

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 OCTOBER 2023

Present: Councillor Bridgeman(Chairperson)
Councillors Ahmed, Boes, Davies, Hopkins and Moultrie

20 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Simmons, Ferguson Thorne, Melbourne and Bid Corr (Parent Governor Co-Optee).

21 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Ahmed and Boes declared prejudicial interests in agenda item 5 as local ward councillors for Fairwater. Councillor Davies declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 as a Non-executive director of Cardiff Bus

22 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 June 2023 and 14 July 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

23 : SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLANNING: PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES TO SERVE CATHAYS AND PARTS OF GABALFA, HEATH, LLANDAFF NORTH AND PLASNEWYDD

Members were advised that this item would allow them to undertake a pre-decision scrutiny on Primary School Places to Serve Cathays and parts of Gabalfa, Heath, Llandaff North and Plasnewydd which would be considered by Cabinet on 19 October 2023.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Huw Thomas (Leader of the Council), Melanie Godfrey (Director of Education and Lifelong Learning), Richard Portas (Programme Director for the School Organisation Programme), Brett Andrewartha (School Organisation Programme Planning Manager); and Michele Duddridge-Friedl (Operational Manager, School Organisation Programme Strategy).

Councillor Thomas was invited to make a statement, in which he highlighted the process to date. He explained that at its meeting on 23 March 2023, the Council's Cabinet had agreed a recommendation to hold public consultation on three options to expand Welsh medium primary school provision and consolidate English-medium primary school provision.

Councillor Thomas highlighted the preferred Option 1 which was as follows:

- Transfer Ysgol Mynydd Bychan to the current Allensbank Primary School site.

- Increase the capacity of Ysgol Mynydd Bychan from 192 places (0.9FE) to 420 places (2FE) and increase the number of nursery places at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan from 64 to 96.
- Amalgamate Allensbank and Gladstone Primary Schools:
- Formally Close Allensbank Primary School.
- Formally Close Gladstone Primary School.
- Establish a new 420 place (2FE) English-medium Primary School with nursery on the current shared Gladstone Primary School / St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School site.
- Transfer St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School to the current Ysgol Mynydd Bychan site and establish nursery provision at the school.

The proposed changes would take effect from September 2025.

Members were informed that the proposal allowed for the expansion of Welsh medium provision in the area which was a key commitment in the WESP. Cabinet was also keen to ensure that the proposal should not disadvantage English medium provision. If the proposal went ahead measures would be taken to invest in the building to bring it up to standard.

During the presentation of the report Members were informed that consultation had taken place on the three proposals with Option 1 being the preferred option. The 230 responses received included 189 online and hard copy responses. There were 17 formal responses, 2 School Council responses and 5 email responses. Specific responses were received from each of the governing bodies and headteachers at the schools and from a range of organisations including Estyn that said the standards would at least be maintained as part of the proposals. There had also been a sizeable number of responses from individuals affiliated with the three schools, the highest proportion being from Allensbank Primary School. Many of the responses were also closely linked to the proposals with each individual school.

Members were invited to ask questions and make comments; the discussion is summarised as follows:

- Members enquired whether the proposal provided a good balance of Welsh and English medium provision. Officers responded that the rationale behind the proposal was to expand the provision of Welsh Medium and to provide a better balance of English Medium provision. The intention was not to reduce but to allow for a re-organisation of provision. Members noted that if the Council proceeded with the proposal it would result in a larger school, with a more efficient make up and would partially clear the deficit of those schools leading to a securer financial base to start from.
- Members asked whether the Cathays primaries consultation had highlighted need elsewhere; and whether there was confidence about capacity of Welsh medium places for the future. Officers responded that this had been earmarked for attention in the SOP Strategy and was currently in the process

of being developed. Members were assured that liaison would take place with scrutiny at the appropriate time to consider this. Members welcomed input into the draft strategy.

- Members asked questions relating to communications and ensuring that conveying Option 1 to parents and wider stakeholders was 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 were 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 be also included in communication with stakeholders.
- Members felt that it was critical that parents, staff and wider stakeholders were given clear, consistent messaging to encourage early buy-in to Option 1 and encourage a smooth transition to the new arrangements. Officers responded that meetings had already taken place with the Chairs of Governors and Headteachers of the schools concerned. It was reported that each of the schools had decided they would like to meet their staff themselves potentially with trade union representatives present. Staff members of the schools involved were already aware and were aware on the day the papers were being released. Members were informed that HR support was in place and opportunities were being taken to discuss the issues with staff affected to understand their views and concerns. A previous consultation had also taken place and this was the second time. All the mechanisms were in place to support a challenging situation for people. It was highlighted that the Council would respond to the consultation with transparency and honesty.
- Members queried staff displacement as a result of the proposals and felt it was critical that this was handled sensitively. Officers responded that both schools had reducing roles so they would already be making difficult decisions about their teaching and learning staff. In terms of the number of classes running currently and in the new form 14 teachers would be required (7 in each plus the nursery). Members were made aware that there was a chance that not all staff would secure roles but they would be given first opportunity to apply for roles and ring fenced if the temporary governing body agreed to that.
- Members requested that the development of an effective, informative communications strategy be explored and reported back to committee, a response on whether the SOP Team would 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 the Chair's letter.
- Members asked questions in relation to finance and viability of the Cathays Primaries proposal and the costs in relation to the renovation of current buildings. Officers responded that the Council was aware of the conditions of the buildings and it presented a good reason to bring some of the proposals

forward. Members noted that the works being undertaken were very extensive, quite complex schemes involving listed buildings. Members were informed that the roof works, stone works and scaffolding should be resolved the end of the year. The Welsh Government was providing £1.8m capital investment funding to the existing Allensbank site and the Council would be providing funding to the existing Gladstone and St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School sites to ensure they were suitable.

- Members enquired as to the implications and challenges of writing off deficit budgets in two of the closed schools and asked whether there were any financial implications in relation to the swap in diocese. Officers responded that deficits often occurred when there was insufficient take up of school places. It was hoped that putting both the schools on a stronger footing and working closely with them that their delegated budget position would be able to be balanced, once the deficit was written off, and be stable going forwards. Members also noted the transition money being put into the budget to support the two schools coming together (£60k per organisation per school) which would be tapered down over the years to support the transition. The deficit would be paid off from the School Organisation Planning Revenue Reserve Fund which would be subject to the same mechanisms that funded the programme.

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations captured during the way forward

24 : SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLANNING: FAIRWATER CAMPUS

Members were informed that this item would allow them to undertake pre-decision scrutiny on the Band B Redevelopment relating to the Fairwater Campus.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education) and Wayne Ganderton (SOP Team)

Members were advised that the item would be split into two parts:

- Part one would be an open session and Members were strictly required to only ask questions on Appendices A, 1 and 3
- Part 2 would be a closed session to members of the public and would allow Members to ask questions on Appendices 2 and 4.

Members were requested to note that Appendix 2 and 4 to the report was exempt from publication on the basis that it contained information of the description set out in paragraphs 14 and 21 of Part 4 of schedule 12 A of the Local Government Act 1972 and in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and was exempt from disclosure as it contains information pursuant to paragraph 16 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Councillor Merry was invited to make an opening statement. She highlighted the fact that Fairwater Community Campus was one of the Council's flagship capital projects that brought together Cantonian High School, Woodlands School and Riverbank School. At its meeting on 13 June 2019 the Cabinet agreed the publication of statutory notices to:

- Increase the capacity of Cantonian High School from 6 forms of entry (6FE) to eight forms of entry (8FE) with sixth form provision for up to 250 pupils in new build accommodation;
- Expand the Specialist Resource Base (SRB) for learners with an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), hosted at Cantonian High School from 20 to 30 places in purpose-built accommodation in the new school buildings;
- Transfer Woodlands Special School to Cantonian's existing site and increase the capacity from 140 places to 240 places in new build accommodation;
- and Transfer Riverbank Special School to Cantonian's existing site and increase the capacity from 70 to 112 places in new build accommodation.

Members were informed that the new school site would have state of the art facilities and would mean the end of temporary classrooms. There had also been long standing historical issues with the school buildings and substantial investment to keep the school open a few years back. Members' attention was drawn to the high-quality new sports facilities, the Community café within the campus, the showcase space and also the enterprise hub and importantly it would be the first Cardiff school to be operating net zero in line with Welsh Government standards.

Members noted that there were elements of the paper that were commercially sensitive. The project was the largest of its kind in the United Kingdom and it was emphasised that three schools into one site was a huge undertaking on a secondary school site with the provision of well in excess of 150 ALN places and comprising 24,255 square metres. Members noted that analysis of relatively comparative schemes across the country had taken place. Members noted that benchmarking had taken place with two sets of consultants and the Welsh Government, due diligence had taken place and there had been an extensive tendering exercise. There was also a strong community focus with the project, net zero carbon and also a strong target around embodied carbon.

In terms of ALN places Members noted there would be a cost of £11.1m out of county places per annum if it was the case that the proposal was not proceeded which was quite significant and stark. Members noted there was a realisation that there was a lot of pressure on the Band B programme. There was a recognition of the need to move towards a rolling programme and consider all priorities, all schemes under that proposal.

Following a CGI presentation of the Fairwater Campus Band B Redevelopment, Members were invited to ask questions and make comments; the discussion is summarised as follows:

- Members sought assurances relating to the delivery of the project and asked whether there was confidence that timescales were achievable; and that the project would remain at the quality proposed and would provide value for money. Officers responded that the principles of value engineering were being adhered to - driving value out of the scheme without reducing quality. There were specific standards inputted in the tendering process in terms of lux levels and decibels. The electrical and mechanical systems had been completely reviewed and it was noted that if the current designs were compared to a year or so ago there would not be a significant difference. Members were assured that there had been a strong vision for the project and that was used to test the value engineering. Members agreed that given the scale of the project and its unique status they would be seeking to monitor and review the project regularly to ensure that there was satisfaction that the project was being delivered on time and to budget
- Members agreed that the new campus would be an improvement on what had been in place previously and asked if there were any updates on social value aspects. Officers responded that work was taking place with youth colleagues to establish a youth centre and additionally to support and provide enhancements for the football club. Plans were in place to establish a committee to look at resources to support social values. Members noted that it had been a relatively slow start to date because of the current stage the project but actions were now starting to take place and Members welcomed an update in due course.
- Members enquired about the location of the community facilities and any safeguarding issues in relation to this. Officers responded the Hub building and wellbeing hubs were located across the front and east side of site and would be opening for community use. Members were informed that the main buildings would be zoned so when opening would be done in such a way as to not affect the whole site. It was recognised that there was a need to make sure safeguarding was in place for the Community Café out of hours and it also presented a learning opportunity. Ultimately the design was such that there was no access to the rest of the school so safeguarding covered there.
- Members enquired regarding the parking on-site and whether this was sufficient and expressed concern about the impact on the community. Officers responded that the ratio for schools in terms of parking was one parking space for 30 children and with the special schools it was a slightly higher ratio. It was anticipated there would be an increase in active travel with new builds and work was taking place with the trade unions in relation to parking. Parking at the campus site was currently in line with the SPG and consultation was taking place with Highways for additional parking at the ski centre. Members also noted that there was parking available opposite the campus on the road which was not ideal but was why additional places had been provided. Car shares schemes were also being developed and staff with any disability or need were given priority. Members requested that when Fairwater Campus next came to Committee officers from Highways be included to give their views and perspective.

- Members sought clarification about the Welsh Government contribution to the project, and were informed that mainstream school contributions are usually 65%; and special schools at 75%; therefore this project would average approximately 70% WG contribution, with the remaining 30% being funded by the Council via borrowing and reserves.
- Members asked whether funds for future maintenance and upgrades to facilities at the site had been factored in and officers responded that this was an area that was being considered carefully at the moment. Members sought assurance that maintenance and upgrade issues were being included.
- Members asked questions regarding surplus places; the impact of other developments (e.g. Plasdwr) and ensuring capacity at Cantonian; Woodlands and Riverbank during the transition period. Officers responded that with any proposal it was vital to ensure it was communicated to the local population so the local population could access it. There would be a requirement to demonstrate the need for additional places and if the need was no longer present places would have to be deducted.

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the meeting for Part 2 of the item to consider Appendices 2 and 4 in accordance with paragraphs 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

*****End of Part 1 – webcasting stopped 18:08*****

*****webcasting re-commenced – 18:46*****

Members welcomed the ambitious and exciting proposals for the Fairwater campus and the news that this would be the largest development of its kind in the UK and looked forward to monitoring the development closely going forwards.

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations captured during the way forward.

25 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS REPORT

Members were provided with the following information:

- CYPSC Work Programme 2023/24
- Update on Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) Task & Finish Group Terms of Reference
- Update on the SOP Task & Finish Group
- Update on CYPSC – Informal Business
- Update on Relevant items Considered by other Scrutiny Committees.

A discussion took place on timing for Schools Recovery on the agenda for CYPSC and possibly combining with ALN for a future agenda item as it was on the work programme but not allocated to a meeting. In addition, Members suggested School Transport as an item if there were any gaps in the agenda.

RESOLVED:

- To agree the draft CYPSC Work Programme 2023/24 (Appendix A)
- To note and agree the Terms of Reference for the RLDP Task & Finish Group (Appendix B)
- To note the progress in relation to the SOP Task & Finish Group
- To note the progress in relation to those items distributed informally
- To note related items considered by other Scrutiny Committees

26 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

There were no urgent items.

27 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14 November 2023 at 4.30 pm.

The meeting terminated at 7.10 pm