

22 September 2023

**Re: Proposals to develop a new Special School in Rhondda Cynon Taf**

Dear Cabinet Members,

I have been instructed by this Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee to convey the comments and observations of Members in relation to the **Proposals to develop a new Special School in Rhondda Cynon Taf** before its consideration at the Cabinet meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2023.

The Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee gave feedback and comments in respect of the New Special School at its meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2023 where the following comments and observations were made:

Concern was raised in respect of the proposal having a potential negative impact on the Welsh Language. Members commented that it was essential for any ALN provision to be reflective of the needs of Welsh Language speakers in RCT. Members also reflected that in order to meet the requirements of the WESP and work towards Cymraeg 2050, any Welsh Medium provision offered at a potential new facility would need to be carefully considered to ensure that Children and Young People who speak welsh at home or are currently learning to speak welsh, can continue to learn and develop their welsh language skills in any new setting. Members also heard that no response to the proposal had yet been received from Menter Iaith, Mudiad Meithrin and the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Members felt reassured that following engagement and consultation with parents, pupils, governors, School Councils and special schools staff that overall the response so far to the proposal had been positive

The Committee noted the out of county provision and the significant associated costs but were reassured to hear that children were only placed out of county by exception and any new provision will enhance capacity for those children and young people with complex needs.

Members were encouraged to hear of the Council's commitment to becoming carbon neutral and were pleased to hear that the integrated school transport team had worked with private transport companies to encourage more environmentally friendly means of transport such as electric vehicles and **recommended** that this be encouraged for any new facility

When considering the design of a new provision, Members **recommended** officers visit other out of county provisions to draw on best practice to ensure the primary consideration is its design and safety. When considering the design, members also **recommended** that self- contained gender neutral toilets are considered to ensure accessibility, safety and dignity of the Children and Young People using the facility. To support this, Members **recommended** that a full equality impact assessment is undertaken prior to the implementation and design stage being taken forward

Members of the Committee also highlighted the importance of recruiting a highly skilled and trained workforce for the new provision and acknowledged that whilst this would be a challenge for officers obtaining skilled staff, particularly with Welsh Language Skills and Speech and Language support it was essential that the right candidates are attracted to the roles.

Following conclusion of the Committee's discussions in respect of the proposals, Members thanked officers for the full and detailed proposal and for the opportunity to provide feedback into the consultation. Members were overall supportive of the proposal before them and look forward to seeing any future developments and welcomed any future opportunities to undertake scrutiny on the proposal.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christian Hanagan', written over a faint, circular official stamp.

**Christian Hanagan**  
**Service Director Democratic Services and Communication**