

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL HELD  
ON 20<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2014**

**Present** : Councillor G Erasmus ( Deputy Mayor )  
Councillors C Erasmus, J Criddle, D Davies, M Franklin, Z Hammond  
& M Veater MBE

In the absence of the Mayor it was formally *resolved* that the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Erasmus Chair the meeting.

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors G Hale, A Farina-Childs, A Parsons & P Cook.

**2. To Consider the Council's response to Caerphilly County Borough Council's Consultation Document on Secondary Rationalisation : Phase 1 West – namely The proposal to build a new school in the Islwyn West region on the Oakdale Plateau 3. This new school would replace the existing Oakdale & Pontllanfraith secondary schools, which would be closed. The new school would be designed with a capacity of 900 pupils, plus provision of special needs of circa 50 pupils. The Islwyn West region would then be served by the new school at Oakdale Plateau 3 and the existing Blackwood School**

The Clerk reported that having read the document, and listened to members points of view at the last meeting he had contacted Caerphilly C.B.C. for clarification on a number of issues –

Do pupil projection numbers include special needs ?

When will the new school & Blackwood become operational as the Islwyn West provision ?

Projected numbers quoted for the 3 schools for September 2016 total 2,049 pupils, yet Blackwood has 1,002 capacity and the proposed new school 950 – a shortfall of almost 100 places ?

The success of the proposals depends upon Blackwood School being entirely fit for purpose, and with the current building position being classed as poor ( with a 25 year maintenance figure in excess of £5.5 million quoted ), obviously a significant investment within the next few years is a must. Can this be guaranteed, otherwise half the pupils will be at a distinct disadvantage ? Will the required funding be included in the total cost of the scheme ?

Is the use of capital receipts from the sale of Pontllanfraith & Oakdale sites a legitimate option ?

He then reported on the responses received from Martin Donovan ( 21<sup>st</sup>. Century Schools Officer )

The Planned implementation date for the proposal is September 2016

In terms of pupil projections the authority is aware that at September 2016 there will be a bulge of pupils. The intention is to ensure the new school is designed to accommodate this bulge in the short term and to ensure Blackwood has sufficient capacity. However, the bulge is only temporary and the authority will be managing the capacity of the new school down to its intended 900 capacity plus 50 additional learning needs over the first two or three years as demographics decline.

The total funding for the scheme that is secured to date of £20 million is to include improvement works at Blackwood and initial discussions have taken place with the school in terms of identifying requirements.

With regards to the sites at Pontllanfraith & Oakdale schools, the Council has not formulated a specific plan for future use, and it is unlikely any capital receipts would be generated until after September 2016. Furthermore, any receipts are likely to offset the upfront borrowing and investment the Council is making in Blackwood and the new school. However, as the project develops this is something that can be explored further.

Discussion on the proposals then took place.

Councillor Criddle queried that if the sites were sold for Housing purposes to maximise the capital receipts, has the knock on effect of potential new pupils moving to those sites been taken into account.

Councillors Franklin & Hammond queried whether given the present number of special needs pupils, the proposed 50 places will be sufficient in the future.

Issues regarding requirement of additional school transport, less choice options and the current specialist provision of educational training across the schools were also debated.

***After further discussion, it was unanimously agreed that Town Council approve the proposals in principle, but ask that consideration be given to ensure –***

***Sufficient funding is allocated to Blackwood School to bring it to the desired standards.  
Sufficiency of proposed Special Needs provision.***

***Specialist provision of educational training currently available is not compromised.  
Potential increase in pupil numbers if the existing sites are sold for housing development.***