

AGENDA ITEM 7**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****CABINET****URGENT ITEM****22nd JANUARY 2015****UPDATE ON THE CONSULTATION TO REORGANISE PRIMARY SCHOOLS, SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND SIXTH FORM PROVISION IN THE RHONDDA VALLEYS AND TONYREFAIL****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING****Author: Chris Bradshaw****Tel: 01443 424026****1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the consultation to reorganise primary schools, secondary schools and sixth form provision in the Rhondda valleys and Tonyrefail.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the progress made in undertaking the consultation to date.
- 2.2 Agree to extend the consultation period for a further 28 days until 5 p.m. 27th February 2015.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the Cabinet meeting on the 4th October 2014, Cabinet resolved to commence the consultation to:

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

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

3.2 To achieve this, the proposal is to:

- Close the sixth forms of Ferndale Community School, Porth County Community School and Tonypandy Community College and transfer the sixth form provision to Treorchy Comprehensive School and a new 3-19 school in Tonyrefail;
- Close Porth County Community School, Llwynceilyn Infants' School, Porth Infants' School, and Porth Junior School and create a new 3-16 middle school on the site of the current Porth County Community School;
- Increase the capacity of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llwynceilyn by approximately 100 places, utilising the site of the existing Llwynceilyn Infants' School;
- Close Tonypandy Community College, Penygraig Infants' School, Penygraig Junior School, Tonypandy Primary School and Ysgol Yr Eos Primary School and create a new 3-16 middle school on the site of the current Tonypandy College. Relocate the specialist primary pupil referral provision at the Tai Centre, Penygraig to the site of the existing Ysgol Yr Eos Primary School;
- Close Tonyrefail Comprehensive School and Tonyrefail Primary School and create a new 3-19 middle school on the site of the existing Tonyrefail Comprehensive School. Relocate Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tonyrefail to the current Tonyrefail Primary School;
- Change the catchment area of Treorchy Comprehensive School, Ferndale Community School, and set new catchment areas for the new middle schools for Porth, Tonypandy and Tonyrefail;
- Transfer the Learning Support Class at Ysgol Yr Eos, and the three Learning Support Classes at Porth County Community School to the new 3-16 school at Porth, to create specialist provision for the four key stages;
- Transfer the Learning Support Class at Tonyrefail Comprehensive School to the new 3-19 school for Tonyrefail.

3.3 To achieve these changes, the Council, in partnership with Welsh Government, is planning to invest £75m in new or refurbished school buildings and facilities.

4 CONSULTATION FEEDBACK TO DATE

4.1 The Consultation commenced on the 20th October 2014, and to date (16th January 2015) we have held consultation meetings with the 14 school councils and the staff and governors of the 14 schools.

4.2 These meetings have been well attended and the matters raised during the meeting recorded for Cabinet's consideration at the end of the consultation period.

4.3 Schools have also been encouraged to support pupils to complete on-line questionnaires and to date we have received 500 completed questionnaires,

which represents 10% of the school population that will be impacted upon by these proposals.

- 4.4 Earlier this month we carried out two public consultation events at Treorchy and Tonyrefail Comprehensive Schools for the public to consider the impact of the changes to the sixth form provision. For both days, the weather was poor and as a result the events have not been well attended with only three parents at the first and less than a dozen at the second, despite the fact in the second event that it was also a parents' evening.
- 4.5 Furthermore at the time of writing this report, in respect of correspondence received from the public we have only received **9** letters/emails, **34** completed questionnaires, and **8** public online survey returns. This is out of a potential audience of tens of thousands. To date we have received more returns for the consultation on changes to three Learning Support Classes than we have for the largest proposal we have ever consulted upon.
- 4.6 We have three other consultation events planned for:
- 20th January 2015 (2pm-6pm) at Porth County Community School to discuss the proposed changes to the Porth schools;
 - 21st January 2015 (2pm-6pm) at Tonyrefail Comprehensive School to discuss the proposed changes to the Tonyrefail schools;
 - 22nd January 2015 (2pm-6pm) at Tonypandy Community College to discuss the proposed changes to the Tonypandy schools.
- 4.7 We have asked the schools to remind parents of the events and encourage them to attend.
- 4.8 In light of the above and in order to help further inform any decision Cabinet may subsequently take on these proposals, Members are requested to consider whether the consultation period should be extended for a further month until 5 p.m. 27th February 2015. If Cabinet resolves to extend the consultation a full day consultation event would be held at Ystrad Sports Centre on 18th February 2015 (during the half term week) to encourage pupils, parents and the wider community to discuss and view our proposals.

5 THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 5.1 The Council's Consultation Document, which was provided to all parents in the schools affected by the changes and is available on the Council's website, stated that the Community, Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessments have been produced and are available on the Council's website.
- 5.2 Whilst these documents were produced and available to consultees upon request (although no requests for copies of the documents had been received as at 9th January 2015) due to an oversight the web-links to the documents were not posted to the Council website until 13th January 2015.

- 5.3 An extension to the consultation as outlined above would give consultees a further opportunity to submit any representations or comments they may have in respect of these documents.
- 5.4 In addition all the required statutory consultees will be written to in order to inform them that the relevant impact assessments have now posted and are available to access on the Council's website. At the same time consultees would be informed of the extension to the consultation (if agreed by Cabinet) and the further engagement event that would be held.
- 5.5 Finally, if the extension is agreed, a letter from the lead Cabinet Member requesting further engagement from parents would be sent to each school linked to the proposal so it can then be passed on to parents.