



COFNOD O BENDERFYNIAD WEDI'I DDIRPRWYO GAN SWYDDOG
RECORD OF DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION

Penderfyniad Allweddol | Key Decision ✓

PWNC | SUBJECT:

Consultation on a proposal to close the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School with pupils transferring to Aberdare Community School.

DIBEN YR ADRODDIAD | PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

In accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation, this report has been prepared to accompany the intended officer decision of the Director for Education and Inclusion Services.

The purpose of the report is to advise on the outcome of the recent publication of a Statutory Notice in respect of the proposal to:

- Close the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and amend the catchment area for post-16 provision to place Mountain Ash Comprehensive School in the catchment area of Aberdare Community School.

PENDERFYNIAD WEDI'I DDIRPRWYO | DELEGATED DECISION:

Agreed that:

- The content of this report is noted.
- The information contained within the Objection Report, attached as Appendix A to this report, which includes a summary of correspondence received, is noted.
- The information outlined in point 2.1.2 will be submitted to Welsh Ministers for determination.
- Once Welsh Ministers determine the proposal, agree to an information report to Cabinet outlining the outcome of the determination.

Gaynor Davies, Director for
Education and Inclusion Services

30/04/2025

Llofnod y Prif Swyddog
Chief Officer Signature

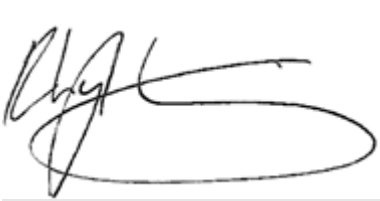
Enw (priflythrennau)
Name (Print Name)

Dyddiad
Date

Mae'r penderfyniad yn cael ei wneud yn unol ag Adran 15 o Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol 2000 (Swyddogaethau'r Corff Gweithredol) ac yn y cylch gorchwyl sy wedi'i nodi yn Adran 5 o Ran 3 o Gyfansoddiad y Cyngor.

The decision is taken in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government Act, 2000 (Executive Functions) and in the terms set out in Section 5 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.

YMGYNGHORI | CONSULTATION



____ 30.4.25 ____

LLOFNOD YR AELOD YMGYNGHOROL O'R CABINET
CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE

DYDDIAD | DATE

Councillor Rhys Lewis, Cabinet for Education, Inclusion
and Welsh Language



____ 30.4.25 ____

LLOFNOD SWYDDOG YMGYNGHOROL
CONSULTEE OFFICER SIGNATURE

DYDDIAD | DATE

Christian Hanagan, Service Director for Democratic
Services and Communication

RHEOLAU'R WEITHDREFN GALW-I-MEWN | CALL IN PROCEDURE RULES.

A YW'R PENDERFYNIAD YN UN BRYN A HEB FOD YN DESTUN PROSES GALW-I-MEWN GAN Y PWYLLGOR TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU?:

IS THE DECISION DEEMED URGENT AND NOT SUBJECT TO CALL-IN BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

YDY | YES

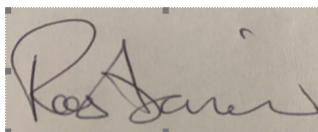
Rheswm dros fod yn fater brys | Reason for Urgency:

It is proposed that the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School closes by no later than September 2026. To enable the closure of the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School by this date, no new year 12 sixth form pupils would be admitted in September 2025.

Under Section 50 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, proposals that affect sixth form education require approval by Welsh Ministers. As such, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) must notify Welsh Ministers within 35 days of the end of the Statutory Notice period and forward to them copies of any objections along with an Objection Report. Welsh Ministers will then decide whether to proceed with the proposal, amend the proposal or not proceed with the proposal.

Os yw'n cael ei ystyried yn fater brys - llofnod y Llywydd, y Dirprwy Lywydd neu Bennaeth y Gwasanaeth Cyflogedig yn cadarnhau cytundeb fod y penderfyniad arfaethedig yn rhesymol yn yr holl amgylchiadau iddo gael ei drin fel mater brys, yn unol â rheol gweithdrefn trosolwg a chraffu 17.2:

If deemed urgent - signature of Presiding Member or Deputy Presiding Member or Head of Paid Service confirming agreement that the proposed decision is reasonable in all the circumstances for it being treated as a matter of urgency, in accordance with the overview and scrutiny procedure rule 17.2:



.....
(Llywydd | Presiding Member)

30.04.25

.....
(Dyddiad | Date)

DS - Os yw hwn yn benderfyniad sy'n cael ei ail-ystyried yna does dim modd galw'r penderfyniad i mewn a bydd y penderfyniad yn dod i rym o'r dyddiad mae'r penderfyniad wedi'i lofnodi.

NB - If this is a reconsidered decision then the decision Cannot be Called In and the decision will take effect from the date the decision is signed.

AT DDEFNYDD Y SWYDDFA YN UNIG | FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

DYDDIADAU CYHOEDDI A GWEITHREDU | PUBLICATION & IMPLEMENTATION DATES

CYHOEDDI | PUBLICATION

Cyhoeddi ar Wefan y Cyngor | Publication on the Council's Website:- 30-04-25

DYDDIAD | DATE

GWEITHREDU'R PENDERFYNIAD | IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

Yn amodol ar y drefn "Galw i Mewn", caiff y penderfyniad ei roi ar waith ar / Subject to Call In the implementation date will be

N/A
DYDDIAD / DATE

WEDI'I GYMERADWYO I'W GYHOEDDI: ✓ | APPROVED FOR PUBLICATION :✓

Rhagor o wybodaeth | Further Information:

Cyfadran Directorate:	Education and Inclusion Services
Enw'r Person Cyswllt Contact Name:	Gaynor Davies
Swydd Designation:	Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Rhif Ffôn Telephone Number:	01443 744014



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

KEY OFFICER DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

30TH APRIL 2025

**CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO CLOSE THE SIXTH FORM AT
MOUNTAIN ASH COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL WITH PUPILS TRANSFERRING
TO ABERDARE COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

**REPORT TO ACCOMPANY A DELEGATED DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF
EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET
MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, INCLUSION AND WELSH LANGUAGE**

AUTHOR(S):

Andrea Richards, Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise of the outcome of the recent publication of the Statutory Notice in respect of the proposal to:

Close the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and amend the catchment area for post-16 provision to place Mountain Ash Comprehensive School in the catchment area of Aberdare Community School.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that:

2.1.1 The content of this report is noted.

2.1.2 The information contained within the Objection Report, attached as Appendix A to this report, which includes a summary of correspondence received, is noted.

2.1.3 The information outlined in point 2.1.2 will be submitted to Welsh Ministers for determination.

2.1.4 Once Welsh Ministers determine the proposal, agree to an information report to Cabinet outlining the outcome of the determination.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To act in accordance with the process outlined in the Welsh Government's (WG's) legislative guidance, the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018).
- 3.2 Under Section 50 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, proposals that affect sixth form education require approval by Welsh Ministers. As such, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) must notify Welsh Ministers within 35 days of the end of the Statutory Notice period and forward to them copies of any objections along with an Objection Report. Welsh Ministers will then decide whether to proceed with the proposal, amend the proposal or not proceed with the proposal.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 At the meeting of the Cabinet held on 20th November 2024, approval was given to begin a statutory process to formally consult on the proposal outlined in section 1.1 of this report. The justifications for doing so were set out in the relevant Consultation Document and Cabinet Report.
- 4.2 On 10th December 2024, the matter was pre-scrutinised by the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee who provided a formal response.
- 4.3 Following the conclusion of the consultation period, and at a subsequent meeting of the Cabinet held on the 19th February 2025, a decision was taken to progress to the next phase of the statutory process and to publish the required Statutory Notice.
- 4.4 The Statutory Notice was published on 4th March 2025 which triggered the commencement of the objection period. This ran until 17:00 on 3rd April 2025. During the objection period, a total of two objections were received by the closing date.
- 4.5 In accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018), the Objection Report, attached at Appendix A, summarises the objections, along with RCTCBC's response to them.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was prepared in respect of the proposal and published on RCTCBC's website together with the Consultation Document that outlined the proposal in further detail in accordance with the requirements of the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018). The Equality Impact Assessment was updated following a review of the responses received during the consultation period.
- 5.2 It was considered that no negative impacts were identified within the Equality Impact Assessment which would prevent approval being sought to continue to

implement the proposal. To confirm, the Action Plan included within the Equality Impact Assessment would continue to be reviewed throughout the duration of the proposal's delivery period.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment was prepared in respect of the proposal and published on RCTCBC's website together with the Consultation Document that outlined the proposal in further detail in accordance with the requirements of the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018). The Welsh Language Impact Assessment was updated following a review of the responses received during the consultation period.

6.2 The outcome of the Welsh Language Impact Assessment identified:

- Both positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts.

6.3 It was considered that no negative impacts were identified within the Welsh Language Impact Assessment which would prevent approval being sought to continue to implement the proposal. To confirm, the Action Plan included within the Welsh Language Impact Assessment would continue to be reviewed throughout the duration of the proposal's delivery period.

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

7.1 The consultation process in respect of the proposal has been undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018).

7.2 The consultation period for the proposal took place between 2nd December 2024 and 17:00 on 17th January 2025. Following the conclusion of the consultation period, and at a subsequent meeting of the Cabinet held on the 19th February 2025, a decision was taken to progress to the next phase of the statutory process and to publish the required Statutory Notice. The Statutory Notice was published on 4th March 2025 which triggered the commencement of the objection period. This ran until 17:00 on 3rd April 2025.

7.3 During the objection period, a total of two objections were received by the closing date of 17:00 on 3rd April 2025. Information contained within the Objection Report, attached as Appendix A to this report, includes a summary of correspondence received.

8. THE STATUTORY PROCESS

8.1 The Statutory Notice for the proposal is to:

Close the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and amend the catchment area for post-16 provision to place Mountain Ash Comprehensive School in the catchment area of Aberdare Community School.

- 8.2 The consultation processes in respect of the proposal have been undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018).

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Should the proposal proceed, there would be no capital funding implications.
- 9.2 Any revenue implications resulting from the closure of the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School, including the school's delegated budget and any potential increases in home to school transport costs, would be identified as the proposal is developed and incorporated into RCTCBC's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements.
- 9.3 Information on the current and projected budgetary positions of both schools affected by the proposal was included in the Consultation Document.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 Powers for Councils to develop school organisation proposals are governed by:
- The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.
 - The WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018).
- 10.2 Councils must, when exercising functions under Part 3 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, act in accordance with any relevant requirements contained in the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018) and must have regard to any relevant guidelines contained in it.

11. LINKS TO RCTCBC'S CORPORATE PLAN, NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

- 11.1 The proposal supports the core aims of RCTCBC's new Corporate Plan for the years 2024 to 2030, 'Working with our Communities', and the four wellbeing objectives, which are:
- **People and Communities** – Supporting and empowering Rhondda Cynon Taf's (RCT's) residents and communities to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives.
 - **Work and Business** – Helping to strengthen and grow RCT's economy.
 - **Nature and the Environment** – A green and clean RCT that improves and protects RCT's environment and nature.
 - **Culture, Heritage and Welsh Language** – Recognising and celebrating RCT's past, present and future.
- 11.2 There are links to RCTCBC's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services School Modernisation Programme and Strategic Plan for the years 2022 to 2025, specifically:

- **Strategic Priority 3:** Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable pupils and their families.
 - **Strategic Priority 5:** Delivering 21st century learning environments and innovative services for our pupils and communities.
- 11.3 The proposal will lead to a more efficient use of the education estate, contributing to the delivery of RCTCBC's Tackling Climate Change Strategy: 2022 to 2025 – Think Climate RCT. The proposal would also support the WG's Delivery Plan for a Low Carbon Wales and its 'Route Map' to decarbonise the public sector in Wales.
- 11.4 Due regard has been given to all seven wellbeing goals and the five ways of working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which requires RCTCBC to think about the long term impact of decisions on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.
- 11.5 The proposal could contribute towards achieving some of the seven wellbeing goals by:
- **A Healthier Wales** – Aberdare Community School was part of a wider leisure and education investment locally, which saw the nearby Sobell Leisure Centre receive significant investment for school and community use.
 - **A More Equal Wales** – The wider catchment areas for both Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and Aberdare Community School and the way the school is used will bring neutral or positive socio-economic impacts to all of the vulnerable groups over an extended area.
 - **A Wales of More Cohesive Communities** – Aberdare Community School is a fully accessible and integrated community school with a dedicated area designed within so that the local community can safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.
 - **A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language** – Although both schools are English medium schools, Welsh is taught as part of the curriculum. Any new post-16 pupils moving to Aberdare Community School will benefit from having the opportunity to be taught in brand new facilities fit for the 21st century.
 - **A Globally Responsive Wales** – Aberdare Community School has been built to BREEAM 'excellent' standards. The school building boasts sustainability features such as photo-voltaic panels, rainwater harvesting and biodiversity, providing opportunities to further develop extra-curricular activities to encourage healthy lifestyle choices for pupils and staff of the school and the wider community.
- 11.6 The proposal could contribute towards achieving some of the five ways of working by:
- **Long Term** – RCTCBC's school modernisation programme has been successfully making excellent progress in modernising its school estate, meeting and rationalising demand for school places, delivering efficiencies,

and ensuring the education portfolio is in the best possible position to help RCTCBC deliver on its carbon reduction targets. The proposal builds on the successful progress already made.

- **Prevention** – RCTCBC believes that the proposal represents the best opportunity to safeguard and sustain educational standards for the future and provides a platform for further improvement.
- **Integration** – Aberdare Community School is a fully accessible and integrated community school. A dedicated area is provided within the school so that the local community and parents/carers can safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.
- **Collaboration** – RCTCBC will continue to work effectively with internal and external partners to ensure the changes brought about by the proposal will meet the short and long term needs of pupils, parents/carers, staff and the wider community.
- **Involvement** – The proposal is made in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018) and seeks the views of a prescribed list of stakeholders including pupils, parents/carers, staff and the wider community. As such, face to face meetings were arranged with both School Councils, Governing Bodies and staff and the wider community.

- 11.7 As stated in 5.1, an Equality Impact Assessment accompanying the proposal has been prepared and updated accordingly following a review of the responses received during the consultation period. The Equality Impact Assessment details the contribution of the proposal to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

12. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

- 12.1 The proposal to close the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School with pupils transferring to Aberdare Community School (subject to parent/carer choice) is relevant to the specific wards covered by these catchment areas.

13. CONCLUSION

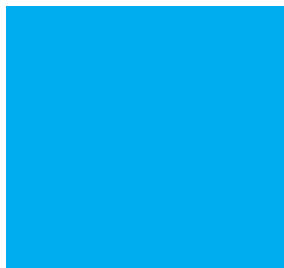
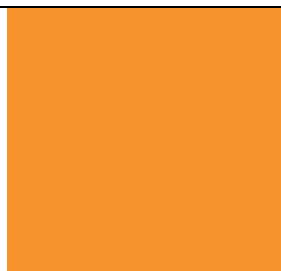
- 13.1 RCTCBC has a statutory duty, through its approach to the organisation and leadership arrangements of schools, to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of provision to ensure that all schools are well placed to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of the community and makes best use of public funding.
- 13.2 The concern that the Governing Body of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School have regarding the viability and future sustainability of the sixth form provision at the school are justified. The delivery of post-16 education is currently inefficient, the curriculum choice for many pupils is restricted and class sizes are too small. Valuable education funds provided to educate pre-16 pupils are being redirected at post-16 pupils, to subsidise the funding shortfall that results from small class sizes. Despite the school's best efforts to work in partnership with neighbouring schools in the Cynon Valley Post-16 Consortium, the post-16 offer across three schools remains fragmented, resulting in lost study time, cost, and travel times.

- 13.3 It is recommended therefore, that consideration be given to the contents of the attached Objection Report and note that it will be submitted to Welsh Ministers for determination, allowing the statutory process to progress.

Background Papers:

Appendix A – Objection Report.

21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS – EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES



OBJECTION REPORT

CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO CLOSE THE SIXTH FORM AT MOUNTAIN ASH COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL WITH PUPILS TRANSFERRING TO ABERDARE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

The Objection Report is also available on the 'Get Involved' page on Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's website.

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg/This document is available in Welsh.

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1. Purpose of this Objection Report

This Objection Report is prepared in accordance with the Welsh Government's (WG's) School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018). Its purpose is to:

- Inform the outcome of the publication of the Statutory Notice published for this proposal, which was published on 4th March 2025 for a period of a minimum of 28 days.
- Include a summary of the statutory objections received and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (RCTCBC's) response to them.

2. The Statutory Notice

The Statutory Notice to progress this proposal, which was published 4th March 2025, is reproduced below:

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education and Inclusion Services, 21st Century Schools, Valleys Innovation Centre, Navigation Park, Abercynon, CF45 4SN.

Notice is given in accordance with Section 42 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, and the Welsh Government School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018), that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC), having consulted such persons as required, proposes to:

1. Make a regulated alteration to below English medium school listed as 1.1, so that the age range of the pupils it can admit is amended from 11 to 19 years to 11 to 16 years and that the sixth form provision be removed.
1.1 Mountain Ash Comprehensive School, New Road, Mountain Ash, CF45 4DG.

Post-16 pupils from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School will have the option of attending sixth form at Aberdare Community School, Ynys Road, Aberdare, CF44 7RP, or the local college, Coleg y Cymoedd, Aberdare, Wellington Street, Aberdare, CF44 8EN and Nantgarw, Heol y Coleg, Nantgarw CF15 7QY for their post-16 education.

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 view of Estyn is available on RCTCBC's website at:
[Consultation Report Mountain Ash Comprehensive School Proposal](#)

It is proposed to close the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and amend the catchment area for post-16 provision to place Mountain Ash Comprehensive School in the catchment area of Aberdare Community School.

The capacity of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School after this proposal is implemented will be 1,394 pupil places. From September 2025 the proposed admission number for the school will be 255.

It is proposed that the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School closes by no later than September 2026. To enable the closure of the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School by this date, no new year 12 sixth form pupils would be admitted in September 2025.

Pupils will be provided with transport in accordance with RCTCBC's Transport Policy which is available here:

School and College Transport | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Within a period of 28 days of the date on which these proposals were published, that is to say by 17:00 on 3rd April 2025, any person may object to the proposals. Objections should be sent to the Director of Education and Inclusion Services, 21st Century Schools, Valleys Innovation Centre, Navigation Park, Abercynon CF45 4SN, or e-mail schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

Where objections have been received, 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 7 days of the determination of the proposal.

Signed:	<i>Gwynor Davies</i>
Director of Education and Inclusion Services for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	
Date:	4 th March 2025

3. Details of Objections Received

The Statutory Notice was published on 4th March 2025 which triggered the commencement of the objection period. This ran until 17:00 on 3rd April 2025. During the objection period, a total of two objections were received.

This Objection Report summarises the objections, along with RCTCBC's response to them. This is in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018).

To confirm both of the objections received during the objection period will be sent to the Welsh Ministers who make the final decision on proposals that affect sixth form education.

4. Objections and Responses

The table that follows summarises the themes included in both objections received, along with the Council's responses.

Number	Objection Theme	Response
1.	<p><i>The proposal would be detrimental to the overall offering of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The loss of the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School would be detrimental to the overall offering of the school and unfairly penalise 	<p>We do not agree, small sixth forms are financially unviable and, where they exist, resources intended for the benefit of 11 to 16 year old pupils accessing statutory education are redirected to subsidise the post-16 provision. This is unsustainable and impacts upon the educational offer for younger pupils and</p>

	<p>young people from the lower area of the Cynon Valley by impacting on their educational prospects.</p>	<p>presents schools with significant budgetary challenges. This proposal will improve the 11 to 16 provision at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School as the resources available for statutory aged pupils will be increased given the improvements to the financial viability of the school.</p> <p>Under current Cynon Valley Post-16 Consortium arrangements, 75.0% of post-16 pupils already access their education across at least two school sites (Aberdare Community School, Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and St John Baptist Church in Wales High School) which impacts upon valuable study time. The extensive travel involved in accessing post-16 courses across multiple school sites could be a potential barrier to pupils progressing into post-16 education within the school setting, adversely impacting upon retention and progression into Further and Higher Education.</p> <p>Should the proposal proceed, transferring sixth form pupils from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School to Aberdare Community School would create a larger sixth form which would have more potential for economies of scale and financial efficiencies which can accrue and be reinvested for the benefit of all pupils. Larger sixth forms also enable a broad and balanced post-16 education to pupils that better meets the needs of individual pupils and, as such, could improve pupil outcomes.</p>
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2.	<p><i>RCTCBC is clearly set on closing the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noting the comments that are contained within the Consultation [Report] and its appendices, [RCTCBC] is clearly set on closing the [sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School] as they have obviously not considered the simple fact that 88.0% of respondents disagree with the proposal. This makes it clear that [RCTCBC], whilst obviously following procedure, are not considering the views of the people and communities which they are supposed to serve and are pressing on with their own agenda. 	<p>This is not true. All correspondence received during the consultation stage was shared with Cabinet and was consciously considered.</p> <p>Cabinet made a decision to progress with the statutory consultation process and publish a Decision Notice triggering the 28-day Objection Period in line with the requirements of the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018).</p> <p>It is the Welsh Ministers who make the final decision on this proposal and not the Council's Cabinet.</p> <p>This consultation has been developed following discussions between RCTCBC and the Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. In addition, correspondence was received by RCTCBC's Director of Education and Inclusion Services from the Governing Body of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School expressing shared concerns regarding the viability and sustainability of the sixth form provision at the school, and a request for RCTCBC to undertake a review was made.</p>
3.	<p><i>Welsh Ministers should, in their considerations, ensure parity of the education of post-16 year old pupils is maintained within the lower area of the Cynon Valley.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Welsh Ministers] should, in their considerations, ensure that parity of the education of post-16 year old [pupils] is maintained within the [lower area of the] Cynon Valley and that [pupils]...are not unfairly excluded for the opportunity to a [post-16 provision] because of [the] options for furthering themselves becoming more limited due to geography and circumstances beyond their control. 	<p>Noted. Under Section 50 of the <u>School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013</u>, proposals that affect sixth form education require approval by Welsh Ministers.</p> <p>If Welsh Ministers approve the proposal, it will be implemented in accordance with the date stated in the Statutory Notice or any subsequently modified date. If the Welsh Ministers decide not to proceed, that will be the end of the proposal.</p>
4.	<p><i>Effective transition.</i></p>	<p>Understandably, some pupils may initially be daunted at the prospect of transferring to a new school. However, it</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This year 11 group is absolutely fantastic but have sadly had extra disadvantages due to Covid-19; they were in their final year in primary school when Covid-19 hit, and missed lots of special moments, and also on a proper transition programme to Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. Their first year at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School was also heavily affected, but still the vast majority of them have always tried to do their best to be successful. • Building new relationships with peers and staff takes time.....proposal will create an 'us and them' culture. 	<p>is worth noting that 75.0% of pupils are already accessing provision across at least two school sites. Should the proposal proceed, there will be targeted support for all sixth form pupils from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. A new package of support aimed at year 12 pupils, known as EVALUATE, will be focused initially on pupils transferring from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School to Aberdare Community School. This will include enhanced careers advice and guidance, mentoring and carefully monitored pastoral care.</p> <p>Meaningful and positive transition is an integral part of ensuring that pupils settle into their new school setting with little disruption to their wellbeing and education. This is supported by providing effective pastoral and academic support and structured opportunities for pupils to become familiar with the new school environment and staff. Should the proposal proceed, an enhanced collaboration across all areas of the curriculum between both schools can begin to develop from year 7 onwards, allowing both schools to foster a collegiate approach and a feeling of belonging across both school communities.</p> <p>A plan is already in place for transition activities to take place which will be beneficial to strengthen the consortia arrangements should the proposal not be implemented. Assemblies have already taken place at Mountain Ash led by Aberdare Community staff and a teambuilding day with the army has been planned for June. In addition, transition plans from other schools in the Local Authority that have been through successful school organisation changes have been shared to support further planning.</p>
5.	<i>Impact on pupils/pupils' wellbeing.</i>	The wellbeing of all pupils has been considered and is paramount to RCTCBC. We acknowledge that some

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are extensive concerns raised by parents[/carers], pupils (of both schools), governors and staff over pupil wellbeing, mental health and support for the transfer of pupils to Aberdare Community School from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School, both immediately and ongoing. • While in the process of choosing their next steps after year 11, this announcement was made and has affected many [pupils]. The timing of this is so quick that pupils who had planned to return to sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School in less than a year's time have been left confused and unsure what to do next. Pupils who were planning to apply have now not filled in the initial options trawl for sixth form subjects as they are disillusioned and feeling very let down. • Joining a [the] sixth form at Aberdare Community School, the Mountain Ash Comprehensive School pupils will be viewed as and treated as outsiders by the established pupil cohorts. • In 2014, Aberdare Community School was formed by the merger of three local schools. For the first few years there was an ongoing 'legacy' of which school the pupils and staff had originated from. This took about five years, or maybe even longer, to be lost as new pupils came though the school, as well as some new staff. For [sixth form] pupils [from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School], when they attend the sixth form at Aberdare Community School, their peers will have had five years teaching in the school, so Aberdare Community School pupils will have an advantage over Mountain Ash Comprehensive School pupils as they will be familiar with the staff, and the school. 	<p>pupils may find the changes more difficult than others.</p> <p>Life transitions are significant features in all young people's lives. All pupils receiving education will experience periods of change and adaptation and many pupils are already accessing their education across more than one school site and have adjusted well to this. It could be argued that receiving post-16 education on a reduced number of school sites will bring greater stability to pupils and continuity in teaching and learning, and social relationships with staff and peers during their post-16 studies.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that some pupils will need additional support emotionally to adapt to a new school environment and encouragement to make new friends and relationships and to be part of a new social network. Transition arrangements that have already been actioned are detailed above.</p> <p>Should the proposal proceed, RCTCBC will work with both schools to support the meaningful delivery of effective transition. Further information on this is detailed above. The transition arrangements that will be delivered, will ensure there will be lots of opportunities to help pupils navigate the change and happily settle into their new school as quickly as possible.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment for the proposal is still available to view on the Council's website and this has been prepared in line with the requirements of the WG's <u>School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018)</u>. In addition, RCTCBC considers that the proposal benefits the children and young people in accordance with the seven core aims set out within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will there be ongoing pastoral support throughout sixth form for Mountain Ash Comprehensive School pupils from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School staff after they move? 	
6.	<p><i>Impact on pupils' attainment.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The [proposal] significantly underestimates how the change will impact on long term A Level results and educational out turn of young people from the lower [area] of the Cynon Valley who spend their pre-16 education at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and ultimately move to Aberdare Community School. The overarching feeling of "belonging" and community that pupils have at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School will be lost and will no doubt affect their performance. What steps will be taken to ensure the success of the results achieved at MACS will continue? 	<p>Should the proposal proceed, it is anticipated that there will be no long term, adverse impact and it should be noted at this point in the consultation process that RCTCBC considers the overall impact of the proposal to be positive.</p> <p>As noted within the Consultation Report, Estyn considered that the proposal is likely to improve the standard of post-16 provision within the area. As has already been included within the data and mentioned above, 75.0% of pupils in Mountain Ash are already accessing provision across at least two school sites, so the attainment success of the pupils will be attributable to the quality of the teaching and learning across the consortia. There is no evidence to suggest that this change will have a detrimental impact on academic outcomes. Indeed, access to education on one school site, should provide greater continuity in teaching, learning and pastoral support.</p>
7.	<p><i>Is there capacity at Aberdare Community School to accommodate all sixth form pupils from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It has been highlighted by the existing pupils of Aberdare Community School, during this process, that there are capacity issues regarding equipment, facilities and course offerings. In relation to certain courses the capacity is reliant upon Mountain Ash Comprehensive School to meet demand. Introducing additional pupil numbers will undoubtedly compound this situation. 	<p>As outlined within the Consultation Document, there is sufficient capacity at Aberdare Community School to accommodate all prospective sixth form pupils of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. The current capacity of Aberdare Community School is 1,574 and there are currently 1,238 pupils on roll. Therefore, there is ample space to accommodate growth in numbers.</p> <p>Schools receive post-16 funding based on the number of post-16 pupils they have on roll. If Aberdare Community School has more sixth form pupils, their funding will increase, and they will have more money to spend on post-16</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am concerned about the practicalities of pupils being absorbed by Aberdare Community School with sixth form numbers forecast to be increasing this year, at both schools. How will you ensure adequate provision across the curriculum for all sixth form pupils with a big increase in the number of A Level classes at Aberdare Community School needed? 	<p>provision and to make any necessary changes to accommodate all pupils.</p> <p>In addition, as stated in the data included within the Consultation Document, numbers on roll in the sixth forms at both schools have been much larger over previous years. This historic data demonstrates that Aberdare Community School has the capacity to cater for a much larger sixth form, as it has done so successfully, within the last 5 years.</p>
8.	<p><i>The catchment area for Mountain Ash Comprehensive School is deprived, this could have a detrimental impact on pupils who are already disadvantaged.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mountain Ash is a disadvantaged area; parts of Mountain Ash are listed as some of the most deprived areas in Wales. Mountain Ash Comprehensive School pupils are already striving to overcome disadvantage, without adding in an extra source at sixth form. How will this be overcome? 	<p>All comments in relation to deprivation are noted.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment for the proposal has been prepared in line with the requirements of the WG's <u>School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018)</u>.</p> <p>Section three of the Equality Impact Assessment sets out RCTCBC's Socio-economic Duty in relation to this proposal. The socio-economic disadvantages relevant for the area are listed using data from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). Each disadvantage is considered within the context of this proposal, and the given impact of this proposal upon each disadvantage is listed, detailed and evidenced. This information is still available on the Council's website.</p> <p>It is important to note that should the proposal proceed, it is highly likely that all sixth form pupils living in the catchment area of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School will be entitled to free home to school transport to attend post-16 education at Aberdare Community School.</p>
9.	<p><i>The sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School may be small but it is successful.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School may be small but it is successful. At Mountain Ash 	<p>This is not disputed.</p> <p>As noted within the Consultation Report, Estyn considered that the proposal is likely to improve the standard of post-16 provision within the area. As has already been included within the data, and</p>

	<p>Comprehensive School pupils are encouraged in all ways possible to aim high and believe in themselves by all staff. What steps will be taken to ensure this continues?</p>	<p>mentioned above, 75.0% of pupils in Mountain Ash are already accessing provision across at least two school sites, so the attainment success of the pupils will be attributable to the quality of the teaching and learning across the consortia. Similarly high expectations will be in place in Aberdare Community School and all pupils will access the support required to enable them to achieve the best outcomes that they are capable of.</p>
10.	<p><i>Could result in home to school transport implications.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The [Consultation] Report points to the A Level offerings at Coleg Y Cymoedd... the primary Coleg Y Cymoedd campus for A Levels is Nantgarw with an extremely limited offering at Aberdare. This means travel to the appropriate campus for A Level pupils from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School becomes far more difficult and...it places more limitations on pupil choice. • At the moment pupils only qualify for free [home to school] transport to the closest provision that runs the course or subjects that the pupil chooses. Lots of pupils feel uncomfortable with the idea of joining an already established year group at another school and are choosing to go to Coleg Y Cymoedd instead. This will mean [that lots of pupils] will not qualify for free [home to school] transport. Lots of families will struggle with this due to financial constraints. 	<p>Information in relation to RCTCBC's Home to School Transport provision is available on the RCTCBC website. This also includes information in relation to post-16 provision.</p> <p>Should the proposal proceed, it is highly likely that all sixth form pupils living in the catchment area of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School will be entitled to free home to school transport to attend post-16 education at Aberdare Community School.</p>
11.	<p><i>The presence of sixth form pupils provides pre-16 pupils with good role models.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger pupils at [Mountain Ash Comprehensive] School will no longer have the opportunity to interact with sixth form pupils. Sixth form pupils have roles of responsibilities in school. At present younger pupils 	<p>RCTCBC recognises this point, however, more opportunities could be made for year 11 pupils to take on this role which would be beneficial for both younger and the older pupils.</p>

	view sixth form pupils in a positive way and see this as something to aspire to in their future. Lots of our pupils do not have positive role models and losing this will be detrimental to them.	
12.	<p><i>Closing the sixth form could have a detrimental impact on staffing levels.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closing the sixth form could have a detrimental impact on staffing levels...no teacher with ambition will want to teach in a school without a [sixth form]. 	<p>The qualifications to teach post-16 education are no different from those of pre-16 education, and staff deployed to teach sixth form can also be utilised to teach years 7 to 11. It is recognised that some staff have a passion for teaching at sixth form level and may decide to seek opportunities elsewhere.</p> <p>RCTCBC has well established Human Resource (HR) policies and procedures that give reassurance to staff and employers about the management of organisational change.</p>
13.	<p><i>How will pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) be supported.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Pupils] have spent five years in a school, where they are used to the staff, the routine, the building and surrounding area and now you want to completely change the sixth form. 	<p>All pupils with ALN will continue to be supported. <u>The Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act 2018</u> provides detailed guidance on the duties and responsibilities of Councils in meeting the ALN of children and young people.</p> <p><u>The ALN Code for Wales (2021)</u> recommends that early years and school settings adopt a graduated response to meeting the ALN of children and young people. A graduated response means that progressively greater expertise and support can be brought in to address the difficulties a child or young person may be experiencing. Additional or different provision should be made depending on the severity of the child/young person's level of need.</p> <p>This duty and responsibility in this regard will be met regardless of which school a child/young person attends.</p>
14.	<i>Mountain Ash Comprehensive School offers some subjects at post-16 that Aberdare Community School doesn't, will these subjects transfer?</i>	<p>There is only one course currently offered in Mountain Ash Comprehensive School that is not currently offered by the other schools in the Cynon Valley Post-16 Consortium. Should this proposal proceed, and should there be future</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Many popular subjects such as psychology are not available in [Aberdare Community School] while they are available at Mountain Ash [Comprehensive School].” 	<p>demand for this course, then support will be offered to the schools in the consortium to provide this course to ensure that there is no detrimental impact on the choices available to pupils. Schools routinely review and revise their post-16 offer to meet need and demand.</p> <p>If there is a need for a specific course, including Psychology as was mentioned in the response, then a potential arrangement to collaborate and share staff under a secondment arrangement could be an option that is explored. Discussions regarding this arrangement are already being held so that plans can be put in place quickly should the proposal be implemented.</p> <p>Creative solutions will be supported where appropriate but until we have final pupil numbers it is difficult to project the potential demand for certain subjects. It is for school leaders to decide on the curriculum offer in their schools based on the demand for certain subjects. However, pupil numbers will influence the capacity of a school to provide an extensive curriculum offer.</p>
15.	<p><i>Sixth form classes at Aberdare Community School could be too large.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Aberdare Community School...will also face larger class sizes at A level.” 	<p>Schools receive post-16 funding based on the number of post-16 pupils they have on roll. If Aberdare Community School has more sixth form pupils, their funding will increase, and they will have more money to spend on post-16 provision and make any necessary changes to accommodate all pupils. This could include exploring a wider variety of post-16 subjects and could potentially mean there would be more choice for pupils as well as the opportunity to develop more post-16 pastoral care.</p> <p>Estyn’s thematic review on ‘<u>A Levels and Sixth Forms in Further Education Colleges</u>’ in November 2018, outlines:</p> <p><i>“Class sizes vary dramatically across centres, from one to about 30 [pupils]. In very small classes, it is difficult to hold</i></p>

		<p><i>productive discussions and for [pupils] to learn from each other.”</i></p> <p>Therefore, having larger sixth forms will benefit pupils, help build relationships, provide greater opportunities for student interaction, study groups and a wider experience of sharing knowledge and ideas. There will also be an opportunity for pupils to ‘buddy up’ providing each other with peer support with increased social interaction and well-being.</p> <p>As previously noted, and as stated in the data included within the Consultation Document, numbers on roll in the sixth forms at both schools have previously been much larger. This historic data demonstrates that Aberdare Community School has the capacity to cater for a much larger sixth form, as it has done so, successfully, within the last 5 years.</p>
16.	<p><i>Parents/carers of pupils have developed a relationship with the staff at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and these would have to be developed from scratch with staff at Aberdare Community School.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like to question how the positive relationships would continue to be developed between the [sixth form] pupils at [Mountain Ash Comprehensive School] and the staff at Aberdare Community School. 	<p>Throughout the consultation process, comments received from the pupils at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School have been very complimentary and extremely positive about the support and guidance offered by the staff at the school. However, should the proposal proceed, we would hope that those positive relationships would be forged and continue to be developed between the pupils and the staff at Aberdare Community School.</p> <p>The transition arrangements that will be delivered to pupils will also be available to parents/carers, and there will be opportunities for both parents/carers and pupils to visit the school prior to any changes being implemented. This will help both the pupils and their families navigate the change and happily settle into their new school as quickly as possible.</p> <p>Good transition inevitably entails effective information sharing about pupils, their skills and any support needs.</p>

17.	<p><i>Financial implications of the decision</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would this be possible to deliver with the decision coming far too late for staffing levels to be changed and funding not in place? 	<p>Given the timing of this decision the Local Authority has confirmed that both schools' budget positions will be protected for the next academic year until a decision on the proposal is made.</p> <p>Both schools have received clarification on this issue and have received confirmation that there will be no financial impact should the proposal be implemented from September 2025.</p>
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