

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

31ST JULY, 2014

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

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MEDIUM TERM SERVICE PLANNING – SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSALS

LEISURE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report outlines the further work undertaken with regard to options for Leisure Services as requested by Cabinet on the 14th May 2014.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet decides on whether or not, and if so how, it wishes to proceed with:

- 2.1 The service change proposal in respect of **Leisure Services** as detailed in the report attached at Appendix 1, having considered the Consultation Exercise attached at Appendix 2, the Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 3 and the further detail now presented in this report (at Section 5).

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On the 8th January 2014 Cabinet decided to initiate a consultation process on a number of service change and charging proposals, namely Phase 2. One of the proposals related to the Council's Leisure Services.
- 3.2 Following the consultation process Cabinet met on the 14th May to consider whether or not, and if so how it wished to proceed with the proposal having considered the Consultation Exercise and the Equality Impact Assessment.
- 3.3 Cabinet determined that in respect of the Leisure Services proposal that the decision “. . . *be deferred for a further indepth review and the findings therefrom together with further options in relation to this service be presented to a future meeting of the Cabinet.*”

Decision notice :

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/en/councildemocracy/democracyelections/councillorscommittees/meetings/cabinet/2014/05/14/cabinet14-may-2014.aspx>

- 3.4 The original proposal is attached at Appendix 1, the relevant excerpts from the consultation report is attached at Appendix 2 and the Equality Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 3.

4. ORIGINAL PROPOSAL FOR LEISURE SERVICES

4.1 It was proposed that the service be redesigned around :

- 3 Core Centres; plus
- 4 satellite centres with opening times reduced and aligned to demand

4.2 The proposal was thus :

	Option : 3 Core 4 Satellite
Llantrisant Leisure Centre	Retain Core Centre
Rhondda Sports Centre	Retain Core Centre
Michael Sobell Sports Centre (including Aberdare Swimming Pool)	Retain Core Centre
Abercynon Sports Centre	Retain Satellite Centre Reduced Opening
Tonyrefail Sports Centre	Retain Satellite Centre Reduced Opening
Hawthorn Leisure Centre	Retain Satellite Centre Reduced Opening
Rhondda Fach Sports Centre	Retain Satellite Centre Reduced Opening

Llantwit Fardre Leisure Centre	Close
Bronwydd Swimming Pool	Close
Hawthorn Swimming Pool	Seek to Transfer to School

- 4.3 The full detail for this original proposal is attached at Appendix 1 and it would have delivered savings for the Council of £1.2M per year (full year impact).

5. FURTHER REVIEW WORK AND OPTIONS FOR LEISURE SERVICES

- 5.1 A number of areas were considered as part of the further review work, the results of which are summarised in the remainder of section 5.

5.2 Review Core Purpose of the Service

The core purpose of the service is the provision of facilities for sports and physical activities. Accordingly some facilities could be considered for closure, namely:

- The Jacuzzis at Abercynon and Hawthorn; and
- Bars (which should be open for functions and on a full cost recovery basis only).

5.3 Maximise the Operating Model

A fundamental review of structures and rota's has been carried out across all centres with an optimum structure now identified for implementation.

5.4 Management and Administration Restructure

A review of the management and administration resources across the service has been undertaken and efficiencies can be delivered through a new leaner structure.

5.5 Satellite Centres - Reduced Opening Hours

The original proposal considered by Cabinet included a reduction in the opening hours of satellite centres to 9 hours Monday – Thursday and 4

hours Friday to Sunday. This was the basis on which savings were calculated. A more detailed analysis of usage across all centres has now been undertaken and identified opportunities for opening hours targeted at peaks in usage thereby maximizing the potential for income generation. A key feature of this proposal will be the flexibility that must be maintained in terms of opening hours in light of any further demand changes.

	Satellite Centres
Monday – Thursday	08.30 – 20.00
Friday	08.30 – 12.00 / 16.00 – 20.00
Saturday	09.00 – 17.00
Sunday	09.00 – 17.00

5.6 Core Centres – Standardised Opening Hours

At the 3 Core Centres, it is proposed that opening hours are standardised to :

	Core Centres
Monday – Thursday	06.30 – 21.00
Friday	06.30 – 20.00
Saturday	07.15 – 17.00
Sunday	07.15 – 20.00

5.7 Financial Implications of Above Proposals

The implementation of the above proposals would deliver savings of £1.5M per year (full year).

5.8 Commercial Focus and Marketing

It is felt that there is the opportunity to improve the way in which we currently advertise our leisure centre offerings and to become more commercially focused. This will seek to maximise usage of our centres aimed at making them more sustainable into the medium to longer term.

5.9 Leisure Trust

In parallel with the above proposals, it is proposed that officers begin to develop a business case for the transfer of our leisure centres into a trust. This could be to either an existing or a newly created trust. It is

proposed that the first stage of this work be presented back to Cabinet before the end of the financial year.

6. DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Cabinet Members will of course be fully aware and mindful of the general equality duty introduced by the Equality Act 2010 and the specific public sector equality duties applicable to the Council as a local authority in Wales.
- 6.2 In accordance with the Council's duties a full Equality Impact Assessments ("EIA's") was prepared alongside and supported by the consultation process for Phase 2 Proposals.
- 6.3 Attached at Appendix 3 to the report is the EIA completed for the Leisure Services Proposal. The EIA is now presented to Cabinet to ensure that a fully informed decision is made on this proposal.
- 6.4 The EIA considers the potential impact of the original Phase 2 proposal on the designated protected groups and identifies any potential mitigation either in place or which can be put in place.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Following the consideration of the original proposal for Leisure Services and the feedback from the consultation process and EIA, Cabinet resolved to defer making any decision pending further review work being undertaken by officers and presented back to Cabinet.
- 7.2 This report now provides further options for Cabinet to consider with regard to Leisure Services.

APPENDIX 1

**ORIGINAL PROPOSAL FOR LEISURE AS
PRESENTED TO CABINET 8TH JANUARY 2014**

DECISION DEFERRED 14TH MAY 2014

APPENDIX 6

DETAILED OPTION APPRAISAL

PROPOSALS TO AMEND THE LEISURE SERVICE

CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Council currently operate 8 leisure centres (5 of which have swimming pool facilities) and 3 stand alone 'open access' swimming pools.

The table below details the Councils current provision

RHONDDA	Rhondda SC, Ystrad	Leisure Centre with Pool
	Rhondda Fach SC, Tylorstown	Leisure Centre with Pool
	Bronwydd Pool, Porth	Stand Alone Pool
CYNON	Michael Sobell SC, Aberdare	Leisure Centre
	Aberdare Pool	Stand Alone Pool
	Abercynon SC	Leisure Centre with Pool
TAFF	Llantrisant LC	Leisure Centre with Pool
	Tonyrefail SC	Leisure Centre with Pool
	Hawthorn LC	Leisure Centre
	Hawthorn Pool	Stand Alone Pool
	Llantwit Fardre LC	Leisure Centre

The total revenue budget for the service for 2013/14 is as follows:

2013/14 Revenue Budget	£'000
Gross Expenditure	9,259
Income	4,247
Net Expenditure	5,012

The map at Appendix 6A shows the geographical distribution of the current leisure centre provision.

There is no statutory requirement to provide leisure facilities, the core purpose of the service being to provide affordable opportunities for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf to play sport and keep fit.

It is apparent that over the course of time, the facilities have extended into other areas of social activity not aligned to the core purpose, for example health suites, soft play / bouncy castles, weddings / parties etc.

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE – LONG LIST OF OPTIONS

Given the current situation with regard to Michael Sobell SC and Aberdare Pool, for the purpose of the following options it is appropriate that these are now viewed as “one facility”.

A number of options were initially considered for amending the service provision.

These were :

1	Retain 3 Core Centres
2	Retain 6 Centres
3	Retain 3 Core Centres plus 3 Satellite Centres - reduced opening at the satellite centres
4	Retain 3 Core Centres plus 4 Satellite Centres - reduced opening at the satellite centres (with Hawthorn Pool possibly transferring to Hawthorn High School)
5	Retain 3 Core Centres plus 4 Satellite Centres - reduced opening and removal of pools at the satellite centres
6	Outsource to Private Sector
7	Outsource to Charitable Leisure Trust

Appendix 6B provides an analysis of the consideration of each option and the reasons for not progressing with each.

The recommended proposal was Option 4 - Retain 3 Core Centres plus 4 Satellite Centres - reduced opening at the satellite centres

PREFERRED OPTION – DETAILS

The preferred option, that is, to retain 3 Core Centres plus 4 Satellite Centres - reduced opening at the satellite centres, attempts to balance retaining the best used centres whilst maintaining an equitable geographical spread. It also provides the opportunity to concentrate available resources around the core function (sports and fitness).

Appendix 6C shows the performance data for each of the current centres.

Appendix 6D shows the rationale for determining the leisure centres proposed to be retained.

The Centres proposed to be retained are shown in the following table, with those proposed for closure and the nearest alternative provision.

Core	Retain		Close	Nearest Alternative	Distance
	Satellite	Transfer to School *			
RHONDDA					
Rhondda SC (Ystrad)	Rhondda Fach SC		Bronwydd Pool	Tonyrefail SC	3.0m
CYNON					
Michael Sobell SC & Aberdare Pool	Abercynon SC				
TAFF					
Llantrisant LC	Tonyrefail SC	Hawthorn Pool	Llantwit Fardre LC	Hawthorn LC	2.8m
	Hawthorn LC				

* Hawthorn Pool possibly transferring to Hawthorn High School

The proposed opening hours for the satellite centres shown above are as follows:

Monday to Thursday - 9 hours opening per day
Friday to Sunday - 4 hours opening per day

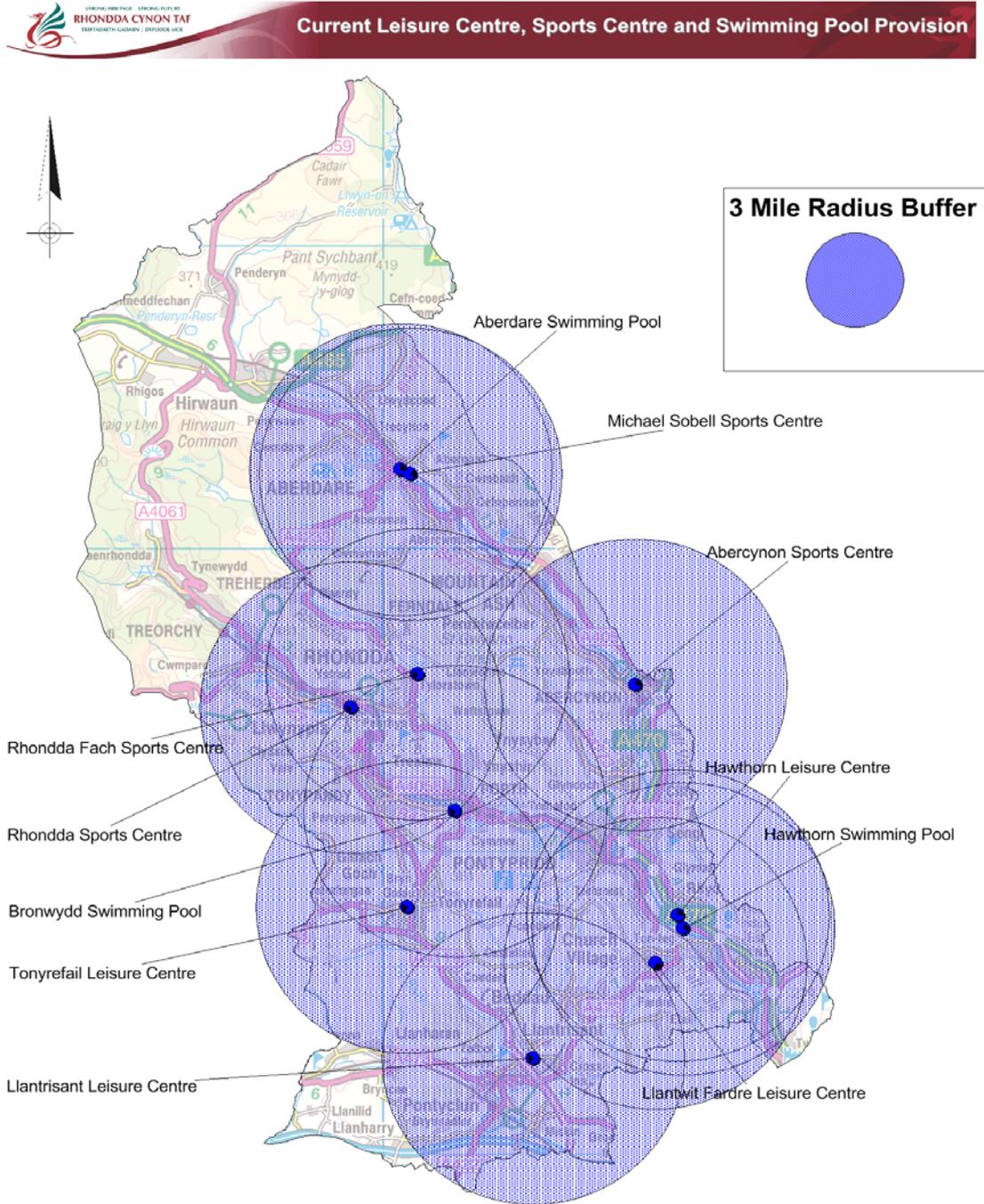
Actual opening hours to be agreed on a centre by centre basis.

The proposed retained centres are shown in the map in Appendix 6E.

FINANCIAL APPRAISAL

The preferred option would deliver savings in a full year of £1.2M

APPENDIX 6A CURRENT LEISURE CENTRES



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**APPENDIX 6B
INITIAL LONG LIST OF OPTIONS**

	Options	Advantages	Disadvantages	Recommended to be taken forward
1	Reduce to 3 Core Centres (Rhondda SC (Ystrad), Michael Sobell SC & Aberdare Pool and Llantrisant LC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate financial savings of £2.7M • Retains a centre in each of Rhondda, Cynon & Taff Ely areas • Retains best used facilities • Represents the optimum business model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in Sports & Fitness opportunities • Potential Impact on School Swimming Programme • Potential Impact on Free Swim initiatives • Potential Impact on local clubs use • Potential impact on availability for social activities 	No
2	Reduce to 6 Centres (Rhondda SC (Ystrad), Michael Sobell SC & Aberdare Pool, Llantrisant LC, Abercynon SC, Hawthorn LC and Tonyrefail SC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate financial savings of £1.4M • Retains greater coverage across RCT • Potential to mitigate a large proportion of loss of use from closed centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in Sports & Fitness opportunities • Potential Impact on School Swimming Programme • Potential Impact on Free Swim initiatives • Potential Impact on local clubs use • Potential impact on availability for social activities 	No
3	Reduce to 3 Core Centres plus 3 Satellite Centres - reduced opening at the satellite centres (Core - Rhondda SC (Ystrad), Michael Sobell SC & Aberdare Pool, Llantrisant LC, Satellite - Abercynon SC,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate financial savings of £1.7M • Retains greater coverage across RCT • Potential to mitigate a proportion of loss of use from closed centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in wider Sports, Fitness and Leisure opportunities • Potential Impact on School Swimming Programme • Potential Impact on Free Swim initiatives • Potential Impact on local clubs use • Potential impact on availability for 	No

	Hawthorn LC and Tonyrefail SC)		social activities	
4	Reduce to 3 Core Centres plus 4 Satellite Centres - reduced opening at the satellite centres (Core - Rhondda SC (Ystrad), Michael Sobell SC & Aberdare Pool, Llantrisant LC, Satellite - Abercynon SC, Hawthorn LC, Tonyrefail SC and Rhondda Fach SC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate financial savings of £1.2M • Retains greater coverage across RCT • Potential to mitigate a large proportion of loss of use from closed centres • Continued use of good condition assets • Opportunity to concentrate on core sporting and fitness provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in wider Sports, Fitness and Leisure opportunities • Potential Impact on School Swimming Programme • Potential Impact on Free Swim initiatives • Potential Impact on local clubs use • Potential impact on availability for social activities 	Yes
5	Reduce to 3 Core Centres plus 4 Satellite Centres - reduced opening and removal of pools at the satellite centres (Core - Rhondda SC (Ystrad), Michael Sobell SC & Aberdare Pool, Llantrisant LC, Satellite - Abercynon SC, Hawthorn LC, Tonyrefail SC and Rhondda Fach SC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate financial savings of £1.6M • Retains greater coverage across RCT • Potential to mitigate a proportion of loss of use from closed centres (excluding Swimming) • Continued use of good condition assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in wider Sports, Fitness and Leisure opportunities • Potential Impact on School Swimming Programme • Potential Impact on Free Swim initiatives • Potential Impact on local clubs use • Potential impact on availability for social activities 	No
6	Outsource to Private Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generates potential financial savings of £630k (NDR) plus potential for additional savings but would require a full assessment • Initially retains current number of centres • Transfer of operating risk • Access to external investment • Protects resources by ring fencing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to result in closure of less viable centres • May lead to increased charges • Set up costs • Limited control and influence • Ties Council into long term contract • TUPE transfers can be cost prohibitive 	No

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> through a contract Likely to increase income generation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional contract monitoring costs Council retains lifecycle (asset) risk External investment can be expensive 	
7	Outsource to existing Charitable Leisure Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generates potential financial savings of £630k (NDR) plus potential for additional savings but would require a full assessment Initially retains current number of centres Transfer of operating risk Access to external investment Protects resources by ring fencing through a contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likely to result in closure of less viable centres May lead to increased charges Substantial set up costs Limited control and influence Ties Council into long term contract TUPE transfers can be cost prohibitive Additional contract monitoring costs Council retains lifecycle (asset) risk External investment can be expensive 	No

APPENDIX 6C

LEISURE CENTRE PERFORMANCE DATA

2012/13 Performance based on Income Recovery Rates				
Facility	Actual			Recovery Rate - Inc as a % of Exp
	Exp £	Inc £	Net £	
Michael Sobell SC	667,078	401,973	265,105	60.3%
Llantwit Fardre LC	245,512	133,612	111,900	54.4%
Llantrisant LC	1,182,042	636,698	545,344	53.9%
Rhondda SC	1,372,351	673,672	698,679	49.1%
Hawthorn LC	730,520	357,339	373,181	48.9%
Hawthorn Pool	290,191	137,149	153,042	47.3%
Tonyrefail SC	775,520	337,694	437,826	43.5%
Abercynon SC	850,158	343,134	507,024	40.4%
Bronwydd Pool	492,922	188,557	304,365	38.3%
Aberdare Pool	826,769	309,228	517,541	37.4%
Rhondda Fach SC	900,422	313,771	586,651	34.8%
Total	8,333,485	3,832,827	4,500,658	46.0%

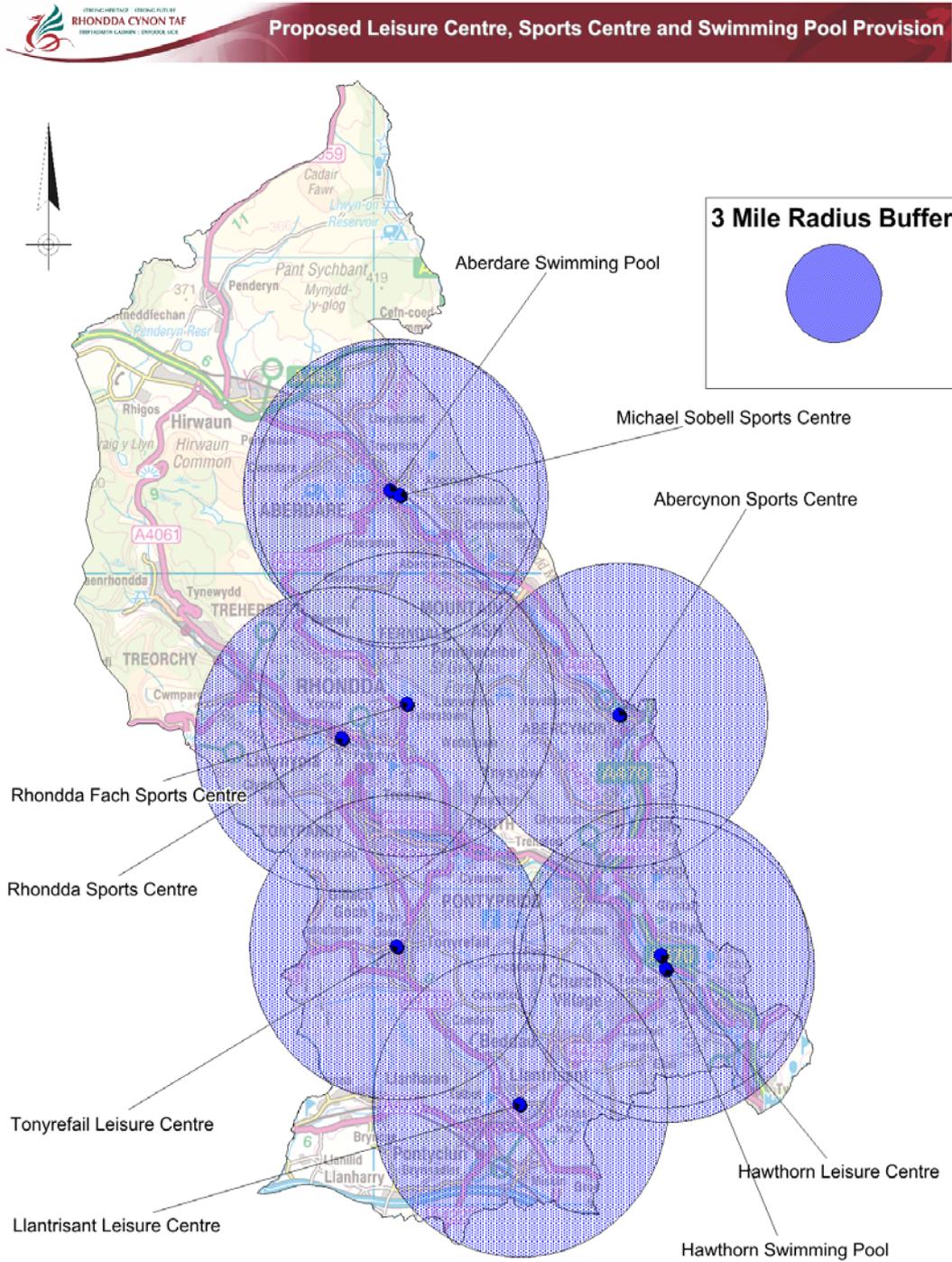
2012/13 Performance based on Usage					Current Monthly Members
	Sport & Fitness	Clubs	Schools Use	Total	
Rhondda SC	197,968	57,260	8,799	264,027	1,291
Llantrisant LC	182,107	37,164	16,610	235,881	2,014
Michael Sobell SC	133,731	52,985	13,523	200,239	996
Abercynon SC	108,540	36,697	13,320	158,557	588
Tonyrefail SC	116,370	33,625	8,330	158,325	678
Rhondda Fach SC	117,553	33,324	3,133	154,010	492
Aberdare Pool	112,115	7,485	8,519	128,119	480
Hawthorn LC	98,733	23,234	2,030	123,997	786
Bronwydd Pool	80,113	4,281	4,976	89,370	352
Llantwit Fardre LC	52,519	8,228	205	60,952	388
Hawthorn Pool	42,174	7,064	10,767	60,005	61
Total	1,241,923	301,347	90,212	1,633,482	8,126

The remaining recorded usage information relate in the main to Health Suite, social activities and spectators.

**APPENDIX 6D
 LEISURE CENTRE DECISION MATRIX**

		Income Recovery Rate	Score (Ranking)	Schools Usage	Score (Ranking)	Sport & Fitness Usage	Score (Ranking)	Number of Members	Score (Ranking)	Total Score (Ranking)
1	Llantrisant LC	53.90%	3	16,610	1	182,107	2	2,014	1	7
2	Michael Sobells SC	60.30%	1	13,523	2	133,731	3	996	3	9
3	Rhondda SC	49.10%	4	8,799	5	197,968	1	1,291	2	12
4	Tonyrefail SC	43.50%	7	8,330	7	116,370	5	678	5	24
5	Abercynon SC	40.40%	8	13,320	3	108,540	7	588	6	24
6	Hawthorn LC	48.90%	5	2,030	10	98,733	8	786	4	27
7	Aberdare Pool	37.40%	10	8,519	6	112,115	6	480	8	30
8	Rhondda Fach SC	34.80%	11	3,133	9	117,553	4	492	7	31
9	Llantwit Fardre LC	54.40%	2	205	11	52,519	10	388	9	32
10	Hawthorn Pool	47.30%	6	10,767	4	42,174	11	61	11	32
11	Bronwydd Pool	38.30%	9	4,976	8	80,113	9	352	10	36
	Total			90,212		1,241,923		8,126		

APPENDIX 6E PROPOSED LEISURE CENTRE PROVISION



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Consultation Report Service Changes Phase 2

Leisure Services



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Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
July 2014



STRONG HERITAGE | STRONG FUTURE
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
TREFTAETH GADARN | DYFODOL SICR

CONTENTS

Section		Page
	Executive Summary	3
1	Introduction	5
2	Background	5
3	Methodology	6
4	Proposed Service Changes	10
5	The Need for Service Change	11
6	Leisure Services Consultation Findings	13
7	General Comments	26

List of tables and figures

Table		Page
1	Proposed leisure centre changes	10
2	Agreement and disagreement with the following principles	12
	Leisure Services	
3	Agreement and disagreement with proposals for the leisure service	13
4	Views on closures and reduced hours over leisure services	14
5	Comments and themes emerging	18
6	Petitions received against Proposal	20
7	Current and preferred times when using leisure centres on weekdays	24
8	Current and preferred times when using leisure centres on weekends	24
9	Leisure Services and protected characteristics	25

Figure		Page
1	Do you understand why the Council needs to reduce services?	11
2	Should the Council be reviewing all services?	12
	Leisure Services	
3	Do you visit a leisure centre...?	23
4	Leisure usage – Do you use the leisure facility to...?	23
5	If you are a user of a leisure centre proposed for closure, would you...?	24

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This section outlines a summary of the main issues and themes raised during the phase 2 consultation process on Leisure services.
- This report sets out the key issues and themes that have arisen as part of the consultation process. This along with access to the full responses received will provide the Cabinet with the materials needed to assist in the final decision making process on the leisure services proposal. The consultation results will need to be considered in conjunction with the Equality Impact Assessments and any other information that is available on the proposed leisure service changes.
- On the 22nd July 2013, Cabinet received an update on the latest projection of the Council's revenue budget position for the period to 2017/18 (financial year 2013/14 and a 4 year projection), as part of the Council's Medium Term Service Planning arrangements. This highlighted an estimated budget gap over the 4 years from 2014/15 to 2017/18 of £56M. This was subsequently updated following the receipt of the Local Government settlement as part of the Council's agreed budget strategy in February 2014, with the estimated gap rising to £63.4M.
- On the 8th January 2014, Cabinet agreed to proceed to a formal consultation a number of proposals, including leisure services. The consultation began on the 27th January, and ended on the 24th February, 2014.
- The consultation was conducted in-house. Before beginning the consultation, discussions were held between officers on the most effective approach to take to ensure that everyone who was potentially affected by the service changes would be able to have their say. The consultation process and materials were agreed by the Council's Corporate Management Team. The consultation materials were considered to provide clear information in an appropriate and understandable format.
- This report attempts to provide a readable summary of the main responses received to the leisure services proposal. No attempt at recommendations are made, the document has been put together impartially and presented to Cabinet to aid decision making.
- Respondents recognised that there was a need for service change and a review of all existing services, when seen in the context of the budget savings that need to be made by the Council. 85% of respondents stated that they understand why the Council needs to reduce services. 79% of respondents agreed that the Council should be reviewing all services and the way in which they are provided and that it was a reasonable approach to take.

Leisure Services

- Open responses in relation to leisure services were received from 1,413 individuals. The number of views expressed totalled 5,859.
- 569 online questionnaires (questions and open comment) and 54 paper Questionnaires (questions and open comment)
- A number of themes emerged from the analysis as follows;
 - Health impact
 - Impact on the young
 - Accessibility Issues
 - High Usage
 - Loss to the Community
 - Adequate Facilities
 - Schools
- 12 petitions against the proposal were received, with a total of 6,971 signatures. 6 pre-completed forms were also submitted for Bronwydd Pool, with a total of 1,825 signatures.
- 84.4% of respondents stated that they were users of the leisure service and 40.4% of respondents use the service weekly.
- 54.6% of respondents stated that they would stop exercising, if they were a user of a facility proposed for closure.

Next Steps

- This report will be presented to Cabinet for consideration, along with filed responses that are available for Cabinet to view should they so wish, before any final decisions are made.
- The consultation results, although an important part of the decision making process, are not the only consideration to take into account. The Cabinet will also need to consider other information available alongside the consultation responses (for example the results of the Equality Impact Assessments).

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the consultation findings for the Council's service change proposal - **Leisure Services**
- 1.2 Section 2 provides some brief background information on the budget gap faced by the Council and the need to initiate a consultation.
- 1.3 Section 3 provides detail of the methodology used.
- 1.4 Section 4 outlines the proposed service changes that were open for consultation.
- 1.5 Section 5 shows the need for service change responses
- 1.6 Section 6 provides a summary of the consultation findings on the leisure services proposal
- 1.7 Section 7 provides a summary of the general comments that were provided as part of the consultation process.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On the 22nd July 2013, Cabinet received an update on the latest projection of the Council's revenue budget position for the period to 2017/18 (current financial year 2013/14 and a 4 year projection), as part of the Council's Medium Term Service Planning arrangements.
- 2.2 This highlighted an estimated budget gap over the 4 years from 2014/15 to 2017/18 of £56M based on the budget assumptions and modelling undertaken at that time. This was subsequently updated following the receipt of the Local Government settlement as part of the Council's agreed budget strategy in February 2014, with the estimated gap rising to £63.4M
- 2.3 Given the size of the budget gap faced and the timescale requirements for any implementation of service changes, Cabinet agreed to receive reports on potential service change / cut proposals as soon as these become available.
- 2.4 The reports included leisure services.
- 2.5 On the 8th January 2014, Cabinet agreed to proceed to a formal consultation on the proposals. The consultation began on the 27th January, and ended on the 24th February, 2014. The following section outlines the methodology used.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The consultation has been conducted in-house. Before beginning the consultation, discussions were held between officers on the most effective approach to take to ensure that everyone who was potentially affected by the service changes would be able to have their say. The process was designed to be open and transparent.

Consultation Materials

- 3.2 The questionnaire and consultation materials were prepared working closely with the service managers for each of the services impacted upon in phase 2 of the process.
- 3.3 The consultation process and materials were agreed by the Council's Corporate Management Team. The consultation materials were considered to provide clear information in an appropriate and understandable format.
- 3.4 The questionnaire was piloted internally. The questionnaire allowed opportunity to provide free text for each of the proposals, allowing any comment/view to be expressed.
- 3.5 The questionnaire and booklet included a section on protected characteristics. The Council is required to consider people with these protected characteristics as part of their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the resultant Public Sector Equality Duties.

The Consultation

- 3.6 The consultation began on the 27th January and finished on the 24th February 2014. The process was planned to ensure that consultation materials were available to people affected by the service change proposals on day 1 of the consultation period, therefore maximising the time available for response.
- 3.7 The analysis included all emails and letters received from the announcement of the service changes on the 8th January, before the consultation period officially started on the 27th January.
- 3.8 Both Council and Cabinet meetings are open to the public. In terms of separate consultation meetings it was considered that this would not be necessarily productive in terms of ensuring that the high volumes of comments received would be noted and fed into the process, although specific forums were attended (see paragraph 3.12).

Distribution

- 3.9 The materials were printed in house and the distribution of materials was undertaken by Council couriers. The following lists the approximate number of booklets that were distributed;
- Libraries – 1040
 - Leisure Centres – 4300
 - Museums - 450
 - Theatres – 600
 - Residential Care Homes/Repite Care Homes/Social Care Day Centres - 560
 - Communities First Offices – 350
 - Main Receptions – 270
 - One4All Centres – 200
 - Buses (50 posters)
 - Bus Stations - 100
 - Contact Centre on request – 200
 - Councillors to deliver in community – 150 each if required (75 councillors 11,250 copies)
 - Spares held in Clydach – 500
- 3.10 This equates to approx. 20,000 copies in total.
- 3.11 Anyone, whether an individual or an organisation in Rhondda Cynon Taf, could take part in the consultation, including employees of the Council.
- 3.12 The consultation was promoted to the press via press releases and the coverage included the South Wales Echo, Western Mail, the Rhondda Leader, Cynon Valley Leader and Pontypridd Observer. There was also coverage on BBC Wales, TV and radio as well as ITV news, GTFM and Real Radio.
- 3.13 Welsh copies were made available, as well as the option for other formats on request.
- 3.14 An online web page was created along with the option of an online survey. A web logo box was placed on the front of the website for ease of access. The online survey was sent out to those Citizens' Panel members with email addresses.
- 3.15 A link to the online page was placed on Social Media. Twitter advertised the consultation, to the Council's 3,000 followers.
- 3.16 A dedicated telephone number was set up in the Council's Contact Centre to deal with any queries and to distribute materials as necessary. 33 calls were received and callers were issued with consultation packs where requested. In addition the One4aLL centres issued packs on request.

- 3.17 A dedicated email address and free post address were also provided.
- 3.18 All correspondence was dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible, this included acknowledging comments when requested, passing on questions to the relevant services and passing on and working with the complaints department to ensure a fast response and turnaround.

Analysis and Report Writing

- 3.19 The analysis of the quantitative data (from the questionnaire) was undertaken using SNAP survey software.
- 3.20 The analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken by using a standardised coding template, which was developed in line with the main themes identified when reviewing responses as they were received.
- 3.21 All responses were allocated a unique reference number upon receipt. They were then read and coded against the template, using as many codes as necessary. Once coded they were input into a database to record and capture all responses against the coded themes. The hard copies were then ordered and filed.
- 3.22 Validation of the analysis process was undertaken by an internal audit review. An internal quality assurance process (including sample checks) was put in place, to check the coding of responses and accurate recording into the database.
- 3.23 This report attempts to provide a readable summary of the main issues identified in the responses received. No recommendations are made, the document has been put together impartially and is presented to Cabinet to aid decision making.

Responses Received

- 3.24 569 online questionnaires (questions and open comment) and 54 paper Questionnaires
- 3.25 Of the questionnaires received (both online and in paper format), 95% of responses were from individuals.
- 3.26 The list below shows some of the stakeholder groups that submitted written submissions to the consultation;

Political Groups

- Rhondda Plaid Cymru
- Plaid Cymru, Pontypridd
- Welsh Liberal Democrats

Voluntary/Community Groups/Special interest

-
- Mountain Ash Karate
 - RCT People First
 - Pontypridd Swimming Club
 - Pontypridd United Services Remembrance Committee

Assembly Members (AMs) and Members of Parliament (MPs)

- Leanne Wood AM
- Eluned Parrott AM
- Owen Smith MP
- Jill Evans MEP

Local Authority Councillors

- Cllr Pauline Jarman
- Cllr Lyndon Walker
- Cllr Joel James
- Cllr Mike Powell

Town and Community Councils/Councillors

- Llantwit Fardre Community Council
- Pontypridd Town Council

Trade Unions

- GMB Rhondda Cynon Taf Branch

3.27 The Cabinet will be able to view all of the online and hard copy filed responses, as well as considering the report findings, before any final decisions are made. It is useful to note that the consultation results, although an important part of the decision making process, are not the only consideration to take into account. The Cabinet will also need to consider other information available alongside the consultation responses (for example, the results of the Equality Impact Assessments).

4. PROPOSED LESISURE SERVICE CHANGES

4.1 The Council currently operates 8 Leisure Centres (5 of which have swimming pools) and a further 3 stand alone swimming pools.

4.2 It is proposed that the service be redesigned around:

- 3 Core Centres; plus
- 4 satellite centres with opening times reduced and aligned to demand

4.3 The proposal is thus:

Table 1. Proposed leisure centre changes

	Option : 3 Core 4 Satellite
Llantrisant Leisure Centre	Retain Core Centre
Rhondda Sports Centre	Retain Core Centre
Michael Sobell Sports Centre (including Aberdare Swimming Pool)	Retain Core Centre
Abercynon Sports Centre	Retain Satellite Centre Reduced Opening
Tonyrefail Sports Centre	Retain Satellite Centre Reduced Opening
Hawthorn Leisure Centre	Retain Satellite Centre Reduced Opening
Rhondda Fach Sports Centre	Retain Satellite Centre Reduced Opening
Llantwit Fardre Leisure Centre	Close
Bronwydd Swimming Pool	Close
Hawthorn Swimming Pool	Seek to Transfer to School

5. THE NEED FOR SERVICE CHANGE

- 5.1 As documented in the remainder of this report, there is some level of opposition to the changes proposed. However, most of the respondents recognised that there was a need for service change and a review of all existing services, when set against the context of the budget savings that need to be made by the Council.
- 5.2 A series of general questions on the service change proposals as a whole were included in the questionnaire.
- 5.3 85.2% of respondents who completed the questionnaire stated that they understand why the Council needs to reduce services.

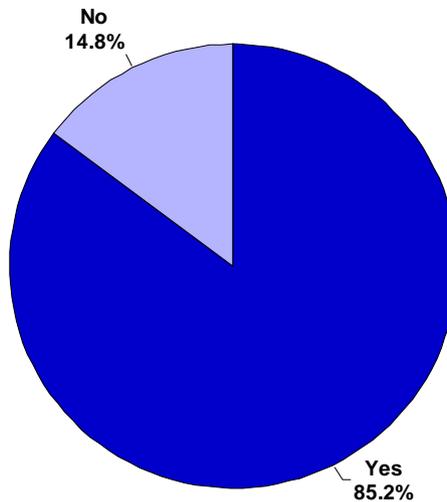


Figure 1- Do you understand why the Council needs to reduce services?

- 5.4 79.4% of respondents who completed the questionnaire agreed that the Council should be reviewing all services and the way in which they are provided and that it was a reasonable approach to take.

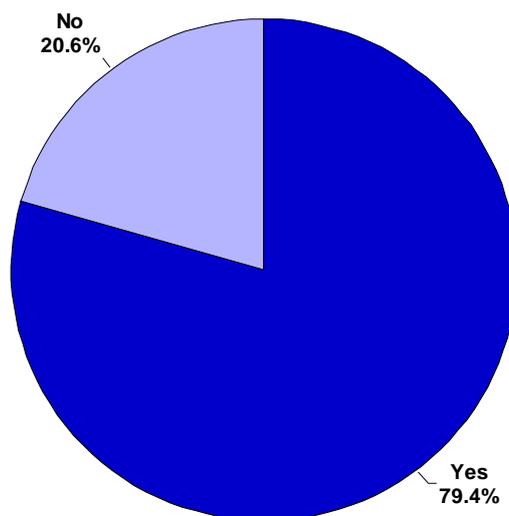


Figure 2- Should the Council be reviewing all services?

- 5.5 The Council states that it is applying a number of principles, while assessing services, respondents who completed the questionnaire were asked if they agreed with them.
- 5.6 As can be seen below there was a mixed response to the principles outlined. The majority of respondents thought that services should continue to meet the Council's statutory obligations (63.1%) and that services should remain sustainable over the medium term (58.8%).

Table 2. Agreement and disagreement with the following principles

	Base		
		Yes	No
Total	2698	1488 55.2%	1210 44.8%
Services are as equitable as possible across RCT	548	309 56.4%	239 43.6%
Proposals result in a reasonable level of service remaining in place	540	273 50.6%	267 49.4%
Services will remain sustainable over the medium term (3-5 years)	529	311 58.8%	218 41.2%
Services will as far as possible be generally better or as good as the rest of Wales	542	255 47.0%	287 53.0%
Services will continue to meet the Council's statutory obligations	539	340 63.1%	199 36.9%

LEISURE SERVICES CONSULTATION FINDINGS

PART A - Open Responses

- 6.1 This section provides a summary of the detailed open comments and feedback received, including letters, emails, booklets and the open responses submitted as part of the online survey and from the returned paper surveys.
- 6.2 **Open responses were received from 1,413 individuals. The number of views expressed totalled 5,859.**
- 6.3 A number of respondents either stated their overall agreement or disagreement. This can also be broken down into the agreement levels with regards to the individual facilities, as shown below. As expected the highest level of disagreement is found with those facilities that are proposed to close, in particular Bronwydd Pool (number = 747).

Table 3 Agreement and disagreement with proposals for the leisure service

	Agree	Disagree
Overall	21	229
Proposal to Retain		
Llantrisant LC	0	3
Michael Sobell SC	0	0
Rhondda SC	0	4
Aberdare Pool	0	4
Satellite centre		
Abercynon SC	2	39
Hawthorn LC	0	28
Rhondda Fach SC	8	44
Tonyrefail SC	1	17
Close/Transfer		
Llantwit Fardre LC	0	110
Hawthorn Pool	2	115
Bronwydd Pool	2	747
TOTAL	36	1,340

6.4 The following table shows the number of respondents who were in favour of closing or retaining the leisure facilities and reducing or retaining the opening hours. Again, as expected the centres with the highest responses are those in favour of retaining those centres that are proposed for closure.

Table 4 Views on closures and reduced hours over leisure services

	Close	Retain	Reduce hours	Retain hours
Llantrisant LC	0	3	0	2
Michael Sobells SC	0	0	0	0
Rhondda SC	0	4	0	2
Aberdare Pool	0	2	0	1
Abercynon SC	1	32	0	26
Hawthorn LC	0	27	0	21
Rhondda Fach SC	13	41	7	8
Tonyrefail SC	1	10	1	13
Llantwit Fardre LC	0	84	6	28
Hawthorn Pool	0	108	2	54
Bronwydd Pool	2	710	4	121
TOTAL	17	1,021	20	276

6.5 There was some support for the proposed changes.

“Agree less used facilities should not be funded but could they be run by user groups like Swansea tennis centre?”

“Agree with the closure of Hawthorn. Begrudgingly accept closure of Bronwydd.”

“I agree, there are many private facilities for residents if they so wish to use, I would simply join a private gymnasium”

6.6 However, the majority of responses indicated that they were against the proposal.

6.7 The following are the main themes to emerge from the consultation;

- Health impact
- Impact on the young
- Accessibility issues
- High usage
- Loss to the community
- Adequate facilities
- Schools

6.8 A large number of respondents referred to the possible impact on health. This included concerns about people stopping exercise, a knock on effect to health services and an increase in mental health issues.

- **Health Impact (number = 596)**

“With the rising numbers of people with obesity, heart problems and other weight-related and lack of exercise related problems, where would they go to take up exercise when prescribed by a GP?”

“I do not agree with the proposal, as exercise is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle.”

“Obesity is a huge problem in this area of Wales and removal of facilities used by children adults and elderly alike will most probably lead people to stop exercising and doing physical activity as they can no longer access these facilities adding to the increasing levels of obesity and the cost of this on the health care.”

6.9 There was concern that the largest impact would be on the young people who use the services, in particular with regard to swimming lessons and learning to swim.

- **Impact on the Young (number = 408)**

“I think these facilities are really important for the general health of the public and should be used more by local schools. To promote fitness and inspire youngsters into taking up a sport”

“Many clubs and sports teams will be affected by this proposal and again could prevent youngsters realising their ambitions of achieving sporting greatness.”

6.10 Accessibility issues were stated as being of concern, including that the current centres were situated in a central location, good location, was easy to get to, respondents would not travel anywhere else. Also issues around safety of travelling at night to an alternative facility and the cost of travel to other venues.

- **Accessibility Issues (number = 302)**

“Not everyone can afford to or have the time to travel to another town to go swimming or exercise.”

“A good geographical spread is needed and if some leisure centres are too close with no others nearby many people will not travel to other facilities”

“I work full time and do not want to spend the extra time travelling to another what will probably be a busier centre once the closures happen”

6.11 A number of respondents reported that some of the facilities were well used and classes were well attended.

- **High Usage (number = 284)**

“Llantwit Fardre sports centre is extremely well used and situated in a densely populated area”

“This pool is used by many schoolchildren every day plus retired people, professionals and swimming clubs and disabled users.....why close it when there is a great use and need?”

6.12 As with some of the other proposals there were some respondents who felt that the proposals would be a loss to the community.

- **Loss to the Community (number = 205)**

“It would be a big loss to the area if it closes”

“great loss for the public”

“this would be disastrous for the community”

“To close Bronwydd Pool will cause devastation to the area”

“well used and vital to the community”

6.13 A number of respondents stated that the next nearest facility doesn't have the same facilities or adequate facilities when compared to the existing centre they used.

- **Adequate Facilities (number = 142)**

“Mygrandson is having swimming lessons and I am concerned that other pools in the vicinity would not be able to take on other classes as I have heard they too already have waiting lists”

“the other pools in the vicinity would not be able to cope with the extra children”

“Ystrad Pool is often too full and feeds people from Treorchy – there is a strong need to keep both pools”

“It has a variety of...classes, much more than other swimming pools”

“There is no other pool within the area that can accommodate all the lessons and activities that go on at Bronwydd”

6.14 There was some concern that the proposal would negatively impact upon the schools that use the facilities, both swimming and leisure generally.

- **Schools (number = 101)**

"If Bronwydd does close where will the schools go for lessons"

"It is used by schools, not only for lessons, but Galas also"

6.15 The table on the following page shows the breakdown of the main themes against each leisure facility outlined in the proposal. The majority of comments related to Bronwydd Pool.

Table 5. Comments and themes emerging

Proposal 6 - Leisure Service	A - General	B - Rhondda SC, Ystrad	C - Rhondda Fach SC, Tylorstown	D - Bronwydd Pool, Porth	E - Michael Sobell, Aberdare	F - Aberdare Pool	G - Abercynon SC	H - Llantrisant LC	I - Tonyrefail SC	J - Hawthorn LC	K - Hawthorn Pool	L - Llantwit Fardre LC	TOTAL OF ALL RESPONSES
Comment / Category													
Health Impact	146	1	9	305	0	1	18	1	11	12	46	46	596
High Usage	18	4	3	158	0	0	17	7	8	8	22	39	284
Adequate facilities	11	0	4	87	0	0	0	2	1	1	21	15	142
Impact on the Young	31	0	1	314	0	0	5	0	3	2	40	12	408
Schools	11	0	1	70	0	0	3	0	0	0	16	0	101
Accessibility issues	54	1	4	151	0	0	5	4	2	3	39	39	302
Loss to the community	15	1	4	147	0	0	4	0	1	3	19	11	205

6.16 The other themes emerging from the responses were;

- Impact on Swimming Clubs (number = 88)
- Cost to Council (number =51)
- Impact on people who work (number = 33)
- Increase Fees (number = 22)
- New Housing estate being built, so they need the L.C. due to the higher amount of people to follow (number =7)

6.17 There were a number of other comments and other ideas, these included;

“Having worked in the industry why hasn't closing on bank holidays been suggested also shutting down at Xmas for a week these two things alone will help claw back money without effecting the service as much. What about turning the outdoor pool into a football pitch that people pay for this will increase revenue once complete and it could be used all year round. Just some ideas.”

“improve green spaces for exercise and health, we have lots of it.”

“Has consideration been given to proposal to WAG or Health Authority for funding?”

“The service and staff should be tailored to meet the public demand and not the geographical spread but must operate in a more competitive against the vast number of private gyms, leisure and sports facilities. The undesirable alternative would be to close all facilities and open schools for that service purpose.”

Petitions

6.18 A number of specific petitions were submitted as follows;

Table 6 Petitions received against proposal

Title	Number / signatures
Rhondda Fach Sports Centre	
Petition to retain Rhondda Fach Sports Centre	898
Petition in favour of maintaining full facilities at Rhondda Fach Sports Centre	39
Petition to retain Rhondda Fach Sports Centre (2)	257
Total	1194
Hawthorn Swimming Pool	
Proposed closure of Hawthorn indoor Swimming Pool	13
Keep Hawthorn Pool open, don't kill Pontypridd Swimming Club	701
Petition against the closure of Hawthorn Swimming Pool, Pontypridd	938
Total	1652
Bronwydd Swimming Pool	
Supporting this letter against closure of Bronwydd	1503
Please keep Bronwydd Pool open	101
Petition against closure of Bronwydd Pool, Porth	47
Save Bronwydd Pool	198
Total	1849
Llantwit Fardre Leisure Centre	
Petition to save Llantwit Fardre Leisure Centre from closure	2168
Save Llantwit Fardre Leisure Centre	108
Total	2276
Overall Total	6971

Pre Completed Responses

6.19 The Council received a number of pre completed surveys in response to this proposal. The responses were identical in terms of their comments. The following were received;

- Pre completed 1 (number = 827)

Proposed Closure of Bronwydd Swimming Pool and Leisure Facilities, Porth – Summary

- The pool is well used by the public and schools
- List of schools that use the pool
- List of clubs that use the pool
- Geographical list of areas that visitors come from
- Visitor numbers
- The pool at Tylorstown and the proposed Lido in Pontypridd should be closed as alternatives

- Pre completed 2 (number = 211)

Proposed Closure Bronwydd Pool - Summary

- The public use the facility on a regular basis, by children and senior citizens
- The pool is used by people from a wide geographical area
- Acceptance that changes need to be made, but there must be alternative to this proposal
- List of schools that use the pool
- List of clubs that use the pool
- Performance Indicators of visitor numbers
- The pool at Tylorstown and the proposed Lido in Pontypridd should be closed as alternatives

- Pre completed 3 (number = 555)

Proposed Closure Bronwydd Pool – Summary

- My family/I use the excellent pool on a regular basis
- The pool attracts people from a wide geographical area
- Acceptance that changes need to be made, but there must be alternative to this proposal
- The pool at Tylorstown and the proposed Lido in Pontypridd should be closed as alternatives
- The Welsh Assembly Government have acknowledged the benefits of exercise

- Pre completed 4 (number = 87)

Objection to the proposed closure of Bronwydd Swimming Pool and Leisure Facilities – Porth

- The land was gifted to Rhondda District Council in 1921 with the intention of improving the environment for those living in the area
- The pool was constructed with grants and public donations in the 1920s and 1930s
- The pool is well used by the public, groups and schools
- Tylorstown pool has less usage
- The pool attracts people from a wide geographical area
- The pool at Tylorstown and the proposed Lido in Pontypridd should be closed as alternatives

- Pre completed 5 (number = 33)

Letter – Re: Consultation on Service Changes (Phase 2) Opposition to the proposals, specifically with relation to the proposal to close Bronwydd Pool in Porth

- The pool is a valuable amenity for the community
- The pool is well used by the public, groups and schools
- Adverse impact on health and sports activities for local people

- Pre completed 6 (number = 112)

Letter – I wish to state my opposition to your council’s plans to reduce leisure provision in the county borough by closing swimming pools

- Increased obesity, poorer public health and possible increase in youth crime
- Rejection of the ambition on Swim Wales to make every 11 year old a swimmer by 2020
- Barriers to the development of swimming in the Rhondda
- Deterred from learning to swim, with an increase in drowning

PART B - Questionnaire Responses

- 6.20 This section outlines the results of the direct questions in the online and paper questionnaire. 623 responses were received to the overall questionnaire with 569 online and 54 paper copies submitted.
- 6.21 84.4% of respondents stated that they were users of the leisure service and the frequency of visits are shown in the pie chart below, with 40.4% of respondents using the service weekly;

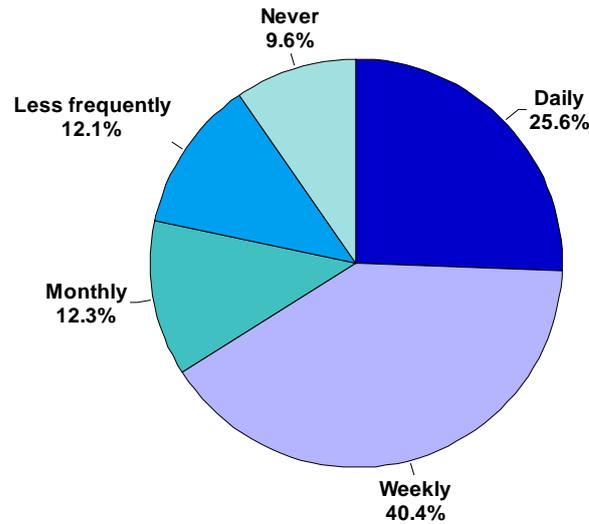


Figure 3– Do you visit a leisure centre...?

6.22 Respondents were asked what they used leisure facilities for. 33.8% of respondents used the facility to go swimming.

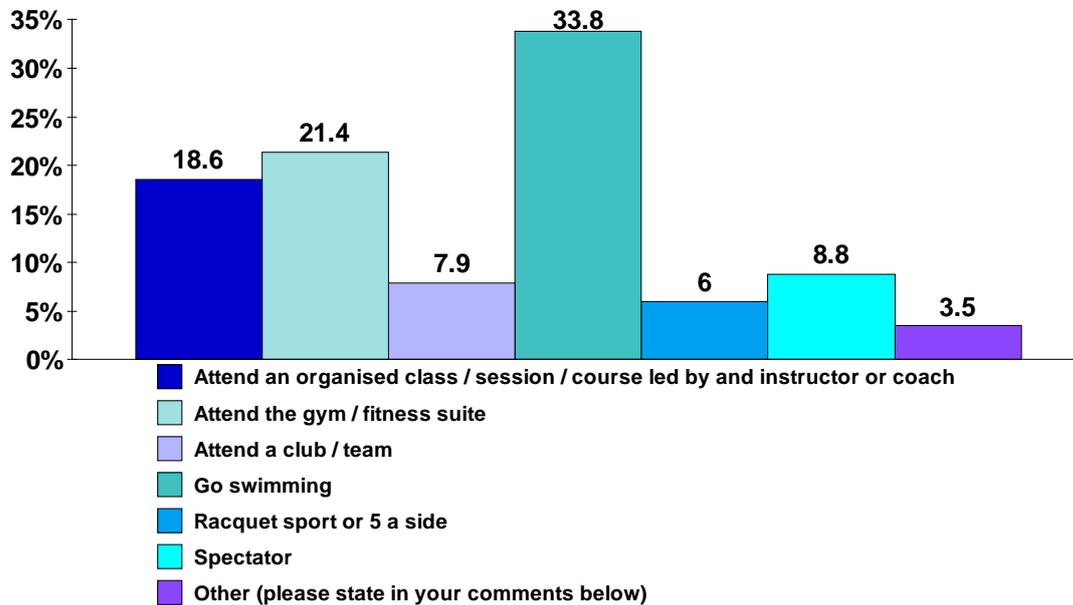


Figure 4 – Leisure usage – Do you use the leisure facility to...?

6.23 Respondents were asked when they currently use the leisure facilities and when would they like to use them. The following table shows that the respondents most popular times of the week (Monday to Friday) are fairly evenly spread across the day, apart from the peak time which would seem to be 5pm to 8.30pm.

Table 7. Current and preferred times when using leisure centres on weekdays (Multiple-choice question)

	Base / responses	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8am to 1pm	772	177	142	150	146	157
1pm to 5pm	558	112	125	109	103	109
5pm to 8:30pm	1170	237	231	239	246	217
8:30pm to 10pm	570	113	116	110	116	115

6.24 The following table shows that respondents use the facilities more on a weekend morning than an afternoon.

Table 8. Current and preferred times when using leisure centres on weekends (Multiple-choice question)

	Base / responses	Saturday	Sunday
AM	614	317	297
PM	446	216	230

6.25 Respondents were asked what they would do if they were a user of a facility proposed for closure. As can be seen in the table below 54.6% of stated that they would stop exercising.

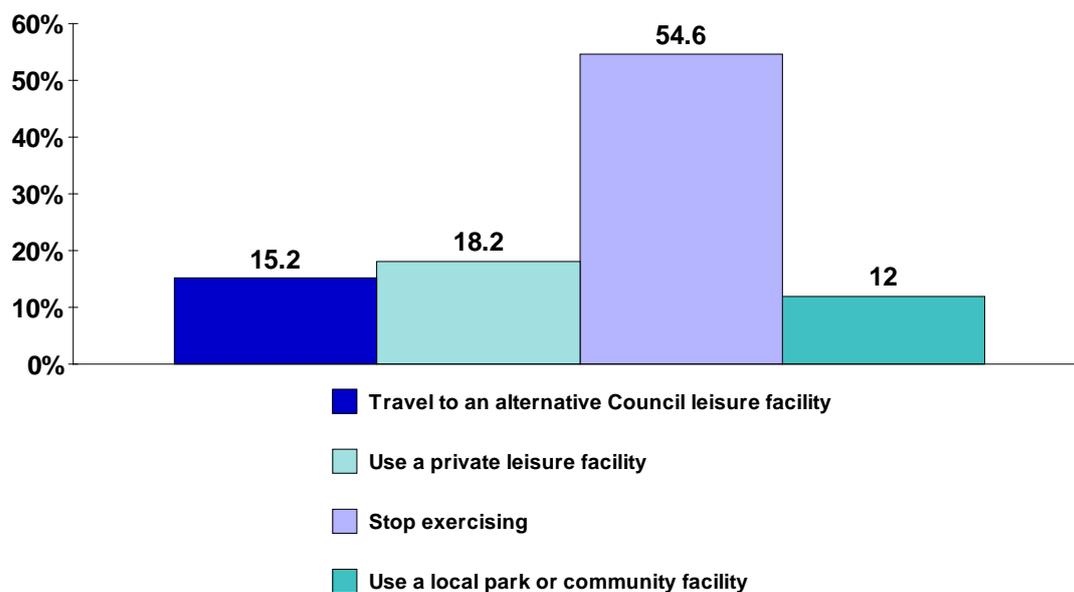


Figure 5 – If you are a user of a leisure centre proposed for closure, would you...?

Impact by Protected Characteristic

- 6.26 Respondents were asked if they felt that the proposal would have more of an impact upon them, because of a number of factors. These factors are what are called protected characteristics and the Council is required to consider people with these characteristics as part of their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the resultant Public Sector Equality Duties.
- 6.27 The following table shows the number of responses that considered that the leisure services proposal would have an impact on the protected characteristics. Further detail will be shown in the Equality Impact Assessment.

Table 9. Leisure Services and protected characteristics

	Leisure Services
Your Gender	632
Your Age	762
Your Ethnicity	71
Your Disability	204
Your Sexuality	68
Your Religion	61
Your Gender Identity	64
Your Marital status	83
Your Pregnancy	76
Your Language	64

GENERAL COMMENTS

PART A - GENERAL Open Responses

- 13.1 This section provides a summary of the detailed open comments and feedback received, including letters, emails, booklets and the open responses submitted as part of the online survey and from the returned paper surveys.
- 13.2 The online and paper questionnaire enabled additional comments to be made and during the analysis of the other materials a number of general comments were found, including suggestions for savings in other Council areas.
- 13.3 The general themes that emerged included;

- **Reducing Councillor expenses (n=97)**

“Think councillors’ pays and expenses should be looked at before killing off our community”

“The overall number of councillors - there are too many and a 50% cut would be appropriate.”

“The number of councillors should be reduced. The payments to cabinet members and councillors should be reduced to cover expenses and loss of earnings to attend meetings which should be after normal office hours.”

“Reducing the amount of pay that senior councillors, managers and the chief executive gets should be taken seriously. If this council and its councillors hope to be re-elected at the next election, then they should seriously think about how it treats the residents of RCT, and show that they are willing to take some of the pain themselves.”

- **Cutting staff wages (n=24)**

“We continually see road humps being put in roads where there have been no history of accidents, roundabouts put in which make roads more dangerous than before, the wages paid to council staff and councillors and sick leave should also be managed.”

“Wage cuts for all RCT workers and MPs in the area”

“The benefit system!! Too many middle management staff in the local authority - keep the ground workers but get rid of these! Too many senior management staff with ridiculous salaries - reduce the salaries!”

- **Reducing management staff (n=54)**

“What about looking at the bosses not the ground level Staff reduce some of them and then RCT could really save money!”

“Wages for the top people, expenses, parties, anything that is not essential like a mayor and posh cars to travel around in.”

“There are too many chiefs and not enough Indians, why do money saving cuts always involve the grass roots level which affects the delivery of the service”

“Senior Officers pay and do we need as many of them”!

“The structure of the top earners within the council should be looked at rather than hitting the poorest at such a crucial time, none of these proposals will affect high earners, just the poor!”

- **All services need to be considered for service change (n=7)**

“Way too many staff employed by RCT mainly offices. All services in RCT’s spending should be looked at not just public services”.

“The way the council deals with disciplinary, appeals, Should be quicker. Refuse collections, community safety should be more police orientated. . Sell off unused land and sell off buildings (move personnel into empty offices) charge for primary care to use Ty Elai or if already charging put price up.”

“The Council should look to join with other councils in provision of services to look for economies of scale and cost savings in the provision of services and also look very closely at its own administrative and staff costs at providing these services”

“Refuse bin collections should be reduced to once per month whilst retaining weekly recycling service, forcing more waste to be recycled. All households should be charged a minimal fee to have their non recycled waste collected once per month that covers cost of this service only. Nappy recycling service should be aligned to the same day as recycling collections. Review of counsellors’ expenses to be reduced what can and cannot be claimed in their duty. Travel costs should not be allowed unless required to go out of RCT on travel for business only.

- **Reducing administrative staff (n=8)**

“Think that the authority should consider all non statutory functions. The council should also consider disbanding the community councils. It should also consider the size of back office functions like admin support and Human Resources.”

"I do not know enough about other Council services to comment but I hope administration costs are being looked at."

"Maybe look at cutting wages, seeing people doing basic jobs getting overpaid. Adverts on the website show this. General administration jobs overpaid. Currently there are environmental health posts going for 30k a year. The equivalent in London is only on 2k more a year. Someone externally should look at this."

- **Welsh language (n=3)**

"You could also save money on trying to force the revival of an elitist dead language. You could save money in education by amalgamating the services, in publishing by only producing in Welsh when selected instead of being obligatory, in translation services which are completely overcharged in comparison to other language translations, etc and it may help our students to concentrate on learning in a united language that doesn't exclude or bully."

"The news letter published in 2 languages could be abandoned"

"Stop all this dual language nonsense. If you must do it in 2 languages ask for option then stop the other"

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Phase 2: Service Change Proposals

Proposal 6: Leisure Service

14th May 2014

Equality Impact Assessment

Phase 2: Service Change Proposals Proposal 6: Leisure Service

1. Purpose of the Initiative

- 1.1 On the 22nd July 2013, Cabinet received an update on the latest projection of the Council's revenue budget position for the period to 2017/18 (financial year 2013/14 and a 4 year projection), as part of the Council's Medium Term Service Planning arrangements. This highlighted an estimated budget gap over the 4 years from 2014/15 to 2017/18 of £56M. This was subsequently updated following the receipt of the Local Government settlement as part of the Council's agreed budget strategy in February 2014, with the estimated gap rising to £63.4M.
- 1.2 The Council has a statutory obligation to set a balanced budget and, therefore, a series of proposals have been presented to Cabinet, given the need to address the medium term budget shortfall. Phase 2 is the second tranche of these proposals, containing seven options for service change in order to make savings.
- 1.3 Notwithstanding the anticipated funding reductions, the Council remains committed to its promise to continue to deliver better public services, stronger communities and social justice. Above all, the Council strives to make Rhondda Cynon Taf a safer, healthier and more prosperous place to live, work and learn.
- 1.4 The economic climate, however, means the Council must deliver this commitment within the context of reduced available funding and in order to assist in ensuring available resources and services are prioritised, any service change / service reduction or alternate service delivery proposals will be tested against the following guiding principles:
 - Services are as equitable as possible across Rhondda Cynon Taf;
 - Proposals will result in a reasonable level of service remaining in place;
 - Services will remain sustainable over the medium term (3 to 5 years);
 - Services will, as far as possible, be generally better or as good as the rest of Wales;
 - Services will continue to meet our statutory obligations.

2. The General Duty

- 2.1 Under the Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010), public authorities must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3. **Proposal 6: Leisure Service**

3.1 The Council currently operates eight leisure centres (five of which have swimming pools) and three stand alone 'open access' swimming pools. Figure 1 shows the Council's current provision:

Figure 1

RHONDDA	Rhondda SC, Ystrad	Leisure Centre with Pool
	Rhondda Fach SC, Tylorstown	Leisure Centre with Pool
	Bronwydd Pool, Porth	Stand Alone Pool
CYNON	Michael Sobell SC, Aberdare	Leisure Centre
	Aberdare Pool	Stand Alone Pool
	Abercynon SC	Leisure Centre with Pool
TAFF	Llantrisant LC	Leisure Centre with Pool
	Tonyrefail SC	Leisure Centre with Pool
	Hawthorn LC	Leisure Centre
	Hawthorn Pool	Stand Alone Pool
	Llantwit Fardre LC	Leisure Centre

3.2 The total revenue budget for the service for 2013/14 is, as follows:

Figure 2

2013/14 Revenue Budget	£'000
Gross expenditure	9,259
Income	4,247
Net Expenditure	5,012

3.3 There are no statutory requirements to provide leisure services, the core purpose of the service is to provide affordable opportunities for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf to play sport and keep fit. However, over time, the services have extended into other areas of social activity, not aligned to this e.g. health suites, soft play / bouncy castles, weddings and parties etc.

3.4 The proposed preferred option is to retain three core centres, plus four satellite centres with reduced provision. As the consultation document outlines, this attempts to balance retaining the best used centres and maintaining a good geographical spread.

3.5 The proposal, therefore, is that the following services are retained:

- Rhondda Sports Centre (core);
- Rhondda Fach Sports Centre (satellite);
- Michael Sobell Sports Centre & Aberdare pool (core);
- Abercynon Sports Centre (satellite);
- Llantrisant Leisure Centre (core);

- Tonyrefail Sports Centre (satellite);
- Hawthorn Leisure Centre (satellite).

3.6 The proposal is to close Bronwydd Pool, with the nearest alternative being Tonyrefail Sports Centre (3 miles away); close Llantwit Fadre Leisure Centre, with the nearest alternative being Hawthorn Leisure Centre (2.8 miles away) and possibly transfer Hawthorn Pool to the school.

3.7 This option would save £1.2M in a full year.

4. What evidence is there to suggest the potential impact of the proposed preferred option on protected groups?

4.1 Consultation & Engagement

4.1.1 A consultation was carried out on the Phase 2 proposals, which formally began on the 27th January 2014 and ended on the 24th February 2014. (Responses received from the announcement of the service changes on the 8th January, before the consultation period officially started were also included in the analysis of results.)

A separate consultation report on the outcomes of the consultation has been produced.

4.1.2 Open responses on Proposal 6 (specifically on the Leisure service proposal) were received from 1,413 individuals. The number of views expressed totalled 5,859.

4.1.3 A number of common themes emerged from the analysis of the responses, including:

- Health impact;
- Impact on the young;
- Accessibility issues;
- High usage;
- Loss to the community;
- Adequate services;
- Schools.

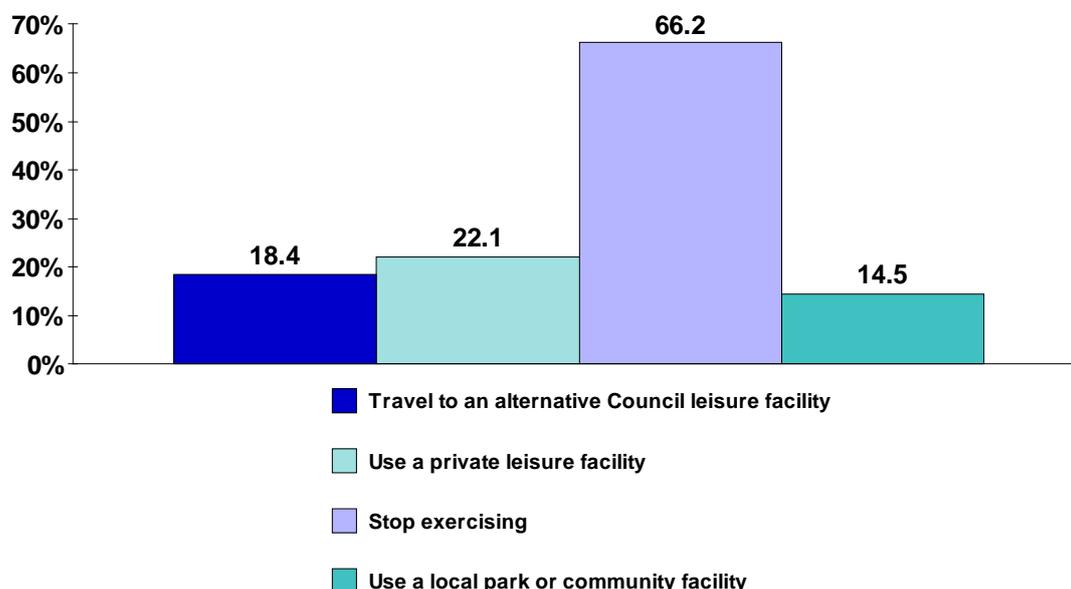
4.1.4 These general themes have been taken into account in preparing this Equality Impact Assessment.

4.1.5 There were also a number of petitions received, in opposition to closure of services. These have been considered as part of the consultation process and in considering service change options.

4.1.6 The questionnaire asked whether respondents used leisure centres. 84.4% stated they were users of the leisure service and the majority (40.4%) used the service weekly.

4.1.7 Respondents were also asked what they would do if they were a user of a leisure facility proposed for closure. Figure 3 illustrates that the majority (66.2%) said they would stop exercising:

Figure 3 - If you are a user of a leisure centre proposed for closure, would you...?



4.1.8 A question included in the consultation questionnaire (online and paper responses) asked whether respondents felt the proposals would have more of an impact on them because of a protected characteristic, with respondents able to mark more than one characteristic. The following responses were received:

	Leisure Service
Your Gender	632
Your Age	762
Your Ethnicity	71
Your Disability	204
Your Sexuality	68
Your Religion	61
Your Gender Identity	64
Your Marital status	83
Your Pregnancy	76
Your Language	64

4.1 Other evidence gathered

4.2.1 Evidence has been gathered from a number of sources, including academic research papers, statistical bulletins and local data.

4.2.2 The evidence has been used to, firstly, determine the level of relevance the proposal has to the protected groups covered by the equality duty and, secondly,

explore the potential impacts of the proposal further, having due regard to the need to promote equality and minimise any possible adverse impacts.

4.2.3 In line with feedback from consultation, and other evidence gathered, the following assessment has been taken:

Will the proposed preferred option impact on protected groups covered by the general duty?¹

Protected Group	Could this proposal impact on this group differently from others in RCT?	Could this proposal promote equal opportunities for this group?	Is the potential impact positive / negative?
<i>Age</i>	Yes	No	Negative
<i>Disability</i>	Yes	No	Negative
<i>Gender assignment</i>	No	No	N/A
<i>Marriage / civil partnership</i>	No	No	N/A
<i>Pregnancy / maternity</i>	Yes	No	Negative
<i>Race</i>	Yes	No	Negative
<i>Religion / belief</i>	Yes	No	Negative
<i>Sexual orientation</i>	No	No	N/A
<i>Sex (gender)</i>	Yes	No	Negative

4.2.4 Section 5 outlines the potential impacts the proposal will have on protected groups covered by the general duty, using evidence gathered through engagement, consultation and research.

5 What potential impacts will the proposed preferred option have on protected groups covered by the general duty?

5.1 Protected Group: Age

5.1.1 If the proposed preferred option is agreed, it will have an impact on the general population in that provision of leisure services will be different to the current model, with general issues such as reduced access to activities, resources and services.

5.1.2 Studies have found that participation in exercise and organised sport has benefits for both physical and emotional health in children and young people,² and leisure services provide a low cost opportunity for this group to take part.

5.1.3 Through consultation, residents highlighted that, in particular, closure of services may impact on children and young people. Views expressed included: hampering young people's ambitions within sport but also, affecting health and fitness:

¹ (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010)

² See, for example, [WHO](#); [NHS Choices](#).

“Many clubs and sports teams will be affected by this proposal and again could prevent youngsters realising their ambitions of achieving sporting greatness.”

“I think these facilities are really important for the general health of the public and should be used more by local schools. To promote fitness and inspire youngsters into taking up a sport”³

5.1.4 As well as the general usage that children and young people enjoy, the services provide:

- a venue for swimming for schools;
- swimming lessons (this includes adult swimming lessons, but the majority of these are children and young people learning how to swim or improving their current skills).

5.1.5 Regular physical activity has health benefits for all age groups. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, 64% of adults report themselves as being overweight or obese and on average, 24% of people report having high blood pressure; 16% report having a respiratory illness and 14% report suffering with a mental illness.⁴ Research suggests that these are conditions that can be improved through regular physical activity and, exercise is also encouraged in older people to improve balance and co-ordination, decreasing the chance of injury.⁵ Therefore, a decrease in affordable community services that allow people a range of opportunities to exercise could impact on adults.

5.1.6 There are a number of community groups and clubs that meet regularly at the leisure centres. For example, 'Young at Heart' clubs and 'Evergreens' for people over the age of 55 years old. These groups encourage physical activity but also have a positive social benefit for older people.

5.1.7 Similarly, there are other casual bookings through the leisure centre, made in partnership through other Council services, such as care homes and foster groups. The closure of a facility they use would mean they would need to find alternative provision.

5.1.8 Through consultation, members of the public also expressed that any closure of a local facility for some of these groups would mean they have further to travel to access leisure opportunities. This could be an additional cost to them and may discourage them from using the retained centres.

5.2 Protected Group: Disability

5.2.1 Physical activity and participation in sport has been cited as having a positive impact on mental health, physical health and social wellbeing.⁶ For some people with a physical disability, taking regular exercise can be very beneficial as it can provide pain relief, improve muscle strength, mobility, and, as with other groups of the population, prevent conditions from worsening.⁷

³ Taken from Phase 2 Consultation report.

⁴ [Welsh Health Survey](#) (2013 release, 2011/12 data)

⁵ NHS Guidelines <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physical-activity-guidelines-for-older-adults.aspx>

⁶ See, for example, [EFDS](#) or [WHO](#)

⁷ [English Federation of Disability Sport](#) and [Disability Research Series "Promoting the participation of people with disabilities in physical activity and sport in Ireland"](#). Fentem (1994) in Disability Research Series (pp24)

5.2.2 The social benefits of taking part in disability sport or general physical activity can be positive for people with physical, learning and sensory disabilities. The establishment of social networks, the encouragement of social integration and promotion of positive self-esteem are all outcomes of sport and physical activity participation. As a result, improved functional independence can be an outcome of taking part, as well as positive impacts on challenging behaviour.⁸

5.2.3 At present, a number of clubs aimed at people with disabilities use the Council leisure services, such as a swimming club for people with disabilities, a swimming club specifically for people with autistic spectrum disorders and a wheelchair rugby team.

5.2.4 A reduced number of services could mean that some disabled service-users would need to find alternative premises to exercise. This could displace some of the already formed social networks, which can emotionally have an impact on disabled people more than non-disabled people due to the possible disruption. Some disabled people may also find it more difficult to travel the short additional distance between centres proposed for closure and centres proposed for retention than the general population.

5.3 **Protected Group: Pregnancy / maternity**

5.3.1 Research suggests that exercise during pregnancy can be beneficial for mother and baby,⁹ and, therefore, it is recommended that women take part in regular, gentle exercise during pregnancy.

5.3.2 Additional benefits of attending exercise classes can be meeting other pregnant women or parents with young children, increasing the social wellbeing of service users.

5.3.3 At present, many of the leisure centres offer exercise classes specifically for pregnancy or mother and baby. A reduction in service provision could mean that these classes would be reduced, additional pressure could be put on retained leisure centres because existing service users would need to find alternative provision.

5.4 **Protected Group: Race**

5.4.1 Participation in sport has been demonstrated as having a positive effect on the community cohesion of an area, helping people from different backgrounds, of different race and different religion to get to know each other and understand each other's differences.¹⁰ The proposed closure of leisure services could impact on this group, due to reduced access to provision.

5.4.2 In partnership with the 'Urdd', there are Welsh language provision sports groups and coaching sessions that use the leisure service, providing an opportunity for people to live their lives through the language they choose. The potential closure of some centres could mean this provision would be reduced.

⁸ See p24 of Disability Research Series (footnote 8)

⁹ [NHS Choices](#); [Baby Centre](#)

¹⁰ See, for example, Active Communities Network ["Breaking barriers"](#), [Street Games](#).

5.5 **Protected Group: Religion / belief**

5.5.1 The proposed preferred option could impact on certain religious groups, who prefer to exercise in a women-only environment.

5.5.2 At present, women-only classes and swimming times are provided at the leisure centres in RCT. The possible reduction in service would put pressure on provision at other leisure centres, meaning that this service could be reduced. Specific religious groups would, therefore, need to find alternative provision if this was the case.

5.6 **Protected Group: Sex (gender)**

5.6.1 As stated in section 5.3 and 5.5, there are certain classes and provisions aimed at women and therefore, in this way, females could be impacted by the proposed preferred option.

6 **In areas where a negative impact has been identified, are there ways in which the impact can be minimised or removed?**

6.1 In proposing the preferred option, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has committed to the following principles to minimise the impact on the communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf:

- Services are as equitable as possible across Rhondda Cynon Taf;
- Proposals will result in a reasonable level of service remaining in place;
- Services will remain sustainable over the medium term (3 to 5 years);
- Services will, as far as possible, be generally better or as good as the rest of Wales;
- Services will continue to meet our statutory obligations.

6.2 It is worth noting that, although the current leisure service provision provides low cost opportunities for physical exercise, many of the impacts cited in section 5 are around the effects of decreased physical activity on protected groups, rather than a loss of service provision. Low cost opportunities to take physical exercise, which are separate to leisure service provision, are widespread in Rhondda Cynon Taf. For example, a large amount of green space means there are opportunities for running, walking and cycling. There are other activities run throughout the County Borough to promote physical activity, and national campaigns such as 'Change 4 Life'¹¹ encourage the population to lead an active lifestyle, providing ideas on how to take exercise day-to-day.

6.3 Through consultation, residents feel that, the proposed preferred option will impact on the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf due to the loss of community assets. However, the leisure services proposed for retention still provide a good geographical spread and co-ordination of the leisure services will seek to ensure that a reasonable level of service remains in place.

¹¹ [Change 4 Life](#)

- 6.4 Under the proposed preferred option, core and satellite leisure facilities will still operate for specific protected groups. To mitigate the potential negative impact of a loss of dry and wet facility space, specific groups would also be supported to access alternative facilities.
- 6.5 Leisure Services are well connected with local community school, sport and commercial facilities and therefore, the preferred mitigating action to the proposed preferred option would be to move usage into core and satellite facilities but if this does not satisfy all demand, groups will be linked with community partners.
- 6.6 As part of mitigating the impact of a potential pressure on space for activity, a complete review of pool allocation could be undertaken to ensure all swimming groups such as public swimming, fitness swimming classes, swim and aquatics clubs, school swimming could all be accommodated.
- 6.7 Although the leisure service is a discretionary service, the proposed preferred option will ensure that seven centres will remain. These will continue to provide a range of leisure, sport and exercise opportunities for all groups of the population.
- 6.8 Some community groups may see an opportunity to continue using the centres proposed for closure, which could mitigate the impact. The option of running a facility that is potentially due to close is available to community groups. Advice and support is available from both the Council and Interlink (the County Voluntary Council (CVC) for Rhondda Cynon Taf) for any groups interested. The opportunity does exist to transfer assets, provided there are robust and sustainable Business Plans in place. This could include continuing to run the centres or swimming pools (potentially making it more suited towards the community within which it is situated), offering space and services to users and community groups or clubs.

7 In areas where a positive impact has been identified, in what ways can this be used to promote equality?

- 7.1 Following a decision by Cabinet, should a service change be agreed, the service will look to maximise the use and benefits to the community of the leisure services, which will continue to seek to promote equality and participation for all in sport and physical activity.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 In line with the General Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010), this Equality Impact Assessment has:
 - Assessed specific differential impacts that have been identified for each of the protected characteristics;
 - Stated where actions can be considered to minimise or remove any potential negative impacts relating to the proposals;
 - Provided opportunities, where applicable, to advance equality and good relations between different groups.

- 8.2 As such, this Equality Impact Assessment has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that due regard has been given to the ‘duty’ placed on the Council in this respect and that, whilst some impacts have been identified, there are ways of mitigating these through a revised programme of activity and partnership working with other organisations in respect of the Leisure Service.
- 8.3 If a decision is taken to implement some or all of the options put forward within the proposal, implementation arrangements will need to have regard to equality planning requirements, thus ensuring negative impacts are minimised equality is promoted.
