

Date: 17 June 2021

My Ref: SS/CYP/SOPProposals



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Councillor Sarah Merry
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
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CF10 4UW

Dear Sarah,

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 JUNE 2021 – SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLANNING PROPOSALS

Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Committee for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to facilitate the consideration of Cabinet proposals relating to Cathays High School and Primary School places to serve Cathays and parts of Gabalfa, Heath, Llandaff North and Plasnewydd. Please also pass on our thanks to Mel Godfrey, Richard Portas and Brett Andrewartha. The comments, observations and recommendations below were captured during the Committee's discussion at the Way Forward.

General Comments

The Committee acknowledged that, for both proposals, their stages in the process resulted in a lack of detail in what information is currently available. We feel that we need to be assured that when the detail is being developed, we are given an appropriate opportunity to scrutinise this and have the information we need to be able to support and challenge them as appropriate.

This Committee agreed at this meeting to commence its work programming for the current municipal year, and to that end, we **recommend** that we work with yourself and officers in drawing up a comprehensive programme of sessions on both the 21st Century Schools Programme and other School Organisation proposals, to enable us to work with you in developments going forward. This may present opportunities for us to work with you in a more informal capacity and for us to be involved in developments at an earlier stage than just pre-decision scrutiny. The knowledge and experience of CYPSC Members on this issue could provide further opportunities to

support yourself and officers in developing this process. The following should form part of this work.

Modelling and long-term strategic planning

Members asked a number of questions about the robustness of some of the modelling and capacity analysis. We also asked questions relating to other schools in Band B, population changes over the next decade and whether the proposed capacity proposals are the right ones.

We welcomed the responses from officers in terms of population projections and are pleased that this work is being undertaken. However, we feel that the Committee needs a mechanism developed for us to monitor population projections over the period ahead, and that this mechanism allow us to monitor it in more detail, including identifying different needs for each ward or area of the city (to be agreed with you), breakdown in demographic etc.

Members agreed that along with monitoring population projections, we would also wish to gain a better view on agreed and proposed developments that are taking place across the City and the impact these may have on demand for school places. We therefore request that our work link closer with Planning and the LDP as part of this work.

Members welcomed the news that the Welsh Medium Education Strategic Plan is being developed over the coming months, and wish to highlight again that Members of this Scrutiny Committee are included in the consultation process and have sight of the draft Plan as soon as it's available. You have committed to provide us with this in your letter dated 1 April 2021.

Whilst Members acknowledged that decisions on Band B schools had been agreed by Cabinet in 2017, we discussed the decision-making process, reasoning behind proposals and how decisions were made. Whilst we will continue to support and challenge Band B proposals, we feel that we need to have greater input in the development of future proposals (particularly Band C), and should you agree to our recommendation above, that this will be key part of our work going forward.

Catchment Review

We have previously recommended that a Catchment Review be undertaken and you have committed to provide us with notification of this.

We wish to reiterate our recommendation for a city-wide review to be carried out at the earliest opportunity, as this will be critical with future planning, particularly in relation to Band C.

Consultation and Engagement

Whilst the Committee welcomed the raft of Appendices attached to the Cabinet report arising from the consultations undertaken on both schools, there was acknowledgement that there were some gaps and opportunities missed in this process.

Members stated that meaningful and comprehensive consultation and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders should be the driving force behind these proposals, and noted the change in direction following feedback arising from the primary school consultation also considered at this meeting.

Whilst we acknowledge your previous response on this issue in your letter dated 1 April 2021, and that the consultation on Cathays HS followed the Welsh Government SOP Code and included our suggestions made at that time, Members agreed that further engagement needs to be built into consultation processes on school proposals and this should be wide ranging, meaningful and go further than statutory requirements. This should include:

- Consultation with the wider school community that will be affected by the proposal;
- Other schools that could potentially be affected by the proposal, so they are given the opportunity to comment on issues such as impact on intake within their own schools; and
- Wider Stakeholder Groups affected by the proposal

Given that further consultation will need to be undertaken when the design brief becomes more detailed and heads into the statutory stage, we request that you provide us with further information on how this will be done and how you will improve the process.

In relation to the specific proposals, we wish to make the following comments:

21st Century Schools, Band B: Expansion and Redevelopment of Cathays High School

Scale of Proposal

Members noted responses in relation to the changes in proposals highlighted in your statement; timelines for the Bay developments and those at the Cathays site; green space; sustainability of the site; and safety and security proposals

Linked to issues already highlighted, Members asked about the proposed increase in capacity to 8 forms of entry. Members considered the implications in relation to the fact that 60% of pupils come from outside of the catchment area, and the school is therefore subject to the ebb and flow of school numbers in other schools. With this in mind, Members request your views on how robust the analysis is (set out in table 5) and whether there is a sustainable need of 8 forms of entry for the foreseeable

future. We would also be interested in whether those families outside of the catchment were also consulted.

Traffic and Transport Analysis

Members noted that a traffic and transport analysis would be undertaken later in the development stages – at planning stage. We therefore request that we have sight of the output of this analysis as soon as it is available.

Funding of the Proposal

Members remain cautious about the funding proposals and are committed to ensuring that funding is closely monitored as further details become available. We need to be assured that funding proposals on this scale are detailed and costed accordingly and we are seeking full openness and co-operation with yourself and officers on this issue. We need to be able to have access to this information and be able to monitor:

- Risks of budget escalation;
- How the capital costs outside of the MIM are going to be met;
- Revenue implications;
- Slippage and impact into the next iteration of the 21st Centuries School Programme.

We would welcome your assurances on this issue.

School Organisation Planning: Primary School Places to serve Cathays and Parts of Gabalfa, Heath, Llandaff North and Plasnewydd

Members acknowledged the withdrawal of proposals and will welcome a revised proposal in due course, and indication of timelines of when this is likely to happen would be welcomed. We would like to reiterate the need to carefully consider some of our proposals set out in this letter, including:

- Effective modelling, detailed projections and long-term strategy in planning for this proposal; and
- Effective, meaningful and detailed engagement and consultation of the new proposals.

To recap, the Committee **is requesting**:

Welsh Medium Education Strategic Plan – agree that Members of this Scrutiny Committee are included in the consultation process and have sight of the draft Plan as soon as it's available.

Consultation and Engagement – your views on improvements to the current consultation and engagement process, which should include:

- Consultation with the wider school community that will be affected by the proposal;
- Other schools that could potentially be affected by the proposal, so they are given the opportunity to comment on issues such as impact on intake within their own schools; and
- Wider Stakeholder Groups affected by the proposal

Consultation and Engagement - Further information on how you will consult on school proposals when the design brief becomes more detailed and enters into the statutory stage and how you will improve the process.

Cathays High School Proposal

Scale of Proposal - Members request your views on how robust the analysis is (set out in table 5) and whether there is a sustainable need of 8 forms of entry for the foreseeable future.

Traffic and Transport Analysis - request that we have sight of the output of this analysis as soon as it is available.

Funding – continued assurances that details funding for this proposal be made available at the earliest opportunity.

Primary Schools Proposal

Assurance that the revised Primary Schools proposal will include:

Effective modelling, detailed projections and long-term strategy in planning for this proposal; and

- Effective, meaningful and detailed engagement and consultation of the new proposals.

The Committee is **recommending** and will formally monitor:

That a comprehensive programme of sessions on both the 21st Century Schools Programme and other School Organisation proposals be developed and agreed to enable CYPSC to work with Cabinet and officers in developments going forward. This work be both formal and informal. The remit of this work should include:

- Modelling and long-term strategic planning;
- Population Projections, demographics and detailed analysis of need in different areas of the city;
- Catchment Review;
- Development of Band C;
- Improvements in consultation and engagement processes;
- Financial monitoring; and
- Linking with Planning and LDP developments to inform future proposals

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

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 & Lifelong Learning

Richard Portas, Programme Director for the School Organisation Programme

Brett Andrewartha, School Organisation Programme Planning Manager

Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services

Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Officer Manager

Melanie Jackson, PA to the Deputy Leader

Helen Eager, PA to the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning