



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

**21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME - CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO
CREATE A NEW COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL IN GLYNCOCH**

21ST MARCH 2022

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR J
BONETTO, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES**

Author(s):

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Members of the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of proposal to:
- Amalgamate Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools. The amalgamation will be achieved by closing the two existing primary schools and opening a new, bigger community primary school to replace them.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the information contained within the attached Consultation Report, which includes a summary of correspondence received during the consultation exercise, including the full response from Estyn, feedback received from the online survey, and notes of the meetings held.
- 2.2 Agree to progress the proposals to the next stage of the consultation process by issuing an appropriate Statutory Notice which will trigger the start of the Objection Period.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To progress the proposal in accordance with the process outlined in Welsh Government legislative guidance (the School Organisation Code 011/2008).

- 3.2 To increase capacity and improve the quality of primary education provision available to learners in the Glyncoch area of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Members will recall that, at the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13th December 2021, approval was given to begin a statutory process to formally consult on a proposal to improve and increase education provision in the Glyncoch area by investing in a new school by amalgamating Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools. The amalgamation will be achieved by closing the two existing primary schools and opening a new, bigger community primary school to replace them.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Consultation Report, prepared in respect of this proposal, is attached at Appendix 1 for your attention. It contains information in respect of meetings held to discuss the proposal, with copies of the notes taken at these meetings; it contains Estyn's full response to the proposal and the clarification to the response; it also contains a summary of the online survey responses received during the consultation period and where required the appropriate clarification to any issues raised.
- 5.2 This consultation process resulted in 34 written responses being received - 32 via the online survey that was available for the duration of the consultation period on the RCT website, and 2 e-mails received via the school planning mailbox. Due to Covid restrictions, meetings with the community could not be held. However, meetings with the staff, governors and pupils were held virtually.
- 5.3 Out of the 34 responses received, 25 were in agreement with the proposal, 6 respondents were not in agreement, 2 respondents were unsure, and one did not provide a response to this question. Overall, the responses were overwhelmingly positive with 74% in favour of the proposal to build a new school. To confirm, all of the comments and issues raised during this consultation process have been reviewed by Cabinet Members.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 Equality and Community Impact Assessments were prepared in respect of this proposal and were published, and can still be viewed, on the Council's website together with the Consultation Document that outlines the proposal in detail.
- 6.2 In summary, the outcome of Equality Impact Assessment identified positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts, upon the protected characteristics and so it was deemed that approval would be sought to continue to implement the proposal. To confirm, the Action Plan will continue to be reviewed throughout the duration of the project delivery period.

- 6.3 As part of seeking views on the school proposals, the consultation survey, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, also included a further question in compliance with the Council's statutory obligations which was 'The Council has a legal duty to look at how it's decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. How would the Council's proposal affect you? All those that responded to this question stated that there would be a positive or no impact on them as a result of the proposals.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment was prepared in respect of this proposal and published, and can still be viewed, on the Council's website together with the Consultation Document that outlines the proposal in detail. The link is below.
- 7.2 In summary, the outcome of the assessment found that the proposal will assist with delivering the targets outlined in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (RCTCBC's) current (2017 to 2022) and new (2022 to 2032) Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and will support the aim of Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 target of one million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050.
- 7.3 As part of seeking views on the school proposals, the consultation survey, in accordance with the Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, also included further questions in compliance with the Council's statutory obligations which were could the proposals impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh language (Positive or Negative) and if in any way, they treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language? Questions also asked were how positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be decreased? All those that responded to these questions stated that there would be a positive or no impact on the Welsh language as a result of implementing the proposals.

8. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 The consultation process in respect of this proposal has been undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, which was introduced on 1st November 2018 and replaced the October 2013 version. These arrangements stipulate that a Consultation Report must be prepared prior to the publication of any Statutory Notices which will progress the proposal. It further states that Statutory Notices be published within 26 weeks of the end of the consultation period.

9. THE STATUTORY PROCESS

- 9.1 The Statutory Notice for this proposal will refer to:

- Amalgamate Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools. The amalgamation will be achieved by closing the two existing primary schools and opening a new, bigger community primary school to replace them.
- 9.2 If agreed, and subject to the matter not being called in for consideration by Scrutiny, the Statutory Notice will be published on 4th April 2022 and will allow for a minimum 28 day period for objections, ending on 11th May 2022.
- 9.3 If any objections are received during this period, in accordance with the aforementioned Code, an Objections Report will be prepared. This matter will then be reported to a future meeting of Cabinet, in June or July of this year, for Members to receive and consider the Objections Report and to make a final decision on this proposal.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 If the proposal proceeds, a significant capital investment will be required in the region of circa £9 million to construct the new school. The funding package will continue to be developed alongside the consultation and decision-making process. The new school will be funded by the Council and Welsh Government via the Mutual Investment Model (MIM) funding stream which is part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, previously called the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 11.1 Part 1 of the Education Act 1996 (“the 1996 Act”) imposes a number of general duties on all local authorities in Wales. The general duty in section 13 of the 1996 Act is to contribute (so far as the Council’s powers enable them to do so) towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by ensuring that efficient primary education and secondary education is available to meet the needs of the population of their area.
- 11.2 Section 13A(3) of the 1996 Act states that a local authority in Wales must ensure that their relevant education and training functions are exercised by the authority with a view to promoting high standards, and the fulfilment of learning potential by every person to whom the subsection applies, including those who are of compulsory school age or are below school age and are registered as pupils at schools maintained by the authority.
- 11.3 Section 14 of the 1996 Act requires the Council to secure sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education in the Council’s area. Schools available for an area shall not be regarded as sufficient unless they are sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide all pupils with an appropriate education.

- 11.4 Appropriate education means education which offers such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of (a) the pupils' different ages, abilities and aptitudes; and (b) the different periods for which they may be expected to remain at school, including practical instruction and training appropriate to their different needs.
- 11.5 Powers for councils to develop school organisation proposals are governed by the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the Code 011/2018. (Local authorities must, when exercising functions under Part 3 of the 2013 Act, act in accordance with any relevant requirements contained in the Code and must have regard to any relevant guidelines contained in it. A copy of the Code is found here:
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/schoolorganisation-code-second-edition.pdf>

12. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 12.1 There are links to RCTCBC's Corporate Plan for the period between 2020 to 2024, specifically the priority:
- Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper
- Ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education.
- 12.2 Due regard has been made to all seven wellbeing goals and the Five Ways of Working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of decisions, on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

This proposal would contribute to achieving the wellbeing goals by:

- Improving sustainability of school buildings in the Council portfolio through a commitment to achieving a zero-carbon building and constructing to BREEAM excellent.
- Providing additional school places to meet WG targets and to promote the Welsh language in the Community.
- Opening new community facilities that would create opportunities for local people to utilise.

This proposal would achieve the five ways of working by:

- Creating a new school environment that can deliver the new Curriculum for Wales.
- Providing first class learning facilities for pupils and the wider community and contribute towards a healthier Wales by providing additional outdoor sport facilities for pupils.

- Contributing towards a prosperous Wales by committing to opportunities for local tradespeople and to use local resources, wherever possible to build the new school.
- Engaging with the community on a thorough consultation with opportunities for all stakeholders in the Community to engage throughout the process.

12.3 The Equality Impact Assessment includes further detail on the contribution of the proposal to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and this document formed an integral part of the consultation document.

13. CONCLUSION

13.1 Members are asked to consider the contents of the attached Consultation Report, and to give officers approval to publish an appropriate Statutory Notice on 4th April 2022 to progress this proposal.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background papers:

The background papers included as appendices to the report are:

- Consultation Report

Officer to contact:

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