

Opening Statement

Joint Committee on Education and Skills

17-4-2018

Dear esteemed members of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills, thank you for the invitation to come here today and make this opening statement.

My name is Brian Bergin I have been a teacher at St Paul's Secondary School in Monasterevin since 2003, appointed acting Deputy Principal in 2006 and appointed Principal in 2010. I have been very fortunate in my position, in that, I have enjoyed the unwavering support of wonderful students, staff, parents, Board and community and I am most grateful for this.

In 2005, now thirteen years ago, our school was named on a PPP bundle of schools. In February 2018 the DES informed that we were "profiled for construction to commence in Quarter 3 2019". That would finally see the school completed in March 2021. How can we reasonably expect this latest completion date to materialise after the events of the last thirteen years? Thirteen years of excitement, expectations, hope, frustrations, anger and despair.

So much of the delays around our project have been related to the identification of, acquisition of and provision of services to a suitable site. And I have a number of questions I would like answered

1. What role did the DES have in the selection of the site?
2. Was there a feasibility study into the provision of services to the "preferred site" by the DES?
3. Why does there remain unresolved legal issues around the procurement of the preferred site?
4. Why did the size of the preferred site decrease by almost 50% from the original site despite the school being built for more students?

The DES is the client in this project and we are very appreciative of that. I understand that different sections of the building unit are responsible for different aspects of each project. I have a few questions on this

1. Who in the DES takes the lead responsibility in a project like this?
2. Who is responsible to ensure timelines are met and co-ordinate between the various sections, Design Team, local authority, statutory bodies and the school?
3. Is there a more time efficient and financially accountable way of making developmental decisions at critical stages with critical stakeholders?
4. As the financing of the project comes from central government (through taxpayers contributions), why does it appear to be a game of which government agency will pay at each juncture?

Throughout this journey I have worked with wonderful professionals who have done sterling work to progress the project to this point. Having submitted the Stage 2B Report this week we are now at a point where the DES can expedite our project. They can do this by ensuring they give it the upmost attention, the benefit of their expertise and the financial resources needed to progress to tender in a timely and efficient manner.