

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 23RD OCTOBER, 2017

REFERENCE FROM LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
18TH SEPTEMBER, 2017

“277 KEY STAGE 3 PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT (PRU) AND EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL (EOTAS) (REF) –

Cabinet had, on 4th September, 2017, resolved **“That the proposals as set out in the report be approved in principle as the basis for referral to Scrutiny Committee (Learning & Culture) for consideration and consultation with service users, their families, staff and trade unions prior to reaching a final determination”**.

The report outlined that the Local Authority provided the EOTAS provision to enable students to access an alternative to mainstream school. This was required for pupils who were medically unfit to attend school and those requiring an alternative to mainstream schooling because of their additional learning needs.

The report highlighted that in July 2016 108 young people had been recorded as receiving EOTAS in the Vale of Glamorgan. At that time, this was the fifth highest in Wales. EOTAS provision could be organised by the school, via a range of alternative providers or by the Local Authority through placements at the PRU known as Ysgol Y Daith. The PRU offered learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties an alternative to mainstream schools. Currently the provision was split according to Key Stages. Key Stage 3 provision for 12-14 year olds was located at Amelia Trust Farm and Key Stage 4 for 14-16 year olds at the Old Magistrates Court in Cowbridge. Transport to and from each venue was provided.

A recent performance review of the PRU conducted by the Central South Consortium (CSC) raised some important issues for the Council to consider. These related to the effectiveness and appropriateness of the curriculum delivered at Key Stage 3 as well as the CSC identifying issues relating to low attendance, limited breadth of curriculum and poor outcomes. Concerns had also been expressed over the suitability of the environment and associated safeguarding and health and safety concerns. The current categorisation of the school was Improvement Capacity C and Support Category Amber. The PRU, like a number of educational establishments, was required to maintain standards in accordance with legislation pertaining to education, and as such, was subject to inspection by Estyn.

Currently the Key Stage 4 PRU operated on a part time basis. Learners spent part of their learning timetable at the PRU studying GCSEs and the remaining time with the training providers. It was proposed that a similar model would be delivered at Key Stage 3. This would involve students receiving 25 hours of tuition per week,

part of which would be delivered at the PRU and the remainder on placements with various other internal and external providers. The changes proposed in the report focused on the location and operating model of the Key Stage 3 provision. It was anticipated that at some stage in the future, the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 provision would be delivered from a single location. During the interim period, continual efforts would be made to identify and exploit the synergies and opportunities that arose between the Key Stages.

In addition to some of the performance issues identified at the current Key Stage 3 PRU provision, the physical environment was also considered to be a limiting factor for the service. The Council's Health and Safety Team assessed the provision in October 2015 and raised significant concerns. Subsequently, the trade unions had made representations to management about staff safety on the site. Therefore, to ensure and safeguard the safety of students and staff, it was proposed that the services currently provided from Amelia Trust Farm should be relocated to Llantwit Major Youth Centre. This would provide a more manageable site from which services would be delivered from January 2018. The current lease arrangement with Amelia Trust Farm was due to expire at the end of July 2017. The Council was required to give three months' notice to terminate the lease arrangement

Work had also been undertaken previously relating to the future use of Llantwit Major Youth Centre. The conclusion of this work in 2015 was that Cabinet declared this building surplus to requirements. It was proposed that the relocation of the PRU to this site would be on an interim basis until the new co-educational school in Barry was completed. Upon completion, the Youth Centre site in Llantwit Major would be surplus and options for the future operation of the premises could be reconsidered.

To accommodate the PRU at the Llantwit Major site, a number of minor modifications would be required to the building to create the appropriate classroom environment and ensure the security of the site.

It was proposed that the relocation of the service would take effect from January 2018. In order to deliver the revised operating model, a procurement exercise would be required to produce a framework of potential suppliers that would be accessed to provide appropriate learning packages for students. This timescale had been designed to enable an efficient and effective procurement process to be delivered, in addition to undertaking the important and necessary consultation activities that were described later in the report.

Potential framework suppliers would include youth support services and training providers. The learning packages would consist of a mixture of national curriculum learning such as literacy and numeracy, personal and social education and vocational opportunities. Providers would offer full time places for an academic year. These places could then be utilised to satisfy the needs of the student on either a full or part time basis as is the case with the current Key Stage 4 arrangements.

As part of the procurement process and ongoing contract management arrangements, providers would be regularly monitored with quality assurance processes being put into place. Monitoring outcomes on a contractual basis gave the Local Authority the assurance that students would achieve. If a provider did not

maintain the required quality of provision, the Council would have the option to cease the provision and develop another option with an alternative provider.

In considering the report, Members raised a number of questions as outlined below:

Question	Response
<p>In referring to incidents of absconding and violence on the site, the report referred to consideration for the erection of a fence not being a viable option.</p>	<p>Fences could be erected at the Llantwit Major site more easily than at the Amelia Trust Farm site. The AMF was also a sizeable site to consider. The PRU standards were reported as Amber and both the CSC and Challenge Advisors had advised on health and safety issues.</p> <p>Should the decision be to leave the service at Amelia Trust Farm, this could potentially be putting the young people at risk</p> <p>The Llantwit site was a temporary proposal as eventually the PRU would be based at Barry Comprehensive School.</p>
<p>The timing of the consultation was quite short and a Member queried whether it would be meaningful and in particular whether the Council was going down a route that it shouldn't be?</p> <p>The whole idea of the PRU was that it was an alternative to mainstream school a Member's concern related to the fact that if it went to Llantwit it would be next to a nursery.</p>	<p>The Lead Officer for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing advised that the Council had to start with consultation in the first instance and staff had also been involved.</p> <p>It was important to note that should the decision be to leave the service at the PRU at Amelia Trust Farm, this could potentially be putting the children at risk.</p> <p>The Officer was keen to advise that it was not a cutting exercise it was about doing the right thing. The budget would provide additional funds to provide further improvements. As the Lead Officer he was concerned about the safety aspect and he was not prepared to carry the responsibility if a child was hurt.</p>
<p>As the report referred to some of the young people being unmanageable, a Member found it hard to believe that they could actually be brought back into the classroom.</p>	<p>The Lead Officer in response advised that they were currently utilising the resources of an ACT trainer provider and a pilot project had been undertaken with the more challenging of students, with</p>

	<p>the success that a number of them had actually attended sessions which they had not done before. Evidence had also shown that excellent results had been made to date in pupil behaviour. Other providers had also been used to motivate and encourage and provide students with a fighting chance. There had also been a marked improvement in attendance as well as some welfare wellbeing issues having been addressed.</p> <p>The Head of Service also advised that at Key Stage 3, it was not experimental as the initiatives had actually worked at Key Stage 4 with bespoke packages also being identified for individuals. The opportunities that they had afforded at Amelia Trust Farm would also be able to be used as it would be a provider to the Council. This was also an area that needed to be utilised and investigated more in a cost effective way.</p> <p>The Lead Officer further stated that EOTAS was rising and schools were using the service as an option to deal with behaviour, however in the future the department would be asking if they have done everything possible before a young person was referred to the PRU.</p>
<p>The Chairman queried what the time gap was for the provision of service at Llantwit Major and the establishment of the Centre of Excellence.</p>	<p>The Head of Service for Strategy, Community Learning and Resources stated that the earliest date would be 2021/22.</p>

Following full consideration of the report, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T Cabinet be requested to continue with the aim of bringing the PRU back to Barry and developing a centre for behavioural excellence.
- (2) T H A T the Council maintains the aim of reintegrating pupils into mainstream school wherever possible and that this is considered an urgent factor.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) For Cabinet to be apprised of the views of the Committee and for Cabinet consideration.”