

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 JANUARY 2024

Present: Councillor Bridgeman(Chairperson)
Councillors Ahmed, Boes, Davies, Hopkins and Moultrie

Carol Cobert (Church in Wales Representative), Bridgid Corr (Parent Governor Representative), Celeste Lewis (Parent Governor Representative), Patricia Arlotte (Roman Catholic Church Representative).

1 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Elaine Simmons.

2 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

3 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on the 5 December 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson

4 : SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLANNING: PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES TO SERVE CATHAYS AND PARTS OF GABALFA, HEATH, LLANDAFF NORTH AND PLASNEWYDD

Members were advised that this item would allow them to undertake a pre-decision scrutiny on objections received and other matters relating to primary school places to serve Cathays and parts of Gabalfa, Heath, Llandaff North and Plasnewydd, which would be considered by Cabinet on 18 January 2024.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Huw Thomas (Leader of the Council), Richard Portas (Programme Director for the School Organisation Programme), Brett Andrewartha (School Organisation Programme Planning Manager); and Michele Duddridge-Friedl (Operational Manager, School Organisation Programme Strategy).

Members were informed that the item would be split into two parts:

- Part one would be an OPEN session and Members were strictly required to only ask questions on Appendices A, 1,2,3 and 7, plus the non-redacted parts of Appendices 4,5 and 6.
- Part two would be a CLOSED session and would allow Members to ask questions on the redacted parts of Appendices 4,5 and 6, if required.

Part 1 - Open Session

Councillor Thomas was invited to make an opening statement. He referred to the fact that this was an extensive process that the Council was mandated to go through

in respect of what it was seeking to achieve. It was the final stage of a three-stage cabinet process, following the objection period that had now concluded.

He referred to paragraph 1 of Appendix 1 which outlined what was proposed following the objections received to the statutory notice. It involved discontinuing Allensbank and Gladstone Primary Schools, creating a new two form of entry English Medium Primary School on the premises currently shared by Gladstone Primary and St Monicas Church in Wales Primary Schools and then transferring Ysgol Mynydd Bychan from its current site to the Allensbank site, expanding capacity to 420 places, expanding the nursery and in turn subject to the agreement of St Monicas Governing Body moving St Monicas to the Ysgol Mynydd Bychan site.

Members recognised that the proposal had to work in the best educational interests for Welsh medium and English medium and the faith sector. Members were advised that the move provided resilience and had important educational benefits as well as the expansion of Welsh Medium Education which was a key strategic aim of the WESP.

Members were informed that the proposal, looking to be brought forward, would be implemented from September 2025 and was also subject to the approval of the St Monicas Church in Wales governing body. Members heard that there had been five objections which included objections from Ysgol Glan Ceubal and Ysgol Mynydd Bychan governing bodies and in the case of Ysgol Mynydd Bychan this also included from the staff. The objections had been addressed in the Cabinet report. The key issues tabled were around the condition of the Allensbank and Gladstone buildings and how relevant it was to 21st Century Schools. There had been mentions around Companies House and having a new build at Companies House. Ysgol Glan Ceubal mentioned the impact on their school and their numbers moving forwards. Members were informed that reassurances had been made to Ysgol Glan Ceubal and Ysgol Mynydd Bychan (YMB) in response to their objections (as set out in Appendix 3 to the papers)

Members were invited to ask questions and make comments; the discussion is summarised as follows:

- Members enquired where the Speech and Language Special Resource Base (SRB) currently located at Allensbank would be based following the closure should the proposal go ahead. Officers responded that there was scope within the proposed site but Cathays continued to be the most appropriate location for it. The staff at the Language Base were employees of Allensbank and aligned to the school. When a new school is established the staff would come under the remit of the new constituted English Medium Primary School. Officers added that this was the only Speech and Language SRB in Cardiff and being centrally based it was logical to maintain it in that location.
- Members asked about re-organisation of staff and other staff changes as a result of the proposal. Officers responded that a two form of entry school would require a not too dissimilar level of teaching staff (14 classes and a nursery). There could potentially be redundancies due to duplication of some staff. The Council's Redeployment Policy would be adhered to and posts ring fenced to affected staff and measures were being taken to safeguard and

support staff. It was noted that there had been a strong desire from a large number of staff at the two schools to be part of the new establishment to provide consistency for learners and families.

- Members asked if there was an anticipation of further school re-organisations for the remainder of the Council term. Members were informed there would be a School Re-organisation Strategy Planning Report in the Spring of 2024 which would address the various pressures across Cardiff – some budgetary, some birth rates and some school conditions. The strategy would chart the general course and invariably there would be consideration of school re-organisation in certain areas.
- In terms of the impact on Ysgol Glan Ceubal, Members asked what measures were being taken to reassure the community about the change and if there was any intention to review the size of Welsh Medium School catchment areas in the near future. Officers responded that Ysgol Glan Ceubal recently received a good ESTYN inspection result and should be in a good place to maintain numbers when the birth rates went down. Whilst there may be a short-term impact from Mynydd Bychan, in reality there was sufficient catchment for the school. It was noted that there had been several meetings with the governing body of Glan Ceubal to offer reassurance that the catchment area was sufficient for 30 places.
- In relation to the transfer of Welsh Medium Education into Allensbank, Members referred to references in the report to supporting Mynydd Bychan in the short term until it grew (alternative use or mothballing parts of the building to reduce costs) and asked how long that support would be in place. Officers responded that there were other considerations in the short term in terms of refurbishments. It was acknowledged that the school would have to grow over a period of time and it was anticipated that it would grow as planned. It was the growth of numbers and the pace that had the most financial impact. Once there were over 30 pupils the school would have to run more than one class and the level of financial support inputted by the Council would reflect the strategic desire of the school to grow.
- Members asked how Mynydd Bychan would be managed in terms of paying for the maintenance and upkeep of the building (electricity, heating etc). Officers responded that the process would involve moving from a one form of entry in the first instance to a one form of entry with a double reception age class. Allensbank was a much larger building but it was not anticipated that this would be used or made available immediately. It had been agreed with the school to mothball the building because it would be utilising it during phases. There was also an opportunity to locate other services there or partners aligned with what the school wanted to deliver. Officers were looking at a range of different ways to utilise and pay an income into the school where there was scope and it could support the further interest in the intake for future years, for example parent classes to introduce families to Welsh etc. Any increased employment or recruitment would be based on the number of children attending the school. The school would have an increased opportunity to be able to generate income on the basis of the fact that it had a

larger site. The school would be supported by the group that was operating in conjunction with the west to promote and market the school but would minimise the amount of space that they were required to look after in the interim period for as long as possible.

- Members queried the reason why St Monicas PAN was 20. Officers responded that the governing body of St Monicas was consulting on an increased admission number to 26 places which reflected the accommodation it had. Members were informed that the setting of admission arrangements in faith based voluntary schools was a matter for the governing body. Potentially if the school reached the point of having a greater number than 26 applications they could admit above that number through the appeal process.

***** End of Part 1 Open Session*****

Members were asked if they wished to ask a question on the confidential, redacted parts of the Appendices to which the response was yes.

The Chair moved that the Committee exclude the public at this point under Paragraph 14 of Part 4 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED: that Members of the Public be excluded from the meeting and the webcasting be paused to consider the redacted, confidential parts of Appendices 4,5 and 6 in a closes session to discuss information deemed exempt, in accordance with paragraphs 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

*****Webcasting paused for discussion of the redacted, confidential parts of Appendices 4, 5 and 6*****

*****Webcasting re-commenced at the end of the discussion*****

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations captured during the way forward

5 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

6 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Committee is Monday 26 February 2024 at 5.00 pm

The meeting terminated at 5.18 pm