

Godre'r Graig School Task Force Meeting – 11.07.2019

Attendees

Councillors		
R.G Jones	Leader	Leader of Council
A.J.Taylor	AJT	Deputy Leader of Council
P.A.Rees	PR	Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture
E.V.Latham	EVL	Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Engineering
L. Jones	LJ	Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Protection
Officers		
Steven Phillips	SP	Chief Executive
Gareth Nutt	GN	Director of Environment
Aled Evans	AE	Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning
Simon Brennan	SB	Head of Property and Regeneration
Nicola Pearce	NP	Head of Planning and Public Protection
Craig Griffiths	CG	Head of Legal Services
Andrew Thomas	AT	Head of Transformation
Dave Griffiths	DG	Head of Engineering and Transport
Robin Turner	RT	Corporate Communication Business Partner
Neil Evans	NE	Senior Executive Officer
Sylvia Griffiths	SG	Strategic Marketing and Communications Advisor
Rhiannon Crowhurst	RC	Transformation Project Officer
Peter Curnow	PC	Transformation Project Officer

The Leader opened the meeting stating that he hoped everyone had read the circulated report before hand and asked were there any questions.

AJT noted the recommendations in relation to clearance of vegetation and mitigation works and asked for timescales and costs if possible.

DG stated that following a visit to the site yesterday (10th July) it would take in the region of approximately 3 months to clear the vegetation, in addition to this there would be a further 3 months for the field study.

However, due to the steepness of the site specialist equipment may be needed to access the site and there were very few units across the country. So realistically it would take around 9 months to undertake the works involved.

The cost of the works would be unquantifiable at present.

It should also be noted that the Council suggests there is an estimated volume of approximately 40,000 tonnes of quarry spoil and associated sub material and vegetation in the respective area.

The Leader continued and asked the attendees to note that to do nothing was NOT an option.

This meeting needed to consider the immediate actions/priority and longer term actions/priorities.

To put the issue in to context an area around Cyfyng Road slipped when there was little or no rainfall and that was a low risk area. This is a medium risk so is a tangible threat.

SP stated the priority is to get children off the site immediately and there is no choice but to close the school immediately. CG advised that from a legal perspective any long term closure or potential long term closure of a school requires the Council to undertake a formal consultation process in line with the legislative requirements. However, the building could be vacated with the school remaining as an entity in its own right, with children being educated at a different location by the school. The school would remain but be at a different location.

Agreed by all that the school should close to pupils and staff today. AE and PR to attend the school to speak with the Head and Chair of Governors with copies of a letter regarding its closure.

The Leader will contact local Members, AM's and MP's.

SG stated it was necessary we highlight that the report was received yesterday by the Leader and we as a council are acting today. SG to ensure reports and relevant communications are uploaded to the Council's website.

Agreed that NP would liaise with DG in relation to the possible residents' queries that may be received from those who live in the vicinity of the school.

Leader stressed the importance of getting on the front foot with regards the media in order to ensure that individuals were aware of the decision that needed to be taken and wished to speak with BBC as soon as possible.

In terms of language and accuracy it was agreed reference to relocating the children as opposed to closing the school should be given as this is what the proposal is, the priority being to address the current risks.

Discussions turned to what are the longer term options. AE stated that there were potentially 3 options. Though other options would be considered, the 3 considerations at present being:

- Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera – Demountable Buildings
- Parc Ynys Derw – Demountable Buildings
- Pontardawe Bowls Hall

It was further noted that Demountable buildings could be sourced in time for the new school year. However, SB noted that the problem is linking them to utilities. SB to liaise with Education and AE to make a decision on preferred option whether it is one of the three above or any alternative ASAP.

AE noted the potential need to provide emotional health and well-being support to pupils and staff.

DG asked whether a 7 day notice should be served on the tip owner. Agreed that this could wait until Monday (15th July) and steps would be taken to put such measures in place but, the priority was to protect the safety of the staff and children within the school.

NE to arrange next meeting within one week.