



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 19 December 2018 at 5.00 pm at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park. Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor S. Rees-Owen (Chair)

Councillor W Lewis Councillor J Brencher
Councillor A Calvert Councillor H Boggis
Councillor M Griffiths Councillor G Jones

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Director of Communications & Interim Head of Democratic Services
Mr P Nicholls, Head of Legal - Litigation, Planning & Environment, Community & Children's Services
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Ms A Richards, Head of 21st Century Schools
Ms S Nicholls, Graduate Officer
Ms L Howells, 21st Century Schools Officer

26 Declaration of Interest

The following declarations of personal interests were declared in matters pertaining to the agenda:

(1) In accordance with the Code of Conduct Co-opted Member Mr J Fish declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 4 Scrutiny engagement in 21st Century Schools Modernisation Proposal, as he is a parent governor at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School also a Chair of Governors at Maesybryn Primary School. I believe that my personal interest is not prejudicial and in the event these plans are implemented I will no longer be a parent governor.

27 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillors A Davies – Jones, S. Evans, J. Davies, H. Fychan, M. Powell, G. Stacey and Co-Opted Voting Member N. Crowley.

28 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 21st November 2018 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

29 School Holiday Enrichment Programme Update (SHEP)

The Head of 21st Century Schools and the 21st Century School Support Officer

presented the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with the School Holiday Enrichment Programme report.

Members were informed that the report provides information on the provision of the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) (also known as the 'Food and Fun Programme') that was delivered over the summer holiday period of 2018 in four primary schools and one special school, namely;

- Genboi Community Primary
- Heol y Celyn Primary
- Maerdy Community Primary
- Penywaun Primary
- Ysgol Hen Felin

The Head of 21st Century Schools explained the background of the School Holiday Enrichment Programme. It was explained that at the SHEP Wales 2017 'food and Fun' National Event held on 30th November 2017 a keynote speech delivered by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford AM, confirmed the allocation, in the draft budget of £500,00 per year for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 to support the further development of the SHEP across areas of social deprivation in Wales.

Members were informed that following on in December 2017, the Council submitted a completed match funding application form to the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to deliver the four primary schools outlined in 1.1 of the report.

The Head of 21st Century Schools explained that in early February 2018 the WLGA informed the Council that the match funding application had been successful. Then subsequently in late February 2018, the WLGA contacted the Council requesting the submission of a further match funding application in order to deliver the SHEP in special schools over the summer holiday period of 2018. A further match funding application was submitted to the WLGA and in April 2018 the WLGA informed the Council that the match funding application had been accepted.

The Head of 21st Century Schools informed Members of the delivery of SHEP and its evaluations. It was explained that the provision of the programme has supported some of the most vulnerable young people in the County Borough and provided much needed support during the school summer holidays and this gained positive feedback from both pupils and parents.

The Chair thanked Officers for their hard work in providing the excellent provision for the families that need the service the most and opened the meeting up for Members questions and observations.

A Member commented on what was a pleasing report they had in front of them and asked for clarification on some of the figures within the report.

Members asked how schools were selected and what criteria was used in selecting pupils for the project. It was explained that the schools that were selected were based on the high percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. In respect of the criteria for pupil selection, this was on a first come first serve basis but all pupils on free school meals were automatically given priority.

A Member commented that there are high levels of poverty within RCT and

asked Officers if they had reviewed whether there were any other programmes going on in these areas with voluntary sector, church involvement, etc. and had we considered this as an extension of the programme. It was explained that Council currently works with our Children's Services Team and Barnardo's and vulnerable families and agreed that this would be a good idea for the future to involve the wider community.

A Member enquired whether the match funding by the Council had been taken from the correct budget. The Member asked would it have been more appropriate to come from the budget of Children's Service rather than Education. It was explained that the match funding comes from the catering budget and some suppliers even donate free food.

A Member enquired on the numbers of pupils that took up the offer of SHEP compared with the previous year. It was explained that at Penywaun Primary School the numbers had doubled and the other schools had increased, however Heol y Celyn numbers were static.

The Chair asked what could be done to expand parental involvement and make it more inclusive. Officers explained that feedback from parent was overall a very positive experience and in the future we would look at expanding the programme with a cluster approach. Parents would be invited in to undertake food and cooking sessions such as preparation of healthy meals and cooking to a budget.

After further in depth discussion Members **RESOLVED**:

- To Acknowledge the content of the report
- Thank officers and staff for their hard work in delivering the scheme.
- To receive additional reports at a future meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

30 Scrutiny Engagement in the 21st Century School Modernisation

The Director of Communications and Interim Head of Democratic Services explained to Members the purpose of the report. He informed Members that the report provides the opportunity for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to engage in the formal consultation process, in respect of 21st Century School Programmes – Proposal to Improve Education in the Greater Pontypridd Area and Proposals to Improve Education in Cynon Valley.

On a number of occasions, Members of the committee have sought the opportunity to contribute and comment upon future 21st Century Schools proposals being considered by the Council as part of Band B Programme.

It was explained that on the 20th September and the 3rd October Cabinet agreed to initiate a formal consultation process in respect of proposals for improving education in the Cynon Valley and improving education in the Greater Pontypridd Area.

The Director of Communications and Interim Head of Democratic Services explained to Members of the committee the format the meeting would be conducted in order to be consistent with the public meetings being held by the

Council. It was explained that consultation would be presented as two separate items starting with the Cynon Valley Consultation first then moving on to the Greater Pontypridd Consultation. It was explained that the Scrutiny's views, alongside the schools and wider stakeholders engagement would be presented to Cabinet as part of the formal consultation process, before Cabinet determine whether to proceed or not with the next stage of the School Organisation Code.

The Director of Communication and Interim Head of Democratic Services invited the Director of Education and Inclusion Services and officers to conduct the consultation.

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services thanked the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee for participating in the consultation and explained that the views of the Committee are sought in relation to the School Organisation Proposals for Hirwaun/Penderyn.

Members were informed that the reasons for the proposal is that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council wishes to seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders on the proposal to:

- Improve and increase education provision in Hirwaun by investing in a new school for Hirwaun Primary School.
- Improve Welsh medium education provision by increasing the supply of places in the Upper Cynon Valley by making Penderyn Community School, currently a dual language school, a Welsh medium primary school.

The changes will be achieved by the construction of a new school building on the site of the current Hirwaun Primary School. The new school would have a capacity of 390 pupils (plus nursery). The new school would replace the current school buildings on the existing site.

Penderyn Community Primary School would become a Welsh medium community primary school with the capacity for 231 pupils (plus nursery). It was explained that as part of the proposal to change the language medium of Penderyn Community Primary School to solely Welsh medium, it is also proposed to amend and extend catchments to encompass the communities of Trenant and Penywaun (currently in the Welsh catchment for Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar). These adjustments are being made to the catchment area to match the demand for Welsh medium places in the locality.

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services presented the consultation document in detail. At the end of the presentation, it was explained that the meeting is now open to any person present to inform officers of their views, which as indicated, will be recorded, and because this is a consultation, it may or may not, be possible to respond to all questions raised at this time, but all questions would be logged and formally included in the consultation report to Cabinet.

The Chair thanked the Director of Education and Inclusion Services for the overview of the proposal and explained to Members that the meeting does not have the jurisdiction to make any decisions but it provides an important opportunity to comment on the proposals and for the observations of Members to be reported back to Cabinet when they received the wider consultation feedback.

In respect of the improving education provision in Hirwaun by investing £10.4m in a new, school for Hirwaun Primary School, Members put forward their questions and observations.

A member explained that she had personally acted as a scribe in a recent meeting organised by Councillor Graham Thomas last Friday at Penderyn. This was not a formal Council meeting.

A Member asked in respect of the Hirwaun and Penderyn area and the concept of Welsh Education along with the Welsh Government plan for more Welsh speakers by 2050 had there been any pre-consultation with the community to take into account their views within the area.

It was explained that in the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) the Council has included in its plan to increase the number of children being taught through the medium of Welsh and specifically included in the plan is to:

- Provide new and improved school buildings with appropriate capacity.
- Consideration of making dual language schools into full Welsh medium schools.

The School Organisation Code is very prescriptive. The Code clearly states that it is not a requirement to hold any meetings to discuss proposals but we convene this as we deem it good practice. However, to adopt a consistent approach we do not hold pre-consultation meetings.

A Member questioned the maintenance figure of £1.9Million and asked how as a Local Authority we got to that situation. Members were informed of that, the school is a CLASP type construction and was built in the late 1960's. The buildings are difficult to maintain due to the management of asbestos and they have come to the end of their useful life.

A member enquired whether the Council has to pay for demolition costs? It was explained that all costs, including the demolition and asbestos removal costs, are included in the overall project costs.

Another Member complemented the proposal and thought it was a well thought out proposal.

In respect of the Transport issue, a Member asked with regards the provision of transport how much extra pressure would be put on school transport. It was explained that this is unclear at present, in respect of the English medium provisional numbers will fluctuate. In catchment pupils resident in Penderyn attending English medium stream will receive free transport to the new Hirwaun Primary School as the walking route is deemed unavailable.

In respect of Transport provision a Member expressed concerns as to whether there was sufficient public transportation to and from Penderyn. A Member commented that the bus service from Penderyn is an hourly service, which could be a serious issue for parents especially if they do not drive. If parents need to get to the school in an emergency this could be of concern.

Majority of Members felt strongly that the transport situation needed to be looked in greater detail. Officers explained that the Education Department collaborates with the Highways transport team and will raise the issue with the private sector

transport company.

The Chair asked how can we make the Penderyn Welsh Medium School Proposal a positive one to the Communities of Hirwaun and Penderyn? The Director of Education and Inclusion Services explained that some parents feel strongly about removing the English stream however parents are already making a choice of choosing Welsh medium with only three pupils registered for English medium provision this year. However, there is positive feedback and the large capital investment in the community is seen as a real opportunity for the wider Cynon Valley schools in the area. We need to focus on equality and ensure all pupils have fair access to good education facilities and opportunities.

The Chair asked if the school would be able to accommodate any future housing development with the area and if this had been taken into consideration when devising the proposal. It was explained that the Council strategically manages its school places and inputs into the Local Development Plan and regularly monitors new and proposed housing development in the area. A Member also explained that there is a proposal for Heads of the Valleys road duelling. There is possible development there and we hope that along that corridor it will bring employment to the area. To have a 21st Century school would be very positive for the area.

The Chair thanked the Officers and as there were, no further questions put forward on the Cynon Valley proposal asked Officers to proceed with the next consultation document to consider the Greater Pontypridd Proposal.

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services took Members through the next consultation process in respect of the Greater Pontypridd Area in the same way as the Cynon Valley Proposal.

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services explained to Members that their views are sought in relation to the School Organisation Proposals for the Pontypridd Area.

Members were informed that the reasons for the proposal is that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council wishes to seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders on the following proposals:

- To develop post 16 education at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School, Beddau and Coleg Y Comoedd, Nantgarw;
- To create two new 3-16 schools in Pontypridd and Hawthorn;
- To improve and increase Welsh medium primary provision by building a new school on the former site at Heol y Celyn, which will incorporate the former provisions at both Heol y Celyn and YGG Pont Sion Norton;
- To amend the catchment areas of Pontypridd High, Hawthorn High and the 6th form catchment of Bryncelynnog Comprehensive Schools to better meet and match the demands for school places.

These changes will be achieved by:

- Closing the sixth form of Hawthorn High School, Pontypridd High, School and Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School and transferring the post 16 provision to Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School or Coleg y Cymoedd, Natgarw. For those students who opt for Roman Catholic education, sixth form provision will be available at St David's College,

Cardiff.

- Closing Pontypridd High School and Cilfynydd Primary School and creating a new 3–16 ‘all through’ school on the site of the current Pontypridd High School.
- Closing Hawthorn High School and Heol Y Celyn Primary School and creating a new 3-16 ‘all through school’ on the site of the current Hawthorn High School and Hawthorn Primary School. The local authority designated ALN specialist class located in Hawthorn High School will also transfer to the new school.
- Closing Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pont Sion Norton and opening a new Welsh medium primary school to be constructed on the site of the current Heol Y Celyn Primary School. The pupils educated through the Welsh medium at Heol y Celyn Primary School will transfer to the new school and the Heol y Celyn pupils educated through the English medium will transfer to the new 3–16 school at Hawthorn.
- Amending the catchment areas for pupils aged 11-16 of the LA maintained secondary schools by:
 - Transferring the Graig area of Pontypridd which is part of the catchment area of Maesycod Primary School to the new 3–16 school for Pontypridd (currently Hawthorn)
 - Transferring the catchment area of Coedpenmaen Primary School to the new 3-16 school for Pontypridd (currently Hawthorn)
 - Transferring the catchment area of Gwauncelyn Primary School to the new 3-16 school for Hawthorn (currently Bryncelynnog).

It was explained that the proposals are interdependent of each other and should they be implemented it is proposed that all changes will be in place by September 2022.

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services took Members through the consultation document in detail. At the end of the presentation it was explained that the meeting is now open to any person present to inform officers of their view on the Greater Pontypridd Proposal which, as indicated, will be recorded and because this is a consultation it may or may not be reported back to Cabinet when they received when they receive the wider consultation feedback.

The Chair once again thanked the Officers for the overview of the proposal and reiterated that the meeting does not have the jurisdiction to make any decision, but provides an important opportunity to comment on the proposals and for the observations of Members to be reported back to Cabinet when they receive the wider consultation feedback.

Members were invited to put their views and comments in relation to the following points.

The of development of post 16 centres of excellence based at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School, Beddau and Coleg y Cymoedd, Nantgarw investing £10m in new sixth form provision at Bryncelynnog

A Member commented that she totally understood the argument for a post 16 and a sixth form provision for all however felt that consideration need to be given as to the location of the build of the sixth form provision. It was felt

communication with Transport for Wales and the wider area of Pontypridd should consider the best option for where the pupils should go to school. The Member felt that Pontypridd would be the best area and not the area of Beddau where the proposed sixth form of Bryncelynnog is set.

In replying to the Member, Officers explained that we look at the demand for 6th form places and Pontypridd High School and Hawthorn High School are low in numbers compared to Coleg Y Cymoedd. The college provides an alternative choice which many young people are exercising that choice and learners will be provided with transport to the nearest college. It was explained that outcomes are strong in Bryncelynnog and are higher than in the other settings.

Co-opted Member thanked the Chair for the opportunity to speak. Before he asked his first question the Co-opted Member commented that he would like to remind Members of an important tenet of this committee. We have always prided ourselves in putting the lives of children and young people at the forefront of our challenges and we must ensure that the Authority does not lose sight of the fact that the lives of pupils, parents and staff that will be affected by these proposed changes.

Co-opted Member put his first question to the Officer, which was as follows:

This is comprehensive plan for the Council. As I understand it is based on meeting Band B requirements to secure funding for school and educational development and is in part informed by forecasted changes in population demographics, planning development as well as being supposedly justified by existing educational attainment outcomes. As I understand it even in the event the plans are in the future delivered upon parents and pupils will still have choices e.g., Post 16 pupils can chose where they wish to receive their education. Now whilst I am all for parental choice surely we must ensure that this investment produces deliverables not only in terms of cost efficiency but in terms of educational outcomes. How are we going to ensure these outcomes are achieved if the vagaries of choice could have a considerable impact?

In reply, Officers explained that although the proposals involve the sixth form provisions being removed there is still excellent provision within Bryncelynnog and Coleg y Cymoedd and there is scope for improvement and we need to provide pupils with the best possible chance to succeed. Officers support and challenge on a regular basis and we have a good working relationship with the college. It was explained that the Chief Executive sits on the college board and data is made available and outcomes are regularly reviewed and challenged. Bryncelynnog have shown strong and positive outcomes.

The second question put forward by the Co-opted Member was a supplementary question, what plans are being developed to support schools and importantly Governing Bodies to deliver on the proposal and in particular with regards to school choice. It was explained that larger numbers in 6th forms allows the school to enhance the range of subjects available. Bryncelynnog has a good reputation and good leadership and an enhanced offer of subject choice will be available to all students.

With regards to parental choice a Member asked that whilst capacity exists in

Bryncelynnog children attending Gwauncelyn Primary will still be able to choose the existing secondary provider as opposed to that proposed under the boundary changes and when is it forecast this would end? In addition, would pupils receive pupil transport for this choice or only those attending Hawthorn?

It was explained that the School Admission Code would be implemented and pupils within the new catchment would receive transport to Hawthorn if eligible under the Transport Policy but pupils out of catchment would not receive transport.

With regards to Transportation the Co-Opted Member asked how will pupils from deprived areas such as Glyn Coch and Ynysybwl have true choice at post 16 when travel time and more importantly cost will be a significant factor. What plans if any are being considered for pupil transport? Is the WG School Transport Policy to be applied strictly or is discretionary travel being considered? If so, what does this look like, for how long and what are the costs the Authority?

It was explained that if these proposals are agreed we would amend the catchment area of both Pontypridd and Hawthorn High Schools for post 6th form provision.

Another Member of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee asked why are we taking away the option for Cilfynydd and Hawthorn 6th form? Could you explain the reason for this? Officers explained that numbers are small in both schools and because class sizes are small, there is a greater cost to the schools and limits the choice of A level subject available to students.

A Member thanked officers for the opportunity to be part of the consultation. She agreed that there was a need for change however felt that all aspects needs to be considered. It was asked if pupils required faith education schooling would pupils want to go to St David's Sixth Form in Cardiff, which would be sharing facilities with other authorities? The Member felt that there should be a secondary school within their area. We need to build on a model that is working to increase higher retention rates. We need to look at a whole range of factors.

It was explained that currently Hawthorn, Pontypridd High and Cardinal Newman work in partnership with Coleg y Cymoedd.

A Member commented that a child that attends a sixth form school setting goes there for support, familiarity and a good relationship with staff within their community, by removing the sixth form out of their local environment pupils may feel isolated and we could end up with there being no relationship with staff or other pupils which could have an effect on the young person's wellbeing.

Officers explained that the colleges have excellent pastoral services and pupils are well supported.

Members stated that a 6th form college within the Pontypridd Area would be a better site as it is a university town and it would connect wider valleys and beyond.

Transport links need to be looked at as students travelling to Bryncelynnog would be limited. The Member felt if the building was in the centre of Pontypridd it would be more beneficial for both pupils and economy.

Officers explained that data shows that pupils are making decisions to leave the local schools. There is a significant percentage of learners going to college and outcome data shows that outcomes from the college are positive. There is a willingness to collaborate the current situation hasn't worked we need to offer what meets the pupils needs.

Officers explained that in relation to transport from key areas, pupils would have bus passes, taxis. Transport Service would look at the route. Officers reiterated that pupils are making their own decisions and choice as to where they want to study at sixth form.

The Co-opted Member asked a question with regards to the post 16 education at Coleg y Cymoedd, Nantgarw, what accountability if any will they have to this Authority for their outcomes and what governance will be in place? I ask this as I understand the majority of effected post 16 leavers at Pontypridd and Hawthorn have given early indications of this being a likely choice over Bryncelynnog.

Officers explained that the college is accountable to Estyn and accountability to the Local Authority does not exist however the Chief Executive of RCT sits on the Board.

The Member asked with regards to secondary school professionals seeking fulfilment and professional development through post 16 teaching, with that being removed from Pontypridd and Hawthorn how do we intend to recruit and retain excellent provision at these locations?

An Officer explained that professional development is at the forefront for staff and the proposals create opportunity for the staff of the new school to work across the phases.

Members proceeded to the next part of the proposal which was the creation of two new 3–16 schools in the Pontypridd and Hawthorn which will take a radically different approach to education in these areas by sharing both primary and secondary sector resources and investing £16.7m in improved educational facilities.

A Member welcomed the provision however there were two things she wanted clarification on; one, the design of the building and secondly the concerns of travel time for pupils to the new schools. The Member felt parents had concerns over the distance pupils had to travel and wondered whether there had been any feedback from both pupils and staff.

In respect of the proposal to improve and increase Welsh medium primary provision by investing £10.7M in a new school to replace Ysgol Gynradd Gymreag Pont Sion Norton and the Welsh medium stream of Heol Y Celyn Primary School Members put their questions and observations forward.

A Member commented on the concerns of parents over the distance some of the young children would have to travel and what transport would be

provided.

It was explained that transport would be provided as normal.

The Chair thanked the Officer for taking the Committee through the consultation document and received general comments from the floor.

The Chair commented that she and a few Members of the Committee went to visit four of the new schools that had recently been developed through the 21st Century Band A process. These schools provided first class facilities but it is too soon to receive outcome data.

The Chair felt that a piece of work could be carried in twelve months' time to see how the Band A proposal is progressing and take into consideration staff and pupils comments.

The Chair explained that feedback from the visits was positive from Headteachers, staff pupils and parents. However, the transition process to the three to sixteen schools needed greater support. Transport was another concern with the amount of traffic at the start and at the end of the day.

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services suggested that some of the Headteachers would be happy to attend a meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in the future to talk about their experiences.

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to

- Acknowledge the Consultation report
- To receive a progress report in 12 months to see how Band A Schools were progressing (inviting Pupils and Staff to Comment)
- Send a letter from the Committee to the Headteachers thanking them for the school visits.

31 URGENT BUSINESS

**This meeting closed at Time Not
Specified**

**Cllr S Rees-Owen
Chairman.**