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**SCHOOL ORGANISATION PROPOSALS - SPECIALIST PROVISION FOR  
PRIMARY AGED PUPILS WITH SPEECH AND LANGUAGE  
DIFFICULTIES, AND WITH BEHAVIOURAL EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL  
DIFFICULTIES – DRAFT CABINET REPORT**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To provide Members with the opportunity to consider and review the Draft Cabinet report on the proposals for primary aged pupils with speech and language difficulties and with behavioural emotional and social difficulties. The report reflects the outcome of the consultation exercise recently undertaken following the publication of the proposals (copy attached at **Appendix A**).

**Background**

2. A proposal entitled “Specialist Provision for Primary Aged Pupils with Speech and Language Difficulties, and with Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties” was approved by the Cabinet on 3 December 2015. The report’s recommendation was for the Cabinet to:
  - *“Authorise officers to consult on the proposal to remodel SEN<sup>1</sup> provision specifically to respond to the falling demand for speech and language places and increased demand for provision of children with behavioural social and emotional needs through the closure of Meadowbank Special School by August 2017.*

*“This will be supported by the following proposed changes:-*

- *An increase in the capacity for mainstream support for children with speech and language needs;*

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<sup>1</sup> Special Educational Need

- *A change in the use of the Allensbank Specialist Resource Base (SRB) to provide additional places for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties;*
  - *An increase in the number of Nurture/Revolving Door classes in mainstream schools across the city.*
- *“Note that prior to implementation of the proposal a further report will be provided to the Cabinet providing details of any objections received, the responses to those objections and recommendations for implementation or otherwise of the proposal.”*

### **Previous Scrutiny**

3. The public consultation exercise was undertaken between 11 February 2016 and 6 April 2016. During the consultation period, the Chairperson of this Committee received correspondence from a number of citizens, who requested the opportunity to address the Committee. They wished to express their views on the proposals, and for Members to be aware of the impact they felt the closure of Meadowbank would have on the lives of children with a Speech and Language Impairment in Cardiff who receive at first hand the experience of the staff, pupils and the environment in which they work in.
4. At its 17 May 2016 meeting, the Committee considered the 3 December 2015 Cabinet Report and heard the comments and concerns of those presenting to Committee. After the meeting, Members agreed to write to the Cabinet Member (copy attached at **Appendix B**), with the following comments and advice:

*“The Committee discussed in detail the Cabinet report and information provided, and agreed to raise the following issues for you to take into consideration, prior to the approval of the proposals for Meadowbank School at Cabinet in the near future. We believe that the school should remain open until:*

- a. *“A detailed Cardiff wide strategy for the provision of Speech and Language Difficulties, and with Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties support, is developed, consulted on and implemented.*
- b. *“An assessment of current support for children with Speech and Language Difficulties, and with Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties across Cardiff’s primary schools is undertaken, and is determined to be fit for purpose.*
- c. *“The professional views of all primary and secondary head teachers on the impact of pupils with Speech and Language Difficulties, and with Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties currently in their schools is sought and assessed.*
- d. *“Further discussions are held with the school and appropriate third sector organisations on the support and needs of children and young people with Speech and Language Difficulties, and with Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties.*
- e. *“That the school’s expertise is promoted as a centre of excellence or as a training centre for teachers across Cardiff and the wider region.*
- f. *“Ensure that the Council continues to provide early specialist intervention, as it is considered to be the most effective and efficient method of managing children with special educational needs.*

*“The Committee also wishes to receive anonymised data on the number and cost of any “Out of County” placements of children with Speech and Language Difficulties, and with Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties, as it was unable to assess from the Cabinet report the financial impact of the overall proposals.*

*“The Committee recommends that you consider the above points before you agree the final proposals for Meadowbank School, and that you inform the Committee of your views on the above”.*

### **Draft Cabinet Report**

5. The draft Cabinet report summarises the findings of the consultation exercise undertaken between 11 February 2016 and 6 April 2016. In total 253 responses were received including 52 online responses and 201 paper / email responses. Responses were received from Estyn, governing bodies of schools, head teachers, other stakeholders including The Cardiff and the Vale Speech and Language Therapists, the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, Afasic, the Welsh Language Commissioner, the Social Services Directorate, and from school staff, parents, pupils and members of the public. The formal responses are included in **Appendix 2**.
  
6. The Draft Cabinet Report recommends that the Cabinet authorises the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education to:
  - *“Carry out a further review of speech and language support in Cardiff with the aim of bringing forward revised proposals;*
  
  - *“Undertake further engagement with schools and other stakeholders in relation to early intervention for children with behavioural emotional and social needs*
  
  - *“Work with the governing bodies of Meadowbank and Allensbank Schools to ensure the needs of children with speech and language needs placed at the schools can continue to be met effectively, pending any revised proposals”.*

## **Scope of Scrutiny**

7. The scope of this scrutiny is for Members to:

- Consider that the draft Cabinet Report reflects on the points raised in the Committee's letter dated 24 May 2016;
- Pass on any observations, comments or recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education for consideration prior to the consideration of the Draft report by Cabinet.

## **Way Forward**

8. Councillor Sarah Merry (Cabinet Member for Education) and Nick Batchelar (Director of Education and Lifelong Learning) will present the report to the Committee, and will be available to answer any questions Members may have.
9. This report will also enable Members to provide any comments, concerns or recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and prior to its consideration by Cabinet.

## **Legal Implications**

10. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure

Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

### **Financial Implications**

11. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is recommended to:

Review the information contained in the draft Cabinet Report, attached at **Appendix A**, together with information provided at the meeting and provide any recommendations, comments or advice to the Cabinet Member and / or Director of Education and Lifelong Learning prior to the report's consideration by Cabinet.

**DAVID MARR**

**Interim Monitoring Officer**

**5 July 2016**