

AGENDA ITEM 3

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

17th MARCH 2016

IMPROVING PRIMARY EDUCATION PROVISION IN LLWYNYPIA

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING (COUNCILLOR MRS E HANAGAN)

**Authors: Chris Bradshaw, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
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01443 744227.**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Members of the outcome of the recent publication of a statutory notice in respect of a proposal to close Ynyscynon Nursery School and transfer its pupils to Pontrhondda Primary School, subject to parental preference, in September, 2016. Building work to improve the facilities at Pontrhondda Primary School and to create appropriate provision for children of Nursery age will be undertaken during the forthcoming summer holidays.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note that several objections were received in response to the publication of the statutory notice to progress this proposal. An Objections Report, which summarises the objections received and the Council's response to them is attached to this report, as Appendix 1;
- 2.2 Agree to implement the proposal to close Ynyscynon Nursery School and transfer its pupils to Pontrhondda Primary School, subject to parental preference, in September, 2016, noting that works to improve the site and buildings of Pontrhondda Primary will be undertaken prior to this date.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To implement the proposal in accordance with the process outlined in Welsh Government legislative guidance (the School Organisation Code).

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Members will recall that, at the meeting of Cabinet held on 7th January 2016, approval was given to publish a statutory notice to progress the proposal to close Ynyscynon Nursery School and transfer its pupils to Pontrhondda Primary School, subject to parental preference, in September, 2016. Work to undertake improvements to the site and facilities at Pontrhondda Primary, which will include the creation of provision for children of Nursery age will commence in the near future, with the majority of such work being undertaken during the forthcoming school summer holidays.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Equality and Community Impact Assessments were prepared in respect of this proposal and were published on the Council's website together with the consultation document that outlined the proposal in detail. Copies of both reports have been provided to Cabinet previously.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The consultation process in respect of this proposal was undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, which was introduced on 1st October 2013. Consultation took place between 2nd November 2015 and 31st December 2015 and full details of this process was published in a Consultation Report, which was presented at the meeting of Cabinet held on 7th January and subsequently published on the Council website.

7. THE STATUTORY PROCESS

- 7.1 The statutory notice for this proposal was published on 29th January 2016 and a 28 day period, to 29th February 2016 was allowed for the receipt of objections, in line with legislation. This period was extended slightly to account for the half term holiday and school Inset days. Several objections have been received, these are summarised and appropriately responded to in the Objections Report, that is attached at Appendix 1. It must be noted that the objections received are in essence the same issues that were raised during consultation, which have already been responded to in the Consultation Report that was published on 25th January 2016.

- 7.2 Subject to a decision by Cabinet to approve the proposals, the Council will have to publish the attached Draft Objections Report. Publication must be undertaken within 7 days of a Cabinet decision to approve the proposals.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This proposal to close Ynyscynon Nursery School and transfer its pupils to Pontrhondda Primary School will realise annual revenue savings of £171,000. In closing a school, redundancy costs may arise, as the number of staff required in the replacement school may be less than for the separate schools. The Council seeks to minimise this cost by redeploying displaced members of staff wherever possible. Therefore, it is not possible at this point in the process to identify any possible redundancy costs.
- 8.2 Building improvements will be made to the site and building of Pontrhondda Primary School, to improve the accommodation and facilities of this school and to ensure that it has appropriate provision for children of Nursery age. It is estimated that the cost of this work will be approximately £200K and will be funded by the Council from within its existing capital resources. It must be noted that Pontrhondda is the 'associated' school to Ynyscynon Nursery and is the school that the Ynyscynon pupils would ordinarily transfer to for their education at Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2. The schools are located just 0.6 miles apart and there are no associated additional transport costs as a result.
- 8.3 The other facilities based at the Ynyscynon site, namely Flying Start and day care nursery provision are proposed to remain, they are not affected by the proposal to close the school.

9 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP.

- 9.1 This particular proposal forms part of the larger school reorganisation proposals that form our 21st Century Schools Programme for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Members are asked to formally approve the proposal as consulted upon and agree to close Ynyscynon Nursery School and transfer its pupils to Pontrhondda Primary School, subject to parental preference, on 1st September 2016.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Children and Young People

Appendices to the report are:

- *Objections Report*

Contact Officer

*Julie Hadley, School Organisation Manager
01443 744227*

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT FOR CABINET

17th MARCH 2016

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG
LEARNING IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR
EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING (COUNCILLOR MRS E HANAGAN)**

Item: IMPROVING PRIMARY EDUCATION PROVISION IN LLWYNYPIA

Background Papers

Cabinet – 7th January, 2016

Officer to contact:
Julie Hadley, School Organisation Manager
01443 744227

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APPENDIX 1**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****PROPOSAL TO CLOSE YNYSYCNON NURSERY SCHOOL****OBJECTIONS REPORT****1. Purpose of the Objections 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 statutory notice published for this proposal, which was published on 29th January 2016 for a period of 28 days; and
- Detail all objections received and the local authority's response to them.

2. The Statutory Notice

The statutory notice to progress this proposal, which was published on 29th January 2016 is reproduced below:

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

Notice is given in accordance with sections 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:

discontinue Ynyscynon Nursery School, Church Street, Llwynypia, Tonypany CF40 2ND. The school is currently maintained by RCTCBC.

make a regulated alteration to Pontrhondda Primary School, Pontrhondda Road, Llwynypia, Tonypany CF40 2SZ to increase the age range of the school from 4 to 11 years, to 3 to 11 years, thus establishing nursery provision. When implemented the school will have 21 part-time places for nursery age pupils.

The schools are currently maintained by RCTCBC.

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 RCTCBC's website at <http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/GetInvolved/Consultations/Schoolconsultations.aspx>

It is proposed to implement the proposals on 1st September 2016.

It is proposed that pupils currently attending Ynyscynon Nursery School will transfer to Pontrhondda Primary School, on 1st September 2016, subject to parental preference. This school is an English Medium Community Primary School. No interim arrangements will be required as the school will be ready to receive the pupils on the aforementioned date.

The capacity of Pontrhondda Primary school is 153 pupils, and it is proposed to make additional provision for at least 21 Nursery aged children, funded on a part time basis. The admission number for pupils aged 4 to the Reception Class at the school in the first school year in which the proposals have been implemented will remain at 21.

Pupils will be provided with transport in accordance with RCTCBC's Transport Policy. From September 2016, RCTCBC will provide free transport for pupils who attend their relevant Primary, Infant or Junior School, if they reside beyond 2 miles walking distance to that school. The relevant school is the catchment school or the nearest school. It must be noted that no address within the catchment area of Pontrhondda Primary School is more than 2 miles from the school. The current catchment area of Ynyscynon Nursery School lies wholly within the catchment area of Pontrhondda Primary School.

Within a period of 28 days after the publication of these proposals, that is to say by 29th February 2016 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



Signed: _____
Chris Bradshaw
Chief Executive
For Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Date: 29th January 2016

Explanatory Note of the Proposals

It is proposed to close Ynyscynon Nursery School on 1st September 2016, with its pupils transferring to Pontrhondda Primary School on this date, subject to parental preference. Building works to remodel and reconfigure the school, to create provision for children of Nursery age will be undertaken prior to this date. It should also be noted that, although the admission limit for Nursery aged pupils has been set at the same figure as the admissions limit for pupils of statutory school age (21 pupils), the Headteacher will have the discretion to request that the local authority admit further pupils over this limit, should there be evidenced demand and providing that the school has sufficient capacity and resources to be able to make such additional provision.

This closure proposal relates to Ynyscynon Nursery School only; it is proposed that the other services that utilise the Ynyscynon Early Years Centre, including Flying Start and day care provision shall remain at the site should the school provision relocate.

3. Details of Objections Received

- A total of 3 objections were received by the published closing time and date, namely 5pm on 29th January 2016. They consisted of 3 letters and e-mails, from:

A parent of a current pupil

A parent of a prospective pupil

An Assembly Member for South Wales Central

4. The Objections and our Responses.

- **Ynyscynon Nursery has better outdoor facilities, including a woodland and an allotment area.**

It is accepted that Pontrhondda does not have these facilities and it will not be possible to replicate them completely. However, we have displayed our proposals to improve the outdoor environment at Pontrhondda Primary and this work will be done in conjunction with the school staff and governing body.

- **There is insufficient space at Pontrhondda to accommodate the Nursery age pupils.**

We have clearly indicated that the capacity of Pontrhondda will be increased by remodelling and improvement works. Plans depicting how this may be achieved were displayed at the open evening held on 15th December 2015.

- **There is not enough parking area outside Pontrhondda. How are you going to solve this issue?**

Unfortunately, this is a problem outside of most, if not all schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf and beyond and there is no straightforward solution. However, we are in discussions with the neighbouring College to provide parking on their site for school staff, in addition we will consider using a redundant parcel of land on the College site to provide a pick up/drop off facility for parents, which will hopefully alleviate this matter.

- **Ynyscynon has an excellent reputation.**

We have made no criticism of standards at Ynyscynon and recognise and understand that members of the community do not wish for it to close. Our consultation document outlines what we consider are the educational benefits of an 'all through' Primary education for children aged between 3 and 11 years, which is a key reason for consideration of this proposal. Pontrhondda Primary School is now the only Primary school in Rhondda Cynon Taf that does not have nursery class

provision. Pontrhonda is also the school that pupils from Ynyscynon ordinarily transfer to for their statutory education provision; it is located just 0.6 of a mile from Ynyscynon and it shares the same catchment area.

- **Concerns expressed at the loss of the day care and Flying Start provision**

We have made it clear during consultation that this proposal relates to the Nursery School only; it is the intention that all other facilities offered at the Early Years Centre shall continue to be provided.

- **The Nursery aged pupils currently have two classrooms which assists their learning. They will not have this space at Pontrhonda**

There are just 22 Nursery aged pupils on roll at the present time, plus 10 pre-Nursery pupils, this low number of children does not require two separate classroom areas; this is only possible at Ynyscynon due to the surplus capacity that exists in the school building. The proposal for Pontrhonda is to create a large, open plan Early Years unit which will have more than sufficient floorspace to accommodate the number of children who will attend. This method of provision for Early Years education is commonplace in other schools in the County Borough, where it has been shown to be successful in respect of the outcomes achieved by the pupils.

5. **Conclusion**

(to be inserted following the decision of Cabinet)