

Appendix 1B – Notes of Meeting with Governing Body and Staff Members – Aberdare Community School

Date	11 th December 2024
Time	15:45
Venue	Aberdare Community School

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Sarah Corcoran	SC	Head of Secondary Achievement & Wellbeing
Catrin Edwards	CE	Head of Transformation, Admissions & Governance
Bethan Davies	BD	Human Resources Manager
Catherine Williams	CW	21 st Century Schools Project Officer

1. Welcome and Introductions

SC welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

2. Consultation Overview

SC provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document.

3. Staff and Governor Questions

The Governing Body and staff members of Aberdare Community School were invited to ask questions. The questions raised and comments made by the Governing Body and staff members, and responses provided are summarised in the table that follows.

Number	Question/Comment	Response
1	How will the notes of the meeting be shared with us?	The notes of the meeting will be included as an appendix to the Consultation Report.
2	Whilst we respect that due process must be followed, we are concerned that if the decision is not made until April 2025, there will not be sufficient time to put an effective transition and induction process in place, should the proposal proceed. April to June is a particularly busy time for year 11 pupils with revision activities and GCSE exams taking place.	The Cynon Valley Post-16 Consortium (comprising Aberdare Community School, Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and St. John Baptist Church in Wales School) will continue regardless of whether the proposal proceeds, hence transition activities should already be taking place to enable pupils to become familiar with the three school settings. Most Mountain Ash Comprehensive School sixth form pupils already travel to at least one of the other school sites to complete their studies, so it is important that this happens regardless of the outcome of the proposal.

		<p>Transition happens for <u>all</u> year 11 pupils at all schools, so all schools should have a Transition Plan in place to facilitate this.</p> <p>Should the proposal go ahead, there could be an opportunity to include some extra induction activities at the start of the academic year in September 2025 for pupils transferring from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.</p>
3	Does the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) have any ideas of how transition could work, or would the school be responsible for organising this?	As a decision has not yet been made, nothing is in place at present. Should the proposal go ahead, RCTCBC would be happy to discuss this with the school.
4	If the proposal proceeds, it will be important to ensure that enhanced transition arrangements are put in place in terms of pastoral care and pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). It may be beneficial to engage with pupils now, under the existing Cynon Valley Post-16 Consortium arrangements.	Noted and agreed.
5	Although I am very much in favour of the proposal in principle, I am concerned that any deficits associated with delivering post-16 provision at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School would, in some way, be transferred over to us and have a negative effect on the Aberdare Community School budget.	This would not be the case. Post-16 funding is a separate standalone grant. Every year, the Welsh Government (WG) calculates an amount per pupil that is allocated to schools in their funding formula, based on the number of post-16 pupils at the school in the previous academic year. If the proposal proceeds, post-16 pupil numbers, and therefore post-16 funding, will increase at Aberdare Community School going forward. The larger class sizes that should result would make delivering post-16 provision more financially viable.
6	It's never been reported to the Governing Body that pre-16 funds are spent on post-16 provision. Would we still need to spend pre-16 funds on post-16 provision to ensure that a broader curriculum offer is available?	The post-16 curriculum offer that is delivered is ultimately a decision for the Governing Body to make. Year 11 pupils across the consortium will have already provided expressions of interest in terms of post-16 courses, which should help to inform these plans. If the proposal proceeds, this should result in larger, more financially viable class sizes at Aberdare Community School, enabling the school to provide an enhanced curriculum offer, without the need for pre-

		16 funding to be diverted to subsidise post-16 provision.
7	The timescales remain a big concern in terms of timetabling.	Noted. Should the proposal proceed, RCTCBC will provide as much support as possible.
8	Post-16 funding is calculated based on the previous year's post-16 pupil numbers. If the proposal goes ahead, this will pose a big problem for us in the first year, as our actual pupil numbers would increase considerably, but our funding would be based on the previous year's much lower pupil numbers.	This is noted and agreed. RCTCBC would work with the school and support them to ensure they are not financially disadvantaged in the short term due to the retrospective nature of the post-16 funding model.
9	It could take us time to build up staff expertise in some subjects that we do not currently deliver. Would there be any scope to bring in staff specialism from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School to cover these subjects in the interim if needed?	<p>RCTCBC 'Managing Change' Policy sets out the Human Resource (HR) policies and procedures that apply in relation to the management of organisational change.</p> <p>Part-time secondments could potentially be explored in the short term; however, any such arrangements would require consultation with staff, Governing Bodies and trade unions.</p>
10	It's important that parents/carers are consulted with, particularly the parents/carers at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. How will this happen?	<p>Both schools, along with all their associated primary schools, have been asked to circulate the consultation information to parents/carers.</p> <p>Public drop-in sessions for parents/carers and members of the local community will take place at both schools on Wednesday 8th January 2025 between 15:30 and 17:30.</p>
11	The Consultation Document states that only 29.7% of year 11 pupils returned to Mountain Ash Comprehensive School for post-16 provision for the 2023/2024 academic year. Do you know where the rest went?	Post-16 retention rates have fallen across Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) as pupils are better informed and have more choices. For some, Coleg y Cymoedd is a more attractive or appropriate option, whilst others go into employment, or their destinations are unknown. We need to ensure that pupils choose the right pathway for them.
12	If the proposal goes ahead, there would only be two schools left in the Cynon Valley Post-16 Consortium (Aberdare Community School and St. John Baptist Church in Wales School). Are any other Post-16 Consortium as small?	Yes, Bryncelynog Comprehensive School and Y Pant Comprehensive School work as a Post-16 Consortium. There are also examples in Welsh medium education.

4. Closing Remarks

The Governing Body and staff members were encouraged to engage in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed at 16:30.