

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 14TH MAY, 2018

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price [Chair]

Councillors:

L.R. Bowen, K.V. Broom, I.W. Davies, J.P. Jenkins, B.W. Jones, D. Jones, G.R. Jones, M.J.A. Lewis, E.M.J.G. Schiavone, B. Thomas, E.G. Thomas and D.T. Williams

Mrs V. Kenny – Roman Catholic Church Representative

Mrs M. Jones – Parent Governor [Dinefwr Area]

Mr J. Davies – Parent Governor [Llanelli Area]

Also in attendance:

Councillor G. Davies, Executive Board Member for Education & Children

The following Officers were in attendance:

Mr A. Morgan - Head of Education Services
Mr A. Rees - Head of Curriculum & Wellbeing
Mr S. Davies - Modernisation Services Manager
Mr J. Owen - TIC Programme Manager
Mr A. Carter - Senior Manager TIC Schools
Mrs M. Evans Thomas - Principal Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, 3, Spilman Street, Carmarthen : 2.00 p.m. - 3.20 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S. Najmi, Mrs G. Cornock-Evans (Parent Governor Member) and Mrs J. Voyle Williams (Church in Wales Representative).

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
B.W. Jones	6 – MEP Proposal to Provide Nursery Provision at Ysgol Parc y Tywyn by Increasing its Age Range from 4-11 to 3-11	Her son teaches at Ysgol Parc y Tywyn.
D. Price	5 – MEP Proposal to Increase the Capacity of Gorslas Community Primary School from 110 to 210	He is the Local Member for Gorslas and is also a member of Gorslas Community Council who are discussing the sale of the land with the County Council.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

5. MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF GORSLAS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL FROM 110 TO 210

[NOTE: Councillor D. Price had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Committee was reminded that a formal consultation exercise was undertaken from 6th November, 2017 to 17th December, 2017 on the proposal to increase the capacity of Gorslas Community Primary School from 110 to 210. The results of the consultation exercise were presented to the Committee for consideration 25th January.

On 26th February, 2018 approval was granted by the Executive Board for the publication of a Statutory Notice. The Notice was published on 5th March, 2018 and provided objectors with 28 days in which to forward their objections in writing to the Council. Following the end of this period on 1st April, 2018, no objections were received.

The Committee was being asked to consider whether or not the proposal, as laid out in the Statutory Notice, should be implemented.

It was noted that should the County Council agree to implement the proposal, the capacity of Gorslas Primary School will increase from 110 to 210 from 1st September, 2019 when occupation of the new school building is proposed.

The following questions/observations were raised on the report:-

- Reference was made to Estyn's query regarding the impact the proposal will have on neighbouring schools and officers were asked how confident they are that the other schools in the area will not be impacted negatively by the proposal. The Modernisation Services Manager explained that there are a large number of children living in Gorslas who currently attend other schools. He added that there are also a lot of housing developments being built in Gorslas at the moment;
- In response to a question regarding how confident officers are that the modelling is robust, the Modernisation Services Manager stated that officers are very confident in the robustness of the figures. The level of demand is very, very acute in the village, with two mobile classrooms installed over recent years, and that demand will be met;
- Asked if there is scope to expand the school if it is a success and the figure of 210 is reached sooner than expected, the Modernisation Services Manager stated that, in his opinion, there is probably not much scope to invest further on that site. Moving forward, a 210 pupil school will be created in Gorslas and a review will be undertaken into the surrounding schools. If it is then deemed that further investment is required in that area then consideration will be given to all the schools in that area;

- Reference was made to the statement in the report that the Council will monitor the effects of the proposal on neighbouring schools and should the proposal have any detrimental effects on provision, then appropriate action will be considered and officers were asked to expand on this. The Modernisation Services Manager explained that this would involve a review of other schools in the area and the option to round down the admission number for the new school if so required;
- Asked whether officers have looked at the impact of car parking and drop off zones, the Committee was advised that this was done as part of the consultation process. Less parking and more drop off zones were originally proposed, however, following the consultation process, additional parking has been added to address the concerns raised.

RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive Board that the proposal to increase the capacity of Gorslas Community Primary School from 110 to 210, as laid out in the Statutory Notice, be implemented.

6. MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE NURSERY PROVISION AT YSGOL PARC Y TYWYN BY INCREASING ITS AGE RANGE FROM 4-11 to 3-11

[NOTE: Councillor B. Jones had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Committee was reminded that a formal consultation exercise was undertaken from 6th November, 2017 to 17th December, 2017 on the proposal to provide nursery provision at Ysgol Parc y Tywyn by increasing its age range from 4-11 to 3-11. The results of the consultation exercise were presented to the Committee for consideration 25th January.

On 26th February, 2018 approval was granted by the Executive Board for the publication of a Statutory Notice. The Notice was published on 5th March, 2018 and provided objectors with 28 days in which to forward their objections in writing to the Council. Following the end of this period on 1st April, 2018, no objections were received.

The Committee was being asked to consider whether or not the proposal, as laid out in the Statutory Notice, should be implemented.

It was noted that, should the County Council agree to implement the proposal, Ysgol Parc y Tywyn will be able to provide nursery provision in the school's new building from 1st September, 2018.

The following questions were raised on the report:-

- Concern was expressed regarding the application process for 3-11 and 4-11 education in that responses are received for the former but not the latter. The Chair explained that this issue would form part of the review being undertaken by the Task and Finish Group into Early Years Education & Play in Carmarthenshire;
- Asked if it is the Authority's intention to make all schools 3-11, the Chair explained that no strategic decision has been made in this regard. He added that this issue would also form part of the Task and Finish Group review.

RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive Board that the proposal to provide nursery provision at Ysgol Parc y Tywyn by increasing its age range from 4-11 to 3-11, as laid out in the Statutory Notice, be implemented.

7. TASK AND FINISH REVIEW 2015/16 - ACTION PLAN MONITORING - MAY 2018

At its meeting held on 24th September, 2015 the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee resolved to earmark improving the performance of those learners eligible for free school meals as one of its priorities for 2015/16. In order to progress this matter, the Committee agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to research and review the attainment gap for e-FSM learners.

The Committee considered a report detailing progress in relation to key actions stemming from the findings of the Task and Finish group. The report also detailed further developments within this area of provision.

The Task and Finish Group provided a strong basis for the department's current actions and thinking in this area of service delivery. Closing achievement gaps remains a strong focus for the department, working closely in conjunction with schools. New Local Authority Estyn inspection arrangements warrant close attention to the progress of all groups of learners, including the marginalised and vulnerable. This is further incentive to pursue our stated aim of ensuring the wellbeing, equity and high achievements of all our young people, irrespective of upbringing or current or past circumstance. Strategic and operational development will therefore be ongoing, thus providing legacy to the Task and Finish Group's valuable work.

The following questions/observations were raised on the report:-

- Officers were asked if they have any information regarding the effect Universal Credit will have on free school meals as currently lots of low income families are not eligible. Whilst officers did not yet have a definitive answer, the Committee was advised that schools are proactive in encouraging parents to take up free school meals. There are also difficulties as some families are too proud to claim, however, the introduction of new biometric systems is helping in this regard;
- Reference was made to the fact that Torfaen County Borough Council saw an increase in the take up of free school meals when Universal Credit was introduced and officers were asked whether this good practice would be shared. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing informed the Committee that we are closing the gap between fsm and non-fsm learners and that sharing good practice will get prominence in this regard;
- Whilst hoping that the Authority's Erasmus bid is successful, officers were asked if there is a Plan B in place. The Committee was advised that officers are working on several alternatives;
- Reference was made to the importance of the Pupil Deprivation Grant and concern was expressed that figures for next year have still not been received, so the budget cannot be finalised.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

8. TIC PROGRAMME FOR SCHOOLS UPDATE

Further to Minute 6 of the meeting of the Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee held on 27th November, 2018, the Committee received an update on the TIC (Transform, Innovate, Change) Programme for Schools.

The Committee was advised that a number of work streams have been developed which relate to service delivery to schools by a range of council services via SLAs and to a range of procurement issues where collaborative or corporate arrangements might yield savings to schools who take them up.

The Committee received a presentation summarising the progress to date with an indication of the potential and actual savings that could be/have been made.

RESOLVED

- 8.1 that the report and presentation be received;
- 8.2 that the Committee receive a further update report in six months' time.

CHAIR

DATE