

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2017 - 2018

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 21st March 2018

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Agenda Item No. 5

School Organisation Proposals – The
Process and Outcomes

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the process that has to be followed when considering any changes to be made to the organisation of school provision, and of the progress and work undertaken by the Council in this regard since 1999.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise and comment on the information contained within this report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To raise Members awareness of the process required to be undertaken to make any alterations to the provision, or character of a school, and to note the work undertaken by Rhondda Cynon Taf to reorganise school provision and improve its school building stock over the past 19 years to work towards the expansion of Welsh medium education to meet our aspirations in our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). To continue with the Council's School Modernisation Programme in collaboration with Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools and Education Programme.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Members will be aware that, since 1999, the Council has made significant changes to school provision and improvements to the school building stock within Rhondda Cynon Taf. A comprehensive programme of school reorganisations has resulted in the closure of 33 schools and the amalgamation of a further 34; a total of 16 new primary schools have been created in this time, plus one new secondary school.

- 4.2 As a result of our proposals to reorganise schools in the Rhondda and Tonyrefail areas, together with the amalgamation of Cwmaman Infants and Glynhafod Junior Schools, all of which will be implemented in September 2018, a further 13 schools will be closed or amalgamated and one new primary, plus three new 'all through' 3–16/19 schools will open in their place.
- 4.3 The process to consider the possible creation of an 'all through' 3– 9 school at the Garth Olwg Community Campus, Church Village is currently underway; if this proposal is agreed this will result in the closure of a further 2 schools (Ysgol Gyfun Garth Olwg and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Garth Olwg), with a new 3–19 school opening in their place, in September 2019.
- 4.4 As part of our school reorganisation programme over the last 19 years we have also extended, and rebuilt several schools, on new sites, and refurbished/remodelled and significantly improved many more. These projects have been financed by the Council with support from the Welsh Government via several capital finance initiatives, including the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme, Band A.
- 4.5 Our programme of school modernisation will continue with projects identified as part of our Band B Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) which will run between 2019-2024. This will continue our programme of reducing surplus places and providing 21st Century learning environments.
- 4.6 One of the main criteria for allocation of funding under the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme is the requirement to expand Welsh medium education from pre-school to post 16; how we intend to address this is outlined and explained in our WESP:
- In line with Professor Donaldson's review of curriculum and assessment, the Council believes in the educational value of individuals being proficient in both English and Welsh and that the ability to use Welsh as well as English language skills can be a significant advantage for young people seeking work. In practice, this means that the Council seeks to ensure that Welsh language provision is of the highest quality and seeks to maintain the consistent focus on raising standards in learning Welsh language skills so that all pupils, in English or Welsh medium education, develop their bi-lingual skills. As such, the draft categorisation outcomes indicate that almost all of Rhondda Cynon Taf's Welsh medium schools have either improved or stayed consistent on results in January 2016.
 - Welsh Government have set a target of one million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050, an increase of around 438,000 people on the 2011 Census figures. The national draft Welsh Government Welsh Language Strategy identifies how vital the education system and transmission rates between parents and children are in achieving this target. Therefore, local WESPs provide the opportunity for local authorities and their partners to plan the actions needed over the next

three years to work towards increasing the number of Welsh speakers.

Projects aimed at achieving these goals are included in our Band B SOP.

- 4.7 A list of all of the aforementioned school closures/amalgamations, new school builds and major refurbishment/extensions/improvement projects undertaken in the period identified above is attached, as Appendix A.
- 4.8 A further outcome of this extensive programme of reorganisations is that, by the time the new schools that are due to open in September 2018 are complete, almost 6000 surplus school places will have been removed across the County Borough. This is in line with statutory requirements placed upon the Council to remove unnecessary and costly surplus capacity in our schools by Welsh Government, the Wales Audit Office and recommendations from Estyn.

5. THE CRITERIA FOR REVIEWING SCHOOL PROVISION

- 5.1 The Council's Cabinet has previously considered and agreed the following criteria, against which schools are reviewed prior to any school reorganisation proposals being consulted upon. They are:

- Surplus places in excess of 25% of published capacity;
- Buildings that are beyond economic repair/not fit for purpose;
- Financially unviable (usually due to a sharp fall in pupil numbers);
- Schools considered to be 'small' schools, i.e. schools with 90 or fewer pupils of statutory school age;
- Separate infant and junior schools in close proximity;
- 'Paired' schools, i.e. where children progress from one of the schools to the other;
- Mixed aged classes where there are more than two age groups in one class;
- Schools considered to be at risk, based on their academic Key Stage data and the quality of the leadership, or meeting Estyn's criteria as a school in need of significant improvement or special measures.

- 5.2 To be included in any school reorganisation proposal or review, a school must meet at least one of these agreed criteria for review, preferably several. This has been the case with all of the projects identified in section 4 of this report.

6. THE PROCESS FOR UNDERTAKING SCHOOL REORGANISATION

- 6.1 When undertaking any formal review of school provision, the Council has to follow statutory guidance arising from the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. This Act produced the School Organisation Code (the Code), which outlines how proposals must be consulted upon, published and implemented and the statutory process that must be followed to achieve this.

6.2 Any proposal to make any change to a school must follow the statutory process outlined in the aforementioned Code. Such changes would include:

- The opening of a new school, or closure of an existing one;
- The transfer of a school to a new site over 1 mile away;
- Changing the age range of a school (such as creating an 'all through' 3–16/19 provision);
- Introduction of or ending sixth form provision at a school;
- Enlargement of a school's premises which increases capacity by at least 25%, or 200 pupils, whichever is fewer;
- Addition or removal of SEN provision or any change in the type of such provision.

The process this Council follows when amalgamating or merging schools is to formally close the existing schools and open a new one in their place. This approach ensures that the staff of all schools involved in the process are given equal and fair consideration when the recruitment process for the new school is undertaken.

6.3 The actual process and timeline that has to be followed is summarised below:

- A Consultation document is prepared and presented to the Council's Cabinet for consideration with a report outlining the proposal and the rationale behind it. Cabinet consider the report and agree that consultation may commence. Community Impact, Equality Impact and Welsh Language (if applicable) Impact Assessments are also prepared at this time, and are published alongside the Consultation document.
- The Consultation document is then circulated to all prescribed consultees as outlined in the Code. A period of at least 42 days is then allowed for all consultees to consider the document and provide the Education Department with their comments or observations on the proposal (we always try to allow more time than the prescribed 42 days for this part of the process if practicable).
- As part of the consultation process, we organise meetings of the relevant pupil School Councils, staff and governors of the schools directly affected by the proposal. We also organise a drop in session/open evening for all interested parties, including parents, school staff and governors, local elected members and members of the local community to attend. Details of the proposal in question are put on display and officers of the LA are in attendance to answer any questions and provide further information if requested. The Code does not specify that any meetings at all must be held, this is done as it is considered to be good practice and of benefit to all stakeholders.
- At the conclusion of the consultation process, a further report outlining the outcome of the process is presented to Cabinet for consideration. If

Cabinet agree to progress the proposal; a Statutory Notice is published. This Notice has to be published for a period of 28 days, during which time any person may object to the proposal, for any reason.

At the conclusion of consultation a Consultation Report is also prepared, which summarises and responds to all comments, questions and issues raised during consultation. This Report is published within 13 weeks of Cabinet making a decision to progress a proposal and prior to the Statutory Notice publication.

- At the conclusion of the Statutory Notice period, an Objections Report is prepared and presented to Cabinet, again with a covering report for further consideration. This Report follows the same format as the Consultation Report, but it responds accordingly to all objections received. Cabinet then consider the objections received and the responses given to them, and decide whether to implement the proposal or not.

Any proposals that involve the addition, or removal of sixth form provision in a school has to be forwarded to the Welsh Ministers for approval.

The Objections Report then also has to be published, within 7 days of Cabinet making a final decision on the outcome of the proposal, i.e. whether it should be implemented or not.

All documentation is published on a dedicated page on the Council website and all key stakeholders are written to at each stage of the process, either by letter or by e-mail.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Equality Impact, Community Impact and Welsh Language Impact (if applicable) Assessment documents are prepared, and published as part of the initial consultation processes for each proposal consulted upon.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 Consultation is undertaken as outlined in section 6.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 These are summarised as part of the information contained within the consultation documents referred to in section 6.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 The statutory guidance summarised within the School Organisation Code, which is in place as a consequence of legislation contained within the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 is adhered to at all times.

- 10.2 New draft legislation which will update and amend the current Code has been subject to consultation by the Welsh Government and we expect to hear whether or not this draft legislation will become law in the near future. If so, the Code will be revised and updated accordingly. The changes being suggested refer, in the main, to the treatment of proposals concerning small and rural schools, with a presumption against closure of these schools being introduced. We have already been advised, as part of the consultation process regarding this new proposed legislation that no schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf meet the criteria to be considered small and rural.

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN/CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

- 11.1 School reorganisation proposals, that aim to improve school provision link to all three main priorities outlined in the Council's Corporate plan, namely:
- Economy – Building a strong economy;
 - People – Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone;
 - Place – creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work;
 - WESP – to ensure compliance with Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 Members are invited to scrutinise the content of this report and to consider receiving further information and associated reports on the improvements made to our school building stock. This will provide further information on the Council's Band B investment programme in relation to reduction of surplus places, rationalisation of school building stock and reducing the backlog of outstanding maintenance in our schools.

APPENDIX A

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC has been undertaking an almost continuous review of its school provision since 1999. In that time, the following changes to school organisation across the County Borough have been introduced:

Schools where Closure was agreed

- Treherbert Infants (September 2005)
- Cynon Infants (January 2006)
- Hirwaun Nursery (January 2006)
- Newtown Primary (September 2006)
- Blaenllechau Infants (September 2006)
- Blaenclydach Infants (September 2006)
- Trefforest Primary (September 2006)
- Graig y Wion Primary (September 2006)
- Nantgarw Infants (January 2007)
- Gilfach Goch Infants (September 2007)
- Tonyrefail Nursery (September 2007)
- Robertstown Nursery (January 2010)
- Penrhiwfer Infants (September 2010)
- Rhydyfelin Nursery (September 2013)
- Glantaf Infants (September 2014)
- Glanffrwd Infants (September 2014)
- Ynyswen Infants (September 2014)
- Aberdare High School (September 2014)
- Aberdare Girls School (September 2014)
- Blaengwawr Comprehensive (September 2014)
- Rhiwgarn Infants (January 2015)
- Aberllechau Primary (January 2015)
- Pentre Primary (September 2015)
- Ferndale Infants (September 2016)
- Ynyscynon Nursery (September 2016)

Agreed School Mergers and Amalgamations

- Penyreglyn Junior & Infants (Jan 2003)
- Penywaun Junior and Infants (Jan 2003)
- Penrhys Junior and Infants (Jan 2003)
- Gwaunmeisgyn Junior and Infants (Jan 2003)
- Gwauncelyn Junior and Infants (Sept 2003)
- Hendreforgan Junior and Infants (Sept 2003)
- Penrhiwceibr Junior and Infants (Sept 2003)
- Dinas Junior and Craig yr Eos Infants (Sept 2004)
- Cwmclydach Junior and Infants (Sept 2006)
- Ynyshir Junior and Infants (Sept 2006)
- Comin Junior and Infants (Jan 2010)
- Maerdy Junior and Infants (Sept 2010)
- Abercynon Infants, Abertaf Primary and Carnetown Primary (Jan 2012)

- Cwmbach Junior, Infants and Nursery (Sept 2012)
- Ynysboeth Junior and Infants (Sept 2012)
- Cymmer Junior and Infants (Sept 2016)

The three Aberdare Secondary Schools that closed in September 2014 became the new Aberdare Community School from that date; the school fully relocated in to its new premises by June 2015.

Previous Closures

- Hendrefadog Infants 1999
- Dunraven Primary 1999
- Blaenrhondda Primary 1999
- Blaencwm Primary 1999
- Tir Gwaidd Nursery 2002
- Glynhafod Nursery 2003

Schools Relocated to new Sites (former sites closed)

- Ty Gwyn Secondary SEN Centre, Pwllgwaun site (PRU)
- Coedylan Lower Comprehensive (Pontypridd High)
- St Margarets RC Primary (Aberdare Town centre)
- YGG Aberdar (Aberaman)
- Rhondda Special School (Trealaw) (now Ysgol Hen Felin)
- YGG Llantrisant (Llantrisant Town)
- Ysgol Gyfun Rhydfelen (now Ysgol Gyfun Garth Olwg)
- Penyreglyn Junior and Infants
- Ynyshir Infants
- Williamstown Primary
- Ty Gwyn Primary SEN Centre, Talbot Green (PRU)
- Aberdare Community School (see above)

New Schools built, and schools that have undergone major refurbishment , since 1999:

New Builds – Primary

Penpych Primary 1999	Tylorstown Primary 2001*
Cwmbach Junior 1999*	Penyreglyn Primary 2003
YGG Aberdar 2003	YGGG Llantrisant 2005
Ysgol Hen Felin (Special) 2003	Rhydyfelin EYC 2006
YGG Garth Olwg 2005 (PFI)	Ynyshir Primary 2009
Penderyn Primary 2007	Abercynon Primary 2012
Williamstown Primary 2011	
Ynysboeth Primary 2013	

New Builds – Secondary

YG Garth Olwg (PFI) 2006
Aberdare Community School 2015 (21st Century Schools Programme)

Y Pant Comp 2016 (major scheme in 21st Century Schools Programme)

Major refurbishments/ Extensions – Primary/ Special

Llwyncrwn Primary 1999	Hawthorn Primary 2000
Glenboi Primary 2000*	Cwmdar Primary 2002
Comin Infants 2003	YGG Ynyswen 2003
YGG Abercynon 2003	Penrhiwceibr Primary 2004
Ysgol Ty Coch 2004	Hendreforgan Primary 2005
Ysgol yr Eos 2005	Cwmlai Primary 2006
Pontyclun Primary 2006	Maesgwyn Special 2008
Coedpenmaen Primary 2008*	Tonyrefail Primary 2009
Dolau Primary 2009	Aberdare Park Primary 2010
Park Lane Special 2011	YGG Castellau 2011
Ysgol Llanhari Primary provision 2012	Brynnau Primary 2012
Llwyncrwn Primary 2015	Cwmbach Primary 2013
Ty Gwyn PRU 2016	Penywaun Primary 2014
Trerobart Primary 2014	Maerdy Primary 2011
Treorchy Primary 2015	Llwyncrwn Primary 2015

* - fire damage rebuilds

Major Refurbishments/ Extensions - Secondary

YG Rhydywaun 2001	Tonypandy Comp. 2002
Y Pant Comp. 2003	Bryncelynnog Comp. 2003
Hawthorn High. 2005	Coedylan Comp. 2005
(St John Baptist C in W High, VA, 2001	Cardinal Newman RC, VA, 2003)
Pontypridd High 2005	

In addition to the above, for information, the following schools have received extensions, or major refurbishment in the last 19 years also:

Tylorstown Primary 1999	Hawthorn High 2001
Treorchy Comp 2003	Ferndale Comp. 2004
Gwauncelyn Primary 2004	Gwaunmeisgyn Primary 2004
Tonypandy Comp. 2004	Tonyrefail Comp. 2004
Craig yr Hesg Primary/ Ty Gwyn SEN 2004	Cwmclydach Primary 2006
YGG Pontsionnorton 2015/6	Darran Park Primary 2016
Pontrhondda Primary 2016	Bryncelynnog Comp 2016/17
Penywaun Primary 2016	Abernant Primary 2016
Gwauncelyn Primary 2016	Maesybryn Primary 2011
Heolycelyn Primary 2016	Park Lane Special 2016
Trealaw Primary 2016	Ysgol Gyfun y Cymer 2016
Parclewis Primary 2013	Pontyclun Primary 2017
St John Baptist 2017	Mountain Ash Comp 2017

Band A 21st Century Schools Schemes – to be completed 2018/19

Tonyrefail Community 3 - 19 School – new Secondary and Primary buildings, full refurbishment of listed building and new sports facilities

Tonypandy 3 - 16 School (Ysgol Nantgwyn) – new Primary building, refurbishment/ remodelling of Secondary building and new sports facilities

Porth Community 3 - 16 School - new Primary building, refurbishment/ remodelling of Secondary building and new sports facilities

Treorchy Comprehensive – new Science block, refurbishment of existing school, additional 6th form facilities, sports facilities and parking area

The new Cwmaman Primary School

Refurbished and remodelled Primary school facilities at Cymmer

Relocation of YGG Tonyrefail to the former Tonyrefail Primary building

Extension to YGG Llwyncelyn (incorporating the former Llwyncelyn Infants building)

Refurbishment/remodelling of Ferndale Community School