

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2016/17

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

26th September 2018

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AGENDA ITEM No. 6

**Scrutiny Engagement in the 21st
Century Schools Modernisation
Proposal**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES IN CONSULTATION WITH
THE CHAIR OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE,
CLLR S REES – OWEN**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to outline opportunities for the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee to engage in a review of the current 21st Century Schools Programme Band A projects to identify: How well did we perform?; How do we know?; and How do we learn the lessons and improve the Programme for Band B?. This will include the role of Scrutiny in scrutinising the development and delivery of Band B projects.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Scrutiny:

- 2.1.** Agree to consider and comment upon specific school reorganisation proposals, which are consulted upon in accordance with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2018) in future work programmes;
- 2.2.** Agree to a future report being presented to Scrutiny that reviews the current 21st Century Schools Band A Programme, and provides the opportunity for Scrutiny to visit a number of the new schools and identify how we can further improve Band B. This will include the opportunity to discuss the Programme with school staff and pupils.

3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION S

To provide the opportunity for Scrutiny to participate in the consultation process in respect of school reorganisation proposals during the Welsh Government prescribed consultation process. To review the Band A projects and identify the opportunities to further improve the planning and delivery of Band B projects.

4. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

- 4.1.** As part of the regular engagement meetings which have been established between the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Members, the Chair of Children and Young People has requested that the Scrutiny Committee is part of the school reorganisation consultation process and has the opportunity to comment upon specific future proposals which may be considered by the Cabinet under the Welsh Government Schools Organisation Code.
- 4.2.** During these meetings, it has been outlined by the Officers present, that as a result of the prescriptive nature of the Welsh Government Schools Organisation Code, it would not be appropriate for Scrutiny to be engaged in the detail of specific proposals before the Executive have considered whether or not to proceed with those matters through the prescribed statutory consultation processes. Furthermore, scrutinising in public the future of schools will create unnecessary concerns with school staff, pupils and parents. Nevertheless, the Cabinet Member has been supportive of developing Scrutiny's engagement into future decision making processes.
- 4.3.** In addition, Scrutiny has subsequently identified the opportunity for scrutiny of the 21st Century Programme in November as part of its work programme, determined at the start of the municipal year. This meeting could be the opportunity to begin the review of the Band A projects to identify the lessons learnt.
- 4.4.** The Band A Programme has been the largest investment in Rhondda Cynon Taf Schools for over 30 years. £160m has been invested through the partnership between Welsh Government, with 12 schools having benefitted from the investment. These include Aberdare Community School, Cwmaman Primary School, Tonyrefail Community School, Porth Community School, Ysgol Nant Gwyn, Y Pant Comprehensive School, Treorchy Primary School, Cymmer Primary School, YGG Llwyncelyn, YGG Tonyrefail, Treorchy Comprehensive School and Ferndale Community School.
- 4.5.** Earlier this year Cabinet agreed to the development of further investment opportunities in respect of £168m from 2019 to 2024, secured through the

Band B Welsh Government funding. The funding model for Band B has changed from that provided in Band A, and this will be an important determinant in developing future proposals.

- 4.6.** Future proposals will be developed in line with the criteria set by Welsh Government for Band B funding which include:
- Reducing surplus capacity and inefficiency in the systems.
 - Expansion of schools and colleges in areas of increased demand for educational services.
 - Addressing condition of educational assets.
 - Making assets available for community use where demand exists to optimise the infrastructure and resources for public services.
 - Addressing growth in demand for Welsh medium education.
 - Addressing specific demand for places in Welsh medium and Faith based provision.

5. PROPOSAL

- 5.1.** Members will be aware that there is no formal requirement within the Welsh Government School Organisation Code, to formally consult Scrutiny. In addition, as a local choice function, the previous Council took a decision to make the decision making processes for school organisation an Executive function.
- 5.2.** However, following the representations made by the Chair of Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee, and recognising the views expressed by a number of members of Scrutiny, it is proposed to provide an opportunity for Scrutiny to be engaged in the process for School Reorganisation under Band B proposals, for the first-time, through the most productive and appropriate means.
- 5.3.** Considering the parameters set by the Code, the most appropriate way for Scrutiny to engage in these decisions, is as part of the community consultation process which will be undertaken, should Cabinet agree to consult on any future school reorganisation proposal as recommended by the Director of Education and Inclusion
- 5.4.** With Scrutiny forming part of this consultation for the first time, there is the opportunity for Scrutiny's views, alongside the schools and wider stakeholder engagement to be presented to Cabinet, before the Members of the Cabinet determine whether to proceed or not with the next stage of the School Organisation Code.
- 5.5.** The first Band B proposals are to be considered by the Cabinet on the 20th September and also as part of its October cycle of meetings.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1** The appropriate members of the Council's Senior Leadership Team have been consulted in the development of this report and the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning.
- 6.2.** Scrutiny has already identified, that there will be a number of school reorganisation reports coming forward for consideration by the Cabinet this autumn, as detailed with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

There are no equality and diversity implications

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1** This proposal affords an important opportunity for scrutiny to contribute to the feedback the Cabinet consider when determining proposals in accordance with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code.
- 8.2** Importantly, it provides a further enhancement in the engagement of Members in the decision making processes which support these key decisions.