

Date: 11 July 2022

My Ref: CYP/CLN_EHW_PentyrchPS



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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 – 5 JULY 2022 –
SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLANNING PROPOSALS – COMPLEX LEARNING
NEEDS; EMOTIONAL HEALTH & WELLBEING; PENTYRCH PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Committee to officers attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to facilitate the consideration of Cabinet proposals relating to provision for Children and Young People with Complex Learning Needs and Autism Spectrum Condition; Provision for Children and Young People with Emotional Health and Wellbeing Needs; and the Expansion and Redevelopment of Pentyrch Primary School.

The Committee commends the three reports to Cabinet for consideration.

However, before further comments are made regarding the individual agenda items, the Committee wishes to stress again the importance of detailed information and data being made available before the meeting or addressed at the committee meeting itself. In the Committee's last letter (dated 10th March 2022, attached) we recommended that a strategic overview be provided to us. We continued to press this issue at the July meeting, asking questions around projections, key drivers, efficiency savings etc, and whilst we were informed that work had been mapped out, no further details were given or provided to us. This continued for all agenda items.

To enable us to do our job effectively, we feel that the lack of detail provided, particularly in response to our questions at the Committee meeting is an inhibitor for us in scrutinising proposals. I therefore request you watch the webcast of the meeting. The link can be found here: [Children and Young People Scrutiny](#)

Whilst we appreciate yourself and the SOP Team involving us at every stage of the process for each proposal, the levels of strategic information available in both the reports and direct responses to our questions is of concern. Whilst there will be no formal recommendations arising from this meeting, I urge you to revisit our letter of the 10th March 2022, and provide us with a more detailed response as to why our recommendation was only “partially accepted”, which parts of our recommendation led to this (and reasons why) and a detailed response (and timescales) to the parts of the recommendation that were accepted.

Once we are satisfied with the strategic oversight we have asked for, this will allay many of the concerns we have on how these multi-million-pound proposals will work at a strategic level.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to stress again the importance of officers meeting with us face-to-face where possible, and I will be requesting that unless there are exceptional circumstances (as was the case at this meeting), you will support me in encouraging face-to-face dialogue at committee.

Comments on agenda Items are as follows:

General issues around the Provision for Children and Young People with Complex Learning Needs and Autism Spectrum Condition and Provision for Children and Young People with Emotional Health and Wellbeing Needs Proposals

In relation to these proposals, Members asked questions on the strategic overview; modelling and mitigating risk in relation to the financial implications; and assurances that costs will not escalate.

Members raised the need for them to have more clarity and understanding of current and future demand for ALN places and would request information on this. This would enable Members to have a better sense of supply and demand for places and costs associated with this. Generally, Members felt they needed much more information and insight on modelling for these projects, and this links with some of the wider issues raised across all three proposals presented to this meeting.

Members requested details of staffing for the proposals, and if there were any concerns regarding the availability and calibre of this specialist cohort of staff in the current climate of labour shortages in many areas. Whilst Members were satisfied that staff were in place for September 2022 through formalising current arrangements and that the Council is working with Cardiff Met and its ITT

Programme, the need to continue to work to ensure that teachers, learning support staff, caretakers and health professionals is critical. Please can you provide information on numbers of teachers and other staff that will be needed to meet these proposals.

We also raised the issue of staff with Welsh Language skills (to meet the commitments of the WESP), which adds another layer of potential problems in recruiting staff. We were informed that work around the WESP will take place over the next few months, but no details were given on what this would look like and how it is being joined up strategically. We have already requested that the WESP be brought back to this Scrutiny Committee in September¹ before it is submitted to Welsh Government, so we require you to attend Committee in September to update us on the WESP Action Plan, where we will also focus on how the WESP addresses those with ALN, and recruitment and retention of staff across the board.

In the meantime, we request that details be provided on workforce planning for ALN staff to ensure that there is sufficient teaching and support, with the right skills (including Welsh language) are in place for future proposals.

We asked a number of questions around transport costs and sought assurances that these costs would not escalate, rather than reduce, as stated in the Cabinet report. We were informed that the current climate and the transport industry itself was an issue. We would therefore request further information on how the Council will mitigate this.

In addition, we questioned officers around what an Active Travel Plan would look like for schools where children and young people would not be able to “walk, cycle or scoot” to school, and again, whilst we were informed that taxis and supported transport have been factored into the modelling, no further details were provided. Therefore, we would request detailed information on how an ATP could look for this cohort of pupils, details of what work is being undertaken with Highways colleagues and what the Council is doing to assist the schools in developing them.

We asked questions about how confident officers were that in-house clinical teams would be able to meet demand, and what work was ongoing in this area. We were informed that whilst this has been flagged and strategy meetings had been held with health, no further details were available. Therefore, please supply this information to us, including any other stakeholders involved in this work.

¹ [\(Public Pack\)Correspondence following the meeting Agenda Supplement for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, 22/02/2022 10:30 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Members requested that a map be provided of current ALN provision, with the additional placements and numbers also provided to enable us to have a visual representation of these proposals.

Specific issues re the Provision for Children and Young People with Complex Learning Needs and Autism Spectrum Condition

Members asked a question around the traffic issues at Ty Gwyn School (including Vincent Road), and how the increase in pupils would further exacerbate this problem. We were informed that discussions on some of the traffic issues had been ongoing for some time and that further work and modelling was needed. We therefore request that further details and timescales be provided to us to provide reassurances that these traffic and transport problems will be addressed.

The Committee also requests that it receives more detailed information on The Court school development, including timescales on when design details will be available and considered by the Committee.

We note that officers clarified at the meeting that they expect the proposals concerning complex needs and autism to avoid a continuing rise in costs related to need for out of county and independent school places rather than achieving a reduction in these costs. Members would welcome further information at the appropriate point to demonstrate that this expectation is being met.

Given the scale and number of proposals relating to complex needs and autism members sought reassurance that the implementation of the proposals overall is manageable.

Specific issues relating to Provision for Children and Young People with Emotional Health and Wellbeing Needs Proposals

Members asked whether the proposals would put pressure on the Plasdwr development as well as additional pressures on Cardiff West Community High and Fairwater Primary. In addition, it was asked how this proposal linked up and interacted with the LDP. The response was that there needed to be further discussion on how these proposals are strategically placed across the city and linked with the LDP. We feel that this is a critical issue that should be addressed at very early stages and we would therefore request that further information be provided in relation to this.

Expansion and Redevelopment of Pentyrch Primary School

Members asked whether the Cardiff Influencers were being utilised as part of this proposal, and whilst officers responded that children and young people were included in a range of engagement and information sharing projects, no details were given on how the Cardiff Influencers would be playing a part. Please provide further information on this group and how it will be utilised in this proposal.

Please can you provide information on numbers of teachers and support staff that will be needed to meet these proposals.

Members were pleased to hear that Section 106 funding had been received for the site but would request further details on how much has been received and what it will be used for.

A Member also raised the issue of potentially using some land adjacent to the school to alleviate some of the traffic and parking issues. Officers stated that they would look into this, and we look forward to receiving an update on the outcome of those discussions. Please provide an indicative timescale on when this will be brought back to the Committee.

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

- (i) You to revisit our letter of the 10th March 2022 (attached), and provide us with a more detailed response as to why our recommendation was only “partially accepted”, which parts of our recommendation led to this (and reasons why) and a detailed response (and timescales) to the parts of the recommendation that were accepted.
- (ii) Support the Committee in ensuring that witnesses meet with us face-to-face where possible, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- (iii) Provide data of current and future demand for ALN places. This should also include information on financial modelling that has been undertaken in relation to projections. A map of current provision and new places (with details) should also be provided.
- (iv) We have already requested that the WESP be brought back to this Scrutiny Committee in September before it is submitted to Welsh Government, so we require you to attend Committee in September to update us on the WESP Action Plan, where we will also address how the WESP addresses those with ALN.

- (v) Details be provided on workforce planning to ensure that sufficient teaching and support, with the right skills (including Welsh language) are in place for future proposals.
- (vi) Information on numbers of teachers and other support staff that will be needed to meet all three proposals.
- (vii) Further information on how the Council will mitigate transport costs to ensure that these would not escalate, rather than reduce, as stated in the Cabinet report.
- (viii) Detailed information on how an ATP could look for ALN of pupils, including details of what work is being undertaken with Highways colleagues and what the Council is doing to assist the schools in developing them.
- (ix) Information on how the Council will manage capacity and demand for in-house clinical teams, including details of discussions with Health and any other stakeholders.
- (x) Further details and timescales be provided to us regarding current and potential future traffic and transport issues around Ty Gwyn School. This should include how these traffic and transport problems will be addressed.
- (xi) More detailed information on The Court school development – including timescales when design details and when it will be available for consideration by this Committee.
- (xii) Further information on how the Council will avoid a continuing rise in costs in relation to out of county and independent school places in relation to complex needs and autism. Please provide a timescale when this information can be provided to Committee to demonstrate that this expectation is being met.
- (xiii) Given the scale and number of proposals relating to complex needs and autism Members sought reassurance that the implementation of the proposals overall is manageable – please provide this information.
- (xiv) Further information on how the Cardiff Influencers will be utilised in the Pentyrch proposal (and others).
- (xv) Information be provided in relation to whether the Pentyrch proposals would put pressure on the Plasdwr development as well as additional pressures on Cardiff West Community High and Fairwater Primary; and how this proposal linked up and interacted with the LDP.

- (xvi) Details on how much Section 106 money had been made available for Pentyrch and what it will be used for.
- (xvii) The outcome from further consideration of the land adjacent to the Pentyrch school to alleviate some of the traffic and parking issues. Please provide an indicative timescale on when this will be brought back to the Committee

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. 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
Jennie Hughes, Senior Achievement Leader Inclusion
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
Paula Williams, PA to the Programme Director for the School Organisation Programme
Tim Gordon and Jeremy Rhys – Media and Comms
Cllr Adrian Robson – Group Leader
Cllr Rhys Taylor – Group Leader
Cllr Andrea Gibson – Group Leader
David Hugh Thomas – Chair Governance & Audit Committee
Performance Lead Officers