

**JOINT CABINET AND EDUCATION, SKILLS AND CULTURE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

20 June 2018

Chairperson: Councillor A.L.Thomas

Vice Chairperson: Councillor A.N.Woolcock

Councillors: M.Crowley, S. ap Dafydd, M.Ellis, J.Evans, S.E.Freeguard, S.Harris, M.Harvey, H.N.James, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, S.Paddison, S.M.Penry, R.Phillips, L.M.Purcell, S.Rahaman, A.J.Richards, R.L.Taylor and D.Whitelock

Co-opted Voting Members: A. Amor and M.Caddick

Officers In Attendance A.Evans, H.Jenkins, K.Jones, A.Thomas, R.Gordon, C.Griffiths, R.Crowhurst, C.Furlow, T.Davies, J.Woodman-Ralph, N.Headon, S. Curran, C.Davies and S.Phillips

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors C.Clement-Williams, D.W.Davies, D.Jones, R.G.Jones, E.V.Latham, A.R.Lockyer, P.A.Rees, P.D.Richards, A.J.Taylor and A.Wingrave

1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON**

Agreed that Councillor A.L.Thomas be appointed Chairperson for the meeting.

Agreed that Councillor A.N.Woolcock be appointed Vice Chairperson for the meeting.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following Members made a declaration of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| A.Amor | Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Governor at YGG Rhosafan and Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Dur but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr. M.Crowley | Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Governor at Awel y Môr Primary School and Tywyn Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote. |
| Cllr. A.J.Taylor | Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Governor at Eastern Primary School and Ysgol Cwm Brombil and has children of school age who will attend Ysgol Cwm Brombil. |
| Cllr. P.A.Rees | Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Governor at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School and Crynallt Primary School and has a daughter in law who works at Dyffryn Comprehensive School but has dispensation to speak but not vote. |

- Cllr. D.Morgan Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Chair of Governors at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwm-nedd but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. R.Phillips Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as she is a Governor at Ysgol Gymraeg Trebannws but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. S.ap.Dafydd Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Governor at St Joseph's School and 6th Form and Ysgol Bae Baglan but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. C.Clement-Williams Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as she is a Governor of Baglan Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. D.Jones Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as she is a Governor at Cilffriw Primary School and Llangatwg Community School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. D.W.Davies Re: Report of the Director of Education,

- Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Chair of Governor at Ynysfach Primary School and Llangatwg Community School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. A.Lockyer Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Governor at YGG Castell-nedd and Gnoll Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. E.V.Latham Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Governor at Tywyn Primary School and Ysgol Bae Baglan but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- M.Caddick Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as she is a Governor at St Joseph's Primary School Neath but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. S.Harris Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as she is a Governor at Creunant Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. S.Miller Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement

- Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as she is a Chair of Governors at Melin Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. M.Ellis Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Governor at Ysgol Cwm Brombil but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. H.N.James Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Governor at Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera-Bro Dur and Chair of Governors at Llansawel Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. M.Harvey Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Chair of Governors at Abbey Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. A.Llewelyn Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Chair of Governors at Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera-Bro Dur but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. L.Purcell Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the

Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as she is a Governor at Rhydyfro Primary School and Cwmtawe Community School but has dispensation to speak and vote.

- Cllr. A.Thomas Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Governor at Rhos Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. A.Woolcock Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Chair of Governors at Tairgwaith Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. P.D.Richards Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Vice Chair of Governors at Baglan Primary School and Blaenbaglan Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. D.Whitelock Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he a Governor at Ysgol Cwm Brombil and has grandchildren moving to Ysgol Cwm Brombil.

- Cllr. R.Taylor Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as she is a Governor at Groes Primary School and has children who will attend Ysgol Cwm Brombil but has dispensation to speak but not vote.
- Cllr. R.Mizen Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Governor at Ysgol Cwm Brombil and has grandchildren who will attend Ysgol Cwm Brombil.
- Cllr. S.M.Penry Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as she is Governor at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School and Melin Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. R.G.Jones Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he a Governor at Ysgol Cwm Brombil but has dispensation to speak but not vote.
- Cllr. R.Thomas Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary

Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Governor at Pen Afan Primary School.

Cllr. N.Davies Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as she is a Governor at Upper Afan Federation School.

Cllr. S.Jones Re: Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning on the Strategic School Improvement Programme, Future of Secondary Education in the Upper Afan Valley as he is a Governor at Upper Afan Federation School.

3. **PRE- SCRUTINY**

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following Cabinet items:

Cabinet Proposals

3.1 Strategic School Improvement Programme - Future Of Secondary Education In The Upper Afan Valley

(Cllr.R.Mizen re-affirmed his interest at this point and withdrew from the meeting)

(Cllr.D.Whitelock re-affirmed his interest at this point and withdrew from the meeting)

Members received information in relation to the proposal to make arrangements for pupils who would otherwise attend Cymer Afan Comprehensive School to receive their secondary education at a new build school in Margam, Ysgol Cwm Brombil, and to close Cymer Afan Comprehensive, as detailed within the circulated report.

It was highlighted that a publication of the proposal provides a 28 day period for the submission of objections to the proposal, therefore any responses that were received in relation to the consultation would not be considered unless re-submitted as part of the statutory objection process.

(Cllr.M.Ellis entered the meeting and declared his interest at this point)

The three Ward Members were in attendance at the meeting and addressed the Committee.

They highlighted their disappointment in the proposal to close Cymer Afan Comprehensive School and felt that questions that had been submitted during the consultation period had not been answered. They went on to state that they consider the proposal to be based around finance without having consideration for the impact that the closure of the school would have on the community. It was highlighted that other local areas of the community, such as the swimming pool and community centre, have previously been closed and stated that it was unfair to consider closing the school as well as the other facilities and to consider the effect that this would have on the wider community.

Attention was drawn to the level of deprivation within the Ward and the high level of need of the children in the Afan Valley in relation to those in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM), and Statements of Educational Need (SEN.) Due to these additional needs the Ward Members stated that it is inevitable that the costs of educating these pupils would be higher than average.

The Ward Members were concerned about the amount of time allocated to study, sport and recreation and family that the pupils would miss out on due to the amount of extra time that would be spent travelling to and from the proposed new school site at Margam. Officers explained that there are many pupils across the County Borough who already experience similar travel times to and from school and do not seem to experience any detriment.

Members asked for assurances in relation to travelling in the cases of severe weather. It was highlighted that stringent policies are already in place and it was reiterated that safety is always the paramount consideration. Officers reassured Members that the

potential different weather situations in the Afan Valley to the town areas has been taken in to consideration.

The school federation model was discussed and Ward Members were concerned that the federation would be dismantled and raised concern at the future of the primary schools still based in the upper Afan Valley. It was stated by officers that should Cymer Afan Comprehensive School close a federated arrangement of upper Afan Valley schools could still continue based on the 4 primary schools. Officers clarified that there are currently no plans to re-organise primary school provision in the upper Afan Valley.

The Ward Members stated that one of the suggestions put forward in the consultation period had been to consider Cymmer as a potential site for a 21st Century School. Officers explained that various options had been explored however no viable sites had been found and other shortcomings had been highlighted in the consultation report.

Members asked where other children of the Afan Valley receive their education. Officers highlighted that a small number attend Maesteg Schools as well as other schools in the Bridgend County Borough area and Neath Port Talbot County Borough. However there are too few pupils who live in the area to make good the shortfall in secondary school numbers at Cymer Afan Comprehensive School.

Members asked why Cefn Saeson School hadn't been considered as an alternative as there is surplus capacity to accommodate the pupils. Officers highlighted that the school building at Cefn Saeson is in a worse condition than the Cymer Afan Comprehensive school building. Although a new build school on the Cefn Saeson Comprehensive site is proposed a detailed business case has not yet been submitted and grant funding for the scheme has not been fully approved by the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools and Education Programme. Therefore, Cefn Saeson Comprehensive is not considered to represent a viable alternative to the opportunities available at Ysgol Cwm Brombil.

Members raised concern about the physical direction of travel as it was felt that the focus is towards centralisation and not keeping facilities within the Valley Communities. Members discussed options in relation to transporting people from the main town

centres towards services based in the Valleys instead of transporting people out of the Valleys into town centre provisions.

Officers highlighted that if the direction of travel was reversed then the home to school transport costs for would be prohibitively high with daily transport required for around 800 pupils.

Members asked whether the 60% extra funding referred to in the report is in relation to funding those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Officers clarified that the extra 60% of funding is for all pupils, and is allocated in accordance with the Secondary School Funding Formula which contains an element of financial protection for 'small schools'.

Members asked for further information in relation to the 50% funding on a 21st Century School. It was explained that funding for a new school via the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Programme requires that 50% of the costs are met by the Local Authority.

Members noted that in their role as County Borough Councillors they represent all pupils across the County Borough.

Members asked for clarification on a breakdown of costs per pupil for those in other schools and those in Cymer Afan Comprehensive and Ysgol Cwm Brombil. It was highlighted that the budget is allocated substantively by the number of pupils on roll so the figures available for other schools in no way affects the disproportionate allocation to Cymer Afan Comprehensive School due to the small numbers on the school roll, triggering the small school protection element of the formula.

Members asked whether Cymer Afan Comprehensive School would be eligible for 21st Century School funding, either on its own merit or in partnership with another school. Members were informed that while all schools are eligible it is unlikely that a business case would be successful due to the size of the secondary school pupil roll.

Members raised concern that the approval of the Ysgol Cwm Brombil project was made 2 years ago and queried why there was no mention at that time of the consideration of the Cymer Afan Comprehensive School closure.

Officers explained that the Ysgol Cwm Brombil proposal was a result of unsuccessful grant funding negotiations with the Voluntary Sector. This placed at risk the grant funding available to the Council from the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Programme for Band A. An alternative scheme, Ysgol Cwm Brombil, was subsequently developed and approved. Cymer Afan Comprehensive School was not cited as part of that proposal because of Band A timescales. It was also mentioned that the construction of Ysgol Cwm Brombil took account of all of the pupil numbers within its catchment area.

Members queried how the proposals included in the report complemented the views emerging from the Welsh Government Valleys Task Force and the Council's own Valleys Task and Finish Group. Officers stated that there is no detrimental impact intended from the proposals set out within the report as the aim is to improve the educational setting and standards for Valley's pupils.

A Member of the Committee indicated that they would be proposing an amendment to the recommendation as contained within the circulated report and asked that sufficient time be granted to the Committee and Cabinet Members for them to consider the wording.

The Chair asked that copies of the amendment be handed out to the Committee, Cabinet and public gallery for consideration and therefore adjourned the meeting to allow time to consider the amendment.

(The Chair reconvened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the meeting.)

Members queried if Officers were satisfied that the transport issues raised in the consultation response had been addressed. They were informed that safe and reputable contractors are in place who comply with a stringent framework of checks and balances.

A discussion was held on numbers of residents and children living in Valley areas and it was highlighted that despite the emotive issues raised by respondents to the consultation as summarised in the consultation report, it remains the case that there are only

229 pupils attending the school which makes it unsustainable and that the proposal offers an opportunity of 21st Century education.

Members discussed the opportunities and facilities that will be available at Ysgol Cwm Brombil and that also parents would still be able to exercise a choice about which school they wish their child to attend.

Members noted that Cymer Afan Comprehensive School had in 2016 received a positive progress report from ESTYN but were informed that in 2015 the school had been under ESTYN monitoring.

The Committee were informed that the proposal in the report was not based on specific concerns over educational attainment at the school but was informed by a careful and detailed consideration of the issues affecting the sustainability of the school. This had been supported by a rigorous examination of the evidence and officers of the Council stand by the outcome of that process.

Members queried if every response and alternative suggestion proposed during the consultation had been considered and included in the responses put before Committee. Officers reiterated that they had committed to a careful consideration of all alternative proposals submitted but that none proposed had offered a viable or sustainable alternative option.

Officers confirmed that the option of federating Cymer Afan Comprehensive School would have no effect on the quality of the building.

Members thanked the public and the Ward Members for their continued involvement and contribution to the meeting and the officers for the work they had contributed.

A formal amendment to the recommendation contained within the circulated report was proposed and seconded:

'It is recommended that Officers undertake further work on the options and models for retaining a secondary education campus in the Afan Valley. Including potentially:

- Federation or amalgamation of Cymer Afan and Ysgol Cwm Brombil

- Inclusion of the Afan Valley Primary cluster
- 21st Century school funding for the Afan Valley
- Consultation with the school communities of the Afan Valley on any other potential alternatives

The amendment was not supported and the Committee were overall in support of the original recommendation contained within the circulated report to be considered by Cabinet.

CHAIRPERSON