

EDUCATION DIRECTORATE BLAENAU GWENT

Consultation events: Increased Capacity of Pen Y Cwm Special School

JCC Meeting via Teams Tuesday 4th May 2:00pm via Microsoft Teams

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	How was the demand determined, and did it take into account the new ALN legislation? Do we anticipate this will be enough?	The proposal has 2 phases which seek to address both short-term and long-term demand. Yes, Inclusion have worked closely with the Education Transformation team in developing the proposal in consideration of ALN reform, trend data, projections/demand and the needs of pupils.
2	Will there need to be an increase in staff as a result of this proposal? If so, could staff at risk of redundancy be prioritised.	The Council has a proven track record of managing school organization proposals and will work with Trade Unions, Organisational Development and Pen y Cwm Special School to accommodate this request, should the need arise.

Pen y Cwm Special School Staff – Wednesday 5th May 3:45pm 2021 via Microsoft Teams

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Slightly concerned that there will be pressures on space, but the school are happy to work with the Council as we want what is best for our learners.	The Council welcomes the opportunity to work with the school to secure appropriate provision for both staff and learners going forward. Education have been working closely with the school's SLT to date, to identify the provision requirements.
2	Are the science and technology rooms being restored rather than being used as additional classrooms?	The proposal is to ensure that the specialist rooms can be effectively timetabled for learners as opposed to being used to house pupils. The Council is seeking to ensure additionality and prevent further loss in the short, medium and long-term.
3	What are the class sizes of the new proposed classrooms.	The classrooms will be developed in order to accommodate 10 -12 pupil's dependent on need etc. We will seek to achieve 56- 60 m2 in a special school.
4	The schools outdoor learning spaces fit the needs of the school now. With the additional numbers in the proposal, is there scope for more of EFLC outdoor space, as we don't want to impact on the teaching and learning for pupils outdoors?	The Council does not want to disadvantage the school, and understand that the outdoor learning space is used extensively by pupils. We will seek to ensure that the newly developed facilities are reflective of the number and needs of the pupils. There is scope for discussion with Ebbw Fawr.

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
5	What if the school is not ready for all pupils in September 2021?	A project group has already been established to manage the programme of works, with priorities determined in line with intake and delivery over the course of the next academic session.
6	A request to view the new layout was made by a staff member.	The Council will share the sketch scheme with staff via the Headteacher. A full set of drawings have not been produced yet for the first floor, as the project group are working on designation of spaces and associated requirements.
7	We currently have specialist provision for our existing 120 learners, and there are no plans to enhance, just relocation. This is a perfect opportunity for more provision to be considered with more space for learners so that they don't have to make do.	There are plans to enhance provision by remodeling unsuitable spaces. The proposal has two parts, both of which will seek to maximize opportunities for the school to enhance provision.
8	With the restrictions as a result of COVID-19 the school is already without some of its provision, such as soft play and hydrotherapy pool .	The Council is aware of the restrictions and the impact upon the school, hence why this proposal seeks to add capacity in the short-term, whilst also committing to long-term sustainable development.
9	I share some of my colleagues concerns. We are a special school providing specialist provision for learners who are already under great pressure for space, what spaces is there in the building as a whole?	The Council fully appreciates the concerns and does not underestimate the impact of continued growth and demand. The short-term plan is to focus on the remodeling and transformation of spaces within the existing school footprint, inclusive of shared spaces with Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, which is time critical. There have been extensive discussions with the other building users to determine availability of space. However, we have to consider sustainability, accessibility, infrastructure, technical implications etc. when exploring additional spaces and areas, along with pupil projections at EFLC Primary Phase.
10	What are the medium to long-term options?	A number of these options have been highlighted within the options appraisal as per the presentation. These options are being explored further as all have associated implications such as the requirement to secure planning approval etc.
11	Will learners have an opportunity to feed in to the consultation?	Absolutely, we intend to engage with pupils as part of the consultation process and beyond. Learner voice is an extremely important part of the process and proposal.

Youth forum Meeting via Teams Tuesday 11th May 6:00pm via Microsoft Teams

No questions

Scrutiny Group Monday 17th May 2021 2:00pm via Microsoft Teams

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	You say there are 20 Out of County (OCC) placements, will all be accommodated internally now in Blaenau Gwent with this proposal?	The Council are anticipating a reduction in OCC placements, which is presently subject to review in line with the needs of each learner.
2	In the short-term the works to the school will accommodate some growth. However, what is the long-term answer?	The options presented within the presentation will be explore in more detail over the course of the next few months including, extension, co-location, along with a potential new build. A more detailed options appraisal will be developed over the course of the next few months to determine the most suitable course of action in the medium to long-term. This will be subject to a further report to ensure that members are updated in relation to progress.
3	Will there be plans in the medium to long-term to accommodate the needs of OCC placements in Borough?	It is in the best interest of Blaenau Gwent learners to take this approach in the long-term, seeking to reduce placement based upon provision by ensuring that Blaenau Gwent has sufficient specialist provision for our learners. However, there will be individual cases whereby OCC placement is the most suitable option.
4	What is the timeline?	The proposal is subject to consultation and associated statutory processes in line with the School Organisation Code (2018), with these processes scheduled to conclude - subject to political approval, at the start of the autumn-term for implementation from September 2021. Part 1 is scheduled to conclude at the end of the 2021/22 academic session. Part 2 will be progressed simultaneously, with an options appraisal to assess medium to long-term development drafted by the end of the autumn-term, to inform implementation plans and associated timelines from 2022 onwards.
5	How will the tendering contracts work? Will this be done in house?	The detailed design development and minor works packages will be developed and managed by Technical Services, along with the associated tender processes.
6	What are the next steps?	The Council is encouraging all consultees to formally respond as per the presentation. The consultation process is scheduled to conclude on Sunday 6 th June 2021. An out-turn report will then be produced and via Executive Committee for a determination.

Pen y Cwm School Council Meeting via Teams Tuesday 18th May 1:15pm via Microsoft Teams

No questions

Pen y Cwm Special School Governing Body Meeting Tuesday 18th May 2021 at Pen y Cwm

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	What is your definition of long-term?	The Council consider anything between 1-3 years as short-term, medium-term 3-5 years and long-term, 6 plus years.
2	We would like the commitment from education, that development in the medium to long-term will be a priority for the school.	The Council is absolutely committed to the medium to long-term development, with discussions around a more detailed options appraisal programmed for the summer term. This will be developed in partnership with the school.
3.	There has to be thought around the wellbeing of learners and staff.	The wellbeing of staff and learners is of paramount importance in relation to all aspects of this proposal. Continued consultation with staff and learners will be a key focus throughout the delivery phase – should the proposal proceed. The Education Transformation team have a track record of delivery on live school sites. The project would be programmed and managed to ensure that there is minimal disruption and impact upon both staff and pupils.
4	Is there a financial commitment from Welsh Government for the proposal?	The Council proposes to use a proportion of the WG Capital Maintenance Grant, along with our own minor works budget to deliver the first part of the proposal
5	Would the school see the increase in pupils this September of after the work has been completed?	Admission to Pen y Cwm is managed via the Inclusion team and ALN Panel arrangements. The team are working closely with the school to determine and manage place availability. The demand will factor into the project planning processes.
6	We have some concerns that already Pen y Cwm has lost its identity as the signage in reception clearly states EFLC? Also, there is more space allocated to the primary phase than they need while we are stretched for space.	The Council has been working with Pen y Cwm Special School to seek to resolve the issues in relation to signage etc., and will continue to do so. In determining the availability of space within the co-located primary school setting, pupil projections, the configuration of the teaching and learning environment, along with suitability of this space needs to be considered. There are also sustainability and technical implications associated with this.

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
7	What is the timeline?	The delivery of part one of the proposal will take place over the course of the next academic session. The medium to long-term plans will be progressed concurrently, as detailed in answer to the first question raised.
8	There is some genuine excitement about the proposal by staff, however, you cannot take away the tools that make this a special school with specialist provision.	Both the short-term and medium to long-term proposals seek to address the specialist provision which has been lost, whilst also ensuring that opportunities for additionality are maximised. There have been discussions around opportunities with external partners in the health sector, which are currently in the early stages of development. We will ensure that the proposals are aligned and come back to discuss the opportunities with governors when there is more certainty. In addition, we will be looking to produce a more detailed appraisal of the long-term options by the end of the autumn-term.
9	With the current trend of pupil numbers increasing, what happens if we reach our upper limit with the year?	Then the medium, long-term development will need to be brought forward for earlier consideration by the Project group. There is a piece of research being undertaken regionally which will inform future developments.
10	I am concerned about the financial aspect, will this impact on the schools budget?	The Council is confident that there will be a minimal impact on the school in line with the delivery of part one of the proposal, as detailed within the consultation document. We will continue to work with and support the school in this respect, and remain committed to the provision, which is a priority for the Education Directorate.
11	The longer the decision to extend is left, the costs could escalate meaning the work would not be completed. Have you considered using a modular classroom?	The Council has sought to move away from using demountable units as an option, like many other Councils in Wales. We have an experienced team who will ensure that the capital costs are identified and effectively managed in the medium to long-term.
12	There are some concerns that should there be an Estyn Inspection now, the school would be de-categorised from a green school through no fault of their own.	Welsh Government are reviewing their categorisation model, we will work with the school via the Project team to ensure that the facilities are fit for purpose and reflective of the schools needs and specialist nature.

Ebbw Vale Headteachers Cluster meeting Thursday 27th May 2021 2:00pm via Microsoft Teams

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Will the extended places be implemented in September 2021?	The first phase of the work will be in order to accommodate the September intake, with the remaining remodelling works – subject to approval, scheduled for delivery over the course of the next academic session.
2.	With the extra 55 spaces and the potential 20 out of county placements, will there still be sufficient capacity to support the increased demand?	A review of out of county placements will need to be undertaken in the first instance in line with the needs of these pupils. The situation is being monitored very closely by the Inclusion team and the associated Project Group, who will need to monitor the projections and requests to inform the project development and delivery phase, along with medium to long-term developments.