

Date: 18 October 2023

My Ref: CYP/SOP_CathaysPrimaries_Oct23



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Councillor Huw Thomas
Leader of the Council
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Huw,

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 17 OCTOBER 2023 -
SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLANNING: PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES TO SERVE
CATHAYS AND PARTS OF GABALFA, HEATH, LLANDAFF NORTH AND
PLASNEWYDD**

Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Committee for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to provide us with the opportunity to consider the draft report on School Organisation Planning: Primary School Places to serve Cathays and parts of Gabalfa, Heath, Llandaff North and Plasnewydd, prior to Cabinet on the 19 October 2023. Please also pass on our thanks to Melanie Godfrey; Richard Portas; Michele Duddridge-Friedl; and Brett Andrewartha.

The comments, observations and recommendations below were captured during the Committee's discussion at the Way Forward.

The committee commends the report to Cabinet and supports the recommendations contained within it. Other comments and observations are as follows:

General comments

We asked about whether the proposal gave a good balance of Welsh and English medium provision and were satisfied with the response. We also asked whether the Cathays primaries consultation had highlighted need elsewhere; and whether you were confident about capacity of Welsh medium places for the future.

We were informed that the SOP Strategy would provide further details of this information, and this is currently being developed. We would therefore **request** you provide details of when the SOP Strategy will be available for this committee to review, prior to implementation. The committee would welcome input into the draft strategy (through policy development work, rather than pre-decision scrutiny) and would welcome your thoughts on this. The SOP Task & Finish Group could provide a positive contribution to the development of the Strategy away from formal committee. If agreeable, please provide some indicative timelines of when the Group could contribute to the development of the Strategy and we will timetable accordingly. As the SOP Strategy also featured in the “Fairwater Campus” Agenda item at this meeting, we will also be seeking assurances from Councillor Merry on this proposal.

Communication

Members asked a number of questions relating to communications and ensuring that conveying Option 1 to parents and wider stakeholders is done effectively. Members also suggested that sharing information on equal provision (particularly in relation to funding) between Welsh medium and English medium provision be shared, to ensure that all parties are clear on this issue. Members stated that, given the results of the consultation suggested a potential “option 4”, the rationale behind not considering this option also be included in communication with stakeholders.

Members felt that it was critical that parents, staff and wider stakeholders are given clear, consistent messaging to encourage early buy-in to Option 1 and encourage a smooth transition to new arrangements. We asked around staff displacement as a result of the proposals, and again, we felt it critical that this is handled sensitively.

To this end, Members **request** that the development of an effective, informative communications strategy be explored and reported back to this committee. A response on whether the SOP Team will be developing such a strategy (which should include clear information regarding the rationale for the decision; FAQs using consultation responses as examples etc.) should be included in the response to this letter.

Financial Implications and Challenges

Members asked a range of questions on finance and viability of the Cathays Primaries proposal. We asked about costs in relation to renovation of current buildings; the implications and challenges of writing off deficit budgets in two of the schools; and whether there were any financial implications in relation to the swap in

diocese. Whilst we were satisfied with the responses, we would like to be assured that these challenges are manageable, so would **request** some further narrative from yourself in terms of this.

To **recap**, we are requesting:

1. You provide details of when it is likely that the SOP Strategy will be available for this committee to review, prior to implementation; and seek agreement that the SOP Task & Finish Group be included in a policy development role. If agreeable, please provide some indicative timelines of when the Group could contribute to the development of the Strategy and we will timetable accordingly. Please note that Cllr Merry will be asked for the same assurances in relation to the Fairwater Campus.
2. The development of an effective, informative communications strategy be explored and reported back to this committee; and that the strategy include clear information regarding the rationale for the decision; FAQs using consultation responses as examples etc.
3. Further assurances on the manageability of the financial implications and challenges of this proposal.

There are no formal recommendations arising from this letter.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', written over a light grey rectangular background.

COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN
Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: CYPSC Members
Melanie Godfrey - Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
Richard Portas - Programme Director for the School Organisation Programme
Brett Andrewartha - School Organisation Programme Planning Manager
Michele Duddridge-Friedl - Operational Manager, School Organisation Programme Strategy

Claire Deguara – Cabinet Support Office
Deborah Said – PA to the Leader
Helen Eager - PA to the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning
Paula Williams – PA to the SOP Director
Tim Gordon and Jeremy Rhys – Media and Comms
Gavin McArthur – Chair, Governance & Audit Committee
Cllr John Lancaster – Group Leader
Cllr Rodney Berman – Group Leader
Cllr Andrea Gibson – Group Leader