

Minutes



Cabinet

Date:	17 July 2015
Time:	10.30 am
Present:	Councillors R Bright (Chair), P Cockeram, D Davies, G Giles, J Richards, R Truman, M Whitcutt and D Wilcox
In Attendance:	Ms Sheila Davies (Strategic Director); Mr GD Price (Monitoring Officer) Mr M Rushworth (Section 151 Officer)
Apologies:	Councillors R Poole; Mr W Godfrey (Chief Executive) and Mr M Nicholson (Strategic Director)

1 Apologies

Councillor R H Poole Mr W Godfrey (Chief Executive) and Mr M Nicholson (Strategic Director) offered apologies

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

3 Proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium Secondary School

The Chair of the Cabinet explained it was important to examine the proposal carefully, in particular the education case and the planning of school places case for the region, along with the objection report in order that an informed decision could be taken.

The Cabinet was informed that Welsh-medium secondary school provision is currently available across the South East Wales Consortium area at Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw in Torfaen and Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni in Caerphilly.

However pupil forecasts show that from September 2016 there will be insufficient places to accommodate Welsh-medium secondary learners across the region, with additional pressures emerging by September 2019.

The four authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen have all included a commitment within their 21st Century Schools Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) to work together to secure additional and sufficient Welsh-medium secondary provision within the region in the medium to longer term.

Newport City Council submitted a Strategic Outline Case, an Outline Business Case and a Full Business Case to develop a new Welsh-medium secondary school in Newport. Welsh Government has approved all levels of this business case process and the sum of £17m has been allocated for regional Welsh-medium secondary education funded by Newport City Council, Monmouthshire County Council and Welsh Government.

The next step was to secure the legal permission to establish the new school – this was taken through the full statutory consultation process as a school reorganisation proposal by the Cabinet Member for Education & Young People – first through Formal Consultation and then through the published Statutory Notice stage.

A summary of the findings at the formal consultation stage was available to all members. Cabinet Members were interested to note the comments by ESTYN at that stage which expressed the opinion that the proposal was likely to address the expected demand for secondary Welsh medium education and will improve the current educational provision in the area

In the case of a school reorganisation proposal not receiving any objections, the final determination can be taken by the Cabinet Member for Education & Young People. The outcome of this consultation was the receipt of two formal objections. Where objections against proposals are received a local determination panel must take the final decision. The basis for this was set out in the statutory school organisation code. In February 2014 the Council took the decision to delegate responsibility for the final decision of such school reorganisation proposals to full Cabinet.

The findings of the statutory consultation process were set out in detail in the report. It was explained that at the Statutory Notice stage of the consultation process, two formal objections were received. As formal objections had been received against the proposal to establish a Welsh-medium secondary school in Newport a final decision must be taken on this proposal by full Cabinet.

A summary of the statutory objections and the response to those objections has been developed into an “Objection Report” which was circulated as an appendix to the Report and was available on the Council’s website. The cabinet noted that the objection report referred to two formal objections. Each of the objections was set out in detail in the report together with responses to each.

Members considered the questions asked by objectors were valid queries by interested parties. The Cabinet also considered the responses to these pertinent points. The Cabinet carefully considered the objections report and asked questions on a range of issues, including the following:

- The extent of stakeholder engagement in relation to design:

Cabinet Members were informed that there had been close working with the Duffryn School and the Welsh medium secondary school colleagues in Caerphilly and Torfaen. The Governors, staff and pupils had been involved and had influenced the design of the Duffryn enabling works. Colleagues for the other Welsh-medium Secondary Schools had also helped in terms of what worked well at their sites. Each stakeholder group had influenced design.

- Life expectancy of the school

In response to the Chair of the Cabinet, members were informed that work would not have been suggested unless the life expectancy of the planned school was more than 25 years.

- Welsh Government Grant to fund the capital investment:

It was confirmed that it was funded by 21st Century Schools Capital Grant from Welsh Government.

- The ability of the Duffryn High School site to accommodate the second school:

The Cabinet was informed that Building Bulletin Guidance determines the most appropriate site area. Duffryn has had a surfeit of space for many years in the full knowledge the site could be curtailed. Other opportunities were examined over three years but each only offered a short term solution. . The total land available at Duffryn was sufficient for two separate schools and this represented the best use of assets.

- Highway issues in a busy part of the City

The Cabinet was informed that highway improvement plans were in place. By the time of the opening, all improvements would be in place. The issues and impact of the potential M4 relief Road had been examined

- The procurement approach for this major project:

The procurement process was explained. The SEWSCAP Contractors Framework had been used, along with Welsh Government requirements. Members were informed of five compliant bids. Shortlisting was ongoing – subject to a decision by Cabinet to progress the project- with a view to appointing a contractor later this month. The contractors each had experience of building schools.

- Price and Monitoring

The Chair of the Cabinet stated that the project should not exceed the contract price. It was accepted that there would be contingency in the budget for unforeseen issues but the Cabinet would want assurance that all costs are contained within the available figure. Cabinet asked for close monitoring and report to Cabinet on a regular basis on the financial aspects of the project

- Planning

The Planning application was likely to be considered in August. Planning officers had provided guidance

- Governors

The Cabinet Member for Education and Young People would agree the establishment a temporary governing body who would set up a staffing structure. The temporary governing body would consider the design of the physical barrier between the two schools on the site

- Completion date

The first phase for the first cohort of year 7 would be completed for September 2016. The final incremental stages and final completion date will need to be part of the discussion with contractors and reported back

The 21st Century Schools Programme Business case was presented in detail to the Cabinet. The view expressed to Cabinet was that establishment of a new Welsh-medium secondary school in Newport from September 2016 will deliver against the 21st Century School Programme investment priorities . Cabinet members considered whether the proposal placed

the interests of learners above all others and whether the school would have the ability to deliver the school curriculum. Members were provided with reassurance on both points.

The report also set out the regional planning of Welsh- medium school places case; and the factors to be taken into account for the planning of school places. Cabinet Members considered the need for places and the impact on accessibility of schools and the resourcing of education and other financial implications.

The relevant factors to be taken into account in determining school organisation proposals were set out in detail in the report.

A detailed fairness and equality impact assessment had been undertaken and presented to the Cabinet for consideration.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Young people expressed full support for the proposals, considered that a robust and detailed forensic journey had been taken before arriving at the current position

The Monitoring Officer confirmed the correct statutory process had been followed. He stated that the Cabinet now needed to be satisfied that the educational benefits of the proposed new school outweighed the objections received. If that was the case, a decision to proceed could be properly made.

After careful consideration of the report; the objections made and the responses to those objections; and full discussion on the matter the Cabinet considered that On balance, this option is to support the school reorganisation proposal and to move to establish a new Welsh-medium secondary school in Newport.

Decision

To move to establish a new Welsh-medium secondary school in Newport

The meeting terminated at 12.05 pm