

**Notes of a meeting held with staff and governors at
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pont Sion Norton**

Tuesday 20th November 2018 at 4:00 pm

**Meeting to discuss the Council's proposals to reorganise school provision in the
Pontypridd area**

Present

Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Sophie Nicholls, Graduate Officer 21st Century Schools
Non Morgan, School Organisation and Governance Team Leader
Andrea Richards, Head of 21st Century Schools
29 members of school staff and governors

Introductions

Gaynor Davies (GD) welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the proposal, the reasons for the proposal, the purpose of the meeting, the consultation process, the timescales relating to the consultation process and the proposals themselves should they be implemented.

Should the proposals be implemented, the Council seeks to:

- Develop post 16 education at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School, Beddau and Coleg y Cymoedd, Nantgarw;
- Create two new 3-16 schools in Pontypridd and Hawthorn;
- Improve and increase Welsh Medium primary provision by building a new school on the former site at Heol y Celyn, which will incorporate the former provisions at both Heol y Celyn and YGG Pont Sion Norton;
- Amend the catchment areas of Pontypridd High, Hawthorn High and the 6th form catchment of Bryncelynnog Comprehensive Schools, to better meet and match the demand for school places;

These changes will be achieved by:

- Closing the sixth forms of Hawthorn High School, Pontypridd High School and Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School and transferring the post 16 provision to Bryncelynnog 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;
- Closing Pontypridd High School and Cilfynydd Primary School and creating a new 3-6 'all through' school on the site of the current Pontypridd High School;

- Closing Hawthorn High School, Hawthorn Primary School and Heol y Celyn School and creating 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 in Hawthorn High School will also transfer to the new school.
- Closing Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pont Sion Norton and opening a new Welsh Medium Primary School 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 the new school and the Heol y Celyn pupils educated through the English Medium will transfer to the new 3–16 school at Hawthorn;

Amending the catchment areas for pupils aged 11-16 of the three LA maintained secondary schools by:

- Transferring the Graig area of Pontypridd which is part of the catchment area of Maesycoed Primary School to the new 3-16 school for Pontypridd (currently Hawthorn)
- Transferring the catchment area of Coedpenmaen Primary School to the new 3-16 school for Pontypridd (currently Hawthorn)
- Transferring the catchment area of Gwauncelyn Primary School to the new 3-16 school for Hawthorn (currently Bryncelynnog)

It is proposed that all changes will be in place by September 2022.

GD referred to the detailed information contained within the consultation document which had been circulated and the consultation response pro-forma contained therein (further copies of both were available at the meeting) and referred to page 5 of the consultation document which outlines how people can make comments.

GD explained that the questions/comments/responses would be recorded for inclusion in the consultation report, which would be fed back to Cabinet in early 2019, as would the feedback from pupils. GD stressed that this was a period of consultation and should the proposals proceed to the next stage (statutory notice), objections would be received and recorded at that stage.

The meeting was then opened for questions.

Q. *The nursery provision is approximately 60 places - would they be in the main building or in the centre that already exists in the site next to the school?*

A. In the main building.

Q. Regarding special needs, will there be a unit attached to the school where staff could go and teach those children or discuss the needs of those children. I think a unit would benefit the children, staff and parents.

A. There are 47 learning support classes across RCT and we do review these on a regular basis to ensure we have the right provisions. In some Local Authorities there will be a special Learning Support class in Welsh medium schools and as part of the WESP we review this. The last evaluation showed that there wasn't sufficient demand to meet the need for this. We also try to future-proof any settings we create so where possible we try to develop cross-phase provision. As part of this proposal there is no consolation for a specific provision, but we try to ensure that there is a room designated that we could use for this in the future if the demand is there. Centrally located provisions are ideal and we will continually review this.

A. Part of the grant conditions are for a fully inclusive school. There will be a building that is completely adaptable for any child going in and it will be completely accessible.

Q. In Cwmbach there is a setting called 'Rainbows' and the school can use it to take advice from specialist staff and it prevents going through the long procedures.

A. The 'Rainbows' setting is an independent provider who rents the space near the school there. One of the things that has been raised is wrap around care – this has been brought up in this consultation process and we are looking at this. We are separately consulting on Additional Learning Needs (ALN) proposals in addition to this consultation. In terms of the Welsh medium sector there is a separate budget for this and early years intervention for ALN and we agree with this.

Q. Time-scales for this. If the school will open in 2022 can you take us back from there to show the process from the endorsement from the Local Authority (LA) and then to the opening of the school in terms of staff and governors etc.

A. Should the proposal be approved, we would set up a temporary governing body and representation would be decided by the LA appointments panel. Only current governors of the affected schools can apply for a position on the temporary governing body. Once established, the temporary governing body would appoint the headteacher and then a new staffing structure for the school would be created by the headteacher and the temporary governing body. The temporary governing body would also be responsible for organisation issues such as uniform, school name proposals etc. We would encourage them to consult with pupils on this too.

A. We look to start the recruitment process at least two years prior to September 2022. It does take a while to go through the process but once the headteacher is appointed, the LA will work with them on the structure. The positions are usually ring-fenced to current staff in the first instance and if we positions cannot be filled then they are advertised externally. We are currently doing this successfully in Garth Olwg. Another technical point is that both schools close, therefore all staff become

redundant. Those staff who want to take voluntary redundancy or retirement are therefore able to do that. We try and do this as soon as possible to ensure you as staff know where you are. If you are unsuccessful we approach other schools in RCT to try and create a bump redundancy if there are other schools where people are looking to retire etc. There are many processes we can follow to support you through this time.

Q. Are jobs only advertised internally?

A. We recommend that the governors do that, however, it is for the governors to make that decision. So far all schools have done that.

Q. When would the head be appointed? Would they be the head of the new school and the current one?

A. No they are just the head of the new school. There is a lot of work involved and the headteacher would be heavily involved in the design of the building too.

A. The consultation will be running for a while. It takes about 18 months for various processes to happen and then the construction takes place. You will be heavily involved in this. We would ideally like to start building in 2020. There would be approximately 18 months of construction on site.

Q. Pupils won't move until 2023 then?

A. No the build will hopefully be ready by June 2022 and then they would move in September 2022.

Q. We deal with child protection issues now daily and I would like a child protection officer based on site. Will this happen?

A. The governors and headteacher will decide the staffing structure and that goes out to consultation to you as staff. In the past structures have been changed and then the structure is appointed to.

A. The beauty of a larger school is that you have got more staff who could specialise in certain areas.

Q. Yes and for ALN etc. we need to make sure there is someone looking at this because it will be a big school.

A. The new ALN reforms show that this could be a leadership role in new schools too.

Q. The quality impact assessment online says – 'As the proposal for Pont Sion Norton is the relocation and expansion of the school, the staff of Pont Sion Norton will stay with the school and will be extended'.

A. This has been revised since this.

Q. *It is in the equality assessment area and is on the website. Why has it been changed?*

A. There have been lots of discussions and we have looked at this and decided it will be fair and equitable to all to close both schools and we want to build this into the new larger school. As part of previous proposals we have done this and only two people haven't had jobs in the new schools.

A. We are trying to be equitable to the Welsh area of Heol y Celyn too.

A. If people want to finish, they are able to leave and retire. If we didn't close both schools we would have to say that people could not retire.

Q. *2022 is when the new curriculum will happen and 2020 is the ALN reforms. Education in Wales is changing dramatically. During a period of disruption like this how do you mitigate this against the advent of the new curriculum?*

A. Some of our schools are not fit for the 21st Century. By building the new school we are able to try and future proof this school and ensure that the digital technology is current and that the learning spaces are flexible enough for the new curriculum. It could be argued that this is a perfect time to do this and shape the school for the new curriculum. In terms of mitigating this, we have a large team who specialise in different areas who can help make this a smooth process. All projects have been delivered on time, except at Tonyrefail due to a listed building and the associated issues that has brought. We need to ensure that teaching and learning are at a high standard and that there is no disruption to this. This school will continue to operate here meanwhile.

Q. *We have already started speaking to staff at the Welsh department of Heol y Celyn to ensure we are on the same page in terms of the Welsh Medium education in the new curriculum.*

A. We design new schools to meet the new curriculum. We are asking challenging design questions and we are pushing architects to give us more information to ensure that schools are future proofed for this.

Q. *Are there any proposals to improve the traffic situation?*

A. A robust traffic impact assessment is undertaken and any traffic calming measures required will be put in place and any recommendations made will be met. Some schools have turning circles etc. to minimise the time parents are parked on site but we will be researching this.

A. This will also be a planning condition and we need to ensure it is safe for pupils and that there are enough spaces. We look further than just Holly Street to ensure that pupils also get on their school buses safely.

Q. Does the money for the school take into account these links or are there additional funds?

A. This is additional money to create safe routes and we have done this with £440,000 in Porth. This will be undertaken for all of the schools involved in this proposal and we fund this from the Council's core capital funding, as pupil safety is of paramount importance to us.

Further information:

You can still submit any queries online for this and there will be an event in January for yourselves and the community.

You can also e-mail the school planning email address and we will answer your queries.

All were thanked for their input and attendance and the meeting closed.