

AGENDA ITEM 3**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****CABINET****22nd OCTOBER, 2015****IMPROVING PRIMARY EDUCATION PROVISION IN LLWYNYPIA****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to outline proposals that seek to close Ynyscynon Nursery School and transfer its pupils to the nearby Pontrhondda Primary School, and to seek Members approval to begin the relevant, and required statutory consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members note the information contained within this report and give formal approval to commence consultation on the following proposal; -

To close Ynyscynon Nursery School and transfer its pupils, and education provision to Pontrhondda Primary School.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. Rhondda Cynon Taf has 105 schools for pupils in the primary age range. Currently, there are 91 all age primary schools, 1 nursery school, 8 infant schools (ages 3 or 4-7) and 5 junior schools (ages 8-11).
- 3.2. The Council seeks to minimise transitions between schools amalgamating separate infant, junior and nursery schools through a phased approach, and also closing small schools, incorporating them into larger more educationally and financially viable primary schools. The schools amalgamated or closed since 2012 include primary, infant, junior and nursery schools in Abercynon, Cwmbach, Ynysboeth, Glanffrwd, Glantaf, Aberllechau and Rhiwgarn. Pentre Primary School was the most recent closure, closing on 31st August 2015.
- 3.3. The Estyn Inspection of the Council in 2012, recommended that the Council should:-
 - ***“Raise education standards in all schools; and***
 - ***Reduce surplus places.”***

3.4. The following proposal seeks to address these recommendations.

4 THE CREATION OF A LARGER, MORE VIABLE PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR LLWYNYPIA

- 4.1 The basis for this proposal and the educational rationale behind it is fully outlined and explained in the consultation document that is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. If Members give authorisation to commence statutory consultation on this proposal, this document will be widely circulated to all prescribed consultees as advised by the relevant legislation.
- 4.2 Ynyscynon Nursery School is located at Church Street, Llwynypia, Tonypany in a building that is shared with an Early Years Centre and Flying Start provision. The school comprises a two storey masonry building together with a timber frame stand alone single storey building construction, built in 1936. The school is located just 0.6 miles from Pontrhondda Primary School, this is also the school that the pupils of Ynyscynon Nursery ordinarily transfer to for their Primary education at Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2. The school is the only 'free standing' Nursery school remaining in the County Borough; it educates children of one year group (aged 3 – 4 years) only and in January 2015 there were just 37 pupils on roll, making it the smallest school in Rhondda Cynon Taf by a considerable margin.
- 4.3 Pontrhondda Primary School is located at Pontrhondda Road, Llwynypia, adjacent to the Coleg y Cymoedd Llwynypia Campus. It is a traditional, Victorian style single storey stone construction building with a slate roof, constructed in 1913. It is the only Primary School in Rhondda Cynon Taf that does not offer Nursery education provision at the current time.
- 4.4 Ynyscynon Nursery School is currently being managed, in an acting capacity, by the Headteacher of Pontrhondda Primary School.
- 4.5 In summary, the proposal seeks to invest £200K in improving the site and building of Pontrhondda Primary School, to create a larger, more viable Community Primary School for this area. Work to ensure that Pontrhondda has sufficient capacity to comfortably accommodate all children, resident within its catchment area both now and in future years will be undertaken prior to this date. The funding to enable this will come from within existing education capital budget.
- 4.6 No decisions have yet been taken in relation to the future of the Ynyscynon building should these proposals be agreed. The operation of the early years and flying start provision will be unaffected and consideration will be given to moving the both to the current nursery school building which is in a better condition

5. TIMESCALE, CONSULTATION AND THE PROCESS OF DECISION MAKING

- 5.1 The process for closing schools is set out in the Welsh Government statutory code document 006/2013 – the School Organisation Code. The Code sets out the policy context and general principles for reviewing the supply of school places and sets out the factors that need to be taken into account by those bringing forward proposals. It also outlines the format of the consultation process and identifies the key stakeholders that must be consulted.
- 5.2 The initial consultation of the closure proposal for Ynyscynon Nursery will involve all key stakeholders as outlined in the Code. This consultation will take place over a 8 week period and the proposed timetable for the whole process is as follows:
- Consultation period 2nd November 2015 to 31st December 2015
 - Report back to Cabinet on consultation – January 2016
 - Statutory Notices published (if approved by Cabinet) for a 28 day period – February 2016
 - Report back to Cabinet on outcome of statutory notice period and details of objections received, with an appropriate recommendation – March 2016

The School Organisation Code now makes provision for local authorities to determine their own statutory proposals.

- 5.3 The proposal will be for Ynyscynon Nursery School to close on 31st August 2016, with pupils transferring to Pontrhondda Primary, subject to parental preference on 1st September 2016.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Council considers that there are considerable benefits to be gained from creating larger, more financially viable Primary schools, which minimises the transition between schools. The experience of educational authorities and schools across the UK is that such schools offer a more consistent and secure model upon which schools can plan, manage and deliver the very best educational experience for pupils over time.
- 6.2 It is recommended, therefore, that Members give approval to officers to commence the consultation processes necessary to achieve the proposal outlined in this report.



APPENDIX 1

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF YNYSCYNON NURSERY SCHOOL, WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION AT PONTRHONDDA PRIMARY SCHOOL, FROM 1ST SEPTEMBER 2016.

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Introduction

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council wishes to seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders on the proposal to close Ynyscynon Nursery School and establish Nursery education provision at its associated Primary school, Pontrhondda Primary. Pontrhondda Primary School will be remodelled, to make suitable specialist provision available for pupils aged 3 to 4 years old. It is proposed that Ynyscynon Nursery School would close on 31st August 2016 with the pupils transferring to Pontrhondda Primary school on 1 September 2016. The Early Years and Flying Start provision located within Ynyscynon Nursery School buildings will continue to operate and meet local childcare needs.

Who will we consult with?

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

- The Governing Bodies of Ynyscynon Nursery School and Pontrhondda Primary School
- Pupils of Pontrhondda Primary School
- Parents, carers, guardians, and staff members of Ynyscynon Nursery School and Pontrhondda Primary School.
- Other governing bodies of neighbouring primary schools
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities
- Welsh Minister for Education & Skills
- Assembly Members for the Rhondda Cynon Taf constituencies and regional Assembly Members for the area
- Members of Parliament for the Rhondda Cynon Taf constituencies
- Estyn
- Teaching and staff trade unions
- Central South Education Consortium
- South East Wales Transport Association
- South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner
- The local Communities First Partnership
- Cwm Taf Local Health Board
- The Early Years and Childcare Partnership

What will the consultation process entail?

The consultation will start on the 2nd November 2015 and will be completed at 5pm on 31st December 2015. The feedback from the consultation will be collated and summarised, and a report presented to the Council's Cabinet in January 2016. This consultation report will be available for all persons to view on the Council internet site and copies can be obtained on request from the addresses detailed on Page 5 of this document.

The proposal will be to close Ynyscynon Nursery School and extend the age range of pupils that may attend Pontrhondda Primary School, from 4 – 11 years (as it is presently) to 3 – 11 years. This will allow for the admission of pupils of nursery age to the school.

The Council's Cabinet will consider the report and will decide, based on the feedback, whether to proceed with the proposal, make changes to the proposal or not proceed with the proposal.

If the Cabinet decides to proceed with the proposal a Statutory Notice is published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 requires that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so. To be considered as statutory objections, objections **must** be made in writing or by email, and sent to the Council within 28 days of the date on which the proposal was published.

The Council's Cabinet will consider the outcome of the statutory notice at the next available Cabinet meeting and determine whether to implement the proposal.

If there are objections, the Council's Director of Education & Lifelong Learning will publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and his response to them within 7 days of the day of the determination of the proposal, This report will also be available for all persons to view on the Council's internet site and copies can be obtained on request from the addresses detailed on Page 5 of this document.

If the Council's Cabinet approve the proposal, the proposal will be implemented in accordance with the date given in the statutory notice or any subsequently modified date. In the case of this proposal the implementation date is 1st September 2016.

What do you have to consider?

The remainder of the consultation document sets out the rationale for the proposed change to primary education provision in this part of Llwynypia, Tonypany. We would like you to consider the information contained within this document and to hear your views as to whether or not you support the proposal to close Ynyscynon Nursery School and transfer its education provision to its associated school, Pontrhondda Primary. The existing school building of Pontrhondda Primary will be remodelled, refurbished and improved to benefit all of the pupils who will attend.

How do you make your views known?

Consultation events will be held and you are welcome to attend the appropriate meeting.

School Affected		Group	Time/Date	Venue	
Ynyscynon School	Nursery	Governors and Staff Meeting	Xx November 2015, 4 – 6pm	Ynyscynon School	Nursery

School Affected	Group	Time/Date	Venue
Pontrhondda Primary School	Governors and Staff Meeting	Xx November 2015, 4 – 6pm	Pontrhondda Primary School
Pontrhondda Primary School	School Council	(as above staff, gov's), 2.30pm – 3.00pm	Pontrhondda Primary School
Both Schools and members of the local community	Parents and public drop in session and exhibition	Xx December 2015, 4 – 6pm	Pontrhondda Primary School

A consultation questionnaire is attached, it will also be available at the drop-in session detailed above and on the Council's internet site at www.rctcbc.gov.uk

The questionnaire also enables consultees to register their wish to be notified of the publication of the consultation report to the Council's Cabinet.

You are also welcome to put your views in writing to:

Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
 School Organisation and Planning Unit
 Ty Trevithick,
 Abercynon CF45 4UQ Telephone (01443) 744227 Fax (01443) 744201

E-mail schoolplanning@rctednet.net

All correspondence should be received **no later than 5pm Thursday, 31st December 2015.**

Please note that responses to the consultation will not be counted as objections to the proposal. Objections can only be forwarded following the publication of the Statutory Notice.

All schools affected by this proposal are English medium schools and therefore all the consultation documents are via the English language. If a Welsh language copy of the consultation document is required, please contact the above address.

Background to the proposal

Information on the Schools – Ynyscynon Nursery School

Ynyscynon Nursery School is located at Church Street, Llwynypia, Tonypany in a building that is shared with an Early Years Centre and Flying Start provision. The building comprises a two storey masonry building together with a timber frame stand alone single storey construction, built in 1936. Based on the results of the Welsh Government commissioned building survey of all schools Ynyscynon Nursery School is graded a B for

condition and a B for suitability, where A is the highest and D is the lowest performing building respectively.

The pupil numbers in Ynyscynon Nursery School over the past four years are shown in the following table and are obtained from the statutory annual pupil count (PLASC) which must be undertaken in January each year. The numbers shown are children aged between 3 and 4 years, i.e. of Nursery age only; this school accommodates children of this single age range only

Ynyscynon Nursery School					
No on roll in January	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nursery pupils	19	18	27	24	29
Pre-Nursery pupils	6	19	7	9	8
Total pupils in school	25	37	34	33	37

As this is a Nursery school that caters for one, non-statutory age range of pupils (3 to 4 years) only, we are not required by Welsh Government to calculate the pupil capacity of the building, neither are we required to produce pupil forecasts for the next five years. The building has been deemed to have a nominal capacity of 40 children of Nursery age only and pupil numbers are not expected to either rise, or reduce by any significant degree in the next five years.

Ynyscynon Nursery School was inspected by Estyn in October 2014 and the school's current performance was deemed good, with its prospects for improvement also good.

Estyn also set out that, in order to build upon the progress made to date, the school should:

- R1** Improve children's ICT skills
- R2** Make better use of assessment to inform planning
- R3** Ensure that the newly established leadership team is fully involved in leading and managing the school
- R4** Address the wellbeing issues identified in the report

Since September 2012, the Council's School Improvement Services have been provided by the Central South Consortium, a regional school improvement services for the five local authorities of Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. Schools are rated as either Green, Yellow, Amber or Red. Ynyscynon Nursery School is rated as a Yellow school, because although there is no official standards group for nursery settings, the standards within Ynyscynon Nursery School are considered to be at least good. There are no key measures of educational performance that can be provided for this school, including attendance data, as the pupils are too young for such assessment to be undertaken, they are below statutory school age.

Information on the Schools – Pontrhondda Primary School

Pontrhondda Primary School is located at Pontrhondda Road, Llwynypia, adjacent to the Coleg y Cymoedd Llwynypia Campus. It is a traditional, single storey Victorian style stone construction building with a slate roof, constructed in 1913. The Council has recently invested £195K of capital funding to re-wire the school, upgrade pupil toilets and replace corridor floors. This programme of investment will continue in forthcoming years, to ensure that the building is maintained to a good standard. Based on the results of the Welsh Government commissioned building survey of all schools Pontrhondda Primary is graded a B for condition and a B for suitability, where A is the highest and D is the lowest performing building respectively.

Pontrhondda is the only Primary School in Rhondda Cynon Taf that does not have designated provision for nursery age children on its site; it is however 'associated' with Ynyscynon Nursery School and currently, pupils transfer to Pontrhondda Primary School from Ynyscynon Nursery School at the start of the school year in which they turn 5 years of age, for their education at Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2, subject of course to parental preference. As an illustration, of the 27 pupils that left Ynyscynon in July 2015 to commence their education at Foundation Phase, 25 transferred to Pontrhondda, with 2 transferring to other schools in the area (Penygraig and Tonyrefail).

The pupil numbers in Pontrhondda Primary School over the past four years are shown below and are obtained from the statutory annual pupil count (PLASC) which must be undertaken in January each year.

Pontrhondda Primary School					
No on roll in January	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total statutory aged pupils	121	121	122	132	137

Over the next five years the pupil forecasts for Pontrhondda Primary School, which are calculated in accordance with guidance issued by Welsh Government, are as follows:

Pontrhondda Primary School							
Capacity of the School	2015 (Actual)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% surplus places in 2020
153	137	143	148	140	142	144	5.8%

The overall capacity of Pontrhondda will be increased by the remodelling works to ensure that there is sufficient capacity available to accommodate all of the nursery aged

pupils that may transfer from Ynyscynon. This nursery admission figure is not however included as part of the school's capacity calculation, in line with Welsh Government guidance on this issue.

Pontrhondda Primary School was inspected by Estyn in May 2012. The school's current performance was deemed to be good, and its prospects for improvement good.

Estyn also set out that, in order to build upon the progress made to date, the school should:

- R1** Raise standards in extended writing across the curriculum
- R2** Raise standards in Welsh second language at Key Stage 2
- R3** Ensure that monitoring of lesson observations is sharply focused on standards and areas for improvement
- R4** Develop the strategic role of the Governing Body and ensure that governors are more involved in the self-evaluation process
- R5** Improve attendance rates.

Since September 2012, the Council's School Improvement Services have been provided by the Central South Consortium, a regional school improvement service for the five local authorities of Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. The Consortium categorises the performance of each school in the region and considers that, in the current categorisation (2014 data):

"Pontrhondda Primary is classed as a 'Yellow' school within the National School Improvement and Categorisation Matrix (Green, Yellow, Amber, Red). This is because all performance indicators for the last two years for the expected levels and above expected levels in the Foundation Phase are in quartile 1. The one exception to this is PSD which, for 2013 was in quartile 3. Mathematical Development at the expected levels has been in quartile 1 for the last 3 years.

The tables below and overleaf set out the performance of Pontrhondda Primary School for the key measures of educational performance over the past three years and compare the school to similar schools across Wales based on free school meals. The three year average of the percentage of pupils with free school meals is 32.42%.

	2013	2013 Benchmark Quartile*	2014	2014 Benchmark Quartile*	2015	2015 Benchmark Quartile*
Foundation Phase Indicator	90.5	1	83.3	2	73.3	4
Personal and social development wellbeing and cultural diversity	90.5	3	100	1	93.3	2

Language literacy and communication skills English	90.5	1	88.9	1	73.3	4
Mathematical development	90.5	1	88.9	1	73.3	4

* - benchmark quartiles – 1 being the highest, 4 the lowest.

Percentage of pupils at the end of Year 6 who have achieved the expected level

	2013 %	2013 Benchmark Quartile	2014 %	2014 Benchmark Quartile	2015 %	2015 Benchmark Quartile
Core Subject Indicator	77.8	2	84.6	2	64.7	4
English	88.9	1	100	1	70.6	4
Maths	83.3	2	84.6	2	70.6	4
Science	77.8	3	92.3	1	70.6	4

Percentage of half-day sessions attended by pupils of statutory school age during the academic year

	2013 %	2013 Benchmark Quartile	2014 %	2014 Benchmark Quartile	2015 %	2015 Benchmark Quartile
% attendance	92.4	3	93.4	3	92.65	N/A (due December)

What is the basis for this Proposal?

In recent years, Estyn has sharpened its approach to inspection of schools and local authorities and has raised the bar in respect of what it considers to be good and excellent provision. Furthermore, Estyn has taken a very hard line on local authorities in Wales that have weaknesses in key areas such as corporate governance, educational standards, attendance levels, surplus places and safeguarding.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's education services was inspected by Estyn in March 2012, at which time the following recommendations were made :

- R1 - raise standards in schools particularly in key stage 4;
- R2 - improve attendance rates in all schools;
- R3 - improve the evaluation and analyses of data across service areas and partnerships to drive improvements in outcomes for learners;

- R4 - use the full powers available to the authority to improve leadership and management in schools;
- R5 - reduce surplus places; and
- R6 - improve the rigour and the level of scrutiny and challenge across all services and partnerships.

Over the past three years the Council had focused its attention on these six recommendations, and in particular Recommendations 1, 2 & 5, which will have the greatest impact on pupil achievement in our schools. As a result, schools that, when compared with similar schools across Wales based on free school meals, are in the third and fourth quartiles are being subject to significant challenge, scrutiny and support.

Elected Members have accepted Estyn's recommendations and have undertaken a review of our school provision. The criteria we have used for selecting schools for review is one or more of the following:

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

Ynyscynon Nursery and Pontrhondda Primary Schools have been assessed against the aforementioned criteria:

- The schools are 'paired' with each other, i.e. the children usually progress from the one to the other;
- The schools are located on sites that are only 0.6 of a mile apart;
- The average budget per pupil allocated to primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £3,261. Pupils in Pontrhondda Primary School are allocated £3,579 per head, just above the County average; for Ynyscynon Nursery School this rises to £6,089 per pupil, meaning the school costs almost double that of an average primary school to run;
- There were only 37 pupils in total on roll at Ynyscynon Nursery School in January 2015, well below the small school 'threshold' of 90 pupils. This makes Ynyscynon the smallest school, pupil number wise, in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The opportunity exists to bring the two schools together to create a larger, more educationally and financially viable primary school.

What is the educational case for closing Ynyscynon Nursery School and creating a larger Primary School at Pontrhondda, with an extended age range?

School organisational change should point to the educational benefits that any change will offer, particularly in relation to overall improvements in standards, but also in terms of the social and emotional development of children, which would usually impact beneficially on their overall achievement and outcomes.

It is the Council's view that creating a larger primary school for the community of Llwynypia will improve educational outcomes and provision for the following reasons;

- A single school vision and ethos, with a single Governing Body and management team providing leadership across the full primary age range, using consistent policies and practices;
- Improved transition from Nursery to Foundation Phase and overall progression;
- Greater consistency of teaching and learning for pupils across the Early Years phase and the statutory key stages including:
 - Seamless curriculum planning and co-ordination;
 - Shared schemes of work, assessment and tracking of pupil progress;
 - Greater continuity in terms of expectations, behaviour, partnerships with parents and
 - Day to day organisation;
- Less change for parents and pupils;
- Greater continuity of support for vulnerable groups of pupils;
- Opportunities for staff to move between Early Years and the statutory key stages and further develop expertise;
- Potential for financial savings in terms of staffing structures and purchase of services, which accrue to the single school; and
- The future capital investment benefits that would arise from the modernisation of one institution rather than two.

There are opportunities for the teaching and support staff. A primary school with extended age range for Llwynypia could offer:

- A larger school with a bigger role;
- A more flexible organisation;
- Improved career prospects;
- Improved curriculum co-ordination;
- The opportunity to teach across a wider age range;
- An increased range of expertise;
- Improved opportunities for staff interaction /co-ordination

The school has sufficient accommodation that can be suitably modified to provide nursery education. In addition to this internal remodeling, the Council will invest in additional improvements to the school's outdoor learning areas and off street parking

provision. Coupled with other internal refurbishment works, this will ensure that the school is able to offer high quality accommodation and provision to the youngest pupils, whilst at the same time improving the school premises for all children who will attend.

An extended Pontrhondda Primary School will be able to provide greater flexibility and opportunity for pupils due to an extended, more enhanced and secure financial situation. By being larger the school can provide a greater degree of stability at all levels and provide the ability to employ more teaching and support staff. This will allow the school to cover a wider range of curriculum expertise. Overall, the single, larger primary school will be more financially viable than the Primary and Nursery schools in their current form.

This proposal will also mean that children will be able to transfer direct from their nursery provision at the age of 3 years to their reception class at the same school, subject to a successful application for a place via the school admissions process. It will mean that there will be a seamless transition for them throughout the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2, they will not have to transfer schools again until they leave primary school for their secondary education (subject to parental preference of course). This lack of a physical transition phase (moving from one school to another) and an 'all through' primary education from the age of 3 to 11 years is considered to be one of the main educational benefits of this proposal.

What will this Proposal mean for the school pupils?

In making the proposed change, the main change for the nursery pupils is that they will be part of a larger school with older pupils, compared with being in a very small school where all children are aged 4 years or under.

- There will be more competition for pupils in and outside the classroom which is what children require if they are to achieve good educational outcomes;
- Being part of a larger school creates opportunity to engage in a wider range of curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- Build on the achievement gained at both schools by bringing together a larger team of staff to share expertise and experience.
- Young children will be able to attend the same school as their older siblings, which will also be advantageous to their parents.

The principal change will be an improvement in the quality of the educational provision, and this should have a significant impact on educational performance of the pupils.

The catchment area of the Pontrhondda Primary School will not change, i.e. it will continue to be the same as its current catchment area which already incorporates that of Ynyscynon Nursery School. The Council's policy regarding free school transport will apply.

The Welsh Government and the Council has adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which is expressed in seven core aims that all children and young people:

1. Have a flying start in life;
2. Have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;

3. Enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;
4. Have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;
5. Are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised;
6. Have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing;
7. Are not disadvantaged by poverty.

We consider that this proposal benefits the children in the community of Llwynypia in accordance with the seven core aims set out above.

What is the likely impact of the Proposal on the staff of the schools?

As with any major change, there could be some short term and possibly longer term changes in the staffing structure. The Governing Body of Pontrhondda Primary School would determine any changes.

As this is not creating a new school provision, the senior management and Governing Body of Pontrhondda Primary School will remain in post. Once the Governing Body has determined its new structure and staffing model, arrangements will be made to fill any vacant posts available, with advice given that priority consideration should be given to existing staff of Ynyscynon Nursery School, should they make applications. The Council has well established Human Resource policies and procedures that give reassurance to staff and employers about the management of organisational change.

What will be the likely impact of the Proposal on the community of Llwynypia?

The Llwynypia ward is a Communities First Area and is part of the Mid Rhondda Community cluster that has secured Communities Funding matched with Pupil Deprivation Grant funding to support educational improvement

This is a Flying Start area, and this provision is currently provided from and located on the site of Ynyscynon Nursery School, along with an Early Years Centre which provides some training and day care facilities. Both the Flying Start and Early Years Centre will remain on the Ynyscynon site and will have the opportunity to transfer to the main school building; It is important that the existing facilities for Flying Start is preserved and enhanced with no loss of amenity to the wider community. It is only the school provision that is proposed to transfer to Pontrhondda. The close links and interaction that currently exist will be retained, preserved and enhanced as appropriate.

A community impact assessment and an equality impact assessment have been completed for this proposal. These will be updated after the consultation has been completed to ensure that they include pertinent issues that have arisen and need to be taken into account. The community impact assessment and equality impact assessment will be presented to the Council's Cabinet in the report that sets out the consultation

feedback received in respect of this proposal. A copy of the community impact assessment and equalities impact assessment are available from the contact details at the start of this document and are also available on the Council website.

What are the financial implications of the Proposal?

The purpose of creating all through primary schools, as the principal model of school organisation is not driven by financial considerations. Savings that do arise initially benefit the remaining school, as they enable school improvements to be made, and then schools as a whole through redistribution of the savings across the County Borough.

A move from a position with, ‘two schools-two budgets’, to a single school with a single budget does result in a number of budgets being removed, or reduced, for example, there will only be one budget for a head teacher not two, but conversely the new single school is able to make significant savings from which it benefits. Although it is not possible to be precise about figures related to savings, as much would depend on future decisions of Pontrhondda Primary School’s Governing Body, a summary of the known budgetary impacts is set out overleaf.

	Ynyscynon Nursery (Current)	Pontrhondda Primary (Current)	Pontrhondda Primary (Future)	Revenue Savings
	£’000	£’000	£’000	£’000
Annual Revenue Budget based on 2015/16 budget	225	490	544	171

Building improvements will be made to the Pontrhondda site and buildings to address the maintenance backlog, improve the accommodation and facilities at the school and ensure that there is sufficient, suitable capacity to accommodate the nursery aged children. It is estimated that the total cost of this work will be in the region of £200k, and will be funded from within existing education capital budgets.

There may be redundancy costs associated with these proposals, which are not possible to quantify at the current time. This Council has had a successful track record in the past of minimising the need for compulsory redundancies, by offering alternative placements for displaced staff at other schools in the County Borough, under a formal arrangement it has between its’ schools. No redundancy costs have therefore been identified, but in the event of staff choosing this option, all such costs will be met centrally by the LA.

What are the disadvantages of this proposal?

Some parents may feel that a smaller ‘stand alone’ nursery school is better for pupils rather than one larger school – in other words there could be a view that smaller schools may be more personal and less daunting, particularly for new entrants. Pontrhondda Primary School, even with the addition of a Nursery unit will still be smaller than the

average Rhondda Cynon Taf primary school, with under 200 pupils in attendance and there are many much larger, very successful primary schools in the County Borough.

There will be staffing implications in that, for example, there will be need for only one Headteacher. Staff will be concerned about the security of their jobs which is why the Pontrhondda Primary School Governing Body will, as soon as possible, once the statutory processes are complete, address the staffing issues. In practice, governing bodies seek to keep as much continuity in the staffing as is possible in these situations.

The Council considers that the educational advantages of the proposal outweigh the short-term impact of the changes for pupils and parents.

What alternative options have been considered other than the closure of Ynyscynon Nursery School?

The current position is that we have two small 'paired' schools (one considered to be very small), located just 0.6 mile away from each other on sites with that have surplus places at present. The nursery school currently caters for up to 40 pupils only, of just one age range.

The options available to the Council to improve educational performance and ensure the provision represents value for money are to:

- Close Ynyscynon Nursery School and extend the age range of the pupils that may attend Pontrhondda Primary School to create nursery provision at that school – the current proposal;
- Close both schools and create a new primary school in a new building on a suitable site in the catchment area of the combined schools;
- Federate the two schools, maintaining the two school buildings but with one Governing Body and Headteacher.

At present, we do not have an alternative suitable site to build a brand new school for the Llwynypia area.

In respect of the option to federate the Governing Bodies, this would create a two site school under one Headteacher and one Governing Body. Two separate legal entities would continue employing two sets of staff. This option would not enable the educational benefits that accrue from deploying the teachers across both schools and improving the standards of teaching and learning that arise from creating a single school. Therefore, the other options have been discounted and the preferred option is that proposed in this consultation document.

What is the statutory process to close a school?

The Code on School Organisation ("The Code") is made under Sections 38 and 39 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. The Code came into force on 1 October 2013 and applies in respect of all school proposals published by way of a

statutory notice after that date. Proposals to close a school have to follow the following process:

1. The Council's Cabinet considers The Code and authorises a consultation on the changes to the schools;
2. At the start of the consultation period the Council **must** provide consultees with a consultation document and give them at least 42 days in which to respond, with at least 20 of these days being school days. If the Council considers it appropriate meetings are held with stakeholders during the consultation period;
3. Consultation comments are collated and summarised by the Council. This summary together with the Council's officers own responses is published in a consultation report within 13 weeks of the end of the consultation period and presented to the Council's Cabinet for consideration;
4. The Council's Cabinet decide whether to proceed with the changes within 6 months of the end of the consultation period. If the decision is to proceed, Step 5 is taken. If a new option emerges during the consultation which the Council's Cabinet wish to consider, then Steps 1-3 are repeated;
5. Statutory notice is published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The notice **must** be published on a school day and with 15 school days (not including the day of publication) in the notice period;
6. If objections are received, the Council **must** publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and their responses to them within 28 days of the end of the objection period;
7. The Council's Cabinet must decide to issue its decision on the proposal within 16 weeks of the end of the objection period;
8. If the proposals receive approval they should be implemented in accordance with the date given in the statutory notice, or any subsequent modified date.

Consultation Response Pro-forma

In order to help the Council reach a decision, it would be very helpful if you could answer the following questions. Completed questionnaires should be returned to:

*Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
School Organisation and Planning Unit
Ty Trevithick
Abercynon
CF45 4UQ
or by fax to 01443 744201, or e-mail schoolplanning@rctednet.net*

The Proposal

The proposal is to close Ynyscynon Nursery School and extend the age range of the pupils who can attend Pontrhondda Primary School, to allow Nursery aged pupils to attend this school. This change would be implemented on 1 September 2016.

1. Do you agree with the proposal? Yes No Not sure

Please let us know the reasons for your choice

2. Please state any additional views or points which you would like to be taken into account (attach additional sheets if necessary)

3. Please indicate who you are (eg parent of a pupil at named school, governor at named school etc.)

4. Name (optional)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Please forward completed questionnaires to the above address no later than 31st December 2015.