

Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Cabinet / Education Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committees

20 November 2023

Multi-Location Meeting - Council Chamber, Port Talbot & Microsoft Teams

Chairperson:	Councillor R.Phillips
Vice Chairperson:	Councillor P.Rogers
Councillors:	T.Bowen, W.Carpenter, H.C.Clarke, N.Goldup-John, J.Henton, R.G.Jones, D.Keogh, C.Lewis, R.Mizen, S.Paddison, S.Pursey, P.A.Rees, S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds, A.J.Richards, D.Thomas and R.W.Wood
Co-opted Voting Members:	M. Caddick and L.Newman
Officers In Attendance	R.Bowen, R.Crowhurst, S.Curran, C.Griffiths, J.Merrifield, N.Pearce, A.Thomas, A.Thomas, K.Windsor-Brown, J.Woodman-Ralph and P.Chivers
Cabinet Invitees:	Councillors W.F.Griffiths, J.Hale, S.Harris, S.K.Hunt, J.Hurley, N.Jenkins, S.Jones, S.A.Knoyle and A.Llewelyn

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSON

It was proposed and seconded and agreed that Cllr Rebecca Phillips be the Chair for the meeting.

It was proposed and seconded and agreed that Cllr Phil Rogers be the Vice-Chair for the meeting.

2. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr. R. Davies – Cabinet Agenda Item 6 – Personal, Governor at Godrergraig Primary School

Cllr R. Jones – Cabinet Agenda Item 6 - Personal, Family member works at Ysgol Maes Y Coed

Cllr W. Carpenter – Cabinet Agenda Item 6 – Personal, Family member works at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School

Cllr. Nia Jenkins – Cabinet Agenda Item 6 – Personal, Governor at Ysgol Maes Y Coed

Cllr. P. Rogers – Cabinet Agenda Item 6 – Personal, Vice-Chair of Governors at Llangatwg School

4. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - STRATEGIC SCHOOLS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME**

The Director of Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning gave an overview of the report, which sought member permission to approach Welsh Government for approval to amend the councils Strategic Outline Programme (SOP). It was noted that all band B and some band C schemes in the report have previously been agreed by members and further discussion was not required at this stage.

Members commented on the time required to read papers; concern was expressed with regards to how the process has been taken forward and that information was not freely available. Members requested site meetings and visits to look in detail at any needs and issues as the proposals progress. Members expressed concern that it was necessary for a joint meeting to be requested and requested clarification regarding the need for privacy around the supplementary report.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed the supplementary report was exempt under paragraph 14, as there was

reference to the financial and business affairs of the council with significant commercial information regarding land ownership as part of the feasibility study. This information could have an impact on any future competitive tender process. The decision as to whether to consider in private is for members to determine but the officer advice is that it meets the criteria for a private discussion today.

Members questioned whether there were proposals to look at the needs of pupils for a 21st century school for Llangiwg and Alltwn.

The Director of Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning confirmed that all schools will be reviewed under the 21st Century Schools Programme over time. Building Surveyors will prioritise needs and resources will be allocated in order of priority.

Members asked if there were any other relevant documents or feasibility studies that relate to the proposals.

The Director of Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning confirmed that there were no additional feasibility studies.

Members referenced the proposal for a new school at Coed Darcy and questioned whether this planned school would be removed from the plan. It was noted that the report stated that it was doubtful that the Welsh Government would allow the project at Coed Darcy to be carried over.

The Director of Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning confirmed that the only amendment suggested for band B and band C were for the two special schools and Godrergraig and there was no suggestion to remove the new school at Coed Darcy from band B.

Members asked for clarification regarding the statement in the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) which stated; the schemes involved are generally English medium schools however the improved facilities will impact on Welsh speaking pupils who attend the provision. Members asked what plans were in place to increase the numbers of pupils learning through the medium of Welsh.

The Head of Support Services and Transformation confirmed that presently, Welsh speaking children who attend Ysgol Maes Y Coed or Ysgol Hendrefelin are supported by Welsh speaking teachers and teaching assistants; if the proposals were approved this arrangement would continue. The Director of Education Leisure and Lifelong

Learning re-iterated that the report for consideration today was not relating to Welsh medium education, but a report on Welsh medium education could be provided if members request.

Members questioned whether the existing building at Llangatwg, could be retrofitted in order to preserve a Victorian building and be more considerate to the environment.

The Director of Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning stated that this school was not relevant to the report in consideration but could confirm that all factors would be considered when developing outline business cases.

Members questioned why all the schools in the SOP were included in the report.

The Director of Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning confirmed the schools in band C were included in the report for completeness and as a reminder of what had already been agreed. The Director confirmed that the treasury funding model used by Welsh Government ensures that any applications made for capital funding considers all available options.

Members referred to the plans for a new Welsh medium school in the east of the county and questioned if a need had been established for a school of this size and whether consideration had been given to increasing capacity at Ysgol Gymraeg Rhosafan.

The Director of Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning advised that this discussion was not relevant to today's meeting and offered to bring a report back to committee around Welsh medium education should members request.

Members expressed concern over plans to refurbish the site at Velindre due to the age and condition of the building and questioned whether the budget would be better spent on a modern, fit for purpose, greener building. Members asked for clarification regarding the current Adult Learning provision at Tir Morfa. Members expressed concern in relation to the proposals for Ysgol Hendrefelin due to the differing needs of the pupils.

The Director of Education confirmed that the outline business cases will look at further detail of each proposal. The substantial refurbishment at Velindre has been calculated for a heavy refurbishment using a Welsh Government formula. Proposals may change once the outline business case is developed. The

redevelopment of Adult Learning is part of a wider county wide skills drive. In relation to concerns regarding Ysgol Hendrefelin there are advantages and disadvantages and these will be explored in further detail.

Members commented that there is no guarantee that Welsh Government will approve the proposed changes and it was important to manage community expectations regarding the time involved in progressing plans.

The Director of Education agreed that the process was lengthy and noted that 21st Century Programme which has already been agreed by members also needed to be completed.

Members queried the correctness of the IIA in relation to the valleys impact. The Director of Education clarified that the purpose of the report is to seek permission from Welsh Government to amend the SOP; the IIA has been written and shaped around the proposal.

Access to meetings

Resolved: to exclude the public for the following item(s) pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the relevant exempt paragraphs of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

Resolved: to suspend Access to Meetings.

Following scrutiny, members supported the recommendations to Cabinet.

5. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were none.

Councillor R.Phillips

Chairperson