

AGENDA ITEM 4

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

19th JANUARY 2016

IMPROVING PRIMARY EDUCATION PROVISION IN CYMMER, PORTH

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING (COUNCILLOR MRS E HANAGAN)

**Authors: Chris Bradshaw, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
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01443 744227.**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Members of the outcome of the recent publication of a statutory notice in respect of a proposal to close Cymmer Infants' and Cymmer Junior Schools and transfer their pupils to a new Primary school that will be created for the community, subject to parental preference, in September, 2016. This new school will be created using existing buildings that will be refurbished and remodelled for this purpose.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note that no objections, or comments were received in response to the publication of the statutory notice to progress this proposal;
- 2.2 Agree to implement the proposal to close Cymmer Infants' and Cymmer Junior Schools and open a new Community Primary School for Cymmer, in existing buildings that will be refurbished and remodelled for this purpose. The new school will open on 1st September 2016.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To implement the proposal in accordance with the process outlined in Welsh Government legislative guidance (the School Organisation Code).

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Members will recall that, at the meeting of Cabinet held on 10th November 2015, approval was given to publish a statutory notice to progress the proposal to close Cymmer Infants' and Cymmer Junior Schools, and transfer education provision to a new Primary school in the existing buildings that will be refurbished and remodelled for this purpose, that will be created to serve the Cymmer catchment area, in September, 2016. As with refurbishments to many schools, this work will be undertaken whilst the pupils are in situ, and will be managed carefully to minimise disruption to the pupils and all the necessary precautions will be put in place. The Council's in house project team are well versed in dealing proactively with the challenges presented by working on busy live school sites and will be working closely with the school and local residents to ensure as little disruption as possible is caused by the building works as this project commences on site. It is estimated that this work will commence in August 2016 and will be completed March 2018.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Equality and Community Impact Assessments were prepared in respect of this proposal and were published on the Council's website together with the consultation document that outlined the proposal in detail. Copies of both reports have been provided to Cabinet previously.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The consultation process in respect of this proposal was undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, which was introduced on 1st October 2013. Consultation took place between 1st September 2015 and 23rd October 2015 and full details of this process was published in a Consultation Report, which was presented at the meeting of Cabinet held on 10th November and subsequently published on the Council website.

7. THE STATUTORY PROCESS

- 7.1 The statutory notice for this proposal was published on 20th November 2015 and a 28 day period, to 17th December 2015 was allowed for the

receipt of objections, in line with legislation. No objections were received.

- 7.2 The fact that no objections were received now removes the requirement to publish an objections report. The Council must, however publish a Decision Notice that formally outlines the reasons for implementation of this proposal; a copy of the Draft Decision Notice is attached as Appendix A.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This proposal to create one primary school for Cymmer will realise annual revenue savings of £156,000. In creating one school, redundancy costs may arise, as the number of staff required in the new school may be less than for the separate schools. The Council seeks to minimise this cost by redeploying displaced members of staff wherever possible. Therefore, it is not possible at this point in the process to identify any possible redundancy costs.

- 8.2 Significant building improvements and remodelling works will be required to improve the accommodation and facilities of the new primary school. It is estimated that the cost of this work will be approximately £2m and will be funded by the 21st Century Schools Programme, which includes a 50% contribution from Welsh Government. The Council's 50% share of the capital costs will be met through Prudential borrowing, funded by the revenue savings generated from closing the two schools.

9 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP.

- 9.1 This particular proposal forms part of the larger school reorganisation proposals that form our 21st Century Schools Programme for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Members are asked to formally approve the proposal as consulted upon and agree to close Cymmer Infants' and Cymmer Junior Schools, creating the new Community Primary School for Cymmer, to open on 1st September 2016.

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APPENDIX Aschoolplanning@rctednet.net

All Consultees

Gofynnwch Am: School Organisation
Please Ask For and Planning
Rhif Est: 744232
Ext No:

Fy Nghyf:
 My Ref:

Eich Cyf:
 Your Ref:

Dyddiad: January, 2016
 Date:

Dear Sir/Madam,

**PROPOSAL TO CLOSE CYMMER INFANTS' AND CYMMER JUNIOR SCHOOL AND
 OPEN A NEW COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR CYMMER**

Further to my letter of 16th November 2015, I would confirm that, following the publication of a statutory notice on 20th November and a 28 day notice period, **no** objections to the above proposal were received. The Council's Cabinet, at their meeting held on 19th January 2016 has therefore resolved to implement the proposal, with effect from 1st September 2016.

The reasons for, and rationale behind the proposals and the reasons for this decision to implement them were fully outlined and explained in the consultation document that was widely circulated in September of last year. Cabinet also fully considered all comments received following the consultation process that ended in October of last year. As indicated, no objections were received following the publication of the statutory notice, hence the decision taken to implement the proposal as outlined. A summary of the reasons for the decision to implement these proposals is given below:

- It is the Council's view that creating a Primary school for the communities of Cymmer and Trebanog 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 the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 (Yr 2 to Yr 3) and overall progression;
 - Greater consistency of teaching and learning for pupils across the 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 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.
- An 'all-through' Primary school for Cymmer 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 evidence and rationale to support these statements is all contained within the consultation document that was circulated widely to all consultees in September of last year. This document is still available on the Council website for any person to view at

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/GetInvolved/Consultations/Schoolconsultations.aspx>.

The conclusion therefore reached by Cabinet when making their final decision is that the benefits that can be achieved in respect of improved educational outcomes and provision for school pupils in this area are the prime reasons for implementing these proposals.

Yours faithfully



Chris Bradshaw
Director of Education and Lifelong Learning