



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20TH SEPTEMBER 2018

**21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME - PROPOSALS TO
IMPROVE EDUCATION PROVISION IN CYNON VALLEY**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE
CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, COUNCILLOR J ROSSER.**

Authors: Andrea Richards, Head of 21st Century Schools and Julie Hadley,
School Organisation Manager.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members approval to :

- Begin the required statutory consultations for the proposals to:
 - Improve education provision in Hirwaun by investing £10.4m in a new school for Hirwaun Primary School;
 - Improve Welsh medium education provision and increase the supply of places in the Upper Cynon Valley by making Penderyn Primary School, currently a dual language school, a Welsh medium Primary School;
- Develop 21st Century Schools Programme financial business cases with Welsh Government to:
 - Invest £3.3m to increase the capacity of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar to meet the demand for Welsh medium school places;
 - Invest £10.2m to increase the capacity and improve the educational facilities at Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun to meet the demand for Welsh medium places.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Agree to commence the public consultation on the proposal to invest £10.4m for a new school for Hirwaun Primary School, and change the category of Penderyn Primary School from a dual language school to a Welsh medium school. No new English medium admissions will be

approved after August 2019, and the catchment school for the English medium pupils will be Hirwaun Primary School.

- 2.2 Agree to develop and submit a financial business case to Welsh Government to seek 21st Century Schools Funding to invest £3.3m to increase the capacity of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar to meet the demand for Welsh medium school places;
- 2.3 Agree to develop and submit a financial business case to Welsh Government to seek 21st Century Schools funding to invest £10.2m to increase the capacity and improve the educational facilities at Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun to meet the demand for Welsh medium places.

All the proposals will be implemented by 2022.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To improve and extend the range of education provision available in the Cynon Valley area of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

4. BACKGROUND

The school reorganisation proposal for Hirwaun and Penderyn

- 4.1 Hirwaun Primary School is located on a large, open site at Glannant Street, Hirwaun, Aberdare. The school's buildings comprise of two single storey CLASP buildings, with concrete wall sections built around steel frames and flat felt roofs. They are in a poor condition overall, rated as grade C minus on a scale where A is graded as excellent and D as very poor. There is a backlog of maintenance works valued at over £1.9 million, which is the highest of any Primary school in RCT. The nature and type of construction makes the undertaking of major repairs or any kind, or remodeling/refurbishment work very difficult and costly to achieve.
- 4.2 For the reasons given above, the most cost effective solution to the building issues at Hirwaun Primary is considered to be a new build on the existing site, which as stated is large enough to achieve this; on completion of this work the current school buildings will be demolished and the sites reinstated for use as play areas and car parking. This project has therefore been given a high priority ranking in our submission to Welsh Government for funding for Band B of the 21st Century Schools Programme.
- 4.3 Penderyn Primary School is a dual language (offers education provision through either English or Welsh Medium, subject to parental preference) school located at Pontprenllwyd, Penderyn, Aberdare. The school building is in an excellent condition as it is relatively new,

constructed in 2006. The catchment area of the Welsh Medium department of the school is much larger than that of the English department and encompasses the villages of Hirwaun and Rhigos, as well as Penderyn.

- 4.4 In recent years, the number of pupils attending the Welsh department of the school has risen quite sharply, whilst the numbers attending the English department have declined. In January 2018 there were 179 children attending the Welsh department in total, compared with just 54 in the English department. Of these 54 pupils, just 22 reside within the designated catchment area of Penderyn village; 27, or 50% of the total number of English Medium pupils attending Penderyn actually live in Hirwaun.
- 4.5 Our future forecasts show the numbers of pupils expected to attend the English department continuing to decline; for example in January 2018 there were just 3 children attending the English medium nursery. Full information and data on this matter is contained within the consultation document attached as Appendix 1.
- 4.6 As part of the targets outlined in the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), the Council has indicated that it will review all of our dual language school provision. Converting Penderyn Primary School in to a full Welsh Medium School will assist in achieving the targets set to increase the number of children aged 7 years who are being taught through the medium of Welsh, it will provide additional Welsh Medium school places in an area of the County Borough that has clear evidence of demand for more Welsh Medium provision. Over the past four years the number of Welsh medium pupils at Penderyn Primary School has increased by 17.4%, whilst the demand for English medium places has fallen by 12.1%.
- 4.7 Those pupils educated through the medium of Welsh will continue their education at Penderyn Primary School. From 1st September 2019, no new pupils wishing to be educated through the medium of English will be admitted to Penderyn Primary School. The catchment school for pupils opting for English medium provision will be Hirwaun Primary School. The new school at Hirwaun will have additional capacity to ensure that sufficient places are available.
- 4.8 We are also proposing to undertake a minor catchment area change for the new Penderyn Welsh Medium School, to better match demand for places with supply and ensure that the additional places created through this reorganisation are filled. The communities of Trenant and Penywaun, which are currently in the catchment area of YGG Aberdar for Welsh Medium provision will transfer to the new Penderyn Welsh Medium School, with effect from September 2020. Further details of

this change are contained within the consultation document for this proposal, which is attached at Appendix 1.

- 4.9 Pupils living in the communities of Trenant and Penywaun whose home addresses will be within the extended Penderyn Community Primary School catchment area will receive free transport to Penderyn Primary School for Welsh medium education as they reside more than 1½ miles safe “walking distance” from their nearest suitable school.

In catchment pupils (resident in the village of Penderyn and Rhondda Cynon Taf) attending the English medium stream of Penderyn Community Primary School will receive free transport to the new Hirwaun Primary School building as the walking route is deemed to be ‘unavailable’. This provision will not be available to any English Medium pupils who currently attend Penderyn but do not reside in the designated catchment area, as they are attending this school as a result of parental preference.

The £3.3m investment in YGG Aberdar to create more capacity

- 4.9 YGG Aberdar relocated, with a new build, to Laburnum Drive, Cwmdare, Aberdare in September 2003. It was previously accommodated in a poor condition, Victorian building at Cardiff Road, Aberaman, Aberdare, some 2 miles away from its current site.
- 4.10 The new building at Cwmdare had approximately 90 additional places compared with the former building, but since the school relocated, pupil numbers have been steadily rising, as shown in the tables below. Numbers exclude the Nursery classes, which are shown separately:

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
293	323	324	357	373	370	354	366	359	374

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
370	370	366	368	359

Nursery numbers are as follows:

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
63	41	64	57	47	52	53	56	55	51

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
57	55	55	54	56

The capacity of the school is 372 pupils, plus 54 Nursery places. Since 2015, our published oversubscription criteria have been applied to Nursery admissions, meaning that only children resident within the

designated catchment area have been allocated places. Children resident out of catchment were offered places at their catchment Welsh Medium provision instead.

- 4.11 The above figures show that, with the exception of some minor fluctuations, the school has been operating at almost full capacity for the last 10 years. To meet this demand for places, a double mobile classroom was placed on the school site in 2008, just 5 years after the new school opened. This additional temporary accommodation is also being fully utilised. It should also be noted that two new housing developments, at the former Aberdare High School site and the former College site, both of which are less than ½ mile from the school, are currently under construction.
- 4.12 To meet this recognised demand for Welsh Medium school places in the Upper Cynon Valley, we are proposing an extension to this school, as part of our proposals for the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme, Band B. Our initial strategic outline programme for this grant bid, which for this particular project is funded equally by this Council and the Welsh Government, has received approval in principle, subject to the submission and acceptance of relevant business cases.
- 4.13 The specific proposal in respect of YGG Aberdar is to remove the double mobile classroom unit and replace it with a permanent build, 4 classroom extension block, plus improvements to parking and external play facilities. This will increase the pupil capacity of the school by 60 places overall and, coupled with the minor amendment to the catchment area outlined in paragraph 4.8 above, should ensure that the demand for places from within the catchment area of the school can be met for the foreseeable future.
- 4.14 The Council will undertake appropriate traffic impact assessments to improve the 'Safe Routes' in the Community which will involve additional on-site drop off areas for parents to improve traffic and road safety management in and around the school curtilage. The Council will also work with parents and the Community to promote and encourage sustainable travel such as promoting walking and cycling to reduce the impact of traffic around the school at key times of the day.

The £10.2m investment in YG Rhydywaun to create more capacity

- 4.15 Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun opened in 1995 in a new building at Lawrence Avenue, Penywaun, Aberdare, with only Year 7 pupils attending in the first year. The school 'grew' by one year group each year until it reached its full complement of pupils (years 7 to 13) in 2001. In this year, a planned extension to the school was completed providing a capacity of 1,050 pupils.

- 4.16 The pupil roll at this school, which also serves the Borough of Merthyr Tydfil, has also been steadily rising over the past 10 years, as illustrated in the table below:

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
910	968	944	988	1007	986	998	980	957	971

- 4.17 As a result of minor changes to room usage within the school, the current published capacity of the school is 1,038 pupils; the published admissions limit for each year group is 168 pupils.
- 4.18 In the last 2 years, the school has been oversubscribed, i.e. it has received more applications for places than the number available. In September 2017, 188 pupils were admitted, the admission of 20 pupils over the admissions limit was only possible as a result of there being spare capacity overall in the school. In September 2018, 184 pupils will join the school at Year 7, again over the admissions limit. Oversubscription criteria has been applied for the past 2 years, with pupils not resident in catchment being refused admission (the majority of pupils refused resided in the neighbouring LA area of Neath Port Talbot).
- 4.19 Five year forecasts for the school are shown in the table below:

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1,005	1,037	1,065	1,104	1,123

This data shows us that the school will be operating at full capacity by 2020 and will be oversubscribed by 2021.

- 4.20 As outlined in paragraph 4.12 in relation to YGG Aberdar, we are also proposing an extension to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun, utilising funding from our grant bid under the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme, Band B. This particular element of the bid is also subject to the acceptance of an appropriate business case by Welsh Government.
- 4.21 The proposal in respect of Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun is to construct a classroom extension block, and a separate sports hall containing classrooms for the PE curriculum. These works will increase the school's capacity to at least 1,200 places, adding an additional 162 places to the existing number. This should ensure that demand for places at this school can be met for the foreseeable future.
- 4.22 In addition to the above, the school will also require additional essential ancillary accommodation such as new toilets and curriculum specific teaching areas etc. to cater for the additional pupils. These facilities

were not provided when the school was extended in 2001 and the school does not, as a result, meet the recommended guidelines as outlined in various national school building bulletins. A survey of the school accommodation has revealed that the school has insufficient capacity in the following areas:

- General teaching classrooms and seminar rooms
- IT/Business Studies classrooms
- Science laboratories
- Design/Technology and Art rooms

The existing Physical Education facilities have also been deemed to be insufficient for the number of pupils who will attend the school in the future, which is why a new sports hall with PE classrooms is being proposed. Reference was also made in the Estyn report of 2016 to deficiencies in PE facilities, as follows: 'Boys and girls share the gymnasium and there is no other official indoor provision available at the school. As a result, the indoor sports resources are not suitable for the subject. Toilets and changing facilities are in adequate condition'.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Welsh Language, Equality and Community Impact Assessments are being prepared in respect of the Hirwaun/Penderyn proposal and will be published on the Council's website together with the consultation documents that outline the proposals in detail. Copies of these documents will be prepared in readiness for the commencement of the consultation process and will be published as outlined above.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The consultation processes in respect of the Hirwaun/Penderyn proposals will be undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code. These arrangements stipulate that consultation must be undertaken when the proposals are at a formative stage and that consultation documents must be prepared and circulated to prescribed consultees, as well as being published on the Council website.
- 6.2 The consultation document for the proposal outlined in this report is attached as Appendix 1 to this report; the proposed consultation period, if it is agreed to progress this matter will run from 1st October 2018 to 31st December 2018. Details of meetings that will be organised will be added to the draft consultation document once they have been confirmed with the respective schools.
- 6.3 Formal consultation on the proposals to extend YGG Aberdar and YG Rhydywaun is not required, as the increase in capacity at both schools

is below the threshold at which statutory consultation is necessary. We will, however, undertake local, informal consultation with both schools, including with pupils, staff and governors. In respect of YG Rhydywaun we will also discuss with Merthyr Tydfil CBC whether it will make a contribution to the cost of expanding the School and improving the facilities. Inevitably as housing development occurs in Merthyr Tydfil this will have a consequential impact on the demand for Welsh medium school places.

7. THE STATUTORY PROCESS

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 The Welsh Government has recently conducted consultation on revisions to the above Code and it is expected that a new statutory document will be put in place by 1st November 2018. The attached consultation documents and the consultation processes will therefore be conducted in accordance with the provisions of this revised Code.
- 7.3 The initial consultation on all proposals outlined in this report will involve all key stakeholders as outlined in the revised Code. This consultation will take place over a 12-week period (not including school holidays) and the proposed timetable for the whole process is as follows:
- Consultation period 1st October 2018 – 31st December 2018
 - Report back to Cabinet on outcome of consultation – January 2019
 - Statutory Notices published (if approved by Cabinet) for a 28 day period – February 2019
 - Report back to Cabinet on outcome of statutory notice period and details of objections received, with appropriate recommendations – March 2019.
- 7.4 The School Organisation Code now makes provision for local authorities to determine their own statutory proposals; under the former arrangements, if just one objection was received following publication of the statutory notice, the proposals had to be forwarded to the Welsh Ministers, who would make the final decision as to whether the proposal could be implemented or not. This only now occurs when specific circumstances exist, e.g. if the proposal involves the removal of 6th form provision from a school. This specific

proposal will therefore be determined by the Council's Cabinet at the conclusion of the consultation process outlined in the timetable above.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 These proposals require a significant capital investment of £23.9m, of which it is proposed that 50% will be funded by the Council and 50% by the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Programme. Welsh Government has approved the Council's 21st Century School's Strategic Outline Programme which sets out an indicative level of capital funding available over the period 2019-2026. The next steps are to undertake the statutory consultation on the Hirwaun/Penderyn proposal set out in this report and to submit financial business cases to Welsh Government for all proposals contained within this report. This is the process required before Welsh Government makes any financial funding commitment to specific projects.
- 8.2 During the course of the consultation period any revenue and capital costs that accrue in completing the consultation and preparing financial business cases for Welsh Government approval will be met from within existing budgets.

9 LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND THE WELL BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 9.1 The Council's Corporate Plan commits to "Continue to invest in improving school buildings, to ensure the County Borough's pupils have the learning environment fit for the 21st Century." The proposals considered in the report have taken into account the seven well-being goals and the five ways of working.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 This is another proposal that seeks to improve education provision in the Cynon Valley, offering more Welsh medium provision with an investment of £23.9m in new and improved facilities. Education standards in the area are improving but significant resources that should be released to improve educational opportunities for children are tied up in school sites that need to be significantly upgraded for 21st Century learning.
- 10.2 This proposal seeks to provide learning environments and learning experiences that are as good, if not better than those experienced across the best schools in the UK.
- 10.3 Members may have already seen the results of the Council's investment in new and improved schools across the Cynon and

Rhondda Valleys, and in Taf Ely in Pontyclun, and Tonyrefail. These investments have been well received with parents and the local community. This proposed investment in the Cynon Valley provides the opportunity for over 1,500 children to benefit from improved educational facilities.

- 10.4 It is recommended, therefore, that Members give approval to officers to commence the processes necessary to achieve the proposals outlined in this report.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Children and Young People

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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20TH SEPTEMBER 2018

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE
CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING,
COUNCILLOR J ROSSER.**

**Item: 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME - PROPOSALS TO
IMPROVE EDUCATION PROVISION IN CYNON VALLEY**

Background Papers

The background papers included as appendices to the report are:

- **Consultation Document
(various Impact Assessments are being prepared and will be
finalised prior to commencement of consultation)**

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