
SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLANNING – REPORT OF THE SOP TASK & FINISH GROUP

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with the output of discussions between the School Organisation Planning (SOP) Task & Finish Group and SOP Team at its meeting on the 14 March 2023 in relation to the following proposals:
 - School Admission Arrangements and Coordinated Secondary School Admission Arrangements 2024/2025
 - School Organisation Planning: Primary School Places to Serve Cathays and Parts of Gabalfa, Heath, Llandaff North and Plasnewydd

These proposals will be considered by Cabinet on the 23 March 2023.

2. Members of this Scrutiny Committee are requested to note the comments and observations made by the Task & Finish Group (set out in paragraphs 16 to 18 of this report), and these be submitted as a letter to the Cabinet Member ahead of the Cabinet meeting on the 23 March 2023.

Background to the Proposals

Admissions Arrangements 2024/25

3. In accordance with Section 89 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the Education (Determination of Admission Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2006, Admission Authorities are required to review their School Admission Arrangements annually.

4. The Cabinet report is to inform the Cabinet of responses received following public consultation on the Council's School Admission Arrangements 2024/2025.
5. In order to comply with the legislation above, School Admission arrangements for implementation in the 2024/2025 academic year (i.e., from September 2024) must be determined on or before 15 April 2023.
6. The Education (Determination of Admission Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2006 and the School Admissions Code set out the procedure which admission authorities should follow when determining their admission arrangements, including that proper consultation must be carried out and that the arrangements should be determined by 15 April in the school year beginning two years before the school year which the arrangements will be for.
7. The Cabinet Proposal contained the following recommendation:
 - Determine the attached Council's draft School Admission Arrangements 2024/2025 as set out in the Admission Policy 2024/2025.
8. The reason for the recommendation is:
 - The Council is required to review its school admission arrangements annually and to agree the arrangements following appropriate consultation.

Primary School Places to Serve Cathays and Parts of Gabalfa, Heath, Llandaff North and Plasnewydd

9. This proposal enables the Cabinet to consider a recommendation to hold a public consultation on revised proposals for primary school provision to serve Cathays and parts of Gabalfa, Heath, Llandaff North and Plasnewydd.

10. The Cabinet Proposal contained the following recommendations:

- authorise officers to consult on proposals outlined in paragraph 122 (*of the Cabinet proposal*), to be implemented from September 2025.
- note that officers will bring a report on the outcome of the consultation to a future meeting to seek authorisation as to whether to proceed to publish proposals in accordance with section 48 of The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

11. Further recommendations were available in the Cabinet paper, and this will be shared with CYPSC Members once published.

12. The reasons for the recommendations were to:

- balance provision for Welsh-medium and English-medium community primary school provision to serve Cathays and parts of Gabalfa, Heath, Llandaff North and Plasnewydd.

SOP Task & Finish Group Meeting – 14 March 2023

13. The SOP Task & Finish Group met on the 14 March 2023 to consider the proposals in detail. Papers were released to the Group on the 9 March 2023 to allow Members to have the opportunity to digest the contents.

14. At the Task Group meeting, Members were joined by the following witnesses:

- Richard Portas, Director of School Organisation Planning
- Michele Duddridge-Friedl, Operational Manager, School Organisation Programme Strategy
- Brett Andrewartha, School Organisation Planning Manager

School Organisation Planning Task & Finish Group Observations

15. The Task & Finish Group made the following observations at the meeting on the 14 March 2023. Members are requested to note the following. There will be an opportunity for Members of the Task & Finish Group to briefly give an overview/update of the meeting, if required. The following will be drafted into a letter to the Cabinet Member following this meeting. Comments and observations are as follows:

Admissions Arrangements 2024/25

16. Members of the Task Group noted the minor changes to the Admissions Arrangements Policy for 2024/25 and commended it to Cabinet for approval.

Primary School Places to Serve Cathays and Parts of Gabalfa, Heath, Llandaff North and Plasnewydd

17. Members of the Task Group considered the content of the Cabinet report and its appendices with officers. They discussed issues relating to the site options; consultation; overcoming perceived perceptions of proposals and providing assurances to parents, staff, pupils and other stakeholders on the proposals; the need to increase Welsh medium places and meeting WESP targets; staffing; and the need to retain the speech and language resource base. Members were satisfied with the responses they received.

18. Members agreed that the report be commended to Cabinet for approval. They requested that the results of the consultation be submitted to a formal meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee when available, to ensure that Members have the opportunity to consider the proposals and responses to the consultation. This will be added to the Committee's work programme, as appropriate.

Scope of Scrutiny

19. The scope of the scrutiny was for Members of the Task & Finish Group to consider and provide comments on the draft reports to Cabinet, prior to its consideration of the reports on the 23 March 2023.

Way Forward

20. Members of this Scrutiny Committee are requested to note the comments and observations made by the Task & Finish Group, and these be submitted as a letter to the Cabinet Member ahead of the Cabinet meeting on the 23 March 2023.

Legal Implications

21. 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

22. 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.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

- I. Note the comments and observations made by the Task & Finish Group, and these be submitted as a letter to the Cabinet Member ahead of the Cabinet meeting on the 23 March 2023.

Davina Fiore

Director of Governance and Legal Services

14 March 2023