

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

PROPOSED SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLANNING (SOP) TASK & FINISH GROUP

**Background**

- SOP is governed by a Welsh Government Statutory Code “School Organisation Code” (*Statutory Code document no: 011/2018*).
- The Chair of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee (CYPSC) along with the Cabinet Member (Cllr Merry) and Education senior officers have met to review the way SOP Items are considered by Scrutiny.
- SOP reports usually considered as “pre-decision” formal Agenda items at CYPSC.
- Agreement that current way of working needs a refresh to make the most of the time available at formal scrutiny committee (20+ SOP Items due to be considered during 2022/23, therefore severely limiting the opportunity to consider other issues).
- Agreement that more joined up working between Cabinet, Service Area and Scrutiny is needed, building on current working relationships and making the scrutiny of SOP Items more effective.
- Cabinet papers will now be published **two weeks** before the Cabinet meeting, therefore presenting an opportunity for papers to be considered prior to formal Scrutiny papers being published.

**Proposal**

- Establish a rolling SOP Task & Finish Group, with 3-4 Members of CYPSC – to include one of the CYPSC co-optees
- The T&F Group be chaired by Cllr Bridgeman as Chair of CYPSC.
- T&F Group to meet prior to SOP proposals are being considered by the Cabinet – ensuring scrutiny pre-decision input.
- T&F meeting will take place between Cabinet publication and Scrutiny publication.
- Short output report from the SOP T&F Group will be published with Scrutiny papers, setting out output from the T&F meeting.
- SOP T&F Report will be given a 10-minute timeslot on formal Agenda for the T&F Group to report back any findings.
- If required, any further comments, observations or points of clarity from the formal committee meeting will be included in the letter to the Cabinet Member, to ensure that they are communicated at Cabinet.
- “Strategic” SOP Reports (Investment Programme, SOP Strategy, Catchment Review, Band C etc) will be considered by full Committee.

In addition:

- Chair to hold regular informal briefings with the SOP Director to discuss forthcoming items etc.
- SOP T&F Reports will be shared with Cabinet Member and Senior Officers.
- SOP T&F will decide whether particular proposals (or parts of proposals) need to be escalated and considered by full Committee, in consultation with the Cabinet Member/Senior Officers.

- Should it be required, the SOP T&F will seek clarification on issues with the SOP Team, local Members, stakeholders and/or other Service Areas, therefore ensuring a more robust analysis of proposals.

#### **DRAFT Terms of Reference**

- To explore, scrutinise and act as a consultee on SOP proposals on behalf of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.
- To ensure that the Council is effectively following the School Organisation Code (*Statutory Code document no: 011/2018*) in its development of School Organisation Planning Proposals.
- To coordinate and provide a response on each proposal, and report back to the Children & Young People Scrutiny as appropriate.
- To make recommendations that will inform the decisions and considerations that the Council's Cabinet will make in the development of individual SOP proposals.
- To make recommendations that will inform any future scrutiny of SOP proposals.