

APPENDIX A

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CONSULTATION REPORT

Proposals: The reorganisation of primary schools, secondary schools and sixth form provision in the Pontypridd area.

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This report is prepared in accordance with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. Its purpose is to inform the outcome of the consultation held during the period 15th October 2018 and 31st January 2019 between all stakeholders and interested parties listed below.

1. Who did we consult with?

A copy of a consultation document which fully outlined and explained our proposal was sent to the following stakeholders. The document was also published on the Council website at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

- The Governing Bodies, parents, carers and staff of Hawthorn High School, Hawthorn Primary School, Heol-Y-Celyn Primary School, Pontypridd High School, Cilfynydd Primary School, Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School, Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School and YGG Pont Sion Norton
- The Governing Bodies, parents, carers and staff of Abercynon Primary, Cefn Primary, Coedpenmaen Primary, Coedylan Primary, Craig yr Hesg Primary, Ffynnon Taf Primary, Gwauncelyn Primary, Gwaunmeisgyn Primary, Llanilltud Faerdref Primary, Llantrisant Primary, Llwynocrwn Primary, Maesybryn Primary, Maesycod Primary, Parclewis Primary, Penygawsi Primary, Trallwng Infants, Trehopcyn Primary, Trerobart Primary, Ynysboeth Primary, YGG Abercynon, YGG Evan James, YGG Garth Olwg, St Michaels RC Primary, Our Lady's RC Primary, SS Gabriel & Raphael RC Primary, St Helens RC Primary (Caerphilly), Mountain Ash Comprehensive, Ysgol Gyfun Garth Olwg and Ysgol Ty Coch.
- Other Governing Bodies of neighbouring primary and secondary schools
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities
- Caerphilly County Borough Council
- The Governing Body of Coleg Y Cymoedd
- The Governing Body of St David's College
- The City and County of Cardiff Council
- The Governing Body of the University of South Wales
- Welsh Minister for Education & Skills
- Assembly Members for all constituencies and regional areas serving Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Members of Parliament for the Rhondda, Pontypridd, Ogmere and Cynon Valley constituencies
- Estyn
- Cwm Taf Local Health Board
- Teaching and support staff trade unions
- Central South Consortium
- South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner

- The Early Years and Childcare Partnership
- South East Wales Transport Association
- The local Communities for Work Plus Employment Support Programme
- Community Councils: Pontypridd Town Council, Llantwit Fardre Community Council, Llantrisant Community Council, Ynysybwl/Coed y Cwm Community Council
- Neighbouring local authorities
- Mudiad Meithrin
- Menter Iaith
- The Welsh Language Commissioner

2. The Proposals

The proposals are to:

- Develop post 16 education provision at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School, Beddau and Coleg y Cymoedd, Nantgarw. For those students who opt for a Roman Catholic education, provision will be available at St David's College, Cardiff;
- Create two new 3-16 schools, in Pontypridd and Hawthorn by sharing both primary and secondary sector resources;
- Improve and increase Welsh Medium primary provision by building a new school on the current Heol Y Celyn Primary School site, which will incorporate the two Welsh medium provisions at both Heol y Celyn and YGG Pont Sion Norton;
- Amend the catchment areas of Pontypridd High, Hawthorn High and Bryncelynnog Comprehensive Schools to better meet and match the demand for school places;
- Improve the learning environments for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN).

Details of the proposal and the rationale behind it are fully outlined in the consultation document that was available to all the stakeholders listed and which is attached as Appendix 1. The Community Impact Assessments, Equality Impact Assessment and the Welsh Language Impact Assessment are also attached as Appendix 2.

3. The Consultation Process

All stakeholders identified in Section 1 were advised of the availability of the consultation document and when required were provided with a hard copy. In addition to this, the following meetings were also convened:

School Affected	Group	Time, Date & Venue
Hawthorn High School	Governors and Staff Meeting	Monday, 12th November 2018, 3.30pm, Hawthorn High School
Pontypridd High School	Governors and Staff Meeting	Monday 12th November 2018, 3.30pm, Pontypridd High School
Heol Y Celyn Primary School	Governors and Staff Meeting	Wednesday 14th November 2018, 4pm, Heol Y Celyn Primary School
Hawthorn Primary School	Governors and Staff Meeting	Wednesday 14th November 2018, 4pm, Hawthorn Primary School
Cilfynydd Primary School	Governors and Staff Meeting	Monday, 19th November 2018, 4pm, Cilfynydd Primary School

School Affected	Group	Time, Date & Venue
YGG, Pont Sion Norton	Governors and Staff Meeting	Tuesday, 20th November 2018, 4pm YGG, Pont Sion Norton
Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School	Governors and Staff Meeting	Thursday, 22nd November 2018, 3.30pm, Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School
Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School	Governors and Staff Meeting	Thursday, 22nd November 2018, 3.30pm, Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School
Hawthorn High School	School Council	Monday, 12th November 2018, 2pm Hawthorn High School
Pontypridd High School	School Council	Monday, 12th November 2018, 2pm Pontypridd High School
Heol Y Celyn Primary School	School Council	Wednesday 14th November 2018, 2.30pm, Heol Y Celyn Primary School
Hawthorn Primary School	School Council	Wednesday 14th November 2018, 2.30pm, Hawthorn Primary School
Cilfynydd Primary School	School Council	Monday, 19th November 2018, 2.30pm, Cilfynydd Primary School
YGG Pont Sion Norton	School Council	Tuesday, 20th November 2018, 2.30pm, YGG Pont Sion Norton
Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School	School Council	Thursday, 22nd November 2018, 2pm Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School
Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School	School Council	Thursday, 22nd November 2018, 2pm Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School

Notes of all of the above meetings are attached at Appendix 3. These notes record the questions raised, and the comments and statements made, with responses provided where appropriate.

In addition to these meetings, and in order to provide the opportunity for more debate and dialogue on the proposals, five open evening/exhibitions were held at various locations throughout the areas affected by the proposals. Officers from the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate, Corporate Estates, Highways, School Transport and Human Resources were in attendance.

At these open evenings all attendees were requested to sign in so that the level of attendance could be recorded. The attendance registers indicate that a total of 187

people attended these events over the five nights. Attendees included school governors, staff, pupils, local councillors, the constituency Assembly Member, the Member of Parliament, parents and local residents. The highest number of consultees that attended a single session was 59, and the lowest number of attendees was only 20.

A meeting with the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee was held on 19th December 2018, where the consultation proposals were presented and comments and questions on the proposals received and where appropriate were answered by the officers in attendance. Notes of this meeting were recorded and are included at Appendix 4.

We are required to consult with the Education Inspectorate for Wales, Estyn on each of our proposals. A summary of their response is set out below, and the detailed response is available in Appendix 5.

- **Proposal to change sixth form provision** — *It is Estyn's opinion that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards of education;*
- **Proposal to change primary and secondary school provision in the Hawthorn area** – *It is Estyn's opinion that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards of education;*
- **Proposal to change primary and secondary provision in Pontypridd** – *It is Estyn's opinion that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards of education in the area;*
- **Proposal to close YGG Pont Sion Norton and the Welsh stream of Heol y Celyn Primary School and create a Welsh medium community primary school** – *It is Estyn's opinion that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards of education in the area.*

4. Summary of Responses to Consultation

Responses to the matters raised at the meetings outlined above are summarised in the notes of the meetings attached as Appendix 3.

Questionnaires

2,168 questionnaires were received during the consultation period. Some were sent in via email, some were received at the open evenings, some by post, by hand, and the vast majority came via the schools affected by the proposals.

Pupils at Hawthorn and Pontypridd High Schools completed a large proportion of questionnaires received. We have been made aware by staff members and pupils of these schools that the questionnaires were completed during school time and under staff supervision. These questionnaires were either delivered by, or collected directly from the schools themselves.

Both Hawthorn High School and Pontypridd High Schools wrote to parents and carers sharing their intended response to the consultation proposals. The letter encouraged parents and carers to copy the responses shared by the respective schools. These letters are included in Appendices 6 and 7 respectively.

For transparency it should be noted that the template for recording consultation responses had been altered by two of the schools and a significant proportion of responses were subsequently recorded on the modified proforma. We acknowledge that these may have been modified as it was felt that not all of the questions were personally relevant to all consultees. It is considered however that each individual proposal is an integral part of the wider strategic school management plan, and by not giving consultees the opportunity to complete the full questionnaire, they were inadvertently not given the opportunity to comment fully on all proposals as intended. It is also unclear whether or not learners were given full access to consultation information in order to make an informed decision on all proposals.

The number of altered questionnaires received totals 1,016. This equates to 47% of the total number of questionnaires received.

The breakdown of the respondents who submitted questionnaires is below:

Total Received	2,168
Parents	533
Pupils	1,040
Staff	163
Residents	64
Other/Unspecified	368

The results of the questionnaires received are below:

Proposal 1 – The Proposed Changes to Sixth Form Provision							
For	150	Against	1,735	Unsure	130	N/A Not answered	153
Proposal 2 – Create a new 3-16 school for Hawthorn							
For	278	Against	504	Unsure	299	N/A Not answered	1,087
Proposal 3 – Create a new 3-16 school for Pontypridd							
For	205	Against	746	Unsure	738	N/A Not answered	479
Proposal 4 – Creation of a new Welsh medium primary school							
For	125	Against	427	Unsure	333	N/A Not answered	1,283

Proposal 5 – Catchment area changes							
For	926	Against	698	Unsure	317	N/A Not answered	227

General Correspondence

In addition to the questionnaires, a number of respondents sent in letters and emails. There were 427 written responses received during the consultation period, and of these 109 were duplicates. Copies of all responses have been scrutinised by Cabinet and will be fully considered as part of the decision making process.

Owen Smith MP undertook a separate consultation on the proposals via the schools affected, the results of which are not included in the body of this report. This is an inappropriate use of school time and resources duplicating a statutory process over which Mr Smith has no mandate. The results of this additional consultation were collated and analysed by Owen Smith MP. In the interests of transparency, this information is included at Appendix 8.

A summary of the comments received during the consultation period taken from the questionnaires and other correspondence, as well as feedback provided verbally at the public drop-in sessions, is recorded below.

We received a number of letters and emails that were duplicated, and a number of responses whilst not duplicated, contained common themes, questions and concerns. Where this is the case, to avoid repetition we have captured these as singular comments in this part of the report.

Responses have been grouped below in relation to the section of the proposals to which they refer. Where required, and/or appropriate, our responses are also included. The comments are in bold and where appropriate, our response follows:

Proposal 1 – Sixth form changes

Cardinal Newman

- **Why isn't Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School receiving any investment similar to that being invested in the other schools in the proposal?**

Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School is a voluntary aided school and is governed, managed and controlled by the Roman Catholic Church. It is the responsibility of the Roman Catholic Diocese to apply to Welsh Government for capital funding to improve the quality of the buildings or to create 3-16 schools. Welsh Government has a capital allocation available at favourable terms for church schools, where 85% of the capital investment requirements are met by Welsh Government. However, the Council is supporting the Diocesan to develop business cases to secure 21st Century Schools funding for a number of potential investments in church schools.

- **Does St David's College have the capacity to take on new pupils?**

The Principal of St David's College has confirmed that they do.

- **How will pupils be transported to St David's College?**

Free transport will be provided for those who meet the Home to School Transport criteria. Pupils that do not live in RCT will have to contact their own Council's School Transport Department for further information on criteria and eligibility.

- **The proposals to co-operate with St David's College, Cardiff, are welcomed.**

The A Level outcomes at St David's College are very good, for example in 2018, 30% achieved A*-A, 84% achieved A*-C and 98% achieved A*-E.

- **Why wasn't Cardinal Newman considered an appropriate site for the sixth form centre?**

There is already post-16 education provision in this area at the Nantgarw Campus of Coleg Y Cymoedd. Post 16 students in Cardinal Newman, Hawthorn High School and Pontypridd High School are already opting for Coleg Y Cymoedd with retention rates of year 11 pupils transferring into year 12, in their current school equating to 35.83%, 35.71% and 32.26% respectively, with 47.5%, 48.2% and 48.3% respectively transferring to Further Education.

- **Where is the equality impact assessment and community impact assessment for Cardinal Newman?**

The consultation document and the consultation process is prepared in accordance with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. These documents are not a requirement for the changes that affect Cardinal Newman.

- **Have students been consulted?**

Yes they have. In accordance with the School Organisation Code, officers from the Council met with individual school councils as a part of the consultation process. Notes taken at these sessions are included within Appendix 3.

In addition to this, numerous written responses from pupils were received during the consultation period.

- **Will Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School still work with Y Pant Comprehensive School? What scope is there to widen the catchment area for post 16 to include Y Pant?**

The advice given to the school is to continue to work collaboratively with Y Pant and to further strengthen the links and shared learning opportunities that both schools have forged. At this moment in time there are no plans to include Y Pant in these proposals.

- **Why hasn't Cardinal Newman Comprehensive School been taken into account for the 3-16 proposals? St Michael's RC Primary School should join Cardinal Newman to make a 3-16 school.**

As previously stated, the decision to progress any such scheme would be have to be made by the Diocese.

Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School

- **What will be the result of the investment in the new school?**

The £10m funding that has been allocated to this project is a part of a larger sum that has been approved in principle by the Welsh Government through its 21st Century Schools Programme. The Council will need to undertake a full review of the school site and will undertake site and building surveys before early design work can commence. This will be done in collaboration with the school.

Priority for this funding will be to improve the sixth form facilities at the school, however it is envisaged that other improvements and refurbishment works to the school will also be incorporated.

- **Can you extend the ALN provision to post 16 to ensure the sixth form centre of excellence is inclusive for all?**

As a Council we are committed to ensuring that learners access the most appropriate post 16 provision suitable to their needs. Not all learners with additional learning needs are able to access the level 3 courses that are predominantly available in our mainstream schools as this would not be appropriate to their needs. However, thorough effective person centred planning continued focus will be placed on securing the most appropriate post 16 provision for learners with additional learning needs. For learners who are able to access post 16 courses within a mainstream setting, a robust assessment of their needs and bespoke provision will be required to ensure curriculum access and successful outcomes. For some learners with additional learning needs, more vocational routes to learning within a further education institution is more appropriate to their needs and effective transitional planning will be required.

The Council has a well-established partnership with Coleg Y Cymoedd and post 16 special school satellite bases are situated on Aberdare, Llwynypia and Nantgarw campuses for learners with severe and complex learning needs.

- **What is a centre of excellence?**

Excellent is a term used by Estyn to judge the performance of an education provider in a number of defined categories. An excellent school demonstrates very strong and sustained performance and practice and it is the Council's education ambition to ensure all that pupils have access to high quality educational experiences and excellent provision at all key stages, including post 16 provision.

In terms of these proposals, we would define this as an education provision that has excellent standards of leadership, learning and well-being, in facilities that are equipped to deliver a 21st Century learning experience.

- **It will be difficult for pupils from different schools to come together at sixth form.**

Data suggests that this is already happening very successfully at a post 16 level in Coleg Y Cymoedd and at a number of schools within the County Borough. All secondary schools will continue to provide impartial careers advice and guidance, and

will work in partnership with schools that provide sixth form provision and Coleg Y Cymoedd to ensure that the transition at post 16 continues to be well managed and successful. Offering choice for learners and securing the most appropriate learning pathway is a priority for ensuring engagement and successful outcomes for post 16 learners.

- **The school will be too large, you will lose the personal touch.**

There are a number of larger schools in the County Borough, and significantly larger schools across Wales. The benefits of having a larger sixth form provision outweigh the advantages of smaller schools as the curriculum offer provided in larger school settings ensures greater choice for learners.

- **It will benefit pupils as more courses will be available.**

Yes. There will be a greater number of post 16 courses available and greater opportunities for students to opt for their preferred combination of subjects.

- **The buildings are outdated and need upgrading. The investment will provide better facilities and opportunities.**

Yes. The investment will benefit all students not just those studying in the sixth form.

- **Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School is an excellent school with improving results**

Yes. The Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 data for 2018 evidences this statement.

- **Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School is the natural choice for the sixth form centre – budget, capacity and attainment.**

Yes. The school has strong and effective leadership and this is evident by many performance indicators.

- **Slightly larger post 16 class sizes will provide a better learning environment for children**

Yes. Having larger post 16 classes creates greater opportunities for collaboration between students and for sharing a wider range of experiences.

Pontypridd High School and Hawthorn High School

- **Partnership working has already been attempted with Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School and Y Pant Comprehensive School and it failed.**

The proposal is not suggesting a partnership between Pontypridd/Hawthorn High School and Bryncelynnog/Y Pant. The proposals are to establish a larger and improved provision based at Bryncelynnog. This is not a consortium arrangement. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that the schools do offer and share a limited number of post 16 courses.

- **Only a small number of pupils in both schools have expressed an interest in attending Bryncelynnog for sixth form.**

We cannot comment on the survey undertaken by the two schools with their pupils. However, the actual data on the number of pupils that choose to stay in Hawthorn and Pontypridd High School for their sixth form provision is very low. For example, for Pontypridd High School in September 2018 out of a potential 155 pupils in year 11 (as at July 2018), only 50 returned to Year 12, indicating that 67.74% choose alternative provision. This clearly suggests that Pontypridd High School does not currently provide the choice of curriculum options or educational experiences that some learners are seeking. Furthermore, if the curriculum offer is likely to be further restricted in future due to the deficit position, a further decline in numbers is inevitable and the provision will become even more unviable. The position was the same for Hawthorn High School in September 2018. Out of a potential 112 pupils in year 11 (as at July 2018), only 40 returned to Year 12, indicating that 64.29% choose not return to Hawthorn High School. By enhancing the curriculum offer in Bryncelynnog School it is likely that an increase in pupil numbers will be experienced as evidenced in Tonyrefail Comprehensive School following the implementation of the recent 21st Century Schools developments in the Rhondda.

- **£10m in Bryncelynnog will be used for the poor quality buildings, not just the sixth form.**

All the improvements made to the buildings at Bryncelynnog will potentially benefit sixth form learners and other pupils. For example, science labs upgrades will be utilised by all students.

- **Pontypridd and Hawthorn High Schools should not be compared to Bryncelynnog given that they are in different Free School Meals categories**

For the post 16 provision the Welsh Government data does not compare performance of schools based on the free school meal categories. However, the Council's data evidences that the majority of pupils eligible for free school meals do not return to the sixth forms in Pontypridd and Hawthorn High Schools. The majority opt to study at Coleg Y Cymoedd. In September 2018, only 10.7% of the Key Stage 5 cohort were eligible for free school meals in Pontypridd High School and 14.0% in Hawthorn High School - a significantly lower figure than that in Key Stage 4 in both schools. Therefore, as the free school meal comparison at Key Stage 5 between Pontypridd, Hawthorn and Bryncelynnog secondary schools is not significantly different, it is not unreasonable to compare and contrast the performance of learners, particularly at A-level.

- **Hawthorn and Pontypridd High Schools commented that the A-level results are misleading in the consultation document. They maintain that they have been above the Welsh average on the majority of the indicators**

The data in the consultation document is based on Welsh Government data sets. Welsh Government updated the Key Stage 5 results on 12/11/18. The following table shows the most recent results published on the Welsh Government All Wales Core Data Sets and provides data relating to Level 3 outcomes, the Average Wider Points Score (AWPS) and the percentage of learners achieving 3A*/C. The results confirm that the Key Stage 5 results for both schools at 3A*/C are consistently below both the RCT and the Welsh average from 2015-2017.

		Level 3 %	Average Wider Points Score	3 A*/C %
2015	Hawthorn High	98.2	772.7	14.0
	Pontypridd High	95.2	856.8	20.6
	Cardinal Newman	96.2	832.4	30.4
	Bryncelynnog	98.6	670.2	34.7
	RCT lowest	89.2	455.9	14.0
	RCT average	97.0	730.2	28.6
	Wales average	97.0	799.7	40.0
2016	Hawthorn High	97.6	772.3	14.3
	Pontypridd High	100	928.4	27.5
	Cardinal Newman	98.7	812.1	21.3
	Bryncelynnog	100	823.8	46.6
	RCT lowest	92.2	521.9	11.8
	RCT average	97.0	765.7	29.0
	Wales average	98.0	823.2	38.3
2017	Hawthorn High	100	739.9	41.7
	Pontypridd High	100	820.9	42.6
	Cardinal Newman	95.6	774.8	58.8
	Bryncelynnog	94.3	787.5	52.8
	RCT lowest	86	507.1	16.3
	RCT average	96.3	677.6	45.1
	Wales average	97.1	730.6	54.7

- **The AWPS for Pontypridd High School is higher than most schools.**

The AWPS is calculated by dividing the total number of points gained from all courses sat at Key Stage 5 and not just the number of A-levels or their equivalent. Pontypridd High School provide a large number of Key Skill courses that inflate this figure and makes comparison with any other institutions very difficult. Due to this very issue, the Welsh Government no longer uses the AWPS as an assessment criteria comparator.

It should also be noted that the AWPS is not a criteria that is used by Universities in scoring a student's University application.

- **Pontypridd and Hawthorn High advised that they were not happy with the use of the negative language used to describe the schools.**

It was not the intention to convey negativity towards any schools affected by this consultation. The language and terminology used in the consultation document are commentaries based on the interrogation of the data. It is also important to reflect when considering the performance of Pontypridd and Hawthorn High Schools that until recently both schools were two of forty secondary schools across Wales that were identified by Welsh Government as consistently underperforming and were included in the Schools Challenge Cymru Programme. Over the three years to 2017 both schools had significant additional investment which in total was in excess of £1.24m in addition to the funding allocation from the Council and had access to high quality leadership and teaching support provided directly by Welsh Government. This investment has provided the two schools with a significant advantage over similar schools in Wales. However, despite this considerable additional resource both schools remain in a significant deficit position.

- **The education standards in Coleg Y Cymoedd were raised as a concern, as were the results and the 2017 Estyn Report.**

It is acknowledged that Estyn's inspection of Coleg Y Cymoedd in 2017 was critical of the A-Level provision. However, Estyn recognised that the College was in the process of improving the quality of the provision and graded the College's prospects for improvement as 'good'. The 2018 results support Estyn's conclusions for improvement.

Furthermore, the College has also invested in employing new A Level teachers and the new Principal continues to raise accountability and performance across both the academic and vocational subjects. The successful completion rates for the College have increased for 2018 by 3% and 8% for the A Level Centre.

The current data in the table below shows that the A-level performance of Bryncelynnog and Coleg Y Cymoedd continues to improve. Bryncelynnog is the third best performing sixth form in RCT based on the A*-C A Level performance, Coleg Y Cymoedd sixth best, Cardinal Newman ninth, Hawthorn 12th and Pontypridd 13th.

	Percentage of A-levels		
	A*-A	A*-C	A*-E
Bryncelynnog CS	34.5	81.8	97.3
Coleg Y Cymoedd	17.8	74.8	99.0
Cardinal Newman RC CS	24.4	72.6	98.8
Hawthorn HS	16.9	58.4	88.8
Pontypridd HS	17.4	58.3	90.3
RCT Average	20.2	71.6	95.4
Central South Average	25.6	75.8	97.4

The FE Colleges Learner Outcomes Report was published by Welsh Government on 7th February 2019. It evidences further progress by Coleg Y Cymoedd across a wide range of curriculum areas including A Levels. The College is now performing above the national comparator rates for the main overall qualifications and above the national comparators for 65% of all subject areas. This is a significant improvement from 2014/15 when no subject area was above the national comparators. This data also does not take into account the higher than average level of deprivation of the students, when compared to the Welsh average.

- **Questions regarding the numbers for a viable sixth form.**

250 learners was the calculated number of learners specified in the Welsh Government's Learning and Skills Measure 2009 in order for a sixth form provision to financially break even. It is likely that this figure is higher now as the funding per pupil is relatively lower, with any increases not keeping pace with inflation.

- **The accuracy of the numbers in the document that relate to sixth form class sizes were questioned.**

These have been scrutinised and are accurate.

Each school is funded directly for the number of students enrolled on each course. Hence if there are 14 students undertaking a course in Pontypridd High School but 8 are from Hawthorn, Pontypridd High School will only receive funding for the 6 Pontypridd High School students.

- **The sixth form projected figures are questioned.**

The forecasted figures are based on current data and trends.

- **What is the justification for moving all sixth form provision out of the town area of Pontypridd?**

The justification for removing the sixth forms from Pontypridd High, Hawthorn High and Cardinal Newman is not based on geography alone. Coleg Y Cymoedd offers this provision and is located in the catchment area of Hawthorn High School, a school that serves Pontypridd. As stated in the consultation document the justification for this change relates to improving education standards, meeting pupil demand, providing more choice, and improving financial viability to develop a sustainable provision.

- **How can a centre of excellence be created in Coleg Y Cymoedd when the LA has no input into it?**

The Council has an effective working relationship with Coleg Y Cymoedd and has supported the campus developments in Aberdare, Llwynypia and Nantgarw.

The relationship between the College and the Council is stronger than ever with opportunities for collaboration between both parties being developed in many new areas. The Chief Executive of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Education are governors on the College Board.

- **Should the £10m earmarked for Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School be used to build a sixth form provision in Pontypridd?**

There is already a provision in Pontypridd at Coleg Y Cymoedd.

Proposal 2 – Creation of a new 3-16 school for Hawthorn

- **What evidence is there to support the fact that an all-through school works?**

The Council's first all-through school opened in Llanhari six years ago, and another three all-through schools opened in September 2018. There are also a number of other Councils throughout Wales that have opened or are in the process of opening or consulting on opening all-through schools too. As such the data on this school model is relatively new.

We are however gathering data in the form of educational outcomes, attendance figures, pupil voice surveys etc, to make sure that we are constantly monitoring these schools and will continue to do so going forward. Anecdotally we are receiving very positive reports from all of the schools.

- **Will the younger and older children be segregated? I don't want my young child exposed to older themes and inappropriate language.**

We have a number of all-through schools operating in the County Borough and this is managed with appropriate segregation of the younger and older pupils. The schools are designed so that there are separate entrances, learning environments, toilets, and outdoor learning and play spaces.

The all-through schools in the County Borough are managed differently depending on the ethos that the Headteacher instils within the school, and so no school operates in exactly the same way. However, what is common is that when pupils from different ages integrate or work collaboratively on school projects, it is done under supervision. It should also be recognised that older school children can be positive role models to younger children and can assist with peer mentoring and buddying schemes.

- **What will be the impact of the extra traffic? How will this be managed?**

A planning application will be submitted specifically for the new school, and as a part of this there will be a Traffic Impact Assessment undertaken focussing on both the immediate and surrounding area. This assessment will not only look at the current capacity of the highway, but also the impact of any increase in traffic flow, on not just the highway but also on pedestrian and cycling routes.

The expectation is that this report will contain recommendations in relation to improving the existing highway infrastructure as well as incorporating pedestrian safety measures, which could include traffic calming, or additional pedestrian crossing points.

The most recent school changes in Porth, Tonypandy and Tonyrefail resulted in the Council investing significant sums in improved safe routes to schools, which benefit the whole community and have proved successful in their operation.

- **Will the teachers have the experience and skills to teach across all key stages?**

The structure of the new 3-16 school, and the relevant staffing structure, will be developed and implemented by the interim Governing Body and new Headteacher, once appointed. They will ensure that appropriately experienced staff are appointed under the guidance of the Council's Human Resources Team.

All-through schools provide an opportunity for further training and staff development and for the development of specialist roles.

- **Pupils will have to be taught on a building site.**

The contractors that will be undertaking the works on site will be experienced in working on live school sites. Their experience of this will be one of many aspects scored as a part of the competitive tender process.

The health and safety of the pupils and staff will be paramount at all times, and the contractors will work collaboratively with the school and the Council to ensure that any disruption is minimised. The Council has significant experience in managing this and the processes and procedures that we have adopted on other projects have been very successful.

- **Does this model copy England's Academy Schools?**

No it does not.

- **Class sizes will be too big.**

The capacity of the school and the classrooms will be designed for 30 pupils.

- **By closing the primary schools we are negatively impacting the local communities.**

A Community Impact Assessment has been undertaken and was published on the Council's website. It is also attached within Appendix 2 of this report.

- **Some of the communities affected have vulnerable families. How will you ensure that these families will be integrated into the new school?**

We already have considerable experience of bringing pupils and their families together when we open new schools and the process of transition is well planned and managed over a period in the run up to the start of the new school year. We will apply the previous approaches, working with the respective Headteachers to plan this effectively as early as possible.

Since we undertook the last school reorganisations in the Rhondda, the Council has established the Resilient Families Service, which delivers support to families across Rhondda Cynon Taf through a Team Around the Family (TAF) approach. The Service focuses on increasing family resilience by providing intensive support for up to 12 weeks and is designed to give families the practical help to manage the challenges they are facing by focusing on their strengths as a family.

All schools in the County Borough work closely with the Resilient Families Team to resolve any issues families are facing. Referrals to the Resilient Families Service can be made by families themselves or schools with the family's permission. Creating larger schools can also build capacity within staffing structures and opportunities for developing more specialist wellbeing and/or family liaison posts which will clearly benefit more vulnerable children and families.

Proposal 3 – Creation of a new 3-16 school for Pontypridd

- **What are the benefits of an all-through school?**

As above and as set out in the consultation document.

- **Will the younger and older children be segregated? I don't want my young child exposed to older themes and language.**

As above.

- **What will be the impact of the extra traffic? How will this be managed?**

As above.

- **Will the teachers have the experience and skills to teach across all key stages?**

As above.

- **By closing the primary schools we are negatively impacting the local communities.**

As above.

- **Concerns in relation to the pollution levels around the A470 were raised.**

The Local Authority conducts regular monitoring of ambient outdoor air quality in the County Borough and results of this monitoring are compared against health based Air Quality Objectives. The monitoring network is regularly reviewed to determine the most relevant locations to monitor, with regards to statutory guidance, previous assessments and local knowledge. The monitoring has demonstrated that the vast majority of the County Borough experiences good air quality, with the areas of poor air quality being highly localised. A copy of the latest Air Quality Progress Report is available on the Council website.

Within the County Borough it has been acknowledged that Nitrogen Dioxide, an air pollutant often associated with road traffic emissions, can be elevated in some discrete locations. This is dictated by volume of traffic, proximity of buildings/people, climate, topography of the area and the surrounding built environment. It is understood that the A470 can represent a significant source of locally experienced Nitrogen Dioxide along various parts of its length, however, a number of factors may affect its manifestation and dispersion. Therefore not all communities along the length of the A470 experience similar levels of Nitrogen Dioxide or are at risk of non-compliance to an Air Quality Objective. The Local Authority has identified three discreet areas, Cilfynydd (174 properties), Nightingales Bush (11 properties) and Treforest (8 properties) where the close proximity to the A470, the environment and topography of the area, have been significant factors in the need to declare associated Air Quality Management Areas. These three Air Quality Management Areas associated with the A470 all have resident populations in built up areas within 10-15 metres from the A470.

There is Statutory Guidance which has been utilised by the Local Authority to plan the required monitoring network in Rhondda Cynon Taf since 1998 and it assists with establishing the likelihood of compliance to an Air Quality Objective at a specific location. The current Guidance (Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance .TG16) implies that at locations such as Pontypridd High School, where members of the public/students would congregate beyond 20m from the used area of a major strategic road (the A470), they are likely to be compliant with Air Quality Objectives for Nitrogen Dioxide. There are other local factors, such as traffic flow, wind direction and topography of the area, which would also be taken into account when assessing air quality at this location. This area of the A470 has a relative free flow of traffic, compared to other more congested areas and the school is positioned on the windward side of the prevailing wind, with the wind commonly blowing in the direction to the opposite side of the A470 at this location. In addition the A470 is situated at a slightly higher elevation to the area occupied by Pontypridd High School, as a result it would benefit from improved dispersal in comparison to areas with a built environment in close proximity and directly adjacent or above the A470.

Therefore in line with statutory guidance and knowledge of the local area outlined above, no monitoring has been undertaken at Pontypridd High School, as it was not deemed to be at risk of breaching the relevant Air Quality Objective. However, to provide reassurance, a monitoring device has been set up at a potential worse case location on the campus since December 2018, to obtain the required air quality data, to enable the results to be compared against the annual Air Quality Objective for Nitrogen Dioxide.

- **Need to address traffic issues by the schools.**

A planning application will be submitted specifically for the new school, and as a part of this there will be a Traffic Impact Assessment undertaken focussing on both the immediate and surrounding area. This assessment will not only look at the current

capacity of the highway, but also the impact of any increase in traffic flow, on not just the highway but also on pedestrian and cycling routes.

The expectation is that this report will contain recommendations in relation to improving the existing highway infrastructure as well as incorporating pedestrian safety measures which could include traffic calming or additional pedestrian crossing points. The most recent school changes in Porth, Tonypandy and Tonyrefail resulted in the Council investing significant sums in improved safe routes to schools, which have benefitted the whole community.

Proposal 4 – Creation of a new Welsh Medium Primary School

- **There should be a Welsh medium school in north Pontypridd**

We are proposing to build a brand new, larger school in the Pontypridd area. School transport will be available for those who are eligible. There is already a Welsh medium school in Pontypridd i.e. YGG Evan James which has surplus capacity and there is also YGG Abercynon to the north.

- **Why not use the site in Glyncoch?**

All of the proposals included in the consultation are inter-dependant. By closing Heol Y Celyn Primary and the transferring of the English medium pupils to Hawthorn, this frees up a site, which we know is suitable, to construct a new and larger Welsh medium school which will accommodate the pupils from YGG Pont Sion Norton as well as the Welsh medium pupils already attending Heol Y Celyn.

- **Heol Y Celyn should be made into a Welsh only school as well as giving YGG Pont Sion Norton a new school.**

The demand for Welsh Medium education in this area does not justify this.

- **Pupils will have to travel further for Welsh medium education and this is not acceptable.**

It is acknowledged that this may well be the case for some pupils, however the majority of pupils will be unaffected as nearly 70% of pupils currently attending YGG Pont Sion Norton do so utilising school transport.

The school bus route distances of the new routes proposed will be shorter than the current school bus routes travelled. We have calculated the routes, and the average overall distance travelled for those pupils who already use school transport will be shortened by just over 1 mile per day.

- **The traffic caused by school transport at YGG Pont Sion Norton causes gridlock. I and other residents will be glad to see the Welsh School moved elsewhere. Years ago the school was an English medium school used by local children walking to school. This is no longer the case and the buses and parents cause misery to local residents trying to get to work.**

Yes. The home to school transport drop off and pick up each day is very difficult directly off the A4054 and this can cause congestion due to difficulties associated with the existing school site.

- **Parents would have to get two buses to pick their child up in an emergency.**

There is a direct bus to Heol Y Celyn from Glyncoch, but from Ynysybwl and Cilfynydd it would require a change of bus in Pontypridd Bus Station.

However, parents from Glyncoch and Ynysybwl needing to attend YGG Pont Sion Norton in an emergency by public transport are currently required to change buses at Pontypridd Bus Station.

The need for emergency collections should be infrequent.

- **Parents in the north of Pontypridd will not send their children to Welsh medium education because there is no Welsh medium nursery in the area. Can we put a Welsh medium nursery in another school in north Pontypridd, which could eventually feed into the new school in Rhydyfelin?**

There is already a Welsh Medium Meithrin in Ynysybwl and an unregistered setting in Cilfynydd.

- **The Council will be lowering the number of Welsh medium schools in RCT. This is unacceptable and will not help reach the Cymraeg 2050 target.**

On the contrary, these proposals are to invest in a brand new and larger primary school increasing Welsh medium pupil places by 93 across the existing provisions.

The Council is contributing to this target in other areas in the County Borough as we are increasing our Welsh medium pupils places in a number of schools through the delivery of our 21st Century School projects. We have already increased capacity and made improvements in a number of schools, including YGG Tonyrefail and YGG Llwyncelyn; we are currently consulting on increasing the Welsh medium capacity in Penderyn Community Primary School; and we are planning on increasing capacity in YGG Aberdar and YG Rhydywaun utilising 21st Century Schools investment. This highlights the Council's commitment to improving Welsh medium education.

- **25% of pupils in RCT are educated in Welsh. Does the LA spend 25% of its 21st Century Schools budget on Welsh Language Schools?**

Currently just under 20% of pupils in RCT are educated in Welsh. The 21st Century Schools programme for Band B (this is the funding that covers the works required as a part of this consultation) totals circa £168million.

Within this overarching budget, we anticipate that the investment into improving Welsh medium education will be circa £60million, which equates to 35%.

- **There is no transparency as to how this decision was made. Can we see the options that were ruled out?**

If we are to proceed with these proposals as consulted upon, then the site at Heol Y Celyn affords us with a suitable site to enable us to build a larger Welsh medium school

to our 21st Century School standards. This is a consultation period and if a decision is made not to pursue these proposals other options will then be considered.

- **The proposal for the new school should include a Welsh medium SEN unit. This is a missed opportunity.**

This may be something we consider in due course as we regularly review the need for specialist provision in the Local Authority.

Proposal 5 - Catchment Changes

- **Concerns that friendship groups of pupils in Tonteg will be split up.**

Every school has a designated catchment area, however, parents/carers have the right to state a preference for their child(ren) to attend any school. If the number of applications received for a particular year group in a school is below the school's Admission Number, all applications for admissions to that year group at the school will be granted. Bryncelynnog has over 200 surplus places and a further 200 places in the school are occupied by children from the Tonteg area. Therefore, for the foreseeable future, children that reside in Tonteg should be able to apply and secure a place at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School.

- **Concerns that there will be a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of those that attend Gwauncelyn as they transfer to a different school**

There are a number of examples across the County Borough where children in the same primary school attend a different secondary school and the transition is well planned and managed. Meaningful and successful transition is an integral part of ensuring that pupils settle into their new school environments with little disruption. Advice and support will be provided by the Local Authority to all schools involved to ensure that the transition process is as smooth and worry free as possible for the pupils.

- **Is the walking route between Gwauncelyn Primary and Hawthorn High safe?**

If the proposals to change the catchment area for Hawthorn High are to go ahead, then a review of this walking route will be commissioned to ensure the safety of pupils. This review will include an independent assessment of the route, and any recommendations made by the independent assessor will be implemented.

- **Not all pupils that live in Tonteg will be eligible for school transport to Hawthorn High School**

This is correct. The criteria used by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to determine the eligibility to receive free school transport is based on walking distance, measured by the shortest, available walking route, with free transport being provided to secondary school learners whose home address is more than two miles from the nearest or catchment school.

In terms of the distance and eligibility for free school transport, the Council operates a far more generous allowance than the Learner Travel Measure (Wales) 2008, which

only requires transport to be provided for those secondary school pupils who live more than three miles from their nearest or catchment school.

- **Tonteg has strong community links with Llantwit Fardre and Church Village. There are no community links with Hawthorn.**

There is no reason why any community links will be adversely affected by these proposals. Gwauncelyn Primary School will remain open and so these community links will remain.

- **Concerns were raised about the walking route and the level of traffic emissions.**

There is no Air Quality Monitoring carried out in this area and the route does not go through an Air Quality Management Area. It is recognised that the A473 has congested traffic particularly at rush hours in the morning and evening along the road leading to Treforest Industrial Estate/ Upper Boat roundabout.

It's unlikely however that exposure along the route would be long enough to breach Air Quality Standards but it is recommended that exposure to air pollution is minimised as much as possible.

- **There was a lack of consultation with parents of Gwauncelyn Primary School**

The proposal is for an amendment to the catchment area of Hawthorn High School and Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School, not Gwauncelyn Primary School. Notwithstanding that, the governing body, parents, carers and staff of Gwauncelyn Primary School were consulted with (a full list of consultees is included at section 1 of this report).

- **Hawthorn is a worse school than Bryncelynnog. I don't want my child to go there.**

Please see the point above that refers to pupil/parent choice.

We have acknowledged in our consultation document that Bryncelynnog has achieved consistently better results than some other secondary schools over the last few years. Also, in addition in the most recent School Categorisation System Bryncelynnog is categorised as a 'green' school where as Hawthorn High is 'yellow'.

These school reorganisation proposals are interlinked and at the heart of the proposals is raising standards in education. Through their implementation, we intend on tackling a number of the inconsistencies that exist between the schools. The removal of the sixth forms and the creation of 3-16 schools in Hawthorn and Pontypridd, will allow the schools to reallocate much needed resources to Key Stages 3-4, instead of utilising these resources to prop up small and unsustainable sixth forms. This will allow these schools to focus on appropriately resourcing and improving educational standards throughout all key stages.

Work with the new schools will continue with support from the Council to ensure that the standards of learning in the current schools will continue to improve through the transition period of the creation of the new schools and beyond.

- **There is no public transport to Hawthorn from Tonteg**

There are bus links between both areas although there are no direct transport links. A change of bus is required at the Pottery (Treforest Estate) or Parc Lewis School (Treforest).

5. Conclusion

In view of the responses and comments received during the consultation period, a further assessment of the proposals, which are included within the consultation document, has been undertaken. The proposals have been revisited and the impact of the proposals on the quality and standards of education, the community, and transport arrangements, have been reassessed.

The original proposal was to:

- Close the sixth forms of Hawthorn High School, Pontypridd High School and Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School and transfer the post-16 provision to Bryncelynog Comprehensive School or Coleg Y Cymoedd, Nantgarw. For those students who opt for a Roman Catholic education, sixth form provision will be available at St David's College, Cardiff;
- Close Pontypridd High School and Cilfynydd Primary School and create a new 3-16 'all through' school on the site of the current Pontypridd High School;
- Close Hawthorn High School, Hawthorn Primary School and Heol-Y-Celyn Primary School and create a new 3-16 'all through' school on the site of the current Hawthorn High and Hawthorn Primary Schools. The local authority designated ALN specialist class located Hawthorn High School will also transfer to the new school.
- Relocate Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pont Sion Norton to a new school building to be constructed on the site of the current Heol-Y-Celyn Primary School. The pupils educated through the Welsh Medium at Heol-Y-Celyn will transfer to YGG Pont Sion Norton (the Heol-Y-Celyn pupils educated through the English Medium will transfer to the new 3 – 16 school at Hawthorn, see above);
- Amend the catchment areas for pupils aged 11-16 of the three LA maintained Secondary schools by:
 - Transferring the Graig area of Pontypridd (that is part of the catchment area of Maesycoed Primary School) to the new 3-16 school for Pontypridd (currently part of the Hawthorn High School catchment)
 - Transferring the catchment area of Coedpenmaen Primary School to the new 3-16 school for Pontypridd (currently part of the Hawthorn High School catchment)
 - Transferring the catchment area of Gwauncelyn Primary School to the new 3-16 school for Hawthorn (currently part of the Bryncelynog Comprehensive School catchment).

It is recommended that the proposal set out above is maintained with the exception of the proposed change to the catchment area of Bryncelynog Comprehensive School. It is recommended that the catchment area for Gwauncelyn Primary School remains within the Bryncelynog Comprehensive School catchment area and does not transfer to the new 3-16 school for Hawthorn. Since the consultation commenced in October 2018, the large brownfield site at Llanillid, Llanharan has been purchased by two major developers and the Council has entered into site master planning with the developers, to provide pre-planning advice and guidance. For the site to be developed, a new

secondary school will be required, which, will have an impact on a number of other schools as the new housing development grows. Furthermore, the Council's Local Development Plan will need to be reviewed in 2021, or an equivalent plan developed.

It is therefore proposed that the secondary school catchment areas are monitored over the next 5-10 years taking into account the planned developments and the future new Local Development Plan (or equivalent) to ensure sufficient school places are available across the County Borough.

The recommendations to be put before a forthcoming meeting of the Council's Cabinet are that the following four statutory notices are published to progress with these proposals.

- The alteration of the age range of pupils that may be admitted to Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School, from 11 – 19 years to 11 – 16 years, resulting in the removal of the sixth form provision;
- The closure of Pontypridd High School and Cilfynydd Primary School and the creation of a new 3 – 16 'all through' School on the site of the current Pontypridd High School. There will be no sixth form provision at this school;
- The closure of Hawthorn High School and Hawthorn Primary School and the creation of a new 3 – 16 'all through' School on the site of the current Hawthorn High and Hawthorn Primary Schools, with the Local Authority designated ALN specialist class located in Hawthorn High School, as well as pupils receiving education through the medium of English at Heol y Celyn Primary School transferring to the new school. There will be no sixth form provision at this school;
- The closure of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pont Sion Norton and Heol y Celyn Primary School and the opening of a new Welsh medium Primary School on the site of the current Heol y Celyn Primary School.

If agreed, the four statutory notices that make up this proposal will be published in April 2019 and it will allow for a minimum 28 day period during which time any person may lodge an objection to the proposals.

All of the proposals consulted upon, in this report, are dependent on decisions taken on the future restructuring of sixth form provision. The School Organisation Code states that any proposals which affect sixth form education must be approved by the Welsh Ministers; and the Council **must** also send to the Welsh Ministers any proposals which it considers are related to the proposals requiring determination.

However, Welsh Government have already confirmed that they will only determine the proposal relating to the removal of the sixth form from Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School. Any statutory objections received must be sent to the Welsh Ministers, in addition to the Objection Report referred to above, within 35 days of the end of the objection period for them to consider and determine the outcome of the Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School proposal.

The remaining proposals will be for the Council's Cabinet to determine. At the end of the objection period, an Objection Report will be compiled, summarising any objections received. The outcome of this part of the process will be considered by Cabinet again at a meeting to be held in June 2019.

