

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****CABINET****23 JULY 2015****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

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**REORGANISING PRIMARY SCHOOLS, SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND SIXTH FORM PROVISION IN THE RHONDDA VALLEYS AND TONYREFAIL****1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To advise Members of the outcome of the recent publication of statutory notices in respect of proposals to reorganise Primary schools, Secondary schools and Sixth Form provision in the Rhondda Valleys and Tonyrefail areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are recommended to:-

- 2.1 Note that 19 statutory objections have been received by the published closing date in respect of the proposals to reorganise school provision in the Rhondda and Tonyrefail areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf
- 2.2 Note that, in accordance with the relevant legislation, details of the objections received have been forwarded to the Welsh Ministers, who will make the final decisions in respect of these proposals.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Members will recall that, at the meeting of Cabinet held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2015, approval was given for the publication of four Statutory Notices to progress these proposal to the next stage. The Notices were published, as required by law, on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015 and the 28 day statutory period to receive objections subsequently ended on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2015.
- 3.2 The new School Organisation Code, which was introduced by Welsh Government legislation in July 2013 now requires local authorities to produce an Objections Report at the conclusion of the statutory notice period outlined above. This report must be published within 28 days of the conclusion of the objection period and should outline the LA's responses to any objections received. These objections should then usually be considered by Cabinet when making their final decision as to whether to implement a statutory proposal, or not.
- 3.3 As these particular proposals involve changes to Sixth Form provision, in accordance with the aforementioned Code, they require the approval of the Welsh Ministers; the final decision on whether to implement them or not cannot be made by Cabinet in this instance. A copy of the full Objections Report, together with details of each objection received has therefore already been forwarded to the Welsh Ministers, in accordance with the Code. This has been done in order to comply with the specific requirement that all objections must be forwarded to the Welsh Ministers for consideration within 35 days of the end of the objection period.
- 3.4 All objections received have been appropriately responded to at length in the attached Objections Report, which will be published on the Council website following this meeting and within the 28 day period indicated above.

### **4. SUMMARY**

- 4.1 Elected Members are therefore requested to note the objections received in respect of this proposal and to further note that the objections have been forwarded to the Welsh Ministers in order that they may determine these proposals, in accordance with the relevant legislation.

## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **OBJECTION REPORT**

#### **PROPOSAL: THE REORGANISATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS, SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND SIXTH FORM PROVISION IN THE RHONDDA VALLEYS AND TONYREFAIL**

##### **1. Purpose of the Objection Report**

This report is prepared in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, statutory document 006/2013. Its purpose is to:

- Inform the outcome of the publication of the four statutory notices published for this proposal, which were published on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015 for a period of 28 days; and
- Detail all objections received and the local authority's response to them.

##### **2. The Statutory Notices**

The four Statutory Notices to progress this proposal, which were published on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015 are reproduced below:

###### **Notice 1 – Ferndale**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
Education Directorate, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon CF45 4UQ

Notice is given in accordance with section 42 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC), having consulted such persons as required, proposes to make a regulated alteration to Ferndale Community School Excelsior Terrace Maerdy CF43 4AR so that the age range of the pupils it can admit is amended to 11 – 16 years and that the Sixth Form provision be removed.

It is further proposed that the Sixth Form provision previously accommodated at Ferndale Community School shall transfer to Treorchy Comprehensive School, Pencelli, Treorchy CF42 6UL. It is proposed that the Sixth Form provision at Treorchy shall be able to accommodate up to 500 post-16 students.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council undertook a period of consultation before deciding to publish this proposal. A consultation report containing a summary of the issues raised by consultees, the proposer's responses and the views of Estyn is available on the Council's website at [www.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk).

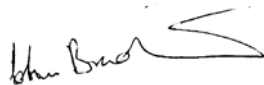
It is proposed to implement the proposals on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017.

The proposed capacity of Ferndale Community School after this proposal is implemented will reduce to 650 pupil places from its current figure of 903. This will be achieved by removing surplus accommodation from the school site and by offering other accommodation for use by local community organisations. From September 2018 the proposed admission number for the school will be 130 for pupils age 11 (Year 7).

Pupils will be provided with transport in accordance with the Council's Transport Policy. At present, the Council provides free transport for pupils who attend their relevant Secondary school if they reside beyond 2 miles walking distance to that school. The relevant school is the catchment school or the nearest school. This distance criterion is also applied to transport provision for post-16 students at present.

Within a period of 28 days of the date on which this proposal is published, that is to say by 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2015 any person may object to the proposals. Objections should be sent to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, School Planning Section, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon, Mountain Ash CF45 4UQ, e-mail [schoolplanning@rctednet.net](mailto:schoolplanning@rctednet.net). RCTCBC will publish a summary of any such objections made (and not withdrawn in writing) within the objection period, together with their observations thereon, within the period of 28 days after the end of the objection period.

The local authority will submit the proposal to the Welsh Ministers for approval together with any other proposals that it considers are linked to this proposal.



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chris Bradshaw  
 Director of Education and Lifelong Learning  
 For Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council  
 Date: 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015

### **Explanatory Note of the Proposals**

RCTCBC has recently undertaken a comprehensive consultation exercise in respect of the proposed reorganisation of school provision in the Rhondda and Tonyrefail areas of the County Borough, as part of its proposals under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme. The overall proposals seek to :

- Create two sixth form centres of excellence, based at Treorchy and Tonyrefail;
- Create two new 3-16 schools, in Porth and Tonypany, and one 3-19 school, in Tonyrefail, which will take a radically different approach to education in the areas, by sharing both primary and secondary sector resources;
- Increase the availability of Welsh medium primary provision in Porth and Tonyrefail;
- Improve the learning environment of primary aged pupils with additional learning needs.

The particular proposals in respect of Ferndale Community School are to close its sixth form and transfer the provision to the site of Treorchy Comprehensive School. The sixth form provision at Treorchy will be expanded to be able to cater for up to 500 post-16 students.

To reduce any disruption to learners, the removal of the 6<sup>th</sup> form will be phased over a two year period. The Year 12 cohort will be removed from September 2017, to allow students to undertake their entire post-16 courses in their new school. The Year 13 students will remain at the school until they conclude their courses in July 2018.

Work will also be undertaken to the Ferndale Community School site, to remove surplus accommodation and upgrade and improve the remaining facilities for the benefit of all pupils who may attend this school in the future. Some accommodation may be made available for use by local community groups and associations.

The Council is also proposing to spend approx £8.5 million at Treorchy Comprehensive School, expanding the sixth form facilities and other infrastructure.

From September 2018 for the purposes of secondary education provision (11-16) the catchment areas of the former Aberllechau and Pontygwaith Primary Schools (currently in the Porth Community School catchment area) will be added to the catchment area of Ferndale Community School. This change formed part of the consultation.

The Council is also currently undertaking public consultation in respect of possible changes to its Home to School Transport policy. The consultation proposes the introduction of a charge for the discretionary elements of the Home to School Transport Policy that are over and above the requirements placed upon the Council by the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. Details of the proposals and how you may give your views on them can be obtained from the Council website [www.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk) or emailing [HTSconsultation@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:HTSconsultation@rctcbc.gov.uk)

## **Notice 2 - Porth**

### **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL** Education Directorate, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon CF45 4UQ

Notice is given in accordance with sections 41, 42 and 43 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC), having consulted such persons as required, propose to:

1. Discontinue the following schools currently maintained by RCTCBC:
  - Porth County Community School, Cemetery Road, Porth, CF39 0BS
  - Porth Junior School, Primrose Terrace, Llwynceilyn, Porth, CF39 9TU
  - Porth Infants School, Mary Street, Porth, CF39 9UH
  - Llwynceilyn Infants School, Heather Way, Llwynceilyn, Porth, CF39 9TL

2. establish a new English Medium Community Middle School, to be maintained by RCTCBC at Cemetery Rd, Porth etc, on the site of Porth County Community School, for boys and girls aged 3 to 16 years.
3. make a regulated alteration to YGG Llwyncelyn, Heather Way, Llwyncelyn, Porth CF39 9TL so that its capacity is increased by 100 pupil places. The current number on roll at the school is 273. The current capacity of the school is 272 pupil places, it is proposed to increase this to 370. Some of these additional places may be utilised to increase Nursery provision at the school.

The admission number at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llwyncelyn in the first school year in which the proposal has been implemented will be 46 for pupils age 4. There will be 46 nursery places in the first instance.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council undertook a period of consultation before deciding to publish this proposal. A consultation report containing a summary of the issues raised by consultees, the proposer's responses and the views of Estyn is available on the Council's website at [www.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk).

It is proposed to implement the proposals on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018.

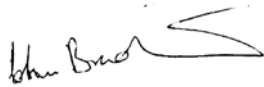
It is proposed that pupils currently attending the four schools listed above should transfer to the new Porth Middle School, on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018, subject to parental preference. This school is proposed to be an English Medium Community Middle School. Building adaptations and other modifications will be undertaken prior to this date to ensure the accommodation is suitable for the pupils of the age ranges indicated.

RCTBC will be the admission authority and there will be no arrangements for pupil banding. The proposed capacity of the Primary Department of the new Middle School shall be 330 pupils, which includes Nursery provision for at least 40 children. The admission number at age 4 to the Reception Class will be 42. The proposed capacity for the Secondary Department shall be 810 pupils and the admission number at age 11 to Year 7 will be 120 so that each secondary year group will make provision for 162 pupils. .

Pupils will be provided with transport in accordance with the Council's Transport Policy. At present, the Council provides free transport for pupils who attend their relevant Primary, Infant or Junior School, if they reside beyond 1 ½ miles walking distance to that school; this distance is 2 miles for pupils attending Secondary schools. The relevant school is the catchment school or the nearest school.

Within a period of 28 days of the date on which these proposals were published, that is to say by 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2015 any person may object to the proposals. Objections should be sent to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, School Planning Section, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon, Mountain Ash CF45 4UQ, e-mail [schoolplanning@rctednet.net](mailto:schoolplanning@rctednet.net). RCTCBC will publish a summary of any such objections made (and not withdrawn in writing) within the

objection period, together with their observations thereon, within the period of 28 days after the end of the objection period.



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chris Bradshaw  
 Director of Education and Lifelong Learning  
 For Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council  
 Date: 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015

### **Explanatory Note of the Proposals**

RCTCBC has recently undertaken a comprehensive consultation exercise in respect of the proposed reorganisation of school provision in the Rhondda and Tonyrefail areas of the County Borough, as part of its proposals under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme. The overall proposals seek to:

- Create two sixth form centres of excellence, based at Treorchy and Tonyrefail;
- Create two new 3-16 schools, in Porth and Tonypany, and one 3-19 school, in Tonyrefail, which will take a radically different approach to education in the areas, by sharing both primary and secondary sector resources;
- Increase the availability of Welsh medium primary provision in Porth and Tonyrefail;
- Improve the learning environment of primary aged pupils with additional learning needs.

The particular proposals in respect of the Porth area are:

- Close Porth County Community School sixth form and transfer the sixth form provision to Treorchy Comprehensive School and a new 3-19 school in Tonyrefail;
- Close Porth County Community School, Llwynelyn Infants' School, Porth Infants' School, and Porth Junior School and create a new 3-16 middle school on the site of the current Porth County Community School;
- Provide a 1,140 capacity 3-16 School for Porth, for 330 pupils aged 3-11 and 810 pupils aged 11-16. It is proposed that the Sixth Form provision previously accommodated at Porth County shall transfer to the new proposed Middle School to be created at Tonyrefail, which is the subject of a separate statutory notice.
- Transfer the Learning Support Class at Ysgol Yr Eos, and the three Learning Support Classes at Porth County Community School to the new 3-16 school at Porth, to create specialist provision for the four key stages. The new proposed Community Middle School will provide SEN provision for children with Communication Disorders and Autistic Spectrum Disorders.
- Increase the capacity of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg, Llwynelyn by approximately 100 places, utilising the site of the existing Llwynelyn Infants' School.

To achieve this change the Council is proposing to invest £7.4m to improve the buildings at Porth County to ensure they meet the learning and safeguarding requirements of a 3-16 school. It is proposed that a further £0.4m will be invested to improve the school buildings at the YGG Llwynceilyn site.

From September 2018 for the purposes of secondary education provision (11-16) the catchment areas of the former Aberllechau and Pontygwaith Primary Schools (currently in the Porth Community School catchment area) will be added to the catchment area of the Ferndale Community School. This change formed part of the consultation.

The Council is also currently undertaking public consultation in respect of possible changes to its Home to School Transport policy. The consultation proposes the introduction of a charge for the discretionary elements of the Home to School Transport Policy that are over and above the requirements placed upon the Council by the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. Details of the proposals and how you may give your views on them can be obtained from the Council website [www.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk) or emailing [HTSconsultation@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:HTSconsultation@rctcbc.gov.uk)

### **Notice 3 – Tonypandy**

#### **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Education Directorate, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon CF45 4UQ

Notice is given in accordance with sections 41 and 43 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC), having consulted such persons as required, propose to:

1. discontinue the following schools currently maintained by RCTCBC::

- Tonypandy Community College, Llewellyn Street, Penygraig, CF40 1HQ
- Tonypandy Primary School, Primrose Street, Tonypandy, CF40 1BQ
- Penygraig Junior School, Hendrecafn Road, Penygraig, CF40 1LW
- Penygraig Infants School, Hendrecafn Road, Penygraig, CF40 1LJ
- Ysgol yr Eos, Bishop Street, Penygraig, CF40 1PQ

2. establish a new English Medium Community Middle School, to be maintained by RCTCBC at Llewellyn St, Penygraig, on the site of Tonypandy Community College, for boys and girls aged 3 to 16 years. Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council undertook a period of consultation before deciding to publish this proposal. A consultation report containing a summary of the issues raised by consultees, the proposer's responses and the views of Estyn is available on the Council's website at [www.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk).

It is proposed to implement the proposals on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018.

RCTBC will be the admission authority for the new community school, and the admission arrangements will make no provision for pupil banding.

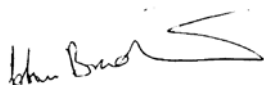


It is proposed that pupils currently attending the five schools listed above should transfer to the new Tonypany Middle School, on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018, subject to parental preference. This school is proposed to be an English Medium Community Middle School. Building adaptations and other modifications will be undertaken prior to this date to ensure the accommodation is suitable for the pupils of the age ranges indicated.

The proposed capacity of the Primary Department of the new Middle School shall be 480 pupils, which includes Nursery provision for at least 60 children. The admission number will be 60 for pupils age 4 (Reception Class). The proposed capacity for the Secondary Department shall be 780 pupils and the admission number will be 96 for pupils age 11 (Year 7) so that the secondary department will in effect be able to accommodate 156 pupils per year group.

Pupils will be provided with transport in accordance with the Council's Transport Policy. At present, the Council provides free transport for pupils who attend their relevant Primary, Infant or Junior School, if they reside beyond 1 ½ miles walking distance to that school; this distance is 2 miles for pupils attending Secondary schools. The relevant school is the catchment school or the nearest school.

Within a period of 28 days after the publication of these proposals, that is to say by 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2015 any person may object to the proposals. Objections should be sent to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, School Planning Section, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon, Mountain Ash CF45 4UQ, e-mail [schoolplanning@rctednet.net](mailto:schoolplanning@rctednet.net). RCTCBC will publish a summary of any such objections made (and not withdrawn in writing) within the objection period, together with their observations thereon, within the period of 28 days after the end of the objection period.



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chris Bradshaw

Director of Education and Lifelong Learning

For Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015

### **Explanatory Note of the Proposals**

RCTCBC has recently undertaken a comprehensive consultation exercise in respect of the proposed reorganisation of school provision in the Rhondda and Tonyrefail areas of the County Borough, as part of its proposals under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme. The overall proposals seek to:

- Create two sixth form centres of excellence, based at Treorchy and Tonyrefail;
- Create two new 3-16 schools, in Porth and Tonypany, and one 3-19 school, in Tonyrefail, which will take a radically different approach to education in the areas, by sharing both primary and secondary sector resources;
- Increase the availability of Welsh medium primary provision in Porth and Tonyrefail;

- Improve the learning environment of primary aged pupils with additional learning needs.

The effect of the particular proposals in respect of the Tonypandy area are:

- Close Tonypandy Community College and make sufficient sixth form provision at a new 3-19 school in Tonyrefail;
- Close Tonypandy Community College, Penygraig Infants' School, Penygraig Junior School, Tonypandy Primary School, Ysgol Yr Eos and create a new 3-16 middle school on the site of the current Tonypandy Community College;
- Provide a 1,260 capacity 3-16 School for Tonypandy, for 480 pupils aged 3-11 and 780 pupils aged 11-16;
- Transfer the Learning Support Class from Ysgol Yr Eos, and the three Learning Support Classes at Porth County Community School to the new 3-16 school at Porth (which is the subject of a separate statutory notice), to create specialist provision for the four key stages for pupils with Communications Disorders and Autistic Spectrum Disorders;
- Relocate the specialist primary pupil referral unit provision at the Tai Centre to the site of the current Ysgol Yr Eos.
- Transfer the Sixth Form provision previously accommodated at Tonypandy Community College to the new proposed Middle School to be created at Tonyrefail, which is the subject of a separate statutory notice.

To achieve this change the Council is proposing to invest £8.6m to improve the buildings at Tonypandy to ensure they meet the learning and safeguarding requirements of a 3-16 school.

From September 2018 SEN provision currently provided by Ysgol Yr Eos will be provided by the new 3-16 school to be established on the site of Porth Community School.

From September 2018 for the purposes of secondary education provision (11-16) the part of the catchment area of Williamstown Primary School that is currently in the Tonyrefail Comprehensive School catchment area will be added to the catchment area of the new 3-16 school on the site of Tonypandy Community College. This change formed part of the consultation.

From September 2018 for the purposes of secondary education provision (11-16) the catchment areas of Gelli and Bodringallt Primary Schools that are currently in the Tonypandy Community College catchment area will be added to the catchment area of Treorchy Comprehensive School. This change formed part of the consultation.

The Council is also currently undertaking public consultation in respect of possible changes to its Home to School Transport policy. The consultation proposes the introduction of a charge for the discretionary elements of the Home to School Transport Policy that are over and above the requirements placed upon the Council by the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure

2008. Details of the proposals and how you may give your views on them can be obtained from the Council website [www.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk) or emailing [HTSconsultation@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:HTSconsultation@rctcbc.gov.uk)

#### **Notice 4 – Tonyrefail**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
Education Directorate, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon CF45 4UQ

Notice is given in accordance with sections 41, 42 and 43 of the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC), having consulted such persons as required, propose to:

1. discontinue the following schools currently maintained by RCTCBC:
  - Tonyrefail Comprehensive School ,Gilfach Road, Tonyrefail, CF39 8HG
  - Tonyrefail Primary School Martin Crescent, Tonyrefail, CF39 8NT
2. establish a new English Medium Community Middle School, to be maintained by RCTCBC at Gilfach Road, Tonyrefail etc, on the site of Tonyrefail Comprehensive School, for boys and girls aged 3 to 19 years.
3. make a regulated alteration to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tonyrefail by transferring the school to the site currently occupied by Tonyrefail Primary School.

The new Middle School will provide SEN provision for pupils with complex learning difficulties.

RCTCBC undertook a period of consultation before deciding to publish this proposal. A consultation report containing a summary of the issues raised by consultees, the proposer's responses and the views of Estyn is available on the Council's website at [www.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk).

It is proposed to implement the proposals on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018.

It is proposed that pupils currently attending the two schools listed above should transfer to the new Tonyrefail Middle School, on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018, subject to parental preference. This school is proposed to be an English Medium Community Middle School. New school buildings will be provided to ensure that all accommodation is suitable to meet the needs and requirements of pupils of all ages that will attend this school.

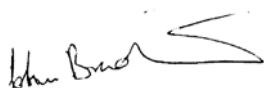
RCTBC will be the admission authority for the new school which will make no provision for pupil banding.

The proposed capacity of the Primary Department of the new Middle School shall be 300 pupils, which includes Nursery provision for at least 38 children. The admission number will be 38 at age 4 (Reception Class). The proposed capacity for the Secondary Department for pupils aged 11-16 will be 690 pupils and the admission number will be 100 age 11 (Year 7)

so that each year group from 7-11 will accommodate up to 138 pupils.. There will be up to 500 places available for post-16 students, the admission number will be 250 age 17 (Year 12).

Pupils will be provided with transport in accordance with the Council's Transport Policy. At present, the Council provides free transport for pupils who attend their relevant Primary, Infant or Junior School, if they reside beyond 1 ½ miles walking distance to that school; this distance is 2 miles for pupils attending Secondary schools. The relevant school is the catchment school or the nearest school.

Within a period of 28 days after the publication of these proposals, that is to say by 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2015 any person may object to the proposals. Objections should be sent to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, School Planning Section, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon, Mountain Ash CF45 4UQ, e-mail [schoolplanning@rctednet.net](mailto:schoolplanning@rctednet.net). RCTCBC will publish a summary of any such objections made (and not withdrawn in writing) within the objection period, together with their observations thereon, within the period of 28 days after the end of the objection period.



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chris Bradshaw  
 Director of Education and Lifelong Learning  
 For Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council  
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### **Explanatory Note of the Proposals**

RCTCBC has recently undertaken a comprehensive consultation exercise in respect of the proposed reorganisation of school provision in the Rhondda and Tonyrefail areas of the County Borough, as part of its proposals under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme. The overall proposals seek to :

- Create two sixth form centres of excellence, based at Treorchy and Tonyrefail;
- Create two new 3-16 schools, in Porth and Tonypandy, and one 3-19 school, in Tonyrefail, which will take a radically different approach to education in the areas, by sharing both primary and secondary sector resources;
- Increase the availability of Welsh medium primary provision in Porth and Tonyrefail;
- Improve the learning environment of primary aged pupils with additional learning needs.

The particular proposals in respect of the Tonyrefail area are:

- Close Tonyrefail Comprehensive School and Tonyrefail Primary School and create a new 3-19 middle school on the site of the current Tonyrefail Comprehensive School;
- Provide a 1,490 capacity 3-19 School for Tonyrefail, for 300 pupils aged 3-11, 690 pupils aged 11-16 and 500 post 16 students. The Sixth Form provision will be

sufficient to accommodate demand formerly accommodated at Tonypandy Community College and Porth County Community School, which shall transfer to the new proposed Middle School to be created at Tonyrefail. Proposals relating to these schools are the subject of separate statutory notices. It is proposed that the Sixth Form provision at the new Middle School will be able to accommodate up to 500 post-16 students.

- Transfer the Learning Support Class at Tonyrefail Comprehensive School to the new 3-19 school for Tonyrefail.
- Relocate Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tonyrefail to the site of the current Tonyrefail Primary School.

To achieve this change the Council is proposing to invest £44.8m to build a new 3-19 school at the Tonyrefail Comprehensive School site, and upgrade the existing Tonyrefail Primary School site to ensure they are 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning environments.

From September 2018 for the purposes of secondary education provision (11-16) the part of the catchment area of Williamstown Primary School that is currently in the Tonyrefail Comprehensive School catchment area will be added to the catchment area of the new 3-16 school on the site of Tonypandy Community College. This change formed part of the consultation.

The Council is also currently undertaking public consultation in respect of possible changes to its Home to School Transport policy. The consultation proposes the introduction of a charge for the discretionary elements of the Home to School Transport Policy that are over and above the requirements placed upon the Council by the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. Details of the proposals and how you may give your views on them can be obtained from the Council website [www.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk) or emailing [HTSconsultation@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:HTSconsultation@rctcbc.gov.uk)

### **3. Details of Objections Received**

- A total of 19 objections were received by the published closing time and date, namely 5pm on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2015. They consisted of 19 letters and e-mails, from:
  - Welsh Liberal Democrats, RCT
  - Plaid Cymru, RCT
  - Save our Rhondda Schools group
  - Assembly Members, South Wales Central (2)
  - Member of school staff
  - Retired headteachers (2)
  - Parents of pupils currently attending schools in the area (3)
  - Grandparents of pupils currently attending schools in the area (2)
  - Parent of child due to start school in the area
  - Local residents (3)
  - School Governor at one of the schools included in the proposal
  - National Union of Teachers, RCT

#### 4. The Objections and our Responses.

- **3– 16/19 schools will not work; you cannot have children of such varying ages accommodated in a single school.**

Our consultation document provided detailed evidence on how this model of provision, known as a 'Middle School' can operate successfully. Information on similar models, in Lampeter, Scotland and the English Academies was provided, together with details of an actual example of this provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf, namely Ysgol Llanhari. The Headteacher of Ysgol Llanhari was present at two of our 'open evening' events, she presented information on how her school operates and answered many questions put to her by attendees.

We also provided attendees details on how a similar provision in RCT, at the Garth Olwg Community Campus (where a Primary and Secondary school share a site, buildings and facilities, together with a public library, day nursery and community learning facility) operates and works successfully. Whilst the two schools at Garth Olwg Campus are independent schools, the play areas of each school are adjacent to each other and the Year 6 class is based in the secondary school, with no concerns expressed by staff, parents or most importantly, the children attending these schools.

- **Safeguarding concerns at 3 – 16/19 schools; younger children being influenced or even put at risk by being in close contact with teenagers.**

We outlined in our consultation document and reiterated at the open evenings that the safeguarding and wellbeing of children is the highest priority for the local authority. The Primary age children in a Middle School will be completely segregated from the Secondary age pupils and no unauthorised or unsupervised 'transfer' of pupils between the two sectors will take place; there will be secured doors etc, only accessible by keypads or 'fobs' to prevent free movement by children who are not accompanied by staff. This can be further assisted by recommended 'staggered' start and end times of the school day (e.g. Secondary pupils will arrive and leave at least 30 minutes before the Primary children; lunch and other breaks will also be held at different times). The two age ranges will have separate play areas and outside space and separate entrances and exits to and from the school buildings. Again, an actual example of how this operates successfully at Ysgol Llanhari has been provided.

- **Primary schools not included in the 'Middle School' model will be at a disadvantage. Children are not being treated equally.**

We believe that the key to ensuring that this does not occur is improved transition between all schools 'associated' with the Secondary department of the new school. We will ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to ensure that work is undertaken in this area. We consider that the other partner/associate primary schools will also benefit from the proposal. In Lampeter, where there is a similar arrangement, the independent pilot

evaluation has highlighted that the remaining primary schools have sought to strengthen their relationship and transition arrangements with the primary and secondary phase of the 3-19 school, in order that their pupils benefit fully from the future all-through developments and to ensure that they will not be disadvantaged when they join the new school in Year 7.

If all the associated schools in the community work together on an effective transition plan, there is no reason why pupils attending other schools should not receive the same level of transition and support provided to the Primary children attending the Middle School, including use of the school's facilities.

- **No evidence provided to support the 3 – 16/19 model of education delivery**

Our consultation document gave clear information on a school in Rhondda Cynon Taf that already operates this model; in addition, the Headteacher of the school in question, Ysgol Llanhari, actually attended some of the consultation events held to give her personal views, with evidence, of how this model is working very successfully at her school. We also provided evidence of how this model is working, again successfully in a school in Lampeter and in the school system in both Scotland and England.

- **Attendance rates will fall**

No documented evidence to support this statement has been provided, it is therefore considered to be personal opinion only.

We do however have actual data that contradicts this statement. We have recently undertaken the reorganisation of Secondary schools in Aberdare and the reorganisation of Primary schools in Abercynon; in both examples three existing schools closed and were replaced by a single new school. Walking distances to the new schools and associated issues such as the potential impact on attendance were raised as objections to these proposals, as they have with the proposals currently being considered. Actual attendance data shows that current attendance levels at both the new Aberdare Community Secondary School and Abercynon Community Primary School are in fact higher than they were at the schools they replaced (Aberdare Girls, Aberdare High and Blaengwawr Comprehensives and Carnetown, Abertaf Primaries and Abercynon Infants).

- **Increased traffic at the Middle Schools will pose a health and safety risk; all three schools included in these proposals have poor access and parking at present.**

In any school closure proposal, traffic management is a concern. Initial traffic assessments have been already undertaken and if these proposals progress, detailed traffic assessments will be undertaken at every site, to assist in preparing possible resolutions to the issues raised. All routes to the schools will be fully assessed using national criteria used by the 'Safe Routes to Schools' initiative and every effort will be made to ensure appropriate improvements, where possible, are implemented.

The initial plans displayed at our open events did give information on proposed highway improvements both on and in the vicinity of all of the school sites. Senior officers from the Council's Highways Division attended all of the open events and provided information and answers to questions wherever possible. The initial plans, presented ideas to improve the access into the three proposed middle schools. These included opportunities to significantly improve the existing pupil drop-off, car parking, access points and the management of vehicles to and from the school sites.

- **The distances to the Middle Schools are too far for young children to walk and involve negotiation of busy main roads and hilly terrain. Taking education provision further away from the communities it serves will be damaging**

We have undertaken checks of the potential distances Primary age children may have to walk (if this is their parents chosen method of travelling to school) to the new Middle School sites. The distances from the outer limits of the primary catchment areas for the schools are as follows:

Porth (residence at Nythbran Terrace, Llwyncelyn) – 1.7 miles by road, 1.49 miles on foot  
 Tonypandy (residence at Appletree Road, Dinas) – 1.7 miles by road, 1.58 miles on foot  
 Tonyrefail (residence at Collenna Road, Tonyrefail) – 1 mile by road and on foot.

We do not consider the short distances outlined above to be 'taking education away from villages and communities' as claimed by the objectors.

All walking distances have been calculated using routes deemed to be available following assessment using national criteria published by Road Safety GB. This Council currently provides free transportation to Primary pupils who reside more than 1.5 miles walking distance from school. The above information indicates that only a limited number of addresses in the Tonypandy catchment may qualify under this distance criterion. The distance **currently** used by RCT for determination of free transport provision for primary children is more generous than that dictated by national legislation, which is 2 miles for primary children. Therefore, if the Council's home to school transport policy was in accordance with the legislative requirements, no child would qualify for free transport provision.

Many of the routes to schools in RCT involve the negotiation of steep hills and hilly terrain; this is an accepted part of life in valley communities. We do not provide transportation in such circumstances as this is not one of the road safety criteria used to assess whether a route is dangerous or not. All routes involved in these proposals will be properly assessed for safety using the aforementioned national criteria and in accordance with the Welsh Government's Learner Travel Measure, consideration of transport provision will be made in respect of any such routes that do not meet the standard to be considered as available or safe under these criteria.



- **Concern at overcrowding on trains taking pupils to Treorchy Comprehensive and other related safety concerns at Ton Pentre station**

It must be noted that this Council does not provide rail transport to Treorchy Comprehensive School as part of its home to school transport provision; in addition, the area of Ton Pentre does not qualify for transport provision in any case as it does not meet the current distance criteria of 2 miles. This mode of travel is therefore the choice and full responsibility of parents and this Council has no input or powers of intervention over it.

- **Concern regarding the proposal to create a 6<sup>th</sup> Form College at Treorchy with an extra 500 students attending and the impact this will have on local residents, especially car parking**

It has been explained to this objector that this proposal does not involve the creation of a 6<sup>th</sup> form College; neither will it mean an additional 500 students attending. The existing 6<sup>th</sup> form, which already accommodates 360 students will be expanded to cater for up to 500. Car parking will also be looked at as part of the proposals for this school.

- **Provision for Primary pupils in Porth will not be in their catchment area**

Catchment areas are also being revised as part of these proposals, this is clearly stated in the consultation document. Large scale maps were displayed at all of the public consultation events depicting the proposed changes also. The response to the question overleaf clearly depicts the relatively short travelling distances these proposed changes will mean for pupils attending the new schools.

- **Closure of Primary schools within a community is not a positive move; communities will be damaged**

Primary education provision will still be delivered within the communities the new proposed Middle schools will serve as already advised. The relatively short distances between the current Primary schools and the new proposed school sites have already been provided.

- **The secondary school sites (at Porth and Tonypany) are too small to accommodate the number of children proposed to attend the new Middle schools**

We will ensure that the accommodation provided at these schools, for pupils of both Primary and Secondary age is suitable to meet the educational needs of all of the pupils that will attend the school in the future, and will offer sufficient space in accordance with Welsh Government requirements. Our proposals will involve considerable capital expenditure (under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools initiative) to remodel and refurbish these school sites to ensure their suitability for pupils of an extended age range. This will involve providing additional teaching accommodation that will be specifically designed and built to cater for younger children.

It is also important to note that:

- Porth and Tonypandy secondary schools currently have a high number of surplus places – Porth County had 30.1% (441 places) of surplus capacity as at January 2014, and Tonypandy Community College had 20.4% (207 places) of surplus capacity;
  - These proposals involve the removal of the 6<sup>th</sup> forms at these schools, which will release accommodation, 222 places in Porth and 185 places in Tonypandy. This information is contained within the consultation document that was widely circulated in October 2014.
- **The plans that were presented at the consultation events were not final versions and did not depict exactly how the new schools will look once complete.**

We made it very clear that the plans we presented at all of the events held were initial drafts of concepts and ideas only at this very early consultation stage. Many of the ‘artists impressions’ presented as examples of classrooms and other accommodation to be provided were in fact actual examples of similar accommodation already provided at new or refurbished schools in RCT, this was clearly explained.

We stressed to all persons attending these events that our plans at this stage were draft only as this is a consultation stage in respect of proposals that have not yet been agreed; to have presented firm, definite plans at such an early stage of the process would have given the impression that we are pre-empting the decisions of the Welsh Ministers, in addition to have presented finalised plans at this stage would have incurred considerable expenditure which may be wasted should the proposals be rejected.

This is the approach we have adopted with other recent school reorganisation proposals such as those in Aberdare and Ynysboeth, where the new school buildings are of a high quality but look very different from the initial artist designs the Council originally presented during the first consultation period.

- **Why is a new building being proposed for Tonyrefail, but not for Tonypandy or Porth?**

All building works being proposed reflect and take in to account the information and data held by the Council on building condition, sufficiency, suitability and statistical information in respect of pupil numbers.

The school buildings at Porth and Tonypandy are in a significantly better standard and condition than those at Tonyrefail. Our plans for Porth and Tonypandy involve major remodelling, refurbishment and repair of existing buildings, to ensure that their facilities meet the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools standards and more importantly, that they are suitable and sufficient to cater for an extended age range of pupils. We believe that this can be achieved at both sites with major capital investment that does not involve a complete re-build. This has been the case at Ysgol Llanhari where the former sixth form centre, built in the 1960’s of CLASP design, has been converted into a 240 place primary school that meets the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools standards.

With regard to the Tonyrefail site, we are restricted with the amount of remodelling and refurbishment of existing buildings we may undertake by two main factors; firstly, the Lower School building has listed building status which severely constrains the amount of physical alterations we can make to it. Secondly, the Upper School building is a three storey CLASP construction which is in a relatively poor condition overall, and difficult to remodel or refurbish due to the presence of asbestos in its internal structures. The site is the largest of all of the schools under consideration at the current time, making it more favourable and suitable for a major redevelopment such as a new school building.

- **Surplus places will not be removed with these proposals**

Surplus capacity at the Secondary school sites will be removed by the remodelling of the sites (which also could involve demolition of buildings) to accommodate pupils of Primary school age; in addition, closure of the Primary schools will also remove the surplus capacity that exists at those schools presently. The schools will all have sufficient capacity to meet current and future forecasted demand for places from within their catchment areas.

- **All Secondary schools should have 6<sup>th</sup> forms. Removing them could result in major recruitment difficulties, as the best staff will not want to work in a school without a 6<sup>th</sup> form. Pupils will have further to travel, could decide to leave education as a result. Creates inequality.**

Our consultation document (pages 14 and 15) clearly outlined what we considered to be the educational benefits to learners in creating larger, more viable 6<sup>th</sup> form provisions. We clarified and clearly explained all of this at the meetings held at all five comprehensive schools included in these proposals, these meetings involves the staff, governors and members of the School Councils (pupils). We also outlined the educational, practical and financial concerns and difficulties experienced with the current pattern of provision. This included setting out the educational improvements we expect the larger sixth form provisions should achieve, which include a greater range of courses available to learners, larger, viable and stimulating classes and greater financial stability for the 6<sup>th</sup> form provision, with no 'subsidisation' from the budgets provided for education at Key Stages 3 and 4.

Pupils will receive transport to the 6<sup>th</sup> form provisions in accordance with our published Learner Travel Policy (this was also made clear at the consultation meetings). We have also clearly advised that changes to our transport policy are being consulted upon at the current time (details are included in the statutory notices).

- **My son will have to change schools for his final A level year only, causing him considerable disruption**

This is not the case. We made it clear in our consultation documentation that, if these proposals are agreed, transitional arrangements will be put in place from September 2017, so that no student will have to transfer schools mid way through their A Level studies.

- **If pupils from Ferndale choose to attend a school in Aberdare instead of Treorchy for post-16 provision, will this threaten the viability of Treorchy Comprehensive?**

Parents and learners are able to exercise their right of choice with regard to post-16 provision and we would actively support them to do this. Treorchy is already a popular and successful school (it is also the largest school by pupil population in RCT), so we do not consider that it will be adversely affected by this issue in any way.

- **A significant minority of pupils will not continue into post 16 provision as it will involve travelling**

As with the comment above, there is no documented evidence to support this statement; this was also not raised as a concern by school pupils in the meetings held with the respective School Councils during the consultation period.

- **The consultation process was flawed. (in respect of persons consulted, lack of advertising/publicity of events held and quality/clarity of documentation produced, including the Consultation Document).**

The consultation was undertaken strictly in accordance with legislation outlined in the School Organisation Code. The consultation document was produced to fully comply with this guidance and met all statutory requirements. All prescribed consultees outlined in the Code were properly consulted and provided with copies of the document, or given details of how it could be accessed. All supplementary documents, including the Community, Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessments followed the prescribed format recommended in the Code and were produced, and therefore available, from the start of the consultation process.

We do **not** agree with the criticism made by some objectors that the consultation document was difficult to read, or the statement made (by the Save the Rhondda Schools group) that *'it is not unreasonable to assume that in a deprived area such as the Rhondda where education and skills attainment is recognisably low a significant number of people did not have the capacity to fully digest such a document.'* In addition to receiving hard copies of the document (or advice of how to obtain it, including website links), all consultees had full information regarding the various consultation events organised (detailed in the consultation document), where Council officers were available to answer questions in person and to provide any additional information or clarification as required.

The consultation document was available to the wider community via the Council website, as was the questionnaire for any person to forward their views and opinions on the proposals. A series of consultation events were held, at the local secondary schools and at a

local leisure centre, all of which were completely accessible and were open to any person who wished to attend. Attendance numbers at each open event were as follows:

- Treorchy Comprehensive School (6<sup>th</sup> form), 12/1/15 – 36
- Tonyrefail Comprehensive School (6<sup>th</sup> form), 13/1/15 – 52
- Porth Community School (3 – 16 proposal), 20/1/15 – 113
- Tonyrefail Comprehensive School (3 – 19 proposal), 21/1/15 – 35
- Tonypandy Community College (3 – 16 proposal), 22/1/15 – 240
- Ystrad Sports Centre (all proposals), 18/2/15 – 80

Taking into account the length of the consultation the number of meetings held with pupils, parents, staff, governors and the wider community, the Council has exceeded the expectations of the School Organisation Code. Indeed the Code is quite clear in stating that there is no requirement for the proposer to hold consultation meetings.

- **Council officers were selective in determining which responses were included in the Consultation Report; only the supportive quotes from Estyn, for example were included.**

The School Organisation Code clearly states that the consultation report should contain a **summary** of all of the issues raised by consultees; it does not require individual responses to be actually published or reproduced in full. We also do not provide any personal data on consultation respondents as this would breach data protection law. We consider that the Consultation Report **does** respond to the main issues that arose from the consultation. It should be noted that copies of all actual objections received will be forwarded to the Welsh Government for consideration in their entirety, as well as being summarised in this Objections Report. The Consultation Report also included 7 appendices in which further information and details were provided, including the **full** responses provided by Estyn in respect of their views of these proposals.

- **The 4 Welsh Medium schools in RCT will be greatly affected by these proposals. Why were they not included?**

This proposal does not involve any changes whatsoever to the structure or organisation of the 4 Welsh Medium Secondary Schools in RCT, which is why they have not been included in our consultation process (although Ysgol Gyfun y Cymer was consulted due to its close proximity to the schools involved). The relatively long distances between the schools makes collaboration and consortium arrangements for Key Stage 4 and post-16 provision difficult and impractical. We do not agree, therefore that these schools will be 'greatly affected', as is being claimed.

- **Why don't you simply create new Primary schools in these areas and leave the Comprehensives as they are.**

Our consultation document clearly outlined our rationale behind these proposals, with evidence as to why we consider the 3 – 16/19 model of provision to be our preferred

method of delivery in these areas. We have given clear information on the work we propose to undertake to all sites to ensure that they have sufficient and suitable accommodation and capacity to cater for children of all age ranges attending that school. No account appears to have been taken of the considerable capital costs of making the alternative provision that has been suggested and neither does it take in to account the fact that there is no building land or surplus site of the size required (to comply with the relevant school building regulations) to construct a large Primary school facility in either Porth or Tonypany.

- **What will the empty school sites and buildings be used for?**

It has been made clear that, as these are proposals only at this stage, no decisions have been taken on this aspect. The future of any schools sites that may subsequently become surplus will be considered in accordance with the agreed Council protocol regarding such matters.

## **5. Conclusion**

As outlined during the consultation process, these proposals involve the removal of 6<sup>th</sup> form provision from three schools, as well as the closure of others or extension to provision. The School Organisation Code, statutory document 006/2013 clearly states that any proposal affecting 6<sup>th</sup> form provision requires the approval of the Welsh Ministers. Details of all objections received have therefore been forwarded to the Welsh Ministers, in compliance with the Code and we await their determination of the outcome of our proposals.