

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 9TH MAY, 2016

REFERENCE FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (LIFELONG LEARNING):
18TH APRIL, 2016

“ PROGRESS ON PROPOSALS TO TRANSFORM SECONDARY
EDUCATION IN WEST BARRY (DLS) –

The report provided Members with details of progress to date and the next steps for the development of revised proposals to expand Welsh medium secondary school places and replace Barry and Bryn Hafren Comprehensive schools with mixed sex secondary schools on the same sites. Councillor C.P. Franks had requested the matter be considered by the Scrutiny Committee and a copy of the Request for Consideration detailing the reasons for the request had been circulated prior to the meeting. Further copies were also available at the meeting. Councillor Franks stated that with the reorganisation of secondary education in Barry once again under review, it would be timely for a report to be presented for consideration.

In referring to the background to the report, Members were informed that Cabinet had considered a report on 5th October, 2015 on the outcome of consultation on a proposal to transform secondary education in Barry, with Cabinet resolving at that time not to publish a statutory public notice on the proposal but to referral the proposal back to a West Barry Secondary Schools Advisory Board with the aim of considering further proposals. The new Advisory Board included the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of the three secondary schools, two Headteacher Representatives from feeder primary schools, representation from further and higher education, the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and Schools, the Managing Director and officers of the Learning and Skills Directorate. This Board had been established in January 2016 with it being agreed at the first meeting of the Board that the development of a new proposal should be accelerated to minimise uncertainty and consequential impact on the schools affected by the proposal.

At its meeting on 22nd March, 2016, the Advisory Board considered feedback from recent workshops involving pupils and staff about their ideas for the future development of the three schools. The benefits of mixed sex education, the importance of better buildings, the value of community involvement and the need to preserve aspects of the schools’ heritage were all emphasised. The Board also reviewed the main points from the first replies from a survey of parents. The first 125 responses had highlighted the importance of having mixed sex English medium schooling, of raising standards at Barry and Bryn Hafren schools, of the use of ICT in the classroom and the need for improved facilities.

Having considered the feedback from the engagement activity, the Board then considered options for the future of the three schools and agreed in principle that the preferred option was to:

- i) Expand Ysgol Bro Morgannwg on its current site with a new entrance from Port Road
- ii) Build a brand new 11-18 mixed sex school on the site of Barry Comprehensive School
- iii) Create a modern, 11-18 mixed sex school by refurbishing and modernising the Bryn Hafren buildings.

Collaboration with Cardiff and the Vale College and Cardiff Metropolitan University would be strengthened to deliver high quality vocational education at the College and a joint sixth form providing academic courses at the English medium schools.

The next stage would be to continue with the workshop and survey work and to include the three governing bodies and the trade unions in these engagement activities. The Advisory Board would meet again to consider the further feedback from the workshops, survey and meetings. They would also discuss an indicative timetable and transition arrangements for implementing the preferred option. It was anticipated that a report on the revised proposals would be presented to Cabinet in June at which time Cabinet would decide whether or not to go ahead with further, formal consultation.

It was important to note that Statutory consultation was required to be carried out for at least 42 days (six weeks), with at least 20 of these being school days. This being the case, the 6th June was the latest date for reporting to Cabinet, to seek approval to consult on a proposal if the consultation was to be completed during summer 2016 as a later date would necessitate starting consultation in September.

Subject to Cabinet approval, the proposed statutory timetables for both the proposals were shown at Appendix A to the report. The Director confirmed that the timetable was a plan rather than a certain timetable with the intention that the consultation for Bro Morgannwg take place over the summer months with the Scrutiny Committee being asked to express its views on the proposals. A report was to be presented to Cabinet on 6th June with the Chairman advising that he had recently agreed to arrange a special meeting for the Scrutiny Committee to consider the proposals and referred to a potential date of 8th June, 2016.

Following a query regarding admission arrangements to the schools, the Director of Learning and Skills advised that catchment areas was an item to be considered at the next meeting of the Advisory Board, with the proposal that a balanced planned intake for the two schools be proposed. Details of any transition arrangements would also be provided together with details of the closure of the current English-medium schools and the opening of the new schools and how the proposals would impact on the current pupils of both schools. The Cabinet Member confirmed that proposed catchment areas would be based on where the primary schools were. Additional vehicular access to Bro Morgannwg was also to be proposed off Port Road to avoid Colcot Road becoming more congested. Both the Cabinet Member and the Director confirmed that a considerable amount of work was required to be undertaken in relation to the detail of the proposals in order to be presented for consultation.

In response to a query relating to the first 125 responses that had been received as referred to in paragraph 6 of the report, Members requested that the information in relation to how many responses had been received be provided to the Committee.

Following a further question as to why St. Richard Gwyn School had not been involved in the discussions, as 35% of the children from the school attended local colleges, the Committee was advised that the school would be involved in any sixth form discussions. In relation to the provision for 14-19 year olds the Council would wish to involve all the schools in the Vale in the discussions on the various developments expected, however at present, as the proposals related to the development of proposals to replace Barry and Bryn Hafren schools and did not involve St. Richard Gwyn at this stage, they had not been invited as part of that process.

In referring to the cost of consultation that was being undertaken, the Director of Learning and Skills reassured Committee Members that the cost of the consultation process was taken from the Directorate's budget and not schools' budgets. A considerable amount of the consultation work would also be completed online, which would be cost effective.

In referring to the figure of £900,000 being spent currently to improve the learning environment at Barry School, this was considered acceptable in view of the current issues at the site. However, having regard to the 21st Century investment programme, the Department was working on proposals for a vision for the future for English medium co-education as well as proposals for expanding the Welsh medium, which it was hoped that Welsh Government would support under the programme.

Following a further query in relation to the provision of A level teaching, it was proposed that the schools would work together and provide a joint sixth form albeit some specialist subject accommodation would need to be accommodated on one of the sites, whereas other subject areas could be dealt with at the other. Although the particular budget information was not available at this stage, a full detailed report on the financial investment which would be discussed with the Section 151 Officer, would be included in future proposal discussions.

The Youth Forum Representative queried proposed building work would impact on learners on the Barry Comprehensive site, with the Cabinet Member responding that this was a similar scenario to the Penarth Learning Community and Llantwit Major Learning Community developments. The new school would be built to the rear and slightly to the side of the existing school with the purpose being to minimise disruption. The Cabinet Member also suggested the Youth Cabinet may wish to undertake a site visit to Llantwit Major Comprehensive to witness the project first hand.

In referring to a contingency plan should Welsh Government funding be unobtainable, the Cabinet Member advised that bids have to be made for the funding and a detailed business case provided. He stated that the Council had a good track record in relation to obtaining funding for the 21st Century building programme and he envisaged sound business cases to be put forward.

The Chairman, in welcoming the report and timetable attached at Appendix A, acknowledged the situation in relation to financial investment and concurred that the best application that could be put forward should be done in order to ensure that the provision of co-education and the Welsh language could be addressed in Barry.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress made with the development of revised proposals to expand Welsh medium secondary school places and establish mixed sex English medium secondary schools in Barry be noted.
- (2) T H A T the timescale for reporting proposals to Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committee as detailed at Appendix A be agreed and that further reports be received for consideration.
- (3) T H A T an extraordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee meeting takes place on 8th June, 2016, to consider the proposals to Cabinet of 6th June 2016 in respect of Ysgol Bro Morgannwg.
- (4) T H A T Cabinet be advised that the Scrutiny Committee supports the timetable as outlined at Appendix A to the report and that the expansion of Bro Morgannwg as a standalone proposal is welcomed.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) In recognition of the alternative proposals timetable being developed for the expansion of Welsh medium secondary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan and the establishment of mixed sex English medium secondary schools in Barry on their current sites.
- (2) That the timescales attached at Appendix A to the report are supported in order that further reports for consideration / consultation can be presented.
- (3) In order that the Scrutiny Committee can consider any proposals.
- (4) To advise Cabinet.”

Attached as Appendix - [Report to Scrutiny Committee \(Lifelong Learning\): 18th April, 2016](#)