

**Joint Meeting of the Cabinet / Education Skills and Culture Scrutiny
Committees**

(via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

20 October 2021

Chairperson: Councillor S.H.Reynolds

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Councillors: M.Crowley, W.F.Griffiths, J.Hale, N.T.Hunt,
S.K.Hunt, J.Jones, D.Keogh, S.A.Knoyle,
A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, R.Mizen, S.Paddison,
S.M.Penry, R.Phillips, M.Protheroe,
S.Rahaman, S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds,
A.J.Richards, M.Spooner, D.Whitelock,
R.W.Wood and A.N.Woolcock

**Co-Opted Member
Officers In
Attendance** M.Caddick
C.Davies, A.Thomas, C.Griffiths, A.Jarrett,
H.Jones, K.Jones, N.Pearce, R.Crowhurst,
M.Shaw, J.Griffiths, S.Ball, R.Bowen,
J.Merrifield, K.Windsor-Brown, J. Woodman-
Ralph.

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors E.Latham, C.Clement-Williams,
M.Harvey, D.Jones, A.Lockyer, P.Rees,
P.Richards, L.Jones

Observers Councillor Rosalyn Davies
Councillor Charlotte Galsworthy
Councillor Sean Pursey

1. **Appointment of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson**

It was proposed and seconded and resolved that Cllr Sonia Reynolds be appointed Chairperson for the meeting.

It was proposed and seconded and resolved that Cllr Saifur Rahaman be the Vice-Chairperson for the meeting.

2. **Chairs Announcements**

In light of the recent tragic death of Sir David Amess MP, the Chair asked that the meeting respectfully observe a one minute silence.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

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| Cllr Mathew Crowley | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Awel y Môr Primary School and Tywyn Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Wyndham Griffiths | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Blaenhonddan Primary School and Waunceirch Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Sian Harris | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as she is a Governor at Creunant Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Stephen Hunt | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Blaendulais Primary School and YGG Blaendulais but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Jane Jones | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as she is a Governor at The Federated Primary Schools of the Upper Afan Valley but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Dennis Keogh | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued |

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| | | 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Ysgol Cwm Brombil but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Simon Knoyle | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at YGG Cwm Nedd but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Alun Llewelyn | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera-Bro Dur but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Sandra Miller | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as she is a Governor at Melin Primary School and Gnoll Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Rhidian Mizen | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Cwmafan Primary School and Ysgol Cwm Brombil but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Sheila Penry | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as she is a Governor at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School and Melin Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Rebecca Phillips | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, |

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| | | Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as she is a Governor at YGG Pontardawe and YGG Trebannws but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Mark Protheroe | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School and Melin Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Susanne Renkes | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as she is a Governor at Baglan Primary School and Blaenbaglan Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Sonia Reynolds | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as she is a Governor at YGG Gawun-Cae-Gurwen but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Dave Whitelock | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Ysgol Cwm Brombil but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Robert Wood | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Ysgol Bae Baglan but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Marcia Spooner | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium |

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| | | 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as she is a Governor at Rhos Primary but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Marie Caddick | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as she is a Governor at St. Joseph's Primary School, Neath but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Rosalyn Davies | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as she is a Governor at Godre'graig Primary School and Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera-Bro Dur but has dispensation to speak. |
| Cllr Edward Latham | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Tywyn Primary School and Ysgol Bae Baglan but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Carol Clement-Williams | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as she is a Governor at Baglan Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Mike Harvey | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Abbey Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr. Doreen Jones | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme |

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| | | - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Cilfrew School and Llangatwg Community School and Cilffriw Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Alan Lockyer | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Gnoll Primary and YGG Castell Nedd but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Peter Richards | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Blaenbaglan Primary School and Baglan Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Leanne Jones | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as she is a Governor at Cefn Season Comprehensive and Melin Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Peter Rees | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at Crynallt Primary School and Cefn Saeson Comprehensive but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr Sean Pursey | Re: | Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary Schools all of which will be Discontinued 31st August 2024 as he is a Governor at |

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| | | Awel Y Mor Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
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4. **Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English Medium 3-11 School to Replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and LLangiwg Primary Schools all of which will be discontinued on 31st August 2024 (enclosed within Cabinet Papers)**

Andrew Thomas outlined information relating to the statutory objection period to the item which ran from 17th June 2021 to 14th July 2021. A total of 297 written objections were received during the 28 day objection period. A large number of emails were in the standardised format, namely 92 of the 297 objections received were standardised email format. Andrew Thomas read a copy of the email received. There were 35 objections received in relation to the Welsh language, 13 of these were emails claiming that there would be a detrimental impact on the Welsh language. None of the themes that came forward in the objection report were different to those that came forward in the consultation report.

Mr Thomas advised that when reorganisation takes place in English medium education there is no requirement under the School Organisation Code to undertake a Welsh Language Impact Assessment. However it is recognised that the Swansea valley is an area which is deemed to be linguistically sensitive. Therefore an assessment was carried out.

Following Cabinet on 16th June 2021, an email was received from Welsh Government on 25th June indicating that they had concerns about the assessment undertaken by Neath Port Talbot in that it didn't explicitly address what linguistically sensitive means and, also that there was insufficient mitigation. A meeting was requested with Welsh Government to discuss this further. A meeting was undertaken on 27th July. On 9th August an email from Welsh Government was received which advised that further mitigation could be explored to mitigate the effect on neighbouring Welsh medium schools and therefore the Welsh language. An agreement was reached to appoint a Welsh Language Planning consultant to undertake further work over the summer to further inform the Welsh Language impact assessment. The Terms of Reference were agreed with Welsh Government. These included to define and confirm the context of the meaning of linguistically sensitive, setting out the principles for

promoting and safeguarding the language in such an area, consider how the principles could be applied to Pontardawe within the context of the Swansea valley proposal and provide options around mitigating actions to reduce negative impacts on the stability of the future growth of the Welsh language in the short, medium and long term. The draft report was received from Welsh Government on 18th October. The report has been used to update Appendix K, NPT's Welsh Language Impact Assessment.

Andrew Thomas advised that there would be a couple of areas within the draft report that they would like the opportunity to contest but have not yet had the opportunity to do so. Mr Thomas went through two examples of where this would be challenged, including funding for developing the Welsh medium education in the Swansea valley and also comments pertaining to the current provision of Welsh medium education.

Mr Thomas advised that all the mitigation items have been included in the amended Welsh Language Impact Assessment and that these can be cross referenced with the WESP (Welsh Education Strategic Plan) that has been circulated. He further referenced the capital schemes that have been and are currently in the process of being applied for in relation to Welsh medium schools in the Swansea valley.

Members queried whether 21st Century funding can be used on renovated buildings as well as to provide new buildings. Officers confirmed that the funding can be used to enhance current buildings but the funding cannot be used to fund existing repairs and maintenance required to existing buildings. Officers referred to an existing school, Ystalyfera, which was mentioned in the objection report. Officers advised that the £27million spent on this school included the significant remodelling of the site and was not merely funding existing repairs and maintenance.

Members were advised that a full explanation was given at the consultation stage with regards to the various site options that were considered, including a stand-alone school for Godre'graig. However, when considered there was £3million more capital costs and £0.5million/year ongoing revenue costs for this.

Members asked if they can be provided with the full Welsh Government commissioned report. Officers advised that it is a report of Welsh Government and permission was sought from them to

reproduce and use sections of the report and appropriate sections of the report have been used within the NPT report.

Members were advised that when full business case approval is received it is usually always granted with a raft of conditions. One of the conditions refers to the completion of a satisfactory Welsh language assessment. Officers suggested that this has now been satisfied due to the mitigation brought forward by the Planning Consultant, which was the weakness that Welsh Government had suggested was present in the earlier assessment.

Member queried what pupil numbers are the figures in the report based on? A concern was expressed in order for the school to reach the viable figures outlined in the report, pupil numbers would need to reach a certain threshold. Officers advised that the school budget is based on a formula including the number of pupils. Mr Thomas categorically stated that there would be no further school closures in the Swansea valley, other than the ones already indicated within the report. Projected school numbers in the report are based upon the number of children who live within the catchment area who could claim a place within the school, now and into the future.

Members advised that the full business case for the school closures and the building of a new school was submitted before any consultation with members of the public on the item. However, officers advised that when the outline business case was submitted, this included options at that stage. Members also sought confirmation with regards to whether Welsh Government were satisfied with the response from the Welsh Language report.

Members recognised the circumstances imposed by COVID under which these proposals have been brought forward. However, it was acknowledged that when closures have been brought forward before public meetings have always been held. However there is no legal requirement to do this. Members queried why no virtual public meetings were held to discuss the proposed school closures.

Officers outlined the consultation strategy that was undertaken. It was acknowledged that everyone has received a response to their comment on the consultation. Face to face consultation was carried out with the school children and meetings were offered to the teachers of the affected schools. Officers advised that they consulted in the manner that they thought would best suit the community.

Consultation on the proposals was held was 6 weeks longer than required.

Officers advised that the authority has £1.2 million of its own capital funds which it can spend on the patch and mend approach to schools. It was confirmed that the statutory testing accounts for approximately a third of this budget. Surveyors assess schools on a regular basis and it was confirmed that repairs are then undertaken on a worst first basis in regards to maintenance of the schools.

Concerns were expressed that the proposed site for the new school is 5 miles away from Godre'graig and Ystalyfera. Officers confirmed that if the decision to move ahead is taken then home to school transport will be provided.

Members recognised the broadness of education that can be offered in a 21st Century School.

Members noted that the report provided is based upon 700 pupils attending the new school. However, currently the three schools combined do not have this total number of pupils. Members queried what would happen if the new school did not reach this number, would it continue to be financially viable?

Officers advised that Welsh Government agreed the business case on the numbers provided when the original outline permission was granted. School numbers are based upon the number of pupils within the catchment area that could claim a place within the school. The figure does not include those pupils from Welsh medium schools. The schools must also be future proofed for a predicted increase in pupil numbers.

Members queried the Welsh medium capital funding which was applied for in 2018. Members asked why YGG Trebanos was not put forward for this funding? Six schemes were put forward and five schemes were successful. Officers advised that this was most likely due to priorities in terms of pupil numbers and that they were aware that Welsh medium capital funding would be available in the future. It was noted that YGG Trebanos was recently put forward for funding.

It was confirmed that Welsh Government commissioned their own Welsh Language Impact Assessment and NPT agreed with the Terms of Reference set for this assessment. Welsh Government determined that NPT had not adequately considered the linguistic

sensitivity of the area and included enough mitigation measures should there be a detrimental impact. Officers advised that it was a report designed to complement the Welsh Language Impact Assessment carried out by NPT and it had successfully accomplished this.

Members referred to the Well Being of Future Generations Act and well-being objective two. Officers advised that this was included as the funding included 65% of the costs for the new leisure facilities alongside the new school. Therefore, adults would benefit from this.

Members raised concerns about the access road into the new site and its ability to safely serve the new development as well as the existing facilities that the road services. Members queried what measures have been proposed to mitigate factors concerning surrounding highway networks. The outcome of the planned traffic impact assessment was considered and if this was negative, members queried what would happen. These issues would be covered by the planning system.

Traffic surveys have been undertaken and are being repeated within the area. Whilst it was acknowledged that traffic levels were previously reduced as a result of the pandemic, officers advised that most traffic levels have now returned to pre-pandemic levels.

As part of any planning application the Education Department would have to address what measures would be put in place to address any pinch points. They would also need to submit a traffic impact assessment and a travel plan which would include different modes of transport and the active travel agenda. A road safety audit would also be undertaken to ensure all road users were safe within the highway network. It was confirmed that these studies have not yet been undertaken and the planning system falls outside the remit of the report being considered at the meeting. Members expressed their concern about the unknown costs of the surveys to be undertaken and any work that may result from the outcome of the surveys.

Officers outlined the £22.7million total cost of the project and were confident that this was a reasonable accurate assessment of the overall cost of the project. Welsh Government would fund 65% of the cost, with NPTCBC funding the remaining cost.

Members were advised that a road safety audit would be undertaken at the site. This would be undertaken independent of the NPT

highway officers. The audit may identify requirements of a development in order to address safety issues and may also identify comments to take into account in terms of the operation of a facility moving forward. Officers are aware of issues at other sites in the Borough, however these issues often relate to behaviour by users of the highway. These issues can be taken into account as part of the travel plan. Successful travel plans will drive down the use of private vehicular traffic in the areas. Further if necessary, the Planning Department can impose conditions on any consent relating to traffic regulations order to ensure the safety of those at the site accessing the school are safe when using the highway network.

Officers confirmed that should some pupils not attend the proposed new school, there is some capacity in the Welsh medium schools to accommodate the pupils.

It was acknowledged that there is a requirement as part of the School Reorganisation Code when a school is reorganised that the authority must conduct themselves in a certain way. There is a legal requirement to consult. However, there is no legal requirement to consult concerning the pool element of the proposals. The funding for the new pool is included within the school package and Welsh Government are aware of this.

Members acknowledged that the new proposed school will have a learning support centre attached. This will allow children with additional learning needs to attend the same school as their siblings.

Members raised their concern about the current temporary accommodation for Godre'graig Primary School.

Members queried the effects on bio-diversity. As part of a planning application, bio-diversity is a key material consideration. A habitat survey would be required to support any application. Any impact on bio-diversity would have to be mitigated in a replacement scheme.

Officers outlined and confirmed how the proposals will have a positive effect on well-being objective three.

A recorded vote was proposed and seconded and agreed in line with required procedures.

The vote was undertaken to determine which Members were for and against the recommendations detailed in the circulated report. The results of the vote were as follows:

For: Cllrs M.Crowley, S.Miller, R.Mizen, S.Paddison, S.Penry, M.Protheroe, S.Rahaman, S.Renkes, S.Reynolds, D.Whitelock, R.Wood, A.Woolcock.

Against: Cllrs W.Griffiths, J.Hale, S.Harris, N.Hunt, S.Hunt, J.Jones, S.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, R.Phillips, A.Richards, M.Spooner.

Abstain: M.Caddick

Following scrutiny, the majority of the committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by Cabinet.

CHAIRPERSON