

**AGENDA ITEM 8****RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****CABINET****25<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2015****PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF KEY STAGE 3/4 PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT PROVISION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL NEEDS****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an opportunity to consider information relating to the current Key Stage 3/4 Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) provision for young people with significant social, emotional and behavioural needs in the Local Authority (LA).
- 1.2. To provide information on recent improvements in Ty Gwyn Education Centre, which provides secondary PRU provision in the LA, and priority areas for further development.
- 1.3. To consider a proposal to re-locate Ty Gwyn Education Centre to the red brick building on the Aberdare High School site, including access to the sports facilities on site.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1. Note the information contained within this report.
- 2.2. Consider the proposal to relocate Ty Gwyn Education Centre to the former Aberdare High School site in January 2016 and to develop educational and vocational facilities that are fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and that will serve to enhance learning pathways for a range of learners with diverse needs.
- 2.3. Consider whether any further information relating to the proposals is required.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Ty Gwyn Education Centre is a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) maintained by Rhondda Cynon Taf. A PRU is an educational establishment maintained by the LA to provide suitable education for children and young people who, by reason of illness, exclusion or otherwise, may not receive such education (section 19 of the Education Act 1996). Unlike schools, PRUs are governed by Management Committees and not Governing Bodies. The Education (Pupil Referral Units) (Management Committees etc.) (Wales) Regulations 2014 outlines the constitution and roles and responsibilities of PRU Management Committees. They have a clear role in governing PRUs and ensuring positive outcomes for learners with significant barriers to learning.
- 3.2 There are currently 37 pupils in Key Stage 3 and 45 Key Stage 4 pupils attending Ty Gwyn Education Centre which is situated in Glyncoch. In addition to this, the setting also has responsibility for co-ordinating Education Otherwise than at School (EOTAS) tuition provision for learners who are unable to attend school or the PRU due to significant medical needs, including mental health needs, medical difficulties or who are at risk of permanent exclusion or have been permanently excluded. EOTAS tuition is provided individually in the home or community setting, or in a group tuition environment for a total of 76 learners.
- 3.3 Ty Gwyn Education Centre provides either part time dual placements or full time placement. Some learners are not registered at a mainstream school as they have long term placement in a PRU or have been permanently excluded from school. A total of 16 dual placements are available for Key Stage 3 pupils who are able to cope with a part time placement in a mainstream context. Support is provided for these pupils by Ty Gwyn Education Centre staff so that opportunities for sharing good practice on inclusive strategies can be provided and mainstream placements sustained.
- 3.4 The vast majority of learners requiring EOTAS provision have significant special educational needs and a small proportion have statements of special educational needs. Approximately 66.1% of Ty Gwyn PRU pupils are entitled to free school meals.
- 3.5 Education Otherwise than at School (EOTAS) is a current focus for Welsh Government debate. Welsh Government's policies in relation to EOTAS provision came under scrutiny as part of the Children, Young People and Education Committee's inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour. Evidence received by the Committee suggested that there was an 'acute shortage' of EOTAS provision in Wales and that the provision which did exist needed 'considerable improvement'. The then Children's Commissioner referred to 'a grim picture of the education offer provided to children and young people in EOTAS'. The Welsh Government published an action plan in 2011 to improve EOTAS provision and commissioned research from the University of Edinburgh to examine the process of exclusion from school in Wales and the delivery, planning and commissioning of EOTAS provision. The subsequent

report: Evaluation of education provision for children and young people educated outside the school setting, was published in October 2013 and identified that 90% of learners accessing EOTAS had SEN, nearly 70% were entitled to free school meals; and 75% were boys. Of this cohort 40% of the group were educated in PRUs. As a result of this research Welsh Government identified eighteen recommendations and Estyn's remit for 2015-16 includes undertaking a review to map EOTAS provision across Wales and the effectiveness of Local Authorities' management of provision. The time is now ripe for ensuring that Rhondda Cynon Taf has secondary EOTAS provision fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and that it builds on recent improvements made.

#### 4. THE CASE FOR CHANGE

4.1 Ty Gwyn Education Centre was the focus of an Estyn Inspection in September 2013. The outcome of this inspection was that the setting was in need of significant improvement. At this time the PRU's performance and prospects for improvement were deemed to be adequate. The inspection outcome was in sharp contrast to the Tai Educational Centre (primary PRU) which was considered to be an excellent provision with excellent prospects for improvement in September 2013. In March 2014, the Head of Centre for Tai Educational Centre, was appointed as the Executive Head of Tai and Ty Gwyn Education Centres. In January 2015, a follow-up Estyn visit was undertaken in Ty Gwyn with positive outcomes achieved. Ty Gwyn was no longer deemed to be in need of significant improvement due to the very good or strong progress made against all five recommendations highlighted in the inspection. Judgements against these recommendations are summarised as follows:

- Recommendation 1: Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and assessment throughout the PRU (judgement: very good progress made).
- Recommendation 2: Improve pupils' attendance (judgement: strong progress made).
- Recommendation 3: Ensure that there is a consistent and systematic approach to improving all pupils' literacy and numeracy skills (judgement: very good progress).
- Recommendation 4: Secure appropriate baseline data on all pupils against which progress can be measured (judgement: strong progress)
- Recommendation 5: Ensure that improvement planning is strengthened by clearly focussing on the expected impact of strategies on teaching and learning (judgement: very good progress).

There is now a need to build on the progress made and ensure that the provision achieves good outcomes in the next Estyn inspection. In order to achieve this, the LA needs to ensure that standards in relation to educational outcomes are improved. The curriculum offer needs to be significantly remodelled if this is to be achieved.

4.2 The curriculum offer in Key Stage 4 currently includes some entry level, GCSE and limited vocational qualifications. Where appropriate, the PRU makes provision for older pupils in Key Stage 4 to attend Coleg Y Cymoedd

placements. This arrangement has been in place since September 2013 at cost of £96K. Increasingly the learners have become reluctant to engage in college placements, and attendance and participation rates have diminished considerably. This current arrangement no longer meets the needs of some of our learners who require access to very specialist teaching and highly bespoke learning programmes. Learners have expressed a preference to remain in Ty Gwyn Education Centre when college placements have broken down and it is now considered that it would be more cost effective to develop in house individualised learning programmes. A broader range of vocational learning opportunities cannot be effectively provided in Ty Gwyn as the environmental constraints of the building are such that this is not possible within the existing premises.

- 4.3 The current building for Ty Gwyn Education Centre is not suitable in the longer term. The School is a former primary school and the lay out of the school and the facilities are not suitable for PRU provision. The limitations with the former primary school building have become more evident following the merger of the PRU based in Ty Catrin and Ty Gwyn Education Centre in January 2014. This change has resulted in larger numbers of learners being educated on a relatively small site. Temporary measures to facilitate the merger and to enhance the capacity of the building were undertaken at this time. A temporary double classroom building was installed as an interim measure but this current arrangement is not sustainable in longer term.
- 4.4 The demand for placements in Ty Gwyn Education Centre remains high particularly in Key Stage 4 when learners with significant social, emotional and behavioural needs struggle to cope with the demands of the curriculum and schools' expectations of them during this important phase in their education. Whilst the LA works closely with schools to enhance their inclusive practice and the provision made for dis-engaged learners there are increasing numbers of learners that cannot cope with mainstream education. The numbers of pupils permanently excluded from school for serious incidents is on the increase but numbers remain relatively low. Whilst there is a need to ensure that schools are challenged in relation to their practice we also have a duty to ensure that PRU provision offers meaningful opportunities for learners who are disaffected and disengaged, and require an alternative option to mainstream education. Getting the curriculum offer right is essential to securing positive outcomes and improving the life chances of learners who are at high risk of becoming not engaged in education, employment and training at post 16.

Our exclusion data which is summarised in Table 1 below suggests that a continuum of high quality provision is needed for learners with significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Table 1

<b>Exclusion Data</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>Total</b>
Permanent	16	6	16	17	<b>63</b>
Fixed term	1622	1884	1645	1562	<b>7972</b>
Number of days lost	4025	4869	3655	3838	<b>19920</b>

The numbers of permanently excluded pupils in recent academic years has remained relatively low but recent data is concerning and learners are losing too many days from school.

## **5. PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 5.1 We currently have high demand for PRU placements, and there is a need to remodel Key Stage 3/4 provision to ensure that we can provide more bespoke learning programmes and pathways.
- 5.2 The numbers of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties continues to grow and the LA needs to take pro-active steps to improve the provision made.
- 5.3 In view of the fact that learners with significant social, emotional and behavioural needs are struggling to cope with a less structured college environment, consideration now needs to be given to developing a wide range of curriculum options, including an array of vocational courses which can prepare young people for the world of work or further education and training. The complex and diverse needs of learners attending a PRU can make it very difficult to make effective provision within one relatively small building. In order to effectively deliver personalised learning pathways, a new PRU setting is needed. The former Aberdare High School building would provide an ideal setting to develop this as there is sufficient capacity on site to develop appropriate classrooms for the teaching of a good range of National Curriculum subjects and the scope to deliver more vocational options such as Child Development; Hair and Beauty; Sport and Leisure; Catering; Construction; and Car Mechanics.
- 5.4 It is advocated that the placements on offer could include a range of flexible options for schools including full time placements; short term revolving door placements (full time but short term); and part time dual placements of varying duration (daily rates could apply in these cases of £50 per day).
- 5.5 The location of the former Aberdare High School is ideal as it has recreational and sporting facilities on site and is conveniently situated next to two special schools, Park Lane Special School and Maesgwyn Special School. This proposal could potentially enable both schools to access the facilities available on site which will further support quality learning and teaching and enhance the curriculum offer available in their settings.
- 5.6. Of the former Aberdare High School it is proposed that we would only retain the red brick building and its adjacent tarmaced games area together with the sports hall. The remainder of the CLASP constructed buildings will be demolished and part of the site will be marketed and sold along with the former caretaker's house. The condition and suitability of the remaining red brick teaching block is such that only moderate refurbishment and remodelling work would be required. The outside environment and recreational facilities would provide an ideal environment for young people to participate in physical

activity and to develop their general health and wellbeing, and pursue leisure and sport related vocational courses.

- 5.7 As these premises will be vacant from July 2015 there is sufficient time to remodel the school in preparation for the potential admission of Key Stages 3/4 in January 2016.
- 5.8 Estimated costs for developing the site and setting up the establishment would be in the region of £400k. The capital investment can be met from the existing education capital programme and will effectively be utilised to improve our current capital asset and deliver a sustainable project which delivers 'best value' in the years ahead. The refurbishment works and internal modifications will include the upgrading of toilet facilities to provide both male and female toilets to ensure that they are fully accessible and compliant with the Equality Act and The Education (School) Premises Regulations 1999. Classrooms will need remodelling to ensure that they are 'fit for purpose' and facilitate the effective delivery of vocational courses. The entire building will need redecoration and ceilings replaced due to their age and condition. New energy efficient lighting will also be required to reduce energy consumption and associated carbon emissions, new doors fitted to comply with current fire regulations and new fencing installed to improve safeguarding and security.
- 5.9 The Transport Team has reviewed the transport arrangements of the PRU pupils and consider that there will be an additional home to school transport cost but this will be offset within existing PRU budgets, for example from the savings made from discontinuing some Coleg Y Cymoedd commissioned provision and developing in-house provision using existing staff.

## **6 CASE FOR CHANGE**

- 6.1 Improving the quality of EOTAS provision in LAs is the focus of Welsh Government scrutiny and improving the quality of education and raising standards is one of the Council's key priorities. Whilst Ty Gwyn Educational Centre has made significant improvements since its last full inspection, there is a need to build on recent progress, and further improve the range of qualifications that can be achieved by improving the curriculum on offer. The current building housing Ty Gwyn Education Centre is not fit for purpose or large enough to provide the full breadth of academic and vocational courses required to fully meet the wide range of learners' needs attending the provision. A move to larger and more suitable premises, built for secondary aged pupils, will provide the scope for modernising and diversifying the curriculum on offer so that the young people achieve better outcomes and are better prepared for the world of work, further education and/or training.
- 6.2 The advantages of implementing the proposed changes include:
- more enhanced breadth and diversity of curriculum that is better suited to meeting the needs of learners on one educational site

- greater scope for young people to choose learning pathways that best enable them to mix and match vocational, academic and occupational qualifications and experience
- increased opportunities for individualising the curriculum thus increasing engagement, participation and attendance rates
- providing learners with the vocational skills necessary to respond to community and business needs and to compete effectively in the job market
- raising standards of success and achievement and increasing progression rates to Higher Education and employment
- providing a more cost effective alternative education offer for mainstream schools that might not have the capacity or resources to develop meaningful vocational education opportunities
- improving the range and quality of facilities and learning resources available to the learners whilst allowing for potential financial savings
- an opportunity for restructuring and to further strengthen the management and staffing structure so that it is fit for purpose
- providing scope for the PRU to work in closer and more effective partnerships with special schools and mainstream colleagues
- reducing the reliance on external providers and the challenges this can present in terms of quality control and accountability
- the development of effective in-county provision thus reducing the risk of costly out of county placements
- scope for income generation by selling surplus placements to other LAs.

## **8 IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The following factors will need to be taken into consideration.

- Consultation
  - Formal consultation processes as set out by Welsh Government in the School Organisation Code 2013 will not be required in this instance
  - Consultation with the local community, relevant parents and school staff will be undertaken as this is good practice but this is not a requirement under the Code. No statutory notices will be required.
- Human Resource implications including:
  - Restructure of the existing provision and implementation of the management of change process on consultation with staff and Trade Unions
  - Modifications to school policies and procedures to reflect the changes to the provision.
- Financial implications including:
  - Potential cost to refurbish and remodel the former Aberdare High School site
  - Potential additional transport costs

- Time Scales
  - Restructure to be completed by December 2015
  - Phased implementation of the development will be needed to ensure that Key Stage 3/4 provision is operational by January 2016.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf is committed to improving the life chances and outcomes of all learners, including vulnerable groups. If the cycle of deprivation and underachievement is to be broken, a top quality education that meets the needs of all children and young people is essential. There are considerable benefits to be gained from the development of an effective secondary PRU provision and these include educational, social, health, financial and environmental gains.
- 9.2 The former Aberdare High School will be vacant by July 2015, this proposal, if agreed, will ensure that effective use is made of the setting before the building falls into disrepair. Indeed, the proposals will ensure that the building is occupied and upgraded promptly and put to good use for sound educational and social reasons.
- 9.3 Developing this provision within RCT will enhance opportunities for collaborative and partnership working across services and agencies. Accessing high quality provision for learners at risk of disengagement and becoming NEET will be key to improving the educational outcomes and life chances of learners with SEN. RCT already has outstanding primary PRU provision and this proposal will enable the LA and the PRU to work towards our goal of developing good secondary PRU provision.