

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Call-In meeting held on 6 August, 2018

- PRESENT:** Councillor Aled Morris Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dylan Rees (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors Lewis Davies, Richard Griffiths, Trefor Lloyd Hughes, MBE, Richard Owain Jones, Alun Roberts, Nicola Roberts
- Co-opted Member: Mr Keith Roberts (The Catholic Church)
- Call-In Request Signatories who are not members of the Committee**
- Councillors R. Llewelyn Jones, Peter Rogers, Glyn Haynes (on behalf of Councillor J. Arwel Roberts)
- Portfolio Member**
- Councillor Llinos Medi Huws (Leader) (on behalf of Councillor R. Meirion Jones, (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Youth and Culture)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive
Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community and Service Improvement)
Head of Function (Resources) and Section 151 Officer
Legal Services Manager (RJ)
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Bryan Owen, J. Arwel Roberts, Mrs Anest G. Frazer (The Church in Wales) Councillor R. Meirion Jones, (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Youth and Culture)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Major Projects and Economic Development), Alun Mummery (Portfolio Member for Housing and Supporting Communities), R.G. Parry, OBE, FRAGS (Portfolio Member for Highways, Property and Waste), Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Corporate Services), Ieuan Williams (Portfolio Member for Service Transformation), Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance), Councillor John Griffith, Councillor Kenneth Hughes
-

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Alun Roberts declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in respect of item 2 on the agenda as a Council representative on the Governing Body of Ysgol Beaumaris.

Councillor Carwyn Jones (not a member of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee) declared a personal and prejudicial interest with regard to item 2 on the agenda as his cousin is employed in Ysgol Beaumaris. Councillor Carwyn Jones said that he had been granted dispensation by the Standards Committee on 18 July, 2017 to represent the local viewpoint throughout the process but not to vote on the matter.

The Chair explained that Councillor Glyn Haynes would be standing in on behalf of Councillor J. Arwel Roberts for the purpose of speaking on the call-in request.

The Legal Services Manager clarified that speaking at the meeting was at the discretion of the Chair. However, substitute members are not permitted for the purpose of voting.

The Chair said that there would be no public speaking at this meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. He read out advice provided by the Head of Function (Council Business)/ Monitoring Officer in relation to the matter which confirmed that there is no legal constitutional right to public speaking at a scrutiny committee and that it is a matter for the Chair to determine when and if this is appropriate. The only requirement in connection with this discretion is that it be used fairly and consistently. The Officer further advises that in the circumstances, the Chair's intentions are a reasonable use of this discretion as this is a case of calling in a decision made by the Executive and is not part of the pre-decision process whereby the Scrutiny Committee collects evidence.

2 SCHOOLS' MODERNISATION – SEIRIOL AREA

A decision made by the Executive at its meeting held on 18 July, 2018 to approve Option 1, namely to refurbish and extend Ysgol Llandegfan, close Ysgol Beaumaris and refurbish Ysgol Llangoed was called in by Councillors Aled Morris Jones, Robert Llewelyn Jones, Bryan Owen, John Arwel Roberts and Peter Rogers. The Executive's decision, the call-in request and the report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community and Service Improvement) to the meeting of the Executive on 18 July, 2018 on the modernisation of schools in the Seiriol area were presented.

In the absence of Councillor Bryan Owen, the Lead Call-In Member, Councillor Peter Rogers explained the reason for calling in the decision made by the Executive on 18 July, 2018 as set out in the call-in request form which was that the idea of a school situated on a new site to take the pupils of Llandegfan, Beaumaris and Llangoed had not been fully explored.

Councillor Peter Rogers referred to the very great uncertainty over which school pupils might attend in the event that Ysgol Beaumaris is closed which has the potential to affect the pupil numbers at Ysgol Llangoed. He pointed out that there is no evidence to suggest that parents will send their children to Ysgol Llangoed and that understanding parental choice is essential in the matter because it also partly accounts for the reduction in the number of pupils attending Ysgol Beaumaris. There is also potentially a knock on effect on numbers in the secondary school serving the catchment area. Councillor Peter Rogers said that many people will have understood that modernising schools means having a new area school built as has happened in other areas where the primary education provision has been reviewed. He thought that the delivery of a new area school was appropriate in this case also.

Councillor Robert Llewelyn also spoke as a signatory of the call-in. Councillor Jones referred to the absence of a detailed Business Plan which he believed should have accompanied the proposal to show more clearly the financial obligations and potential savings consequent on realising the proposal. Neither was it apparent that the risks had been assessed. He highlighted the omission of any plans for the pre-school provision which at Ysgol Beaumaris is very popular and well thought of and referred to the need for sensitivity in dealing with Ysgol Beaumaris as a listed building.

Councillor Glyn Haynes speaking on behalf of Councillor J. Arwel Roberts who was a signatory to the call-in request said that although proposals for new area schools have been initially met with doubt in the communities involved, where they have been developed e.g. Ysgol Cybi, they are now a focal point for the community and are

embraced by parents. Councillor Haynes said that he believed that a new school was the right solution for Seiriol in keeping with other areas on the Islands.

The Leader of the Council responded as follows –

- The Corporate Scrutiny Committee scrutinised the non-statutory consultation on the modernisation of schools in the Seiriol area at its meeting held on 2 October, 2017. The report to the meeting contained an analysis of the options considered including a new area school and possible sites. Although a proposal was made at the time by a member of the Committee that this should be explored further, the Committee did not support it.
- With regard to the impact of closing Ysgol Beaumaris on the town (Key Question 1) and the uncertainty as to whether parents will subsequently send their children to Ysgol Llangoed, closing a school has an effect be it in a town or in a rural area. Beaumaris deserves and is being given the same respect and consideration as other communities where a decision has been made to close the local school. When Ysgol Rhyd y Llan was being developed the local view in Llanfachraeth was that parents would not choose to send their children to the new school. The school which is now up and running is well attended including by children from Llanfachraeth. Parental preferences can therefore change and is not a factor over which the Authority has control.
- With regard to the future of the Ysgol Beaumaris school building (Key Question 2) following approval by the Executive of the establishment of Extra Care provision on the school site (which was scrutinised by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee) the Chief Executive was asked to open discussions with CADW regarding the process for dealing with Ysgol Beaumaris as a listed building.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community and Service Improvement) reported as follows –

- That a new area school for Seiriol was one of the options which was evaluated and scored as part of the non-statutory consultation on the modernisation of primary schools in the Seiriol area held in June and July, 2017 (Options 4 and 20 in the consultation) . The unavailability of suitable land/sites was a factor in not progressing this option. A school of this size would require in the region of 6 acres which space could not be identified in the area particularly as the Lairds site was not included as a development site in the JLDP.
- That the Community Impact Assessment was conducted using the same format as that applied in the other areas where consultation on the modernisation of schools has taken place. It is a format that has been approved by Welsh Government. The risks have also been addressed as part of the assessment.
- That many parents in the Seiriol area have over the years exercised choice by not sending their children to Ysgol Beaumaris preferring instead to send their children to schools in Llangoed and Llandegfan and outside the catchment area in Menai Bridge, Llanfairpwll and Bangor leading to 72% surplus places in Ysgol Beaumaris. Even if all the incomers linked to developments such as Wylfa Newydd were to locate to the Seiriol area, the projections according to the Welsh Government formula predict that there would still be surplus places in Ysgol Beaumaris.
- That it is acknowledged that parents may choose to send their children to schools other than Ysgol Llangoed should Ysgol Beaumaris close. For those children from Ysgol Beaumaris who choose to attend Ysgol Llangoed, a traffic and transport impact assessment will be held as the distance is over 2 miles.

- That enquiries with CADW have been initiated with regard to the Ysgol Beaumaris school building. There is potential to utilise space to the rear and to the front of the building in consultation with CADW Officers.
- That Officers in submitting their proposals to Welsh Government must take into account forecasted pupil numbers. The Authority examines data in relation to projected births in an area and this figure is then factored into the calculations for projected pupil numbers in future. The Authority uses the Welsh Government formula to calculate projections.
- That the requirements of the Twenty-First Century Schools Programme are ambitious in terms of modernising school assets, and although the proposal for Seiriol does not deliver a new school for the area, the refurbishment of Ysgol Llandegfan and Ysgol Llangoed will transform the two schools into modern, twenty-first century schools.
- That the Executive's decision made on 18 July, 2018 also recognised that any arrangement should address the need for pre-school provision in the Seiriol area.

Members of the Committee were afforded the opportunity to ask questions.

The Chief Executive made the following points -

- The option of a new school for the Seiriol area to replace the existing Ysgol Llandegfan, Ysgol Llangoed and Ysgol Beaumaris as well as an option to site a large school nearer Menai Bridge have been considered. They were not included in the preferred options because of the unavailability of land, and also because it became clear in the consultation process that parents in Llandegfan did not wish to travel to Beaumaris and that parents and stakeholders from Beaumaris and Llangoed were concerned about the nature of the road to Llandegfan and Menai Bridge.
- An assessment of the impact of closing Ysgol Beaumaris on the community has been made and considered. Should the Executive's decision stand, it is essential that the communities of Beaumaris and Llangoed work together to ensure the new school in Llangoed succeeds.
- Discussions have been held with Officers from CADW with regard to the existing Ysgol Beaumaris building; it is hoped that the same arrangement can be reached as in the case of Ysgol Cybi in Holyhead whereby the existing school's frontage was retained.
- The formulation of a Business Case is one of the tasks that is undertaken once a decision is made. Business Case submissions for funding for school projects under the Twenty-First Century Schools' Programme have to be detailed and they are required to address a range of issues.

The Call-in signatories, the Leader and the Officers were given an opportunity to summarise.

The Committee considered the information presented and, although it recognised that closing a school is a very hard thing to do, it was minded to support the decision taken by the Executive for the reasons that it will mean bringing two schools in the Seiriol area up to modern, 21st Century school standards; it will address the issue of surplus places in the area's schools with a high percentage of those places being in Ysgol Beaumaris, and because no evidence has been produced at this meeting to show there is a more appropriate option, being mindful also that a range of options have been considered during consultation.

The Legal Services Manager advised that the Committee has three options in coming to a decision on the call-in, viz.

- To reject the call-in and confirm the Executive's decision
- To reject the Executive's decision and refer it back to the Executive with a recommendation that it be reconsidered and/or amended.

- To reject the Executive's decision and to refer the matter with a recommendation to the Full Council. In this event, because the Executive's decision is not contrary to the Budget or Policy Framework nor inconsistent with the Budget, the Council has no power in the matter. It would only convene to consider the matter and, if it objects to the decision, to refer it back with any comments to the Executive as the decision-making body. The Council could not come to a new decision.

It was proposed and seconded that the call-in request be rejected. In the ensuing vote the proposal was carried.

It was resolved to reject the call-in of the Executive's decision from its meeting held on 18 July, 2018 in relation to the modernisation of schools in the Seiriol area.

The Executive's decision therefore takes effect forthwith.

**Councillor Aled Morris Jones
Chair**

DRAFT