

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 15TH DECEMBER, 2020

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR N. DANIELS (CHAIR)

Councillors J. Collins
D. Davies
J. Mason
J. Wilkins

WITH: Managing Director
Corporate Director Education
Chief Officer Resources
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Press Officer

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u> No apologies for absence were received.	
No. 3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u> No declarations of interests or dispensations were reported.	

DECISION ITEMS - EDUCATION MATTERS

No. 4

**WELSH-MEDIUM EDUCATION CONSULTATION PROPOSAL /
CYNNIG YMGYNGHORI AR ADDYSG CYFRWNG CYMRAEG**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.

The Corporate Director Education advised that the report sought the Executive's approval to consult upon the creation of a new 210 places Welsh-medium primary school in the Tredegar/Sirhowy valley. The Corporate Director gave a background of the vision of Welsh Government and the National Strategy.

The Corporate Director Education explained that the report had been considered by the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee along with the Blaenau Gwent Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-20. The WESP was directly aligned to both the Welsh Government's and the Council's Welsh Language strategic frameworks and the Corporate Director outlined the strategic priorities in the WESP as detailed in the report.

It was added that Blaenau Gwent was the only Authority in Wales with one Welsh-medium primary school and if the Council decided not to increase Welsh education there was limited scope for growth and development of the Welsh language in line with Welsh Government aspirations. The Corporate Director also noted that all neighbouring authorities had already undertaken or have intentions to consult on increasing Welsh medium primary provision in their respective areas.

The Corporate Director Education further spoke to the report and referred Members to the four key components of the proposal. The consultation timeline, if approved would commence on Thursday, 17th December, 2020 and would be concluded on Friday, 29th January, 2021. This timeline satisfied the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code's requirement of being 'live' over 20 school working days.

The Corporate Director Education reported that there were no capital financial implications associated with this proposal as 100% funding had been awarded. Further capital funding had also been awarded from Welsh Government from the Childcare Capital Grant. The Corporate Director advised that there would be revenue budget implications associated with the proposal in the medium to long term and Individual School Budgets would need to be increased from financial year 2023/2024. The funding required would grow annually as the school grew to capacity. There would be a positive financial impact on home to school transport as pupils from Ebbw Fawr and Tredegar areas would not need to be transported to Bro Helyg.

The financial impact, if the proposal was agreed would be included within the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Corporate Director added that the revenue funding and expenditure has been modelled over 7 years and was detailed in the appendices attached to the report.

At the invitation of the Leader, the Corporate Director Education outlined Appendices 3 and 4, which detailed the revenue implications against the preferred proposal.

The Executive Member for Education thanked the Corporate Director Education for the detailed overview of the report and appendices. The Executive Member pointed out that the report sought approval from the Executive to proceed to consultation to seek stakeholders views and ascertain if there was a demand for a new Welsh medium school.

It was reported that the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee had supported the preferred option. It had been asked if the consultation would be Borough wide and if there would be a dedicated governor session on the proposal. The Corporate Director Education had confirmed that the consultation would be undertaken across the Borough as it would affect all our learners. In terms of a dedicated governor's session, it was confirmed that this request would be accommodated as part of the consultation exercise as governors were key stakeholders and statutory consultees.

The Corporate Director Education added that there was lengthy discussion at the Scrutiny Committee, however, there was support in proceeding to consultation at this point.

The Leader noted that the Scrutiny Committee was a statutory consultee and asked if the earlier meeting was considered as consultation. The Corporate Director Education advised that the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee meeting would be considered as pre-consultation. The Scrutiny Members would have an opportunity to have their views formally captured as part of the consultation, which would be reported back via the democratic process at the appropriate time.

In response to a question raised in relation to when the report would be submitted for further determination once the consultation exercise had been completed, it was confirmed that the next report was scheduled to be presented in February 2021.

The Leader further asked how consultation would be undertaken in line with safety guidelines due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Corporate Director Education advised that the majority of consultation would be undertaken virtually with small components carried out face to face in a safe and controlled environment. The Council accepts written consultation via email or posted as well as via social media platforms. The Corporate Director did not envisage any issues in undertaking the consultation exercise as it could be done carried out virtually.

The Executive Members supported the report and the Executive Member for Education referred to the preferred option. It was thereupon

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the report, associated documents and course of action be approved.