

CABINET
3RD OCTOBER 2022

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
TASK & FINISH GROUP REPORT:
SCHOOL ORGANISATION CONSULTATION PROCESS

Purpose: To give consideration to the Task & Finish Group's recommendations, which are outlined within the attached report.

Recommendations / key decisions required:

- To endorse the report and recommendations for further consideration by the Cabinet.

Reasons:

- At its meeting held on the 21st April, 2021 the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Task & Finish Group to undertake a review of the current consultation process for school organisation changes, including changes in linguistic provision and closure of schools.
- The recommendations contained within the report have been formulated by the Task & Finish Group following the consideration of a range of evidence over a series of meetings held between May and November 2021.

Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted: YES (23/12/21)

Scrutiny Committee are awaiting a response to the report and recommendations.

Cabinet Decision Required: YES

Council Decision Required: NO

Cabinet Member Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Glynog Davies (Education & Children)

Chair of the Task & Finish Group: Cllr. Darren Price	Designations: Chair of the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee	Tel Nos. / E-Mail Addresses: 01267 224470 DAPrice@carmarthenshire.gov.uk
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education & Children Scrutiny Committee Task & Finish Group Report:

School Organisation Consultation Process

At its meeting held on the 21st April, 2021 the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Task & Finish Group to undertake a review of the current consultation process for school organisation changes, including changes in linguistic provision and closure of schools

As a result of the discussions and evidence considered at the first three meetings and having regard to the fact that the Education & Children Department was in the process of revising its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and Modernising Education Programme (MEP), with public consultation envisaged within the next year, the Task & Finish Group agreed to formulate interim recommendations for consideration by Cabinet. The Interim Recommendations Report was considered and endorsed by Cabinet at its meeting held on 27th September 2021 when it was unanimously resolved to endorse the report.

The Task and Finish Group met on a further three occasions and, following further discussions and consideration of further evidence, formulated the following additional recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet:

Recommendations

- (1) The Council should call on the Welsh Government to review the school organisation code with a view to streamlining the process and re-evaluating which proposals should fall under the scope of the Code. Welsh Government should also ensure that members of the public are encouraged to express their support as well as inviting 'objections' to any proposal as part of the Code.
- (2) Following a decision by Pre-Cabinet to consult informally on any proposal, the local member, School Head and Chair of Governors should be informed, followed by school staff and the full Governing Body. These discussions should take place prior to any public announcement or publication of any Council documentation on the proposal.

- (3) The Council should build on the experience of recent school organisation proposals and ensure that consultation events are held in the affected communities, in person

and online during the informal consultation stage. These consultation events should provide as much information as possible with regards to the reason for the proposal, methodology and any appraisals (including site selection options in new build proposals).

- (4) The Council should agree a one-page information sheet for parents, community members and other stakeholders explaining the consultation stages and ensure that this is available permanently on the Council's website and shared with parents of affected schools at the beginning of the consultation process.
- (5) The Council should ensure that a specific Communications Plan is developed for any school organisation proposal – ensuring that stakeholders are encouraged to respond to the consultation either online or via email and that paper copies of feedback forms are available throughout the consultation period and made available at any community consultation events.
- (6) When moving a school along the Welsh language continuum, the Council should build on the experiences of recent school organisation proposals and ensure that parents and other stakeholders are provided with materials which outline the benefits of bilingualism and advice on the support available to non-Welsh speaking parents. These materials should be made available online and shared in the community engagement events.
- (7) Once the Council has agreed to formally implement a school organisation proposal it should establish a Project Stakeholder Forum in order to keep schools, staff and other community stakeholders such as Town and Community Councils informed of progress. The Forum would also provide stakeholders with a regular means of raising queries with Council Officers and for problem solving ahead of formal implementation of the proposal.
- (8) The School Organisation Code, WESP and MEP should be included in the introductory and ongoing training provided to School Governors, School Staff and elected members and this training should also be available online to be accessed on demand.
- (9) The Council's WESP Strategy, including specific targets and actions relating to the provision of Welsh medium education and the promotion of the Welsh language within individual schools, should be a standing item on the School Governing Body agenda.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?	YES – Draft Final Report of the Task & Finish Group
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IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Signed: Linda Rees-Jones Head of Administration & Law

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

If these recommendations are supported by the Cabinet there will be changes to Carmarthenshire's related policies.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below:

Signed: Linda Rees-Jones Head of Administration & Law

- 1. Scrutiny Committee:** At its meeting on 23 December 2021, the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee endorsed the Task and Finish report for further consideration by the Cabinet.
- 2. Local Member(s):** N/A
- 3. Community / Town Council:** N/A
- 4. Relevant Partners:** N/A
- 5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations –** Officers from the Education & Children Department contributed to and supported the work of the Task & Finish Group.

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER AWARE / CONSULTED		YES
Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:		
Title of Document	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection	
Welsh in Education Strategic Plan	Education & Children Department	
Modernising Education Programme	Education & Children Department	
School Organisation Code	Education & Children Department	