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For all enquiries relating to this agenda please contact Julie Lloyd
(Tel: 01443 864246 Email: lloydj4@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Date: 22nd November 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

A multi-locational meeting of the **Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee** will be held in Penallta House, and via Microsoft Teams on **Tuesday, 28th November, 2023 at 5.30 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda. Councillors and the public wishing to speak on any item can do so by making a request to the Chair. You are also welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, both these requests require a minimum notice period of 3 working days. A simultaneous translation will be provided on request.

Members of the public or Press may attend in person at Penallta House or may view the meeting live via the following link: <https://civico.net/caerphilly>

This meeting will be live-streamed and a recording made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. Therefore the images/audio of those individuals speaking will be publicly available to all via the Council website at www.caerphilly.gov.uk

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christina Harrhy'.

Christina Harrhy
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A G E N D A

Pages

- 1 To receive apologies for absence.

A greener place Man gwyrddach



2 Declarations of Interest.

Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on this agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.

To approve and sign the following minutes:-

- 3 Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 17th October 2023. 1 - 6
- 4 Consideration of any matter referred to this Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.
- 5 Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme. 7 - 18
- 6 To receive and consider the following Cabinet reports*:-
1. Annual Report on the Corporate Complaints received for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 – 15th November 2023;
 2. Corporate Plan (including Well-Being Objectives) 2023 to 2028 – 15th November 2023.

**If a member of the Scrutiny Committee wishes for any of the above Cabinet reports to be brought forward for review at the meeting please contact Julie Lloyd 01443 864246, by 10.00 a.m. on Monday, 27th November 2023.*

To receive and consider the following Scrutiny reports:-

- 7 Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Programme - Consultation Report: Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School Proposal. 19 - 54
- 8 Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme - Proposal for the closure of Cwm Glas Infants School. 55 - 82
- 9 Annual Report of the Director of Social Services and Housing for 2022/23. 83 - 112

Circulation:

Councillors Mrs E.M. Aldworth, C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, D. Cushing, Mrs P. Cook, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C.J. Gordon, T. Heron, A. Leonard, B. Miles (Vice Chair), T. Parry (Chair), J.E. Roberts, J. Simmonds, S. Skivens, J. Winslade and K. Woodland

Co-opted Members:

Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative (with voting rights on educational matters)
Mr M. Western

Parent Governor Representatives (with voting rights on educational matters) Tracy Millington (Parent Governor Representative) and Mr G. James (Parent Governor Representative)

Outside Body Representatives (without voting rights)
Mrs P. Ireland (NEU) and Mrs J. Havard (NEU)

Caerphilly Governors Association (without voting rights)
Mr D Davies

Users and Carers - Vacant

And Appropriate Officers

HOW WE WILL USE YOUR INFORMATION

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Agenda Item 3



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY 17TH OCTOBER 2023 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor T. Parry – Chair
Councillor B. Miles - Vice Chair

Councillors:

E.M. Aldworth, C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, P. Cook, D. Cushing, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C. Gordon, T. Heron, A. Leonard, J. Roberts, J. Simmonds, J. Winslade, and K. Woodland.

Cabinet Members:

Councillor C. Andrews (Education and Communities), E. Forehead. (Social Care), and J. Pritchard (Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change).

Together with:

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), A. West (21st Century Schools Manager), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director – Head of Childrens Services), J. Williams (Assistant Director – Adult Services), M.J. Jones (Financial Services Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

Also in attendance:

Co-opted Members: Mrs T. Millington (Parent Governor Representative), and Mrs K. Cole (NEU).

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here To View](#).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S. Skivens, and Mr. M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative), Mr. G. James (Parent Governor Representative), Mrs. P. Ireland (NEU), and Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 12TH SEPTEMBER 2023.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 12th September 2023 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 15 for, 0 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 12th September 2023 (minute nos. 1 – 7) be approved as a correct record.

4. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE.

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

5. EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Manager introduced the report that informed the Committee of its Forward Work Programme planned for the period October 2023 to March 2024.

Members proposed additional report items to be added, including the use of vapes and mobile phones in schools, the causes of winter pressures and education at home. A Member clarified that a Cabinet report regarding children who were unable to attend school, had come before the scrutiny committee in June 2023. Members were also advised that a report on the causes of winter pressures could be brought to Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee at their next meeting at the end of November. The Chair also requested that a report going to Cabinet on 'free school meals' be included as an information item for this scrutiny at the end of November.

Following consideration of the report, and subject to the proposed additional items, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers, subject to the proposed additional agenda items, be published on the Council's website.

6. CABINET REPORTS

It was confirmed that there had been no requests for any of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

7. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING BAND B PROGRAMME – YSGOL Y LAWNT AND UPPER RHYMNEY PRIMARY SCHOOL PROPOSAL.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Communities introduced the report and Members were advised that the purpose of the report was to officially consult with Members in respect of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Programme proposed to relocate Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary.

The scrutiny committee sought clarity on how the funding formula for schools operates, and how this will be applied to each school. The public perception is that Welsh medium education is more expensive. Members were assured that the schools will be funded on the same basis through the fair funding formula that is applied to all other schools, and both English medium and Welsh medium are funded on the same basis. If there were any changes to the funding formula this would require a consultation on the funding formula itself.

A Member sought information on the shared facilities which should realise cost savings and asked if those savings would be retained by each school, or whether the local authority would benefit from the savings. The committee were advised that these schools will be net zero and very efficient from an energy perspective. The schools will however still be funded using the current fair funding formula. However, as we move towards more schools being built on a net zero basis the fair funding formula may need to be reviewed in terms of the premises costs.

The scrutiny committee sought clarity on what Band B means and were advised that it is a Welsh Government terminology, which started with Band A that ran until 2019, Band B covers the period 2019 to 2026. This is now changing to a rolling programme with local authorities asked to submit proposals for the next 9 years. This is then broken down into three-year manageable periods, and officers are looking at how that can be done and what can be sent to Welsh Government.

A Member asked what timeframe is anticipated for the completion of the new unit in Pontllanfraith and was advised that the Centre for Vulnerable Learners is due to be completed by the end of 2024.

The scrutiny committee asked what the timeframe is for the completion of the two schools, should the go ahead be achieved. Members were advised that there is a lengthy process in relation to these proposals, this includes our consultation, plus Welsh Government have Panels to consider each Business Case. An outline business case has already been submitted in respect of the first stage which has been approved. Following consultation, it will return to scrutiny on the 28th November 2023, before Cabinet, and if approved the next stage is statutory notice which is planned for early spring 2024, and it is required for 28 days. Following that it returns to scrutiny and Cabinet with the objection report (Welsh Government terminology). It then returns to Welsh Government with the full Business Case, it is hoped that the schools could be completed by September 2027.

The scrutiny committee enquired how the school will be separated and what safeguarding arrangements will be put in place to ensure that people visiting the site will be managed. Members were assured that these will be two separate entities, and each school will have their own areas that they control. There will be a shared reception with a secure area for any visitors, with further separate entrances for children to enter each school.

Members sought reassurance on the protection of the Welsh Language at the school, and queried whether Welsh medium school pupils would be separate from the English speaking pupils. The committee was assured that there will be two separate schools, each will have its own playground, classrooms, and halls. There will however be the ability to open up some areas for community use. The Chair gave the committee her feedback on the visit to a similar type of provision in Cardiff and advised that she felt reassured after the visit that this approach

can work very well. Officers, Scrutiny members, heads and governors met with both headteachers at the Cardiff schools, and they said they felt comfortable that they were operating two separate schools. Officers will work closely with both schools, headteachers and governing bodies to ensure the design meets the needs and demands of both schools.

Members enquired whether the visit to Cardiff schools had picked up any additional information for example, was there any sense of rivalry or animosity between the two schools, or did it appear to be that with Welsh being taught in the English school benefitted from having a Welsh medium school next door. Members were advised that the Welsh medium Cardiff school also had a Welsh Language immersion unit for pupils who had moved into the area from outside Wales and wanted to have an introduction to the language, which has been very successful. Neither Cardiff headteacher raised any concerns of this nature.

The scrutiny committee was also advised that the co-location of these two schools may also provide opportunities to assist professional learning for staff for example, and they could consider holding joint events.

Clarification was sought on whether pupils are also consulted as part of the process and Members were advised that the pupil voice is included in the consultation, and a 'child friendly' version of the consultation document has been prepared.

Members commented on the travel distance of the new schools, and how it compares to the distance travelled to the existing schools. The committee had been advised that there was a 4 minute and 16 minute walk between the existing schools and the new school. However, this is not from their home addresses, so for some families the walk to the new schools will be shorter and others it will be longer, however if this is more than 1.5 miles, they can access free school transport.

Members commented that this model has already been done in CCBC, with Ystrad Mynach Primary school and the Welsh Medium school, which had separate playgrounds etc. and worked well.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report and provided comments on the proposals.

8. SCHOOL ORGANISATION CODE 2018 – PROPOSAL FOR THE CLOSURE OF CWM GLAS INFANTS SCHOOL.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Communities introduced the report to officially consult with Members in respect of the proposal to close Cwm Glas Infants School by July 2024.

Members were informed that due to the falling rolls at the school which are projected to decrease further, a meeting was arranged by the Head Teacher and the Governing Body with Local Authority representatives including the Chief Education Officer, to discuss the future viability of the school.

The conclusion of this meeting agreed the school could no longer maintain a balanced budget and an appropriate staffing level, therefore a decision was made by the Head Teacher and Governing Body of the School to pursue closure of Cwm Glas Infants School.

Members asked what alternatives to the closure have been explored and would any of these be financially viable. The scrutiny committee were advised that the governing body, as well as officers, have looked at the options but it is not possible to ensure a balanced budget. There are fixed costs that have to be met and with falling pupil numbers it would not be achievable.

The scrutiny committee asked what the plans would be if there was a sudden influx of pupils at Coed y Brain, does it have the resilience to cope. Members were assured that from

September 2024 the 28 pupils from Cwm Glas will be able to transfer, subject to parental preference. There would still be 80 surplus places at Coed y Brain going forward to accommodate any further applications for places.

Members expressed concern about the staff employed at Cwm Glas and asked what will happen to them. The scrutiny committee were advised that subject to Cabinet approval, there would be extensive meetings with HR colleagues and also with the staff concerned, with the aim to redeploy them to vacancies within CCBC if possible.

The scrutiny committee highlighted that 50% of pupils at Cwm Glas live outside the catchment area, and asked if they will go to a school within their catchment area if Cwm Glas closes. Members were advised that is a matter for parental preference.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report and provided comments on the proposals.

9. 2023/24 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (MONTH 3).

The Cabinet Member for Social Care introduced the report which informed Members of the projected revenue expenditure for Social Services for the 2023/24 financial year and its implications for future financial years. The report identifies the reasons behind a projected underspend of £2,938k for Social Services in 2023/24, inclusive of transport costs, and it will also consider the implications of this projected underspend on Social Services reserve balances and for future financial years.

A Member queried the 330 hours of unmet need and the vacant posts in social care. Members were advised that the recruitment for social care is ongoing but currently very challenging, and the hours of unmet need were reduced to 117 this month.

A Member queried the residential care costs including secure accommodation, and where these would be located. Members were advised that there was not a great 'need' for secure accommodation in Caerphilly, with only one child currently in secure accommodation. Two houses have been purchased to be used as children's homes, one in Aberbargoed and one in Cefn Fforest, with a new build proposed in Rhydney for completion in 2024.

A Member sought clarification on the 'special guardianships' and members were advised that these persons are nearly always close family relatives and are referred to as connected persons. The financial elements include assessments of the persons and no financial loss to those taking care of children who are, in effect, 'fostering' those children, even though they are related.

A Member queried the Gwent Frailty Programme, and whether this was a widely known service and may have contributed to the underspends in this area. Members were advised that the underspends were in relation to recruitment. Members were also advised in relation to the scheme that has a high demand, and persons no longer have to be over 65 to qualify, and GPs' and hospitals can refer persons to this programme if they require it.

A Member sought clarification on the Gwent Missing Children Project. Members were advised that this was a lottery funded project aimed at children who were previously missing, who would be met and interviewed to determine any safeguarding aspects and support required, that needed to be put in place to avoid any further 'missing' episodes. Members were also advised that the funding is due to end, and the regional partnership board is due to discuss the future of the project.

A Member queried the 'other adoption costs' and the families first contracts. Members were advised that the 'other adoption costs' were in relation to children who are more difficult to find adoption places for, and these are registered with independent agencies in order to find

adoptive places anywhere in the UK. Some adopters need financial support and where a child is placed outside of the Caerphilly Borough, the authority would still remain financially responsible for the child for up to 3 years, and after this time would then transfer to the local authority area in which they lived. These costs would also include children who lived outside of the area and had their adoptive place within Caerphilly Borough.

Members were also advised that 'families first' was Welsh Government grant funded, which covered early intervention and prevention services. The extra costs included the additional services provided by CCBC, and members were advised that families first funding information would be circulated to members following the meeting.

A Member clarified that the projected underspend of £2,938k would not be the final figure as this was only projected. Members were advised that these figures were based on the current figures in June and the estimated costs going forward based on these figures.

A Member queried the £43k underspend in the Youth Offending Service and discussion followed regarding whether a reimbursement to CCBC would occur, given rising costs of the service in the future.

A Member sought clarification on the support given to asylum seeking children and whether they are placed with families or children's homes within the Borough. Members were advised that the Home Office had introduced the National Transfer Scheme last year, which can allow a rapid response to unaccompanied children that can be moved from Kent to anywhere in the UK, and each local authority in the UK has a target to meet in relation to supporting these children. Members were advised that the majority of the children have a good understanding of the English language and language difficulties rarely occur, although interpretation services are available.

A Member clarified that the underspend in adult services for home care, related directly to the lack of staff. The Member also clarified that the vacancies in adult services had increased, and that 'other costs' related to the workforce development team shared with Blaenau Gwent, which provided support across the directorate, and also 'other costs' would include IT support, insurance, and DBS checks.

The Chair sought clarification on the projected commitments within adult services and whether any contingency had been considered. Members were advised that contingency is built in, in respect of day services provision and there is some provision for increasing costs, however staffing issues create increased difficulty with regards to any contingency.

The Chair also queried the closure of the South View Residential Home in the Borough that was used and funded by Rhondda Cynon Taff. Members were advised that RCT had now moved the residents out of this property as it was no longer meeting their needs, and that CCBC were looking to repurpose the building for use.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report.

The meeting closed at 7.05 pm.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 28th November 2023.

CHAIR



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 28TH NOVEMBER 2023

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND
CORPORATE SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Forward Work Programmes are essential to ensure that Scrutiny Committee agendas reflect the strategic issues facing the Council and other priorities raised by Members, the public or stakeholder.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members consider any changes and agree the final forward work programme prior to publication.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To improve the operation of scrutiny.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee forward work programme includes all reports that were identified at the Committee Meeting on Tuesday 17th October 2023. The work programme outlines the reports planned for the period November 2023 until March 2024.
- 5.2 The forward Work Programme is made up of reports identified by officers and members. Members are asked to consider the work programme alongside the

cabinet work programme and suggest any changes before it is published on the council website. The Scrutiny committee will review this work programme at every meeting going forward alongside any changes to the cabinet work programme or report requests.

- 5.3 The Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1, which presents the current status as at 3rd November 2023. The Cabinet Work Programme is attached at Appendix 2. A copy of the prioritisation flowchart is attached at appendix 3 to assist the scrutiny committee to determine what items should be added to the forward work programme.

5.4 **Conclusion**

The work programme is for consideration and amendment by the scrutiny committee prior to publication on the council website.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 No assumptions are necessary.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 As this report is for information only an Integrated Impact Assessment is not necessary.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no specific financial implications arising as a result of this report.

9. **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no specific personnel implications arising as a result of this report.

10. **CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been included in this report.

11. **STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 The Local Government Act 2000.

Author: Mark Jacques, Scrutiny Officer jacqu@carphilly.gov.uk

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate

Services

Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer

Gareth Jenkins, Interim Director of Social Services

Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer

Lisa Lane, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer,
Legal Services

Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny
Committee

Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair of Education and Social Services
Scrutiny Committee

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work
Programme

Appendix 2 Cabinet Forward Work Programme

Appendix 3 Forward Work Programme Prioritisation Flowchart

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Forward Work Programme - Education and Social Services

Appendix 1

Date	Title	Key Issues	Author	Cabinet Member
28/11/23 17:30	Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Proposal – Ysgol Y Lawnt / Upper Rhymney Primary	For Scrutiny Members to consider the Consultation Report and endorse the recommendation to proceed to the publication of a Statutory Notice	West, Andrea;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
28/11/23 17:30	Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme - Proposal for the closure of Cwm Glas Infants School	For Scrutiny Members to consider the Consultation Report and endorse the recommendation to proceed to the publication of a Statutory Notice	West, Andrea;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
28/11/23 17:30	Directors Annual Report For Social Services		Jenkins, Gareth;	Cllr. Forehead, Elaine;
28/11/23 17:30	Information Item - 2023/24 Budget Monitoring Report (Month 5)		Jones, Mike;	Cllr. Forehead, Elaine;
28/11/23 17:30	Information Item - Budget Monitoring (Period 5)		Southcombe, Jane;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
28/11/23 17:30	Information Item - Caerphilly Cares Support Package for families eligible for free school meals		McMahon, Tina;	Cllr. Forehead, Elaine;
30/01/24 17:30	Caerphilly Cares/ Employee volunteering scheme update and initial 6 months review		McMahon, Tina;	Cllr. Forehead, Elaine;
30/01/24 17:30	Amalgamation report		West, Andrea;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
30/01/24 17:30	Key Stage 4 Outcomes - Summer 2023		Cole, Keri;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
30/01/24 17:30	Additional Support	Model of delegation Feedback from consultations	Ellis, Sarah;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
30/01/24 17:30	Information Item - Budget Monitoring Period 7		Southcombe, Jane;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
12/03/24 17:30	Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Proposal – Ysgol Y Lawnt / Upper Rhymney Primary	For Scrutiny Members to consider the Objection Report and endorse the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to the Planning Application Stage and submission of a Full Business Case to Welsh Government	West, Andrea;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
12/03/24 17:30	Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme - Proposal for the closure of Cwm Glas Infants School	For Scrutiny Members to consider the Objection Report and endorse the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to closing the school	West, Andrea;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
12/03/24 17:30	Winter Pressures		Street, Dave;	Cllr. Forehead, Carol;
12/03/24 17:30	Healthy schools on Vaping		Cole, Keri;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
12/03/24 17:30	Information Item - Welsh Education Scrutiny Plan (WESP) Action Plan		Mutch, Sarah;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
12/03/24 17:30	Information Item - Budget Monitoring (Period 9)		Southcombe, Jane;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
23/04/24 17:30	Schools Causing Concern		Cole, Keri;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
23/04/24 17:30	School Inspection Update		Cole, Keri;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
23/04/24 17:30	Safeguarding	Critical areas of work undertaken Impact of the work Next steps	Ellis, Sarah;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;

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Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 21st November 2023

Appendix 2

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
13/12/2023 13:00 p.m.	Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Proposal – Ysgol Y Lawnt / Upper Rhymney Primary	For Cabinet to consider the Consultation Report and approve the publication of a Statutory Notice.	Sue Richards/Andrea West	Cllr Carol Andrews
13/12/2023	Proposal for the closure of Cwm Glas Infants School	For Cabinet to consider the Consultation Report and approve the publication of a Statutory Notice.	Sue Richards/Andrea West	Cllr Carol Andrews
13/12/2023	Housing Revenue Account Charges – 2024/2025 (Rent increase report)	For Cabinet to agree the level of rent increase for council contract holders (tenants) effective from April 2024	Lesley Allen	Cllr Shayne Cook
13/12/2023 Page 13	Housing Offices Rationalisation Report	As part of a review of how we provide housing services to our customers and communities, and following a comprehensive customer consultation exercise, we are seeking approval to permanently close all existing Housing Offices, replacing them with a centralised Housing Office in Penallta House. This will facilitate service modernisation and improvements by reducing the need for customers to travel to a housing office to receive services, making housing officers more available to our customers through working agilely within our communities, thereby increasing opportunities for access and engagement and	Fiona Wilkins/Julie Reynolds/Nick Taylor-Williams	Cllr Shayne Cook

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 21st November 2023

Appendix 2

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
		building better relationships with our customers.		
13/12/2023	Greater Blackwood Masterplan	For Members to consider the Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan. The report will seek the views of members prior to its presentation to Cabinet, where Cabinet will be asked to endorse the Draft Masterplan as the basis for a public consultation exercise.	Rhian Kyte	Cllr James Pritchard
13/12/2023	New Listed Buildings at Risk Strategy	To seek Cabinet approval for the Authority's Buildings at Risk Register and Strategy which sets out a framework for the preservation and enhancement of listed buildings at risk over the period 2023-2028.	Rhian Kyte	Cllr Philippa Leonard
13/12/2023	Council Tax Base 2024/25	For Cabinet to agree the calculation of the Council Tax Base for 2024/25 financial year.	Sean O'Donnell	Cllr. Eluned Stenner
13/12/2023	Consultation on Proposals to Implement Council Tax Premiums on Long-term Empty Properties and Second Homes	To seek Cabinet approval to undertake a consultation process on the implementation of premiums	Sean O'Donnell	Cllr. Eluned Stenner
13/12/2023	Cwm lfor Solar Farm final business case	Consideration of updated financial information and options for Cwm lfor Solar Farm to inform whether to proceed with granting additional funding	Anna Lewis/Paul Cooke/Sue Richards	Cllr James Pritchard

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 21st November 2023

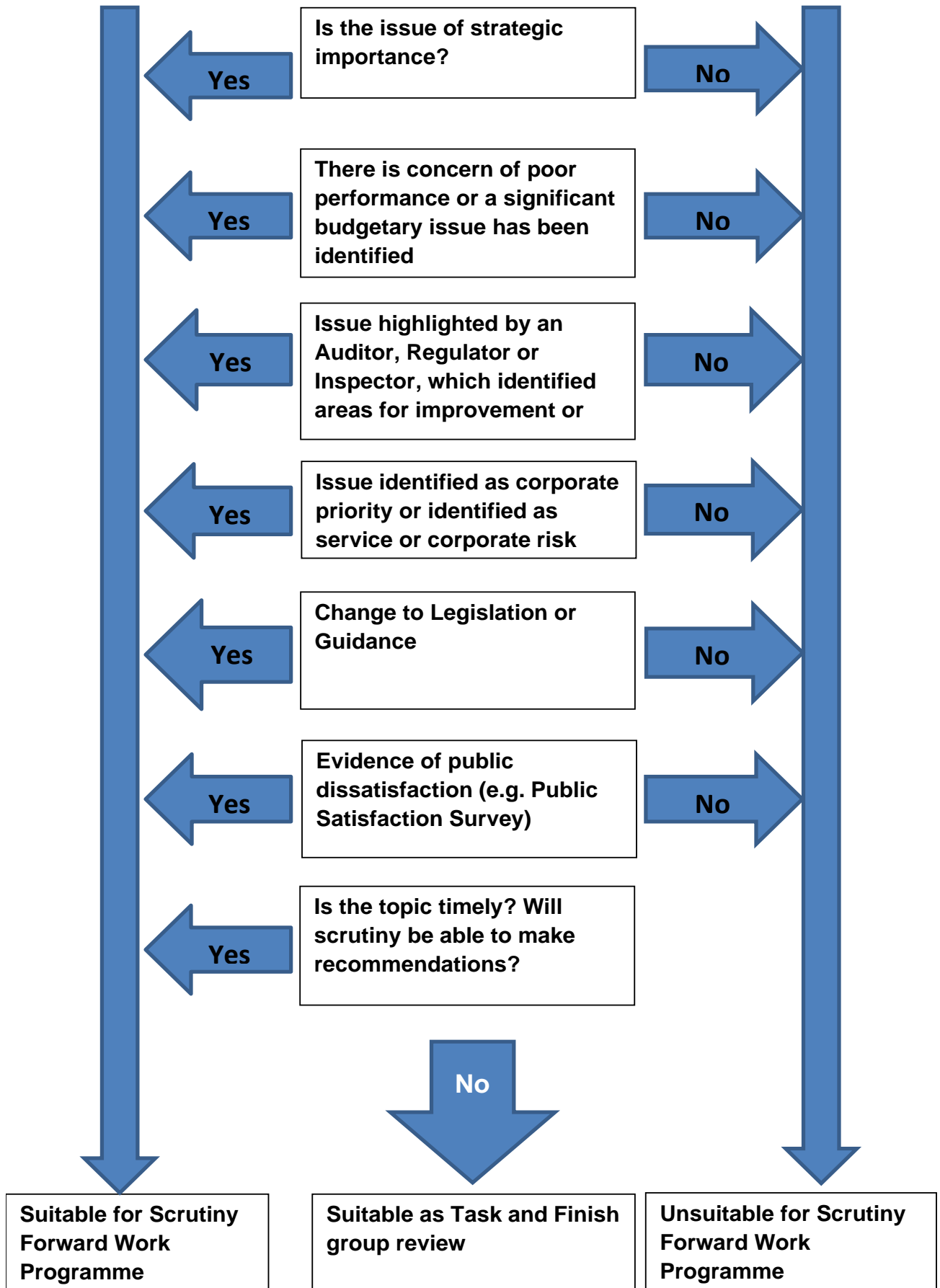
Appendix 2

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
		for the grid connection followed by progression of the final business case.		
17/01/2024 13:00 p.m.	Caerphilly Cares Support Package for families eligible for free school meals	Welsh Government withdrawal of free school meals for eligible families during the school holidays.	Tina McMahon	Cllr Carol Andrews
17/01/2024	Grass Cutting Regimes – 2024 Season	To consider options and proposals for grass cutting for the 2024 cutting season	Rob Hartshorn	Cllr Chris Morgan
17/01/2024	Draft Waste Strategy	To approve the draft waste strategy for public consultation.	Marcus Lloyd/Hayley Jones	Cllr Chris Morgan
17/01/2024	Support for pupils unable to attend school (formerly “Tuition” report).	To seek Cabinet approval for proposals for revising the model of support for pupils accessing tuition.	Keri Cole	Cllr Carol Andrews
17/01/2024	Draft Budget Proposals for 2024/25	To present Cabinet with details of the draft budget proposals for the 2024/25 financial year to allow for a period of consultation prior to a final decision by Council on 27 February 2024.	Christina Harray/ Stephen Harris	Cllr Eluned Stenner
21/02/2024 13:00 p.m.	Additional Support Delegation - Education	To seek agreement to proceed with the delegation of additional support to schools.	Keri Cole/Sarah Ellis	Cllr Carol Andrews

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 21st November 2023**Appendix 2**

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
21/02/2024	Community Benefits Guidance - for projects and developments with the potential for significant community impact	Setting out the council's advice on how community benefits contributions from projects and developments within the county borough might be agreed and distributed.	Sue Richards/Kath Peters	Cllr James Pritchard/Cllr Philippa Leonard
21/02/2024	Budget Proposals for 2024/25	To seek Cabinet endorsement of the 2024/25 budget proposals prior to final determination by Council on 27th February 2024.	Stephen Harris	Cllr Eluned Stenner

Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme Prioritisation



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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 28TH NOVEMBER 2023

SUBJECT: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING BAND B
PROGRAMME - CONSULTATION REPORT: YSGOL Y LAWNT &
UPPER RHYMNEY PRIMARY SCHOOL PROPOSAL

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE
SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Scrutiny Members in relation to the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B proposal in respect of the proposal outlined below:

- **Relocation of Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School**
The proposal seeks to create a sustainable school building with shared facilities, to accommodate Ysgol Y Lawnt, Upper Rhymney Primary School and Community use. The two schools will continue to provide both Welsh and English Medium Primary education and remain as separate entities, situated within the new dual purpose building.

1.2 Members are asked to consider the information contained in the Consultation Report and endorse the recommendations to Cabinet, via vote, to proceed to Statutory Notice.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B proposal for Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School went to formal consultation between the 28th September 2023 and the 9th November 2023.

2.2 To discharge the Council's duty under the School Organisation Code 2018, there is now a requirement for Cabinet members to give due regard to the content of the Consultation Report and determine whether or not it is appropriate to move to the next stage in the process.

2.3 A Consultation Report has been compiled and attached as an annex to this report. The Consultation Report summarises each of the issues raised by consultees. Any

emerging themes that have been raised through gathering the views of consultees during the consultation process have been responded to by means of clarification with supporting reasons.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1.1 Prior to a report being presented to Cabinet, Scrutiny Members are asked to: -

- a) Consider the information contained in the Consultation Report
- b) Endorse the recommendation to Cabinet, via vote, to proceed to Statutory Notice in relation to the proposal for Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure Members are updated on the progress of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B programme.
- 4.2 To seek Members endorsement on the recommendations to Cabinet, via vote, to proceed to the publication of a Statutory Notice in respect of the proposal.
- 4.3 Assist the Council in discharging its duties in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018.

5. THE REPORT

Band B

- 5.1 The Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme is a major, long term and strategic capital investment programme supporting large scale capital building projects across Wales with the aim of educational transformation through enhancing school buildings and developing them as hubs for learning to meet 21st Century Educational and Community needs.
- 5.2 The Programme focuses resources on the right school, in the right place, from early years through to post-16, with funding jointly provided by Welsh Government and Local Authorities.
- 5.3 The key aims of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B investment programme, outlined by Welsh Government, is:
 - *Investment Objective One* - to provide efficient and effective educational infrastructure that will meet current and future demand for places

To include:

- The right number of places for the delivery of Welsh and English medium education
- Addressing sufficiency issues where relevant
- Reducing in Backlog maintenance costs for schools
- Working towards Net Zero Public Sector Buildings in line with Welsh Government Carbon Reduction Commitments

- *Investment Objective Two* – to optimise the use of infrastructure and resources, to deliver public services for our communities.

This will include:

- Flexibility of our assets so that space and facilities available for our stakeholders are maximised.

5.4 The schemes identified for Phases 1 & 2 of the Band B programme were:

- A new replacement Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon on the former Cwmcarn High School site.
- An extension of Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre
- The amalgamation of Llancaeath Junior School and Llanfabon Infants School to create a new Primary School provision
- A new replacement Plasyfelin Primary School on the existing site
- The establishment of a Centre for Vulnerable Pupils (Pupil Referral Unit) on the former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive site

5.5 **Phase 3 – Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School**

5.5.1 The proposal seeks to create a sustainable school building with shared facilities, to accommodate Ysgol Y Lawnt, Upper Rhymney Primary School and Community use.

5.5.2 The two schools will continue to provide both Welsh and English Medium Primary education and remain as separate and segregated entities, situated within the new dual purpose building.

5.5.3 The new school build will be designed to maximise local infrastructure, sustainability and energy efficiencies in meeting the Welsh Government Net Zero Carbon School requirements.

5.5.4 Further to Cabinet approval gained on 28th June 2023, formal consultation for the proposal was carried out between the 28th September 2023 and the 9th November 2023.

5.5.5 A prescribed list of recipients as outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018 were written to and a consultation document was published in Welsh and English, both in hardcopy and electronically via the Authority's website based. Reasonable access to information was promoted from an Equalities perspective and other formats were available, including a child friendly version.

5.5.6 Members of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee who met on the 17th October 2023 in their capacity as a consultee under the School Organisation Code 2018, had the opportunity to consider the information contained in the consultation pack and provide their views which have been noted as part of the minutes of the meeting and summarised in the Consultation Report.

5.5.7 The consultation period ran for 42 days (with at least 20 of these being school days) to provide adequate time for response and conscientious consideration has been given to any responses received.

- 5.5.8 There were 19 responses received in respect of the proposal as outlined in 1.1. In addition, a number of pupils from both schools engaged in the consultation process through 'learner voice' sessions which have been reported on separately. These are broken down into more detail in the Consultation Report.
- 5.5.9 A Consultation Report has been compiled and has been attached as an annex to this report. The Consultation Report summarises each of the issues raised by consultees. Any emerging themes that have been raised through gathering the views of consultees during the consultation process have been responded to by means of clarification with supporting reasons. In addition, Estyn has provided a formal response in consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal which is included in the Consultation Report.
- 5.5.10 The Consultation Report will be published electronically on the Sustainable Communities for Learning pages on the Council's website.
- 5.5.11 Consultees who have indicated in their consultation response that they wish to be notified will be advised by letter or email of the availability of the Consultation Report along with the key stakeholders identified in the School Organisation Code 2018.

5.6 **Conclusion**

Pursuant to the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018, formal consultation has now concluded in relation to this proposal and this report has been compiled along with the Consultation Report to provide members with the necessary information to make an informed decision as to whether to progress the proposal to the next statutory stage which would entail permission to publish a Statutory Notice. The School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, provides that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so at this stage. An Objection Report will then be brought before Cabinet in addition to an updated Integrated Impact Assessment, and at this point, a final determination regarding the proposal will be requested.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report as it merely updates on the progress of individual projects.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 A full Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been completed in relation to the proposal to ensure compliance with the socio-economic duty, Sections 1 to 3 of Equality Act 2010.

[Link to IIA \(Cymraeg\)](#)

[Link to IIA \(English\)](#)

- 7.2 Subject to Cabinet approval to progress to Statutory Notice, the IIA will be further reviewed and updated after this stage. The purpose of this further assessment is to take account of any further information that has come forward through the consultation stages or otherwise, to further support conscientious consideration prior to final determination.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The estimated proposed project cost for the relocation of Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary, which forms the next phase of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B programme, totals £17,605,140.
- 8.2 Costings are based on Building Bulletin 98 and the Welsh Government 2024 Cost allowance. Subject to approval to proceed, further verification will be undertaken by the Council's Quantity Surveyor prior to submission to Welsh Government (WG).
- 8.3 The Authority's contribution of £6,052,119 to be set aside from the Authority's Place Shaping reserve.

Project Name:	LA Contribution	WG contribution	Total Funding
New School Build	£5,777,916 (35%)	£10,730,414 (65%)	£16,508,330
SRB (16 places)	£274,203 (25%)	£822,607 (75%)	£1,096,810
TOTAL PROJECT	£6,052,119	£11,553,021	£17,605,140

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This will be dependent on specific proposals and will be considered as part of the process.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The draft report was distributed as detailed below. All comments received have been reflected in this version of the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 School Organisation Code 2018 (Welsh Government)
School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

Author: Andrea West, Sustainable Communities for Learning Manager

Consultees: Christina HARRY, Chief Executive
Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair, Education & Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair Education & Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Sue Richards, Head of Transformation
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer

Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion & ALN
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager

Appendices:

[Link to Consultation Report – Ysgol Y Lawnt & Upper Rhymney Primary School \(Cymraeg\)](#)

[Link to Consultation Report – Ysgol Y Lawnt & Upper Rhymney Primary School \(English\)](#)

Sustainable Communities for Learning Consultation Report

Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhydney Primary School



Proposal : **To create a sustainable Net Zero Carbon school buildings with shared facilities to accommodate Ysgol Y Lawnt, Upper Rhydney Primary School and Community use.**

Formal Consultation Period : 28th September 2023 – 9th November 2023

This report is published in line with the requirements of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code 2018.



Cymunedau **Dysgu** Cynaliadwy 
Sustainable Communities for **Learning**



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Richard Edmunds

Corporate Director for
Education and Corporate
Services

FOREWORD

“Working together to deliver the best outcomes for all our children”

Caerphilly County Borough Council has embarked upon an exciting but challenging journey of improvement and change. We have bold ambitions to provide every learner with the best life chances and we are committed to doing this through the provision of high quality teaching, learning and leadership across our school settings as part of our Education Strategy – Pursuing Excellence Together.

We have focused on improving young people’s outcomes and this is still a priority area moving forward incorporating a holistic view of education. The Council has adopted ‘Improving education opportunities for all’ as the first of its Wellbeing Objectives and has committed to an ambitious Sustainable Communities for Learning investment programme.

In collaboration with Welsh Government, the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Programme is supporting investment in education within the County Borough. Our aspiration is the improvement of the condition of school buildings and maximising community usage.

Our current proposals support our commitment to increase school effectiveness and to narrow inequalities in achievement across groups; to understand the needs of more vulnerable children; promote the Welsh Language, and support those unable to access traditional learning pathways to ensure that all will benefit from the richness of learning and cultural opportunities. These principles help steer our decision making and prioritise projects.

As part of this proposal a consultation exercise has been carried out in line with the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018. All stakeholders have had the opportunity to participate and make comments.

This Consultation Report has been produced to summarise the emerging themes raised by consultees during the consultation period including Estyn’s feedback. It aims to provide a balanced, transparent document to support Cabinet in deciding whether to progress with the proposal, make changes or not to progress.

I hope you find this document informative as a reflection of the activities undertaken to date and an insight into the journey we are on, shaping delivery and placing learning provision at the heart of our communities.

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This document is available in Welsh and English. Information can also be made available in other formats, languages and in hard copy on request. Please contact us on 01443 864817 to arrange this.

Executive Summary

Schools in Wales need to be in good condition and suitable for the delivery of education. In some cases, schools can be modernised, repaired, refurbished, extended, or partially rebuilt to meet the standards needed for contemporary teaching and learning. However, some existing schools are no longer in the right place and in such cases, we might propose new schools or changes to existing schools.

Caerphilly County Borough Council aspires to continue to raise school standards and improve the quality of the learning environment to create fit-for-purpose 21st century schools and give every child in Caerphilly the best possible start in life.

For proposals relating to schools, the School Organisation Code 2018, provides clear statutory guidance as to the processes that need to be adhered to. Undertaking a consultation exercise is one of the initial stages of progressing any proposal and is subject to Welsh Government and Cabinet approval.

From the 28th September 2023 to the 9th November 2023 a consultation exercise was undertaken.

The purpose of the consultation was to gain views on the proposal to create a sustainable Net Zero Carbon school buildings with shared facilities, to accommodate Ysgol Y Lawnt, Upper Rhymney Primary School and Community use. The two schools will continue to provide both Welsh and English Medium Primary education and remain as separate entities, situated within the new dual purpose building.

This Consultation Report is the prescribed method as outlined by the School Organisation Code 2018 for reflection, review and assessment to provide Cabinet with the information to make an informed decision as to whether to proceed with the proposal to the next stage, amend the proposal taking into account further information that has come forward through the consultation process or to close this proposal with no further actions taken.

The Report is divided into several sections with the aim to:

- Outline the consultation processes undertaken
- Provide clarification in relation to the information provided and consultee engagement
- Summarise each of the issues raised by consultees
- Set out Estyn's response to the consultation in full
- Respond to issues raised by means of clarification, amendment to the proposal or rejection of the concerns, with supporting reasons

Statutory Obligations

This report is published in line with the requirements of the [School Standards and Organisation \(Wales\) Act 2013](#) and the [School Organisation Code 2018](#).

The Consultation report will be published on the Caerphilly Sustainable Communities for Learning website with hardcopies available on request. All information is published in Welsh and English. In addition, a child friendly summary has also been produced to ensure information is provided in an accessible format for any children and young people affected by the proposals.

Purpose of the Consultation Report

The publication of this Consultation Report discharges the Council of its duty under the School Organisation Code 2018.

The consultation period represented an opportunity for people to learn about the proposal, ask questions and make comments. Any negative responses made during the consultation period were not counted as objections to the proposal but as adverse comments.

Objections to a proposal can only be registered after the publication of a statutory notice.

The Consultation Report outlines the processes followed, provides clarity on the issues and comments received from consultees, ensures that the views of children and young people affected by the proposal are expressed and ultimately, provides Cabinet with the necessary information to take one of the following decisions:

- Proceed with the proposal
- Make changes to the proposal
- Not to proceed with the proposal


Full details of the decision making process and the stages of the proposal as outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018 have been published as part of the initial Consultation Document and is publicly available via the Council's website with hardcopies made available on request.

What is the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme?


The Sustainable Communities for Learning programme is a major, long-term, strategic capital investment programme. It is jointly funded by the Welsh Government and local authorities and aims to create a generation of 21st century schools in Wales.

We identified a need to invest in improving our school buildings, meeting the demand for education in both Welsh and English, reducing surplus places and developing shared and co-located facilities. Our aspiration is to provide efficient and effective educational infrastructure that will meet current and future demand for places and for all facilities that receive investment committed to optimising the use of the infrastructure and resources, making assets available for community use.

Band A funding in Caerphilly was used to deliver :

	Project Name	Band A Investment
Image of Islwyn High School	✓ Islwyn High School	£22.6m
	✓ Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Rhymini, Y Gwyndy Campus	£19.2m
	✓ Idris Davies School 3-18	£8m
	✓ Newbridge School extension	£2.6m
	✓ Blackwood Comprehensive improvements	£2m
	✓ Blackwood Comprehensive 3G pitch	£865k
	✓ Trinity Fields School improvements	£1.3m

Band B funding is being used to deliver :

 <p>Artist Impression of new YG Cwm Gwyddon</p>	Project Name Band B Investment
	✓ Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon
	✓ Trinity Fields School expansion
	✓ Pupil Referral Unit, Pontllanfraith
	✓ Llancaeath/Llanfabon School amalgamation
	✓ Plasyfelin Primary School 'Our 1 st Net Zero Carbon School'

Educational transformation remains a vital outcome of our investment in Band B of the Programme, with the priority areas being:

- Reduce the number of poor condition schools
- Ensure that we have the right size schools in the right location
- Provide enough places to deliver Welsh and English medium education
- Ensure the effective and efficient use of the educational estate

Further information is available on the [Sustainable Communities for Learning webpages](#)

PROPOSAL

What are we proposing to do?

We are proposing to:

○ Relocation of Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School

The proposal seeks to create a sustainable Net Zero Carbon school buildings with shared facilities, to accommodate Ysgol Y Lawnt, Upper Rhymney Primary School and Community use.

Artist Impression



teaching areas within the new building.

- The new building will incorporate primary school facilities as well as childcare and separate Special Resource Base provision for each school, one with 8 places for Welsh medium and the other providing 8 places for English medium.
- The proposed new building will include a shared bi-lingual reception area and flexible and adaptable communal facilities for example a Hall that can be subdivided and a separate kitchen servery so that provision is delivered in the appropriate language medium for each school. The configuration of these facilities will be designed in a manner enabling independent use by each school respectively if needed to minimise infringement on current activities or opened up for shared utilisation to provide wider community cohesion.
- The new primary school site will have improved outside learning space and facilities that will be segregated between each school to provide stimulating teaching and learning environments with 21st Century facilities centred on the learning, self-esteem and well-being of all pupils.
- The proposed project will take into account the desire to encourage and facilitate community use of the entire building, in partnership with both Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School. The design will seek to include measures to enable safe 'zoning' which can be utilised by the wider community. It should be noted that any existing community provision at the existing schools would be encouraged to relocate to the new site which will have upgraded facilities.

Each school will retain their existing Governing Body arrangements, however, a joint committee will be established consisting of representatives from both schools to establish terms and conditions about the working mechanisms relating to maintenance, access and general policies relating the site as a whole.

Building on the Net Zero Carbon mandate our proposal is framed to demonstrate innovative and collaborative design, encompassing the built environment and the surrounding landscape in a way that enriches pupils' daily life.

Through developing a sustainable, flexible site, this would enable:

- Space maximisation for reconfiguration of site
- Shared communal facilities including adaptable hall, community room, kitchen and storage capable of delivering the universal free school meals offer
- A longer elemental lifespan
- Lower whole life cost
- Improved value for money

For reference, a similar approach has been taken by Cardiff Council as part of their Gabalfa Primary School and Ysgol Gymraeg Glan Ceubal project, whereby both schools are co-located in a building with shared communal facilities and continue to operate successfully as separate entities delivering Welsh and English education.

What is driving this proposal?

Proposals have been prioritised based on a number of factors including building condition, pupil projection and local and national drivers, however, the delivery of the curriculum and the Educational agenda remains at the core.

Options Appraisal

The planning and development of effective school organisation proposals is crucial to the Welsh Government's goal of transforming education in Wales and providing better educational outcomes with a commitment to increase school effectiveness, and narrow inequalities in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged areas, groups and individuals.

The Welsh Government's Business Case Guidance in relation to utilisation of the Options Framework approach has been followed to identify the widest possible number of feasible options, focusing on the following key dimensions: scope, service solution, service delivery, implementation and funding.

An options appraisal provides the opportunity to help councils make an informed and evidence based decision on how to deliver services. It does this by considering the relative advantages and disadvantages of a number of different delivery model options (including the current way in which the service is delivered).

The methodology helps decision makers to consider the:

- Desirability - the degree to which each option meets the strategic objectives and priorities of stakeholders
- Viability - the degree to which each option is financially viable and sustainable
- Feasibility - the degree to which each option can be implemented

As part of outlining the current proposal, an options appraisal was undertaken.

The options appraisal stage allowed for a number of different delivery model options to be explored and evaluated against a set of agreed criteria, leading to the selection of the preferred option.

Table 1: Options Appraisal Longlist	
Option	Longlist Options: Description
Option 1	Do Nothing : No change to existing schools
Option 2	Do Minimum: Internal refurbishments of both school sites
Option 3a	Do Intermediate: Develop on existing Ysgol Y Lawnt site only
Option 3b	Do Intermediate Develop on existing Upper Rhymney School site only
Option 3c	Do Intermediate Relocation of one/both schools into alternative existing school stock (if available)
Option 4	Do Major: Build two new Net Zero Carbon school buildings to accommodate each school respectively on the new site

Option 5	<p>Do Maximum Build a single new Net Zero Carbon school building, with shared communal facilities, accommodating both schools on the new site</p>
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Each option was evaluated against the investment objectives outlined in the Consultation Document and the extent to which it met the Critical Success Factors. This stage was an important part of the process, to raise important questions at an early stage and assist in developing proposals.

This resulted in options either being discounted, carried forward for further consideration in the short list with an eventual option identified as a preferred way forward. It is the option identified as the preferred way forward upon which the consultation exercise was based as all other options have been discounted at this point.

The process utilised was outlined in detail in the Consultation Document and resulted in

Option 5 being identified as the preferred option, namely, **Build a single new Net Zero Carbon school buildings, with shared communal facilities, accommodating both schools on the new site.**

Benefits and Disbenefits

There are common challenges faced by all Local Authorities when adopting new proposals. The vast majority of Council policies are delivered through projects and programmes of various forms. It is therefore vital that projects are delivered successfully in order to realise their intended benefits for citizens.

Evidence shows that the best way to ensure successful delivery is by setting up projects correctly in the first place. The most common causes of failure, among others are a lack of clear objectives, insufficient resources and over-ambitious cost and schedule that impact on the level and amount of benefit that can be realised and can be avoided if tackled in a project's early stages.

As part of the development of the proposal, a number of benefits and disbenefits were identified as outlined in the Consultation Document. The consultation process was an opportunity to consult with relevant stakeholders to understand what they see as positive outcomes and what negative consequences may be delivered.

The Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities. An Integrated Impact Assessment was carried out to initiate discussion and invite comments as to whether the principles for the proposal are supported.

All comments have been recorded and Cabinet members will be provided with copies of all the responses received within the consultation period and in their original format as part of the decision making process.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

Consultation Process

The consultation process has followed the Welsh Government guidelines as set out in the School Organisation Code 2018.

Stakeholder Engagement

Through [TeamCaerphilly - Better Together](#), the Council is committed to ensuring high quality, citizen focused services for the communities that comprise our county borough. In future-proofing public services, we recognise the need to ensure effective engagement which is central to our decision making - [Read more about our approach to Consultation and Engagement here](#)

For this proposal, our consultation process must follow the Welsh Government Statutory guidance as set out in the School Organisation Code 2018.

The following consultees were advised of our proposals by letter or email:

Table 2: Consultee List	
Pupils and Pupil Councils*	Welsh Ministers
Parents, prospective parents, guardians and carers*	Assembly Members and Members of Parliament representing the area served *
Headteacher, Staff and Governing bodies*	Local CCBC Members
Directors of Education for Neighbouring Authorities	Local Town and Community Councils
Teaching and Support Staff Associations	Estyn
Parent Network	Welsh Education Forum
Diocesan Directors / Boards of Education	South East Wales Consortium (EAS)
Gwent and South Wales Police and Crime Commissioners	South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA)
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership	Mudiad Meithrin, Menter Iaith and voluntary nursery providers

**of schools directly or likely to be affected by the proposal only*

In addition to advising those we were obliged to under the stakeholder criteria, the following were also contacted and advised of our proposals in writing:

- All Headteachers in the Borough
- Welsh Language Commissioner

Consultation Information

The School Organisation Code 2018 states that when undertaking a consultation process in connection with a school proposal, the Council must publish information to enable transparent, balanced and open decision making.

The consultation document must be published on a school day and consultees must be given at least 42 days to respond to the document, with at least 20 of these being school days as defined by Section 579 of the Education Act 1996. The consultation period opened on Thursday 28th September 2023 (a school day) and concluded at midnight on Thursday 9th November 2023.

As part of this proposal, the following documentation was produced:

- Consultation Notification Letter
- Consultation Document
- Child Friendly Summary Presentation
- Consultation Response Form
- Integrated Impact Assessment

All documentation was published in Welsh and English, complying with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards. Information was also available in other languages and formats on request, however, no such requests were received as part of this process.

Hardcopies of the documentation were issued to the schools directly affected by the proposal including the child friendly summary for discussion with the pupils.

In addition to notifying the consultees in writing of the proposal, distribution of information was supported via the school text messaging service direct to parents and staff.

A child friendly consultation summary was also produced to support the consultation process with pupils of the affected schools to present information in a manner relevant to their likely understanding, allowing them to participate in the consultation process and reach an informed opinion. In addition to this documentation, local teaching staff provided assistance to children and young people who wished to submit a consultation response in their preferred format and language.

The Council's Social media channels were also utilised.

Response Methods

As outlined in the Consultation Document, anyone wishing to comment in relation to the proposal could do so in writing by:

- Completing the online response form on the Council's website
- Completing a response pro forma and posting it to the Sustainable Communities for Learning Team at Caerphilly
- Emailing comments to the Sustainable Communities for Learning Team at Caerphilly

Pupils of the schools directly affected by the proposal were also given the opportunity to engage in the process through focused 'Pupil Voice' sessions.

The response forms were designed in such a way as to capture the relevant information required to discharge the Council's obligations required under the School Organisation Code for undertaking a consultation linked to the regulated alteration of a maintained school.

This consultation was undertaken to capture the views of consultees in relation to the proposal. These views have been incorporated into this document, which will be published and considered

by Cabinet when determining whether to proceed to Statutory notice stage. A separate Planning Application Process will be undertaken in respect of this proposal. The separate statutory processes were outlined in the consultation document and any adverse comments received as part of this process have been recorded as such.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Consultation Responses

Overall a total of 19 responses were received during the consultation process.

Please note: The figure above and the data reported on for Questions 1 to 7 does not include the responses received by Estyn, Scrutiny or captured as part of any pupil engagement sessions. These are outlined in more detail later in this document.

Of the prescribed methods for providing a response during the consultation period:

- 18 responses received via Online Survey
- 1 responses received via email
- 0 responses received via post

1 response of the 19 (5%) was returned in the medium of Welsh.

The Sustainable Communities for Learning Team received no requests for the documentation to be provided in any additional format or languages to those already available.

QUESTION 1

The consultees were provided an overview of the investment objectives for the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and asked to confirm the proposal they were responding to as part of the process.

QUESTION 2

The consultees were asked to identify a category that best described them in relation to the proposal for the school affected. The options provided were selected to demonstrate that the key consultee groups as outlined in the School Organisation Code had been engaged with. These included, Parent, Staff Member, School Governor, Elected Member, Local Resident, Group and Other.

Of those who responded, the following categories were selected:

32% Parents	11% Staff Members	5% Elected Members	32% Local Resident	21% Other
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For those selecting 'other', the opportunity was given to elaborate further as they felt appropriate.

QUESTIONS 3 TO 7

As part of the consultation process, consultees were asked to provide basic contact information, including their name, address and email. This psychographic data was collected in order to help

paint a picture of the consultee and enable the Sustainable Communities for Learning team to understand trends in response data and response groupings that would assist in compiling this Consultation Report.

As information can be collected for many purposes, the Caerphilly County Borough Council's privacy notice for consultations/surveys was referenced, which outlined the purpose and legal basis for collecting the information, data usage and data retention periods.

For the purposes of this Consultation Report, Cabinet will be provided with a separate digest of all the consultation comments received. Please note that comments that are considered to be offensive or compromise anonymity have been edited or removed.

QUESTION 8

As part of our duty under the School Organisation Code 2018, consultees must be given the option to request notification as to the publication of this Consultation Report. Contact information has been collected to this end and the preferred method for communication will be notification via email if this information has been made available by the respondent.



17 out of the 21 respondents have requested notification. These individuals have been added to the notification list and will be contacted concurrently with stakeholders when this document is made publicly available through the Council's website. Hardcopies of the documentation will be made available on request.

QUESTION 9

Consultees were asked to indicate "To what extent do you agree with the following statements?" Of those who responded:

- 1) Ysgol Y Lawnt would benefit from a new school & facilities.
13 agreed, 3 disagreed, 2 did not feel strongly either way
- 2) Upper Rhymney Primary School would benefit from a new school & facilities.
13 agreed, 3 disagreed, 2 did not feel strongly either way

QUESTION 10

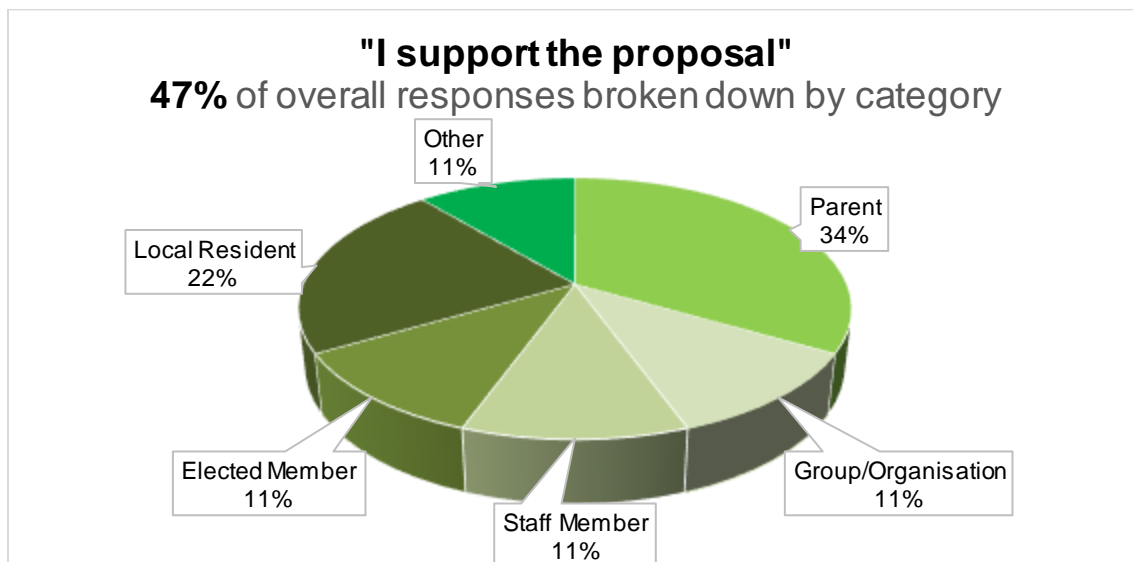
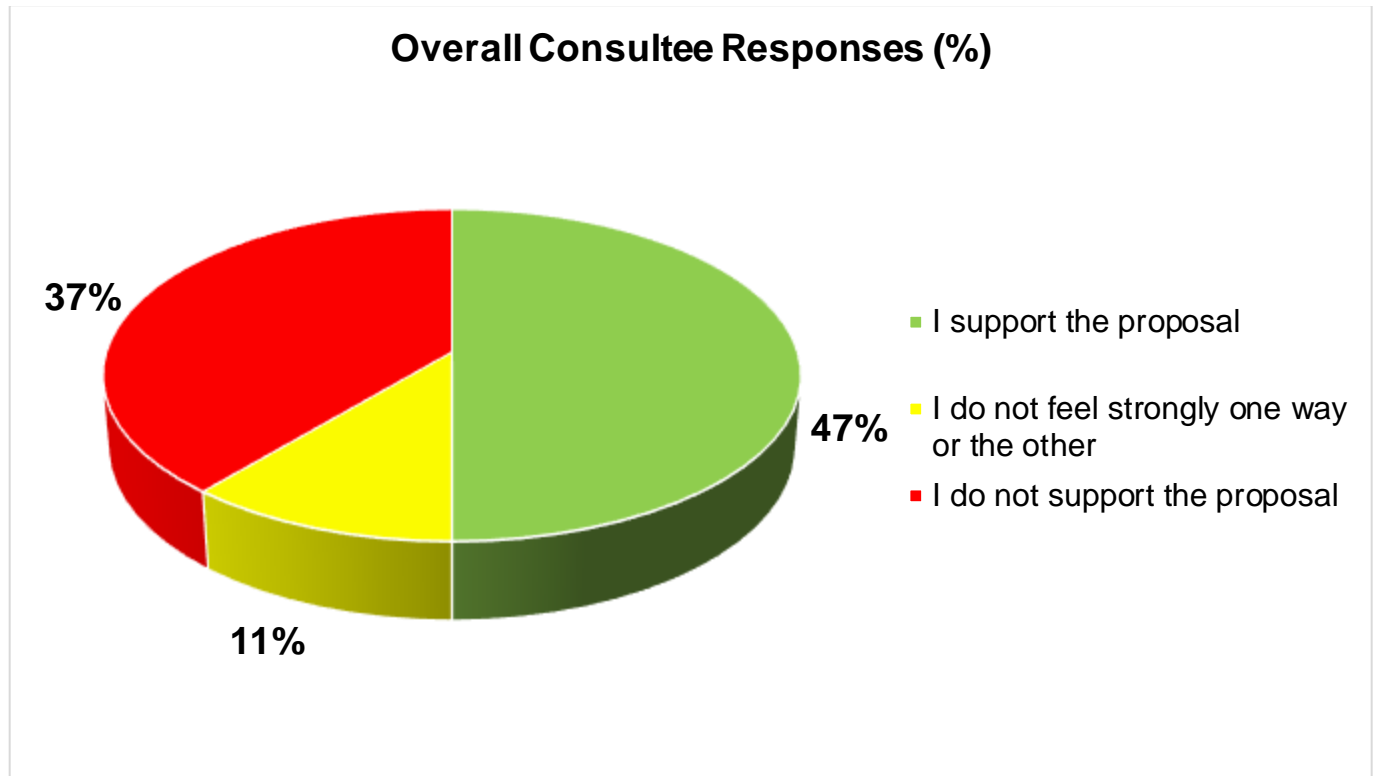
Consultees can submit their views either in favour of or against the proposals.

Consultees were asked to indicate which of the following statements most accurately reflected their views about the proposal. Consultees were reminded to read the consultation documentation prior to providing any responses during this consultation exercise and that unfavourable comments made during the consultation period will not be treated as objections at this stage.

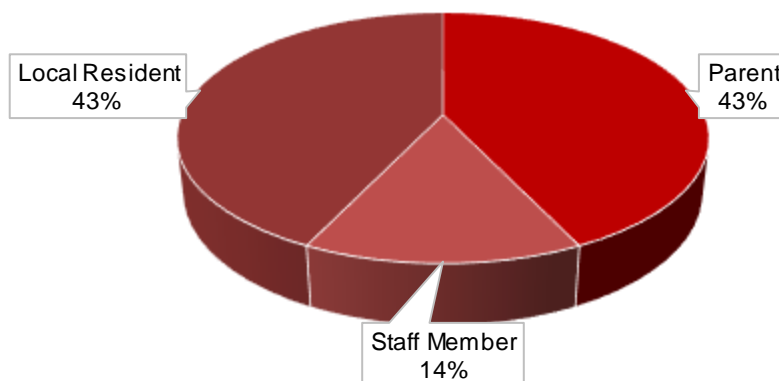
The options available were:

- I support the proposal
- I do not feel strongly one way or the other
- I do not support the proposal

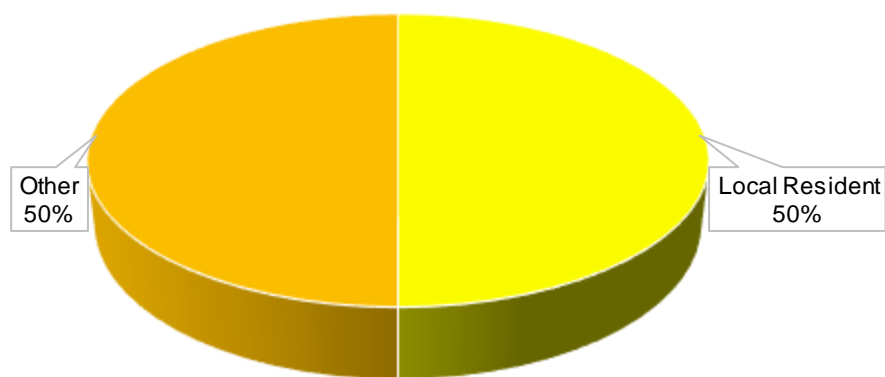
Of the 19 responses returned, 9 support the proposal, 7 do not support it, 2 either didn't feel strongly either way or failed to select an option.



"I do not support the proposal"
37% of overall responses broken down by category



"I do not feel strongly one way or the other"
11% of overall responses broken down by category



It is prudent to bring to the attention of readers that the commentary provided as part of Questions 11 to 13 may offer additional insight into the views of the consultees and that the response provided to Question 10 should not be considered in isolation, for example where there are duplicate responses or multiple responses from a single household.

QUESTIONS 11 to 13

This was a free text box, enabling consultees to provide additional comments as to why they supported or did not support the proposal as outlined in the Consultation Document, or to suggest changes or alternative options that could improve the proposal.

All comments received have been read and analysed.

General themes that emerged from the consultation, including those raised at Scrutiny Committee:

- Proposed Location
- School Design
- Impact on Welsh Language
- Funding
- Project Timelines

These themes are outlined in more detail in the section on 'Consultation Clarification'.

QUESTIONS 14 to 19

In line with the Caerphilly County Borough Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020 and the Consultation and Monitoring Guidance 2016 document, a reduced version of the Equalities and Monitoring questionnaire was included as part of the consultation response to support effective planning and to ensure that a representative sample was achieved to identify any equality issues.

From the responses received, of those that completed the Equalities monitoring section:

I am ...			
Female	14	Prefer to self describe	0
Male	2	Prefer not to say	3

Age			
Under 16	0	40-65	7
16-25	2	Over 65	1
26-39	6	Prefer not to say	3

Disability			
Yes	3	No	12
Prefer not to say	4		

Preferred Language			
English	14	Other	0
Welsh	2	Prefer not to say	3

QUESTIONS 20 to 21

We have to make sure that the Welsh Language is treated in the same way as the English language.

Respondents were given the opportunity to make suggestions on how we can increase opportunities for people to use or access services in Welsh. In addition, respondents were able to comment on how the proposal could be changed to have (more of) a positive impact on the Welsh language.

Responses included:

- Provision of additional funding to Welsh Schools only
- Amend the proposal to a standalone Welsh Language School only

- Welsh Language Courses
- Working with Welsh Language Organisations

QUESTION 22

In relation to equalities implications that respondents highlighted, 1 respondent indicated that their decision was influenced based on a family member, but none indicated implications as per the list outlined in the consultation response form.

Scrutiny Response

The Council's Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee is a consultee for any policy or service developments in relation to Education within the Borough.

A Multi-Locational meeting (Penallta House & MS Teams) took place on Tuesday 17th October 2023 at 5.30pm.

As part of this meeting, the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Programme and consultation in respect of the proposal for Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School was discussed as agenda item 7.

All consultation documentation was made available to members as part of the agenda reports pack and officers linked to the proposal were available to take questions. Any queries raised have been acknowledged and included as part of the themes analysis.

A recording of the session is available to view:

[Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting](#)

Estyn's Response

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code 2018, the Council, as the proposers, is required to send a notification with regards to the consultation to Estyn.

Estyn is the education and training inspectorate for Wales and their vision is to improve the quality of education and training and outcomes for all learners in Wales. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal. The full response from Estyn is included as Annex 2 at the end of this document. However, in summary:

“Estyn considers that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision in the area.”

The Council acknowledges Estyn's response.



LEARNER VOICE

Young people have a right to act to express their views in all matters affecting them and for their views to be heard and given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

School Council / Pupil Engagement

The Council acknowledged that the voice of young people is about involving them as active participants in the development, delivery, management and improvement of their educational and student experience and needs to be at the heart of planning, provision and evaluation.

The Sustainable Communities for Learning Team in Caerphilly ensure that when bringing forward any proposal, suitable arrangements are made to consult and involve pupils throughout the process with the support of the local teaching teams.

A child friendly consultation summary was produced to support the consultation process with pupils to present information in a manner relevant to their likely understanding, allowing them to participate in the consultation process and reach an informed opinion.

➤ Schools directly affected by the proposal

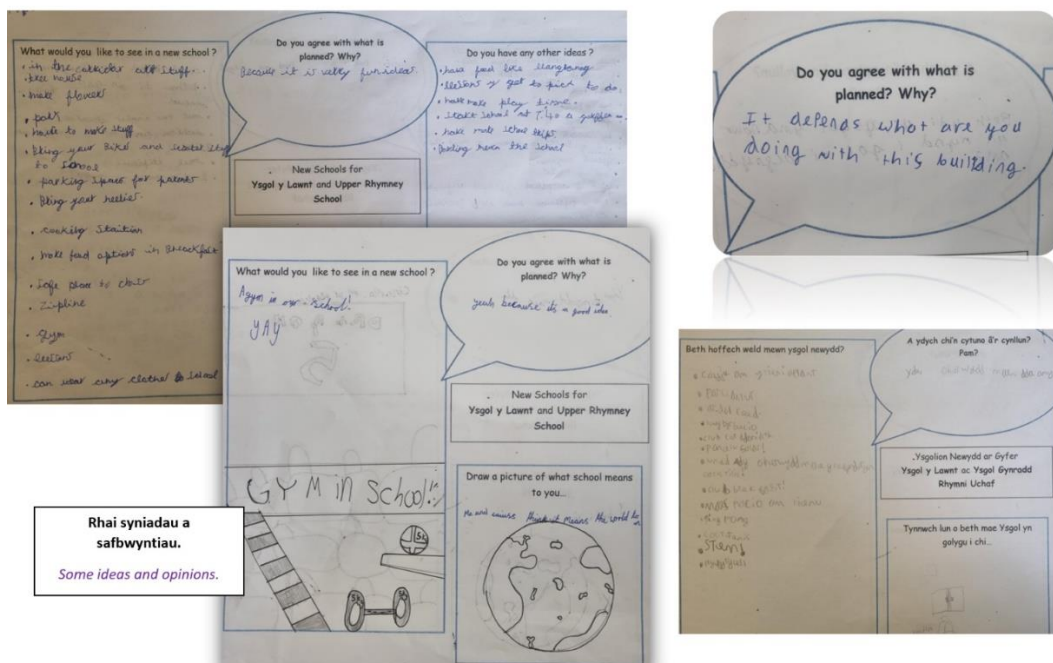
The proposal directly impacts on pupils at Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School. The School Councils, Eco Councils and wider pupil cohorts were encouraged to participate in the consultation process through a series of supported interactive sessions.

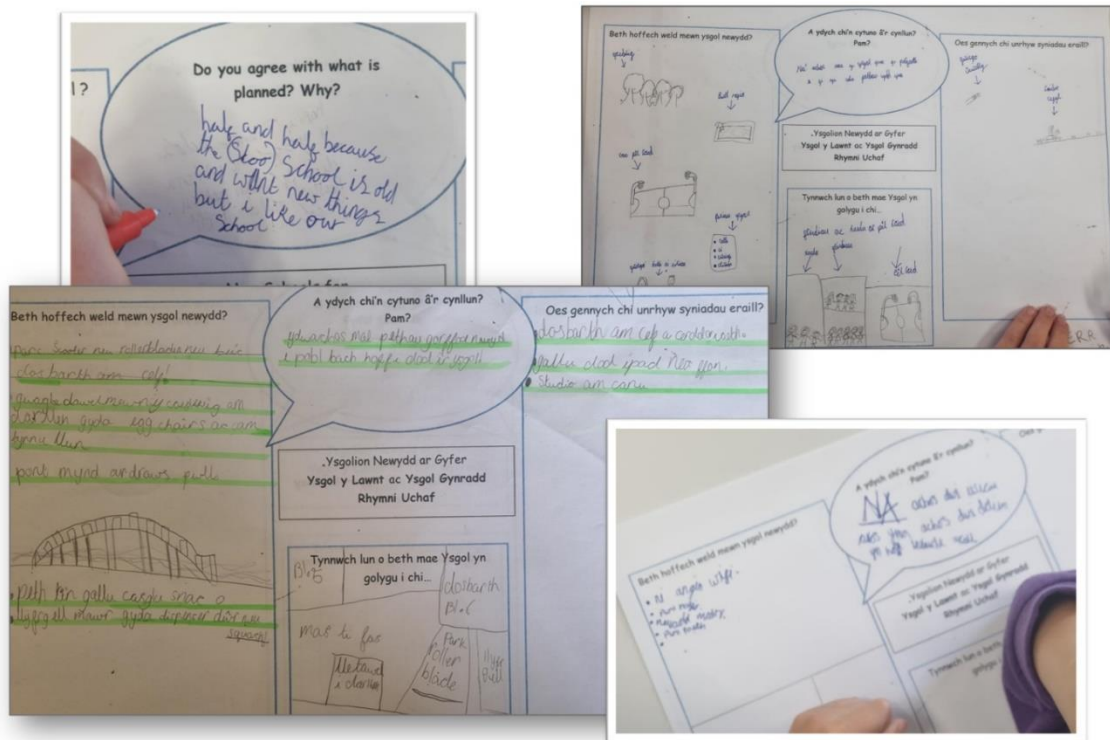
The pupils were asked:

- Do they agree with what we are looking to do?
- Did they have any ideas of what they would want in a new school?
- Did they have any other ideas they'd like us to think about?

A selection of their responses is shown below:

Ysgol Y Lawnt:





Images from a Consultation Sessions undertaken with pupils at Ysgol Y Lawnt

Upper Rhymney Primary School:

"We like the proposal; we want to keep our teachers; We like the new location; We would be happy to work with children from another school; I think the new school looks spacious; its only down the road; it would be nice as all of us will be in one building and not separate from infants" - Student Council



Images from a Consultation Sessions undertaken with Student Council at Upper Rhydney Primary School

Other Schools identified as being affected

The Head Teachers of other local schools in the area were contacted during the consultation period whereby the schools were invited to provide their responses as part of the consultation process. Where information has been submitted, responses are included as part of the separate annex available to Cabinet.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Consultation Clarification

When analysing all consultation response comments received as part of the consultation period, a number of emerging themes became evident.

Table 3: Summary of Response Themes		
Theme	Overview	Number of Mentions
Proposed Location	Travel Distance	4
	Site Safety & Security	2
	Site Access & Traffic	4
School Design	Concept Artwork	3
	Facilities	4
	Site Orientation	1
Impact on Welsh Language	Welsh and English Schools (precedents)	2
	Independent School Functions	3
	Site Operations	1
	Community Cohesion	1
Funding	School Funding Formula	2
	Project Funding and Cost	1
Project Timelines	Process Timeline	1
	Proposed Occupation Date	1

To assist Cabinet in the decision making process, the following information is provided by Council Officers involved in the formulation of the proposal by means of response for clarification with supporting reasons.

Proposed Location

- Travel Distance

A selection of consultees raised concerns with regards to the impact of the new location on those that currently walk to school, in addition, a concern was noted regarding taking Ysgol Y Lawnt out of the centre of Rhymney Town and its perceived catchment area. The distance between both schools and the proposed new build site is less than 1 mile at its maximum. As outlined in the Consultation Document, it is anticipated that the likely effect of different travelling arrangements as a result of the proposal will be minimal, although it is acknowledged that some pupils may find themselves living closer to the new site and conversely others finding themselves further away although the difference between the sites is minimal.

It should be noted that the catchment areas of both schools is wider than just the Rhymney Town area, especially in reference to Ysgol Y Lawnt, which accommodates catchment pupils from as South as New Tredegar to the most Northern Boarder of the Authority. As such Caerphilly complies with the requirements of the Learner Travel Measure (Wales) 2008 through providing transport for pupils of statutory school age in accordance with our individual transport policy. Caerphilly's transport policy is more generous than the legislative requirement by providing transport to the 'relevant' school (i.e. catchment or nearest school) of more than a distance of 1.5 miles primary. This is applicable for both Welsh and English medium schools.

➤ Site Safety & Security

Consultees raised concerns regarding site security e.g. fencing, allotment and forest areas.

For clarity, whilst no formal design process has been undertaken to date, as a minimum, a thorough risk assessment of the school site, taking account of site security, any public rights of way, traffic management arrangements and the condition of all buildings will assist the Local Authority and Schools to make appropriate arrangements to manage those risks appropriately and ensure relevant external and internal measures are put into place, for example perimeter fencing, locking mechanisms, security lighting, signing in processes etc.

When in operation, it is the responsibility of the headteacher and governing body to ensure that the school site and its building(s) are safe. These arrangements will vary from school to school depending on the nature of the site and the age of the pupils on roll.

➤ Site Access & Traffic

A handful of consultees expressed concerns around the site location, road network and potential impact on traffic management and flow in the proposed area. It is always the intention of the Council to provide a system of transport that seeks to ensure pupils can safely and comfortably access their education.

A number of 'Safe Travel' routes, as far as reasonably practicable, are already established such as lighting and designated footpaths. During an initial site visit by the Sustainable Communities for Learning team, it has been identified that the access road, parking and designated bus/taxi turning points could potentially be improved, especially for Ysgol Y Lawnt, as part of the new site design process to alleviate any local traffic concerns and this will be taken into consideration at the relevant stages as the proposal progresses.

School Design

➤ Concept Artwork

As part of the consultation responses, queries were raised in relation to the configuration and layout of the school as shown in the diagrams provided in the Consultation Document. It should be emphasised that the images were only concept designs and no formal design process has been undertaken as the consultation process is intended to gain the views of stakeholders which will inform the proposal and any subsequent plans moving forward.

➤ Facilities

Queries were raised in relation to the type of facilities that would be available from the new site, for example, childcare, wraparound services and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision. As part of the consultation process, the Council indicated an intention to utilise the identified site to provide the following facilities:

- ❖ Primary school facilities to accommodate both Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School
- ❖ Childcare
- ❖ Special Resource Base provision for each school, one with 8 places for Welsh medium and the other providing 8 places for English medium.
- ❖ Safe 'zoning' which can be utilised by the wider community.

It should once again be noted that there are no formal designs in place and how these can be delivered is still subject to review, based on stakeholder feedback.

➤ Site Orientation

A selection of consultees raised concerns regarding the layout and orientation of the school and how access to external amenities would be fairly distributed between both schools, in addition there were also comments regarding the potential for 2 individual school buildings on the site. Whilst no formal designs have been developed and as outlined above, the images used in the Consultation Document were conceptual artwork only at this stage, it is the intention of the Council to ensure that any development would ensure that both schools would benefit from not only an aesthetic and practical perspective but also from the benefits which providing a Net Zero build can bring to the environment and energy costings.

Impact on Welsh Language

➤ Welsh and English Schools (precedents)

Concerns were raised by consultees and noted during the Scrutiny Committee meeting regarding the perceived impact on the Welsh Language and the potential for dilution resulting from siting a Welsh Medium and English Medium School together. As outlined in the Consultation Document and associated Integrated Impact Assessment, consideration has been made to potential concerns where the Welsh speaking community may utilise English when they all come together.

- 1) It must be emphasised that both schools would remain independent entities and each school would occupy their own separate teaching areas within the new building. This will also extend to the outside space and both sets of pupils would have their own independent access points.

- 2) Any proposed shared use facilities are still subject to design, and the Council will work closely with both schools to develop a fit for purpose approach which delivers a facility that is functional for curriculum delivery and wider community use. For example, as a result of a delegation of School representatives, Members and Officers visiting Gabalfa Primary School and Ysgol Gymraeg Glan Ceubal in Cardiff, which is operating in a similar manner to that currently being proposed, the schools were clearly established and operating independently and there was no negative impact on the use of language in either school. It was acknowledged through discussions with both Head Teachers in Cardiff, that there were lessons to be learned from a layout perspective, for example how the shared reception point for visitors had two independent receptionists in operation, one for the Welsh Medium School and one for the English Medium School and this has been noted by Officers.
- 3) In addition to the reference site in Cardiff mentioned in the Consultation Document, there is already existing precedent within Caerphilly whereby Ysgol Bro Allta and Ystrad Mynach Primary, one being Welsh medium, the other English medium, successfully operate from a share site, as highlighted in the Scrutiny Committee meeting.
- 4) As identified as part of the Integrated Impact Assessment undertaken for the proposal, which was published as part of the Consultation pack, the Council intends to mitigate any negative impact on the Welsh Language as far as reasonably possible through utilising this site as an archetype in fully exploiting the opportunity to make Upper Rhymney Primary School and exemplar school whereby it will use the Welsh language more, via the Cymraeg i Blant scheme, engagement in Welsh for the Family course, potential twinning of the schools whereby cultures of the schools can be shared and the possibility of a Welsh Language mentoring scheme whereby Upper Rhymney Primary School Pupils are mentored for Welsh lessons by their peers from Ysgol Y Lawnt. Consideration will also be given to setting targets in line with the Welsh Language Education: White Paper to enhance Welsh language provision in maintained schools that are not already designated Welsh-medium schools. Further discussions and support with both schools will be undertaken as the proposal progresses to investigate the options available to support this aspiration.

➤ Independent School Functions

Comments were received regarding the importance of establishing sufficient practical arrangements to enable each school to operate independently and in their language medium of choice. Once again, it must be emphasised that both schools would remain independent entities and each school would occupy their own separate teaching areas within the new building. This will also extend to the outside space and both sets of pupils would have their own independent access points.

The new building will incorporate both primary schools with associated facilities as well as childcare and separate Special Resource Base which provides provision for pupils with additional learning needs in each school, one with 8 places for Welsh medium and the other providing 8 places for English medium.

➤ Site Operations

Further to the comments received relating to independent school functions, observations were also received in relation to how a joint site would operate and the need for parity of decision making between both schools. Each school will retain their existing Head Teacher and Governing Body arrangements, however, a joint committee will be established consisting of representatives from both schools to establish terms and conditions about the working mechanisms relating to maintenance, access and general policies relating the site as a whole.

➤ Community Cohesion

Views were received relating to the impact on the Welsh Language through co-location and how this could be promoted in the wider community. As part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, a key Investment Objective is to optimise the use of infrastructure and resources, and to ensure flexibility of our assets so that space and facilities available for our stakeholders are maximised.

Whilst no final designs have been determined, there is a desire to encourage and facilitate community use of the asset in a safe, manageable way, which are intended to provide opportunities for pupils, families and the wider community for educational, recreational and leisure activities. Any design / configuration of shared communal facilities will ensure that any infringement on the Welsh Language as a result of these activities can be limited as required and therefore support each school to deliver activities either independently or concurrently if required and through each schools preferred language choice. It is anticipated that through both schools occupying the same site, it will also enable greater exposure and opportunity to utilise the Welsh Language through supporting the aspirations of the Welsh Language Education White Paper in relation to Upper Rhymney Primary School.

Subject to approval from Cabinet and Welsh Government to proceed, further engagement with relevant stakeholders will be undertaken to shape the new build and its facilities at the appropriate planning stage.

Funding

➤ School Funding Formula

A scrutiny member queried the funding arrangements for both schools. The Local Authority uses a funding formula to determine how much money should be allocated to each school. As part of this proposal, the current allocation to each school would not be changed as to do so requires Cabinet approval which falls outside of the scope of this consultation process.

In addition, as part of the consultation responses a query was raised with regards to any savings achieved as a result of the proposal. As the current proposal is centered around a shared use Net Zero Carbon building, each school would directly benefit from any savings on energy bills compared to their current sites as a result.

➤ Project Funding and Cost

To provide additional clarity around the funding mechanisms for the proposal. Subject to Cabinet approval, the proposal will be funded as part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. This is a jointly funded initiative between the Local Authority and Welsh Government. As with all schemes identified under this programme, there is a general intervention rate of 65% Welsh Government and 35% Local Authority, where exceptions do not apply. The estimated proposed project cost for the relocation of Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary, totals circa £17.6 million. Costings are based on Building Bulletin 98 and the

Welsh Government 2024 Cost allowance. Subject to approval to proceed, further verification will need to be undertaken by the Council's Quantity Surveyor prior to submission of the final cost to Welsh Government. The Authority's contribution will be set aside from the Authority's Place Shaping reserve as agreed in principle by Cabinet during their meeting on the 28th June 2023, when they agreed to proceed to consultation.

Project Timelines

Both Estyn and Scrutiny queried the timeline for the process and the anticipated completion date.

➤ Process Timeline

Subject to approval at each stage, the process is outlined as follows:

Table 4: Process Timeline (subject to approval to progress at each stage)	
Consultation Ends	Thursday 9 th November 2023
Scrutiny (to consider Consultation Report & endorse publication of Statutory Notice)	Tuesday 28 th November 2023
Cabinet (to consider Consultation Report & agree publication of Statutory Notice)	Wednesday 13 th December 2023
Statutory Notice / Objection Period Opens	Monday 8 th January 2024
Statutory Notice / Objection Period End	Monday 5 th February 2024
Scrutiny (to consider Objection Report)	Tuesday 12 th March 2024
Cabinet (to make final determination)	Wednesday 20 th March 2024

Subject to final determination to proceed, the process would then be subject to the Planning Application and Sustainable Drainage approval process which is led by the Council's experienced Property Services Team.

In addition an Outline Business Case will be submitted to Welsh Government at the appropriate design/tender stage in line with their recently revised 3 stage Business Case process.

➤ Proposed Occupation Date

Subject to approval at each stage outlined above, the current anticipated occupation date is September 2027.

Reasonable Alternatives Identified

Following the consultation period, the Council is required to carry out a further assessment for the proposal. The purpose of this further assessment is to take account of any further information that has come forward through the consultation or otherwise.

As outlined in the Consultation Document, the proposal under consideration is to create a sustainable Net Zero Carbon school buildings with shared facilities, to accommodate Ysgol Y Lawnt, Upper Rhymney Primary School and Community use. This was the preferred option as

identified through the options appraisal process and scored against the critical success factors of Strategic fit, Educational fit, Accessibility, Financial fit and Environmental impact.

Through the consultation process and the comments returned, the Council acknowledges suggestions relating to redeveloping the existing Ysgol Y Lawnt site; providing 2 separate buildings on the proposed site and also the potential to accommodate Upper Rhymney Primary School with another English Medium school on the new site, namely Bryn Awel Primary School and relocate Ysgol Y Lawnt to the vacant premises. It should be noted that all these suggestions were considered and discounted at Options appraisal stage. Therefore, no reasonable alternatives have been highlighted as a result of the Consultation Process.



NEXT STEPS

Recommendation

In reviewing the proposal to take account of further information that has come forward through the consultation and in consideration of the likely impact on quality and standards in education, the community and travelling arrangements, it is the recommendation of this report that the proposal is progressed as outlined in the Consultation Document, namely:

- **Relocation of Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School**

The proposal seeks to create a sustainable Net Zero Carbon school buildings with shared facilities, to accommodate Ysgol Y Lawnt, Upper Rhymney Primary School and Community use.

Decision Making

To deliver our reforms across the entire system, we will need a bold commitment to effective collaboration along with integration of services where appropriate. This will include Welsh Government, the teaching profession and the wider education workforce, our key partners in local authorities, diocesan authorities, regional services, Estyn and others. Successful implementation of any proposal will require effective and honest engagement between all facets of the education system and our local communities and we are committed to providing the conditions to enable this to happen.

Cabinet Members are asked to:

- a) Consider the information contained in the Consultation Report
- b) Approve the recommendation, via vote, to proceed to Statutory Notice in relation to the proposal for Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School

Reporting, Notification and Publishing of Information

Should Cabinet decide to proceed with the proposal, a Statutory Notice will be published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 provides that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so. To be considered as statutory objections, objections must be made in writing and sent to the Council within the 28-day period.

Cabinet will then consider the outcome of the Statutory Notice at a future meeting and determine whether to implement the proposal having given due consideration to all the information provided.

In the event of objections, the Council will publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and Cabinet's response to those objections within 7 days or the day of the determination of the proposal. This report will be available for all persons to view on the Council website and paper copies will be available on request.

Should Cabinet approve the proposal, a full Business Case will be submitted to the Welsh Minister for final approval and the works will commence.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Annex 1 :

[Consultation Notification Letter](#)

[Consultation Document](#)

[Integrated Impact Assessment](#)

Annex 2:

Estyn's Full Response

This report has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals. Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer.

The proposal is to carry out a regulated alteration to relocate Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School to a shared dual-purpose building on a new site.

The two schools will continue to provide Welsh and English medium primary education and remain as separate entities.

Summary/ Conclusion

Estyn considers that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision in the area.

Description and benefits

The local authority has set out a clear rationale for its proposal. It outlines simply the advantages of building a new joint facility while identifying the relatively poor condition rating of the two existing school buildings. Neither of the current school buildings is fully DDA compatible and the local authority identifies that both have a backlog of maintenance. However, neither school's

buildings are at the lowest condition level and the proposal does not identify the scope or cost of necessary maintenance work.

The main school building of Ysgol Y Lawnt is Grade II Listed and subject to development restrictions. The site also has limited outdoor play areas. Upper Rhymney Primary is on two levels and currently has no lift. The proposal is to create a large, energy efficient building on a new site with modern classrooms, enhanced outdoor facilities and flexible spaces for shared and communal use.

While the local authority provides a clear description of the proposal and a projected timetable for statutory procedures, it does not provide a timetable for implementation of the proposals or for the transfer to the new site.

In the main, the proposer identifies clearly and fairly the expected benefits and disadvantages when compared with the status quo and how they will manage any risk. The local authority has provided a Welsh language Impact Assessment and a Community Impact Assessment as part of its proposal.

The local authority sets out four possible alternatives to its proposal. It provides suitable reasons for rejecting the option of building two new school buildings on the same site. However, it does not identify specifically why the possibility of developing either school independently on its existing site has been discounted, other than by stating the view that limitations on both sites make this alternative poor value for money and high risk.

The proposer has considered, in part, the impact of the changes on learner travel arrangements. It notes rightly that travel times for 'a minority' of pupils may change as a result of the proposed school's new location, but does not consider how many pupils, nor detail how the local authority will deal with this issue. The local authority does point out that it considers the difference in time taken to travel to the new school site will be negligible as it is in relatively close proximity to both existing schools.

The proposal projects a modest growth in pupil numbers at both schools over the next few years, with the need for around 193 Welsh medium pupil places and 157 English medium pupil places by 2026. At the same time, the new build would cater for 525 pupils, plus a nursery and 16 special resource base places. The proposer does not explore the reason for surplus spaces thoroughly, other than identifying that a new innovative build may stimulate demand and that possible surplus places in the English medium provision could be managed sustainably by balancing the need to increase places in the Welsh medium school.

The proposal takes clear account of the impact of the proposals on Welsh medium provision within the local authority and the extent to which the proposal supports the targets in the local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The proposal to transfer Ysgol Y Lawnt to a new 21st century standard school building with an increased capacity will contribute to the authority's aim of increasing the number of pupils accessing Welsh medium education and expand the opportunities for pupils to pursue an education through the medium of Welsh. The proposal gives due consideration to the possible negative impact on pupil numbers in neighbouring Welsh medium schools. In mitigation, the local authority has outlined the possibility of minimising this through a managed and phased capacity increase of the new Welsh medium provision.

The proposal identifies that the local authority has set aside a reserve for capital costs as part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Programme. The proposal does not provide an estimate for the cost of the new build or details of any potential savings.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The local authority does not give thorough consideration in its proposal to the impact of the changes on the quality and standards in education. For example, while it signposts the most

recent inspection reports for both schools it does not identify directly whether the proposed change would assist the schools in addressing any of the identified recommendations.

The proposal does outline the benefit of the enhanced outdoor areas planned for the new site. For example, it highlights the provision of a MUGA with 3G surface and of a forest school and allotments for pupils' use. It assumes fairly that pupil attitudes and well-being would likely be impacted positively by the increased opportunity to engage in outdoor learning and physical play using these resources. The proposal also indicates that flexible use of the space may benefit pupils by enabling worthwhile opportunities for partnership working between the two schools and with community partners. For example, the proposal considers the potential positive impact on pupil, staff and community use of the Welsh language through the sharing of expertise between the two schools and common access to the bilingual reception area and communal facilities. However, the proposal does not give appropriate consideration to any potential adverse impacts arising from two schools sharing the same site, such as competition over the use of shared spaces or other limiting factors at an operational level that may compromise their independent function.

The proposal considers, in part, the impact on vulnerable groups, in particular those pupils with Special Educational Needs who are likely to benefit from the provision of two separate learning resources bases with eight pupil places in each language medium. In terms of accessibility, the new building will be fully accessible and compliant with the Equality's Act 2010.

The local authority rightly identifies that the proposed changes would result in some disruption and adjustment for pupils, staff and the wider community. The proposal seeks to maintain continuity for each of the schools by retaining the current leadership and governance arrangements for both schools and by engaging community partners in plans to transfer existing aspects of community use. Given that the proposal is to build on a new site, there should be no detrimental impact on the experience of pupils in either school during the construction phase.

Report prepared by:

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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 28TH NOVEMBER 2023

**SUBJECT: SCHOOL ORGANISATION CODE 2018 - CONSULTATION
REPORT: PROPOSAL FOR THE CLOSURE OF CWM GLAS
INFANT SCHOOL**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE
SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Scrutiny Members in relation to the proposal in respect of the closure of Cwm Glas Infant School by July 2024.
- 1.2 Members are asked to consider the information contained in the Consultation Report and endorse the recommendations to Cabinet, via vote, to proceed to Statutory Notice.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Due to the falling rolls at Cwm Glas Infant school which are projected to decrease further in future years, a meeting was arranged by the Head Teacher and the Governing body with Local Authority representatives including the Chief Education Officer, to discuss the future viability of the school.
- 2.2 The conclusion of the meeting as outlined in 2.1, agreed the school could no longer maintain a balanced budget and an appropriate staffing level, therefore a decision was made by the Head Teacher and Governing Body of the School to pursue closure of Cwm Glas Infant School with effect from July 2024.
- 2.3 The proposal in respect of the closure of Cwm Glas Infant School by July 2024. went to formal consultation between the 28th September 2023 and the 9th November 2023.
- 2.4 To discharge the Council's duty under the School Organisation Code 2018, there is now a requirement for Cabinet members to give due regard to the content of the Consultation Report and determine whether or not it is appropriate to move to the next stage in the process.

2.5 A Consultation Report has been compiled and attached as an annex to this report. The Consultation Report summarises each of the issues raised by consultees. Any emerging themes that have been raised through gathering the views of consultees during the consultation process have been responded to by means of clarification with supporting reasons.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1.1 Prior to a report being presented to Cabinet, Scrutiny Members are asked to: -

- a) Consider the information contained in the Consultation Report
- b) Endorse the recommendation to Cabinet, via vote, to proceed to Statutory Notice in relation to the proposal to close Cwm Glas Infant Schol by July 2024

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 To seek Members endorsement on the recommendations to Cabinet, via vote, to proceed to the publication of a Statutory Notice in respect of the proposal.

4.2 Assist the Council in discharging its duties in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018.

5. THE REPORT

Cwm Glas Infants School

5.1 Cwm Glas Infants School provides education to pupils between the ages of 3 and 5 and has a published capacity figure of 57 places with a published admission number of 19.

5.2 The current pupil roll is 33 pupils (Full Time Equivalent) with over 50% of these pupils residing outside of the catchment area of the school.

5.3 Surplus places are currently at 47.37% rising to 56.14% in September 2024 and projected to increase in future years as the number of pupils predicted to attend the school is anticipated to decline linked to a reduction in live birth rates in the area and parental preference.

5.4 The projected pupil numbers and resultant financial outlook for the school provides a significant challenge to the ability of the Head and School Governors to agree a balanced budget to maintain the school and an appropriate staffing level which has led to a request to the local authority to consider closing the school from July 2024.

5.5 Under the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010, Individual school budgets are determined using a locally agreed funding formula in accordance with factors which are learner led. Schools must be able to demonstrate via a financial action plan that the school will work to deliver a balanced budget. However, the Head Teacher and Governing Body have acknowledged that Cwm Glas School is facing a significant financial deficit with pupil numbers projected to further decrease moving forward.

5.6 Reasonable alternatives to closure, such as reduction in the number of classes, collaboration, federation and colocation were considered by the Head Teacher and

Governing Body in partnership with the Local Authority but deemed not viable or sustainable.

- 5.7 Cwm Glas Infants School is a feeder school for Coed Y Brain Primary at Key Stage 2. Both schools share the same catchment area and are both located in Llanbradach within circa 1 mile of each other. Should the decision be taken to close Cwm Glas Infants School, based on current and future projections for both schools, all pupils could be accommodated within Coed Y Brain Primary School, subject to parental preference.
- 5.8 Further to Cabinet approval gained on 28th June 2023, formal consultation for the proposal was carried out between the 28th September 2023 and the 9th November 2023.
- 5.9 A prescribed list of recipients as outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018 were written to and a consultation document was published in Welsh and English, both in hardcopy and electronically via the Authority's website based. Reasonable access to information was promoted from an Equalities perspective and other formats were available, including a child friendly version.
- 5.10 Members of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee who met on the 17th October 2023 in their capacity as a consultee under the School Organisation Code 2018, had the opportunity to consider the information contained in the consultation pack and provide their views which have been noted as part of the minutes of the meeting and summarised in the Consultation Report.
- 5.11 The consultation period ran for 42 days (with at least 20 of these being school days) to provide adequate time for response and conscientious consideration has been given to any responses received.
- 5.12 There were 21 responses received in respect of the proposal as outlined in 1.1. In addition, a number of pupils from the school were engaged in the consultation process through 'learner voice' sessions which have been reported on separately. These are broken down into more detail in the Consultation Report.
- 5.13 A Consultation Report has been compiled and has been attached as an annex to this report. The Consultation Report summarises each of the issues raised by consultees. Any emerging themes that have been raised through gathering the views of consultees during the consultation process have been responded to by means of clarification with supporting reasons. In addition, Estyn has provided a formal response in consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal which is included in the Consultation Report.
- 5.14 The Consultation Report will be published electronically on the Sustainable Communities for Learning pages on the Council's website.
- 5.15 Consultees who have indicated in their consultation response that they wish to be notified will be advised by letter or email of the availability of the Consultation Report along with the key stakeholders identified in the School Organisation Code 2018.

5.2 Conclusion

Pursuant to the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018, formal consultation has now concluded in relation to this proposal and this report has been compiled along with the Consultation Report to provide members with the necessary information to make an informed decision as to whether to progress the proposal to the next statutory stage which would entail permission to publish a Statutory Notice. The School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, provides that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so at this stage. An Objection Report will then be brought before Cabinet in addition to an updated Integrated Impact Assessment, and at this point, a final determination regarding the proposal will be requested.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report as it merely updates on the progress of individual projects.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 A full Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been completed in relation to the proposal to ensure compliance with the socio-economic duty, Sections 1 to 3 of Equality Act 2010.

[Link to IIA \(English\)](#)

- 7.2 Subject to Cabinet approval to progress to Statutory Notice, the IIA will be further reviewed and updated after this stage. The purpose of this further assessment is to take account of any further information that has come forward through the consultation stages or otherwise, to further support conscientious consideration prior to final determination.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Under the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010, Individual school budgets are determined using a locally agreed funding formula in accordance with factors which are learner led.
- 8.2 Schools must be able to demonstrate via a financial action plan that the school will work to deliver a balanced budget.
- 8.3 The Council's Education Finance Team have been working closely with the school for a number of years, however, the Head Teacher and Governing Body have acknowledged that Cwm Glas School is facing a significant financial deficit with pupil numbers projected to further decrease moving forward and are unable to demonstrate via a financial action plan their ability to reverse the deficit.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This will be dependent on specific proposals and will be considered as part of the consultation process.

9.2 The Council's Human Resources Team will work closely with all relevant parties to ensure that processes are adhered to, and support is provided as required.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 The draft report was distributed as detailed below. All comments received have been reflected in this version of the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 School Organisation Code 2018 (Welsh Government)
School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

Author: Andrea West, Sustainable Communities for Learning Manager

Consultees: Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive
Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair, Education & Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair Education & Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Sue Richards, Head of Transformation
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion & ALN
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager

Appendices:

[Link to Consultation Report – Cwm Glas Infant School \(English\)](#)

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Consultation Report

Proposal to Close Cwm Glas Infant School



Proposal : **Currently the pupils at Cwm Glas Infant School transition to Coed Y Brain Primary School at Key Stage 2. The proposal seeks to transition the pupils at Foundation Phase, to deliver inclusive all-through primary school provision from September 2024.**

This will result in the closure of Cwm Glas Infant School.

Formal Consultation Period : 28th September 2023 – 9th November 2023

This report is published in line with the requirements of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code 2018.



SPE	
Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Executive Summary ➤ Statutory Obligations ➤ Purpose of the Consultation Report 	
Proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are we proposing to do? ➤ What is driving this proposal? ➤ Options Appraisal ➤ Benefits and Disbenefits 	
The Consultation Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consultation Process ➤ Stakeholder Engagement ➤ Consultation Information ➤ Response Methods 	
Consultation Responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consultation Responses ➤ Scrutiny Committee Response ➤ Estyn's Response (summary) 	
Learner Voice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School Council / Pupil Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schools directly affected by Proposal ○ Other schools identified as being affected 	
Other Considerations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consultation Clarification ➤ Reasonable Alternatives Identified 	
Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Recommendation ➤ Decision Making ➤ Reporting, Notification and Publishing of Information 	
Supporting Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Annex 1: Key Consultation Documents ➤ Annex 2: Estyn's Response (Full version) 	

This document is available in Welsh and English. Information can also be made available in other formats, languages and in hard copy on request. Please contact us on 01443 864817 to arrange this.

INTRODUCTION

Executive Summary

The prime purpose of schools is the provision of education and in line with Welsh Government guidelines, any case for closure should be robust and in the best interests of educational provision in the area.

When considering whether a closure is appropriate, special attention is given to any reasonable alternatives and the overall effect of closure on the local community and how parents' and pupils' engagement with the alternative school and any facilities it may offer could be supported.

The School Organisation Code 2018, provides clear statutory guidance as to the processes that need to be followed. Undertaking a consultation exercise is one of the initial stages of progressing any proposal and is subject to Cabinet approval.

From the 28th September 2023 to the 9th November 2023 a consultation exercise was undertaken.

The purpose of the consultation was to gain views on the proposal. Currently the pupils at Cwm Glas Infant School transition to Coed Y Brain Primary School at Key Stage 2. The proposal seeks to transition the pupils at Foundation Phase, to deliver an inclusive all-through primary school provision from September 2024. This will result in the closure of Cwm Glas Infant School.

This Consultation Report is the prescribed method as outlined by the School Organisation Code 2018 for reflection, review and assessment to provide Cabinet with the information to make an informed decision as to whether to proceed with the proposal to the next stage, amend the proposal taking into account further information that has come forward through the consultation process or to close this proposal with no further actions taken.

The Report is divided into several sections with the aim to:

- Outline the consultation processes undertaken
- Provide clarification in relation to the information provided and consultee engagement
- Summarise each of the issues raised by consultees
- Set out Estyn's response to the consultation in full
- Respond to issues raised by means of clarification, amendment to the proposal or rejection of the concerns, with supporting reasons

Statutory Obligations

This report is published in line with the requirements of the [School Standards and Organisation \(Wales\) Act 2013](#) and the [School Organisation Code 2018](#).

The Consultation report will be published on the Caerphilly Sustainable Communities for Learning website with hardcopies available on request. All information is published in Welsh and English. In addition, a child friendly summary has also been produced to ensure information is provided in an accessible format for any children and young people affected by the proposals.

Purpose of the Consultation Report

The publication of this Consultation Report discharges the Council of its duty under the School Organisation Code 2018.

The consultation period represented an opportunity for people to learn about the proposal, ask questions and make comments. Any negative responses made during the consultation period were not counted as objections to the proposal but as adverse comments.

Objections to a proposal can only be registered after the publication of a statutory notice.

The Consultation Report outlines the processes followed, provides clarity on the issues and comments received from consultees, ensures that the views of children and young people affected by the proposal are expressed and ultimately, provides Cabinet with the necessary information to take one of the following decisions:

- Proceed with the proposal
- Make changes to the proposal
- Not to proceed with the proposal

Full details of the decision making process and the stages of the proposal as outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018 have been published as part of the initial Consultation Document and is publicly available via the Council's website with hardcopies made available on request.

PROPOSAL

What are we proposing to do?

We are proposing :

○ **Closure of Cwm Glas Infant School**

Currently the pupils at Cwm Glas Infant School transition to Coed Y Brain Primary School at Key Stage 2. The proposal seeks to transition the pupils at Foundation Phase, to deliver inclusive all-through primary school provision from September 2024.

This will result in the closure of Cwm Glas Infant School.

What is driving this proposal?

Due to the falling rolls at Cwm Glas Infant school which are projected to decrease further, a meeting was arranged by the Head Teacher and the Governing body with Local Authority representatives including the Chief Education Officer, to discuss the future viability of the school. The conclusion of the meeting, agreed the school could no longer maintain a balanced budget and an appropriate staffing level, therefore a decision was made by the Head Teacher and Governing Body of the School to pursue closure of Cwm Glas Infant School with effect from July 2024.

Options Appraisal

The planning and development of effective school organisation proposals is crucial to the Welsh Government's goal of transforming education in Wales and providing better educational outcomes with a commitment to increase school effectiveness, and narrow inequalities in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged areas, groups and individuals.

The Welsh Government's Business Case Guidance in relation to utilisation of the Options

Framework approach has been followed to identify the widest possible number of feasible options, focusing on the following key dimensions: scope, service solution, service delivery, implementation and funding.

An options appraisal provides the opportunity to help councils make an informed and evidence based decision on how to deliver services. It does this by considering the relative advantages and disadvantages of a number of different delivery model options (including the current way in which the service is delivered).

The methodology helps decision makers to consider the:

- Desirability - the degree to which each option meets the strategic objectives and priorities of stakeholders
- Viability - the degree to which each option is financially viable and sustainable
- Feasibility - the degree to which each option can be implemented

As part of outlining the current proposal, an options appraisal was undertaken.

The options appraisal stage allowed for a number of different delivery model options to be explored and evaluated against a set of agreed criteria, leading to the selection of the preferred option.

Table 1: Options Appraisal Longlist	
Option	Longlist Options: Description
Option 1	Do Nothing: No change to existing school arrangements
Option 2	Do Minimum: Reduce staffing levels at Cwm Glas Infant School through reduction to 1 class
Option 3	Do Intermediate Co-location of services at Cwm Glas Infant School to offset costs to maintain the school
Option 4	Do Major: Collaboration/ Federation of Cwm Glas Infant School with another school in the area
Option 5	Do Maximum Transition Cwm Glas Infant School pupils to Coed Y Brain at Foundation Level and close Cwm Glas Infant School

Each option was evaluated against the investment objectives outlined in the Consultation Document and the extent to which it met the Critical Success Factors. This stage was an important part of the process, to raise important questions at an early stage and assist in developing proposals.

This resulted in options either being discounted, carried forward for further consideration in the short list with an eventual option identified as a preferred way forward. It is the option identified as the preferred way forward upon which the consultation exercise was based as all other options have been discounted at this point.

The process utilised was outlined in detail in the Consultation Document and resulted in **Option 5** being identified as the preferred option, namely, **Transition Cwm Glas Infant School pupils to Coed Y Brain at Foundation Level and close Cwm Glas Infant School.**

Benefits and Disbenefits

There are common challenges faced by all Local Authorities when adopting new proposals. The vast majority of Council policies are delivered through projects and programmes of various forms. It is therefore vital that projects are delivered successfully in order to realise their intended benefits for citizens.

Evidence shows that the best way to ensure successful delivery is by setting up projects correctly in the first place. The most common causes of failure, among others are a lack of clear objectives, insufficient resources and over-ambitious cost and schedule that impact on the level and amount of benefit that can be realised and can be avoided if tackled in a project's early stages.

As part of the development of the proposal, a number of benefits and disbenefits were identified as outlined in the Consultation Document. The consultation process was an opportunity to consult with relevant stakeholders to understand what they see as positive outcomes and what negative consequences may be delivered.

The Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities. An Integrated Impact Assessment was carried out to initiate discussion and invite comments as to whether the principles for the proposal are supported.

All comments have been recorded and Cabinet members will be provided with copies of all the responses received within the consultation period and in their original format as part of the decision making process.



CONSULTATION PROCESS

Consultation Process

The consultation process has followed the Welsh Government guidelines as set out in the School Organisation Code 2018.

Stakeholder Engagement

Through [TeamCaerphilly - Better Together](#), the Council is committed to ensuring high quality, citizen focused services for the communities that comprise our county borough. In future-proofing public services, we recognise the need to ensure effective engagement which is central to our decision making - [Read more about our approach to Consultation and Engagement here](#)

For this proposal, our consultation process must follow the Welsh Government Statutory guidance as set out in the School Organisation Code 2018.

The following consultees were advised of our proposals by letter or email:

Table 2: Consultee List	
Pupils and Pupil Councils*	Welsh Ministers
Parents, prospective parents, guardians and carers*	Assembly Members and Members of Parliament representing the area served *
Headteacher, Staff and Governing bodies*	Local CCBC Members
Directors of Education for Neighbouring Authorities	Local Town and Community Councils
Teaching and Support Staff Associations	Estyn
Parent Network	Welsh Education Forum
Diocesan Directors / Boards of Education	South East Wales Consortium (EAS)
Gwent and South Wales Police and Crime Commissioners	South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA)
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership	Mudiad Meithrin, Menter Iaith and voluntary nursery providers

**of schools directly or likely to be affected by the proposal only*

In addition to advising those we were obliged to under the stakeholder criteria, the following were also contacted and advised of our proposals in writing:

- All Headteachers in the Borough

Consultation Information

The School Organisation Code 2018 states that when undertaking a consultation process in connection with a school proposal, the Council must publish information to enable transparent, balanced and open decision making.

The consultation document must be published on a school day and consultees must be given at least 42 days to respond to the document, with at least 20 of these being school days as defined by Section 579 of the Education Act 1996. The consultation period opened on Thursday 28th September 2023 (a school day) and concluded at midnight on Thursday 9th November 2023.

As part of this proposal, the following documentation was produced:

- Consultation Notification Letter
- Consultation Document
- Child Friendly Summary Presentation
- Consultation Response Form
- Integrated Impact Assessment

All documentation was published in Welsh and English, complying with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards. Information was also available in other languages and formats on request, however, no such requests were received as part of this process.

Hardcopies of the documentation were issued to the schools directly affected by the proposal including the child friendly summary for discussion with the pupils.

In addition to notifying the consultees in writing of the proposal, distribution of information was supported via the school text messaging service direct to parents and staff.

A child friendly consultation summary was also produced to support the consultation process with pupils of the affected schools to present information in a manner relevant to their likely understanding, allowing them to participate in the consultation process and reach an informed opinion. In addition to this documentation, local teaching staff provided assistance to children and young people who wished to submit a consultation response in their preferred format and language.

The Council's Social media channels were also utilised.

Response Methods

As outlined in the Consultation Document, anyone wishing to comment in relation to the proposal could do so in writing by:

- Completing the online response form on the Council's website
- Completing a response pro forma and posting it to the Sustainable Communities for Learning Team at Caerphilly
- Emailing comments to the Sustainable Communities for Learning Team at Caerphilly

Pupils of the schools directly affected by the proposal were also given the opportunity to engage in the process through focused 'Pupil Voice' sessions.

The response forms were designed in such a way as to capture the relevant information required to discharge the Council's obligations required under the School Organisation Code for undertaking a consultation linked to the regulated alteration of a maintained school.

This consultation was undertaken to capture the views of consultees in relation to the proposal. These views have been incorporated into this document, which will be published and considered by Cabinet when determining whether to proceed to Statutory notice stage. The separate statutory processes were outlined in the consultation document and any adverse comments received as part of this process have been recorded as such.



CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Consultation Responses

Overall a total of 21 responses were received during the consultation process.

Please note: The figure above and the data reported on for Questions 1 to 7 does not include the responses received by Estyn, Scrutiny or captured as part of any pupil engagement sessions. These are outlined in more detail later in this document.

Of the prescribed methods for providing a response during the consultation period:

- 17 responses received via Online Survey

- 4 responses received via email
- 0 responses received via post

0 responses (0%) were returned in the medium of Welsh.

The Sustainable Communities for Learning Team received no requests for the documentation to be provided in any additional format or languages to those already available.

QUESTION 1

The consultees were asked to confirm the proposal they were responding to as part of the process.

QUESTION 2

The consultees were asked to identify a category that best described them in relation to the proposal for the school affected. The options provided were selected to demonstrate that the key consultee groups as outlined in the School Organisation Code had been engaged with. These included, Pupil, Parent, Staff Member, School Governor, Elected Member, Local Resident, Group and Other.

Of those who responded, the following categories were selected:

29%	14%	5%	0%	24%	19%
Parents	Staff Members	School Governors	Elected Members	Local Resident	Other

For those selecting 'other', the opportunity was given to elaborate further as they felt appropriate.

QUESTIONS 3 TO 7

As part of the consultation process, consultees were asked to provide basic contact information, including their name, address and email. This psychographic data was collected in order to help paint a picture of the consultee and enable the Sustainable Communities for Learning team to understand trends in response data and response groupings that would assist in compiling this Consultation Report.

As information can be collected for many purposes, the Caerphilly County Borough Council's privacy notice for consultations/surveys was referenced, which outlined the purpose and legal basis for collecting the information, data usage and data retention periods.

For the purposes of this Consultation Report, Cabinet will be provided with a separate digest of the consultation comments received. Please note that comments that are considered to be offensive or compromise anonymity have been edited or removed.

QUESTION 8

As part of our duty under the School Organisation Code 2018, consultees must be given the option to request notification as to the publication of this Consultation Report. Contact information has been collected to this end and the preferred method for communication will be notification via email if this information has been made available by the respondent.



17 out of the 21 respondents have requested notification. These individuals have been added to the notification list and will be contacted concurrently with stakeholders when this document is made publicly available through the Council's website. Hardcopies of the documentation will be made available on request.

QUESTION 9

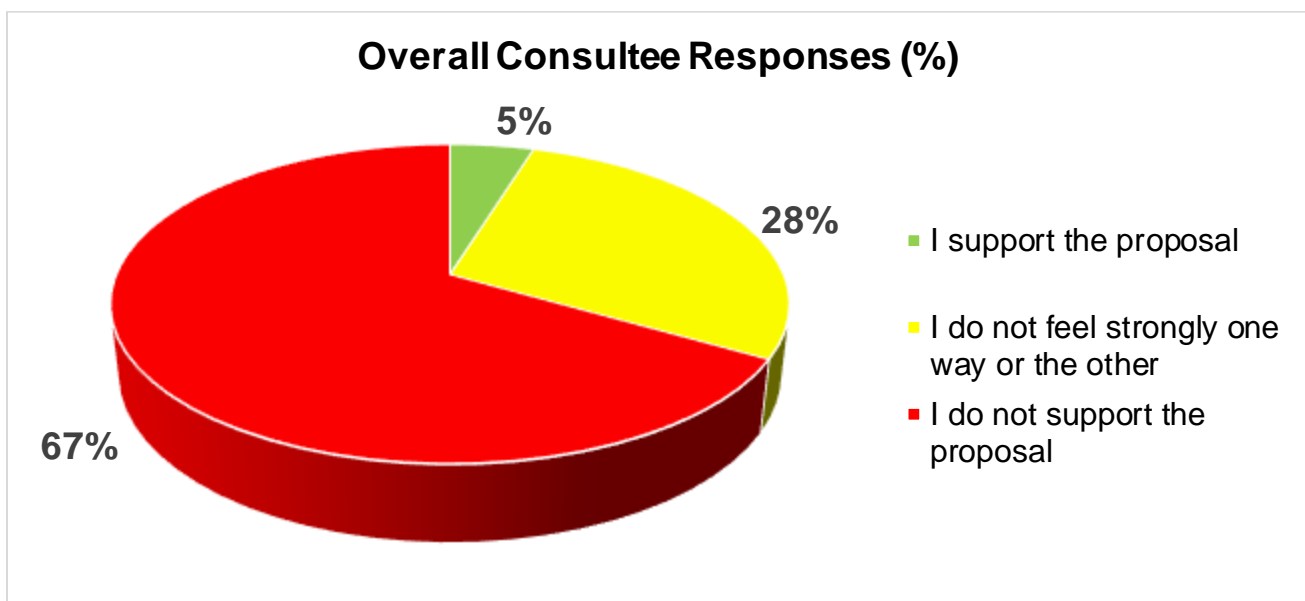
Consultees can submit their views either in favour of or against the proposals.

Consultees were asked to indicate which of the following statements most accurately reflected their views about the proposal. Consultees were reminded to read the consultation documentation prior to providing any responses during this consultation exercise and that unfavourable comments made during the consultation period will not be treated as objections at this stage.

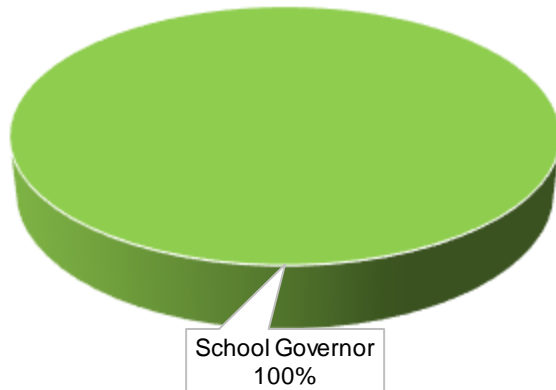
The options available were:

- I support the proposal
- I do not feel strongly one way or the other
- I do not support the proposal

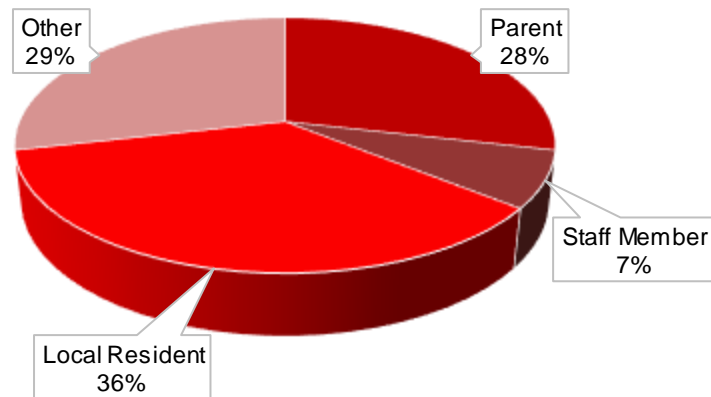
Of the 21 responses returned, 1 supports the proposal, 14 do not support it, 6 either didn't feel strongly either way or failed to select an option.



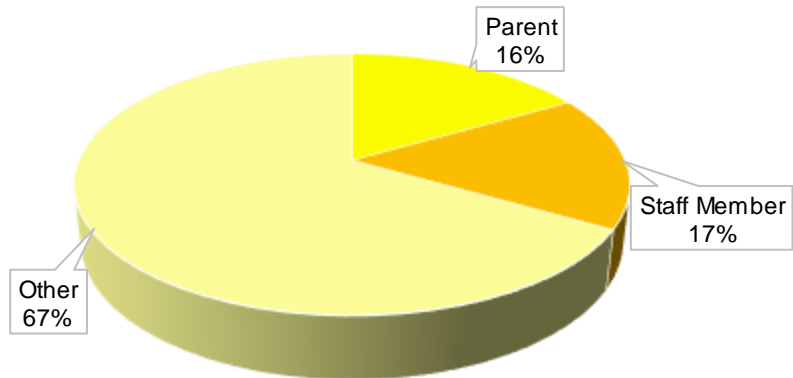
"I support the proposal"
5% of overall responses broken down by category



"I do not support the proposal"
67% of overall responses broken down by category



"I do not feel strongly one way or the other"
28% of overall responses broken down by category



It is prudent to bring to the attention of readers that the commentary provided as part of Questions 10 to 12 may offer additional insight into the views of the consultees and that the response

provided to Question 9 should not be considered in isolation, for example where there are duplicate responses or multiple responses from a single household.

QUESTIONS 10 to 12

This was a free text box, enabling consultees to provide additional comments as to why they supported or did not support the proposal as outlined in the Consultation Document, or to suggest changes or alternative options that could improve the proposal.

All comments received have been read and analysed.

General themes that emerged from the consultation, including those raised at Scrutiny Committee:

- Transition Processes and Impact
- Staffing Implications
- Future Developments

These themes are outlined in more detail in the section on 'Consultation Clarification'.

QUESTIONS 13 to 18

In line with the Caerphilly County Borough Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020 and the Consultation and Monitoring Guidance 2016 document, a reduced version of the Equalities and Monitoring questionnaire was included as part of the consultation response to support effective planning and to ensure that a representative sample was achieved to identify any equality issues.

From the responses received, of those that completed the Equalities monitoring section:

I am ...			
Female	14	Prefer to self describe	0
Male	7	Prefer not to say	0

Age			
Under 16	3	40-65	9
16-25	0	Over 65	1
26-39	4	Prefer not to say	4

Disability			
Yes	2	No	13
Prefer not to say	6		

Preferred Language			
English	14	Other	0
Welsh	0	Prefer not to say	7

QUESTIONS 19 to 20

We have to make sure that the Welsh Language is treated in the same way as the English language.

Respondents were given the opportunity to make suggestions on how we can increase opportunities for people to use or access services in Welsh. In addition, respondents were able to comment on how the proposal could be changed to have (more of) a positive impact on the Welsh language.

2 consultees highlighted the fact that the closure of the school would mean one less facility capable of delivering Welsh language opportunities.

QUESTION 21

In relation to equalities implications that respondents highlighted, 0 respondents indicated that their decision was influenced as per the list outlined in the consultation response form.

Scrutiny Response

The Council's Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee is a consultee for any policy or service developments in relation to Education within the Borough.

A Multi-Locational meeting (Penallta House & MS Teams) took place on Tuesday 17th October 2023 at 5.30pm.

As part of this meeting, the proposal relating to the closure of Cwm Glas Infant School was discussed as agenda item 8.

All consultation documentation was made available to members as part of the agenda reports pack and officers linked to the proposal were available to take questions. Any queries raised have been acknowledged and included as part of the themes analysis.

A recording of the session is available to view:

[Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting](#)

Estyn's Response

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code 2018, the Council, as the proposers, is required to send a notification with regards to the consultation to Estyn.

Estyn is the education and training inspectorate for Wales and their vision is to improve the quality of education and training and outcomes for all learners in Wales. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal. The full response from Estyn is included as Annex 2 at the end of this document. However, in summary:

"It is Estyn's view that this proposal is likely to at least maintain the standard of education provision in the area."

The Council acknowledges Estyn's response.



LEARNER VOICE

Young people have a right to act to express their views in all matters affecting them and for their views to be heard and given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

School Council / Pupil Engagement

The Council acknowledged that the voice of young people is about involving them as active participants in the development, delivery, management and improvement of their educational and student experience and needs to be at the heart of planning, provision and evaluation.

The Sustainable Communities for Learning Team in Caerphilly ensure that when bringing forward any proposal, suitable arrangements are made to consult and involve pupils throughout the process with the support of the local teaching teams.

A child friendly consultation summary was produced to support the consultation process with pupils to present information in a manner relevant to their likely understanding, allowing them to participate in the consultation process and reach an informed opinion.

➤ Schools directly affected by the proposal

Due to the age range of pupils attending Cwm Glas Infant School, the pupil engagement sessions were tailored accordingly.

A selection of their responses is shown below:

The pupils were asked:

1) What they liked about learning at Cwm Glas Infants?



Consultation Clarification

When analysing all consultation response comments received as part of the consultation period, a number of emerging themes became evident.

Table 3: Summary of Response Themes		
Theme	Overview	Number of Mentions
Transition	Infant to Primary setting	8
	Admission Processes	1
	Capacity of Coed Y Brain Primary	1
	Travel distance to Coed y Brain Primary	2
Staffing	Staffing Implications	5
Future Developments	Use of Cwm Glas Infant School site	2

To assist Cabinet in the decision making process, the following information is provided by Council Officers involved in the formulation of the proposal by means of response for clarification with supporting reasons.

Transition

- Infant to Primary setting

A selection of consultees highlighted their experience of the benefits of pupils attending a smaller school, for example, having that strong sense of school community which they perceived may be lost in a larger primary school environment. However, it should be acknowledged that Cwm Glas Infant School is a feeder school to Coed Y Brain Primary School both of which share the same catchment area and are located in Llanbradach, whereby pupils currently transition at Key Stage 2.

A primary school provides an environment where children can work and play together over a longer period of time developing a greater understanding and appreciation of one another's diverse strengths, skills and personalities. This has been shown to have a positive impact on social skills, problem solving and relationship development between all members of the community.

- Admission Processes

One respondent expressed concerns relating to the transfer of pupils to Coed Y Brain Primary School. The authority will work with both schools and parents and pupils to ensure a smooth transition between the schools.

Should the decision be taken by Cabinet to close Cwm Glas Infant School, all pupils currently on roll will be able to transfer to Coed Y Brain Primary School, at the relevant time, subject to parental preference.

Further information regarding the admissions process for prospective pupils can be found here: [Starting School – A guide to Admission Arrangements and Education Services 2024-25](#)

➤ Capacity of Coed Y Brain Primary

A scrutiny membersought confirmation with regards to the ability of Coed Y Brain Primary school to accommodate current pupils from Cwm Glas Infants and any future additional demand. Cwm Glas Infants School is a natural feeder into Coed Y Brain Primary, and based on current surplus places and future projections, has ample capacity to accommodate current and future pupils.

➤ Travel distance to Coed Y Brain Primary

A selection of consultees raised concerns with regards to the impact of the new location on learner travel. Cwm Glas Infant school and Coed Y Brain Primary share the same catchment area and are both located in Llanbradach Village circa 1 mile from each other with existing active travel routes established.

As outlined in the Consultation Document, it is anticipated that the likely effect of different travelling arrangements as a result of the proposal will be minimal, although it is acknowledged that some existing Cwm Glas Infant school pupils may find themselves living closer to the Coed Y Brain Primary school site and conversely others finding themselves further away although the difference between the sites is minimal.

Those pupils that reside within catchment and live more than 1.5 miles away from their nearest catchment school are eligible to free transport under Caerphilly's transport policy which is more generous than the legislative requirement under the Learner Travel Measure (Wales) 2008.

Staffing

➤ Staffing Implications

There were concerns raised in relation to the future employment of the existing staff at Cwm Glas Infant School. The Council's Human Resources Team will work closely with all relevant parties to ensure that processes are adhered to, and support is provided as required dependent on the final outcome.

Future Developments

➤ Use of Cwm Glas Infant School site

Local neighbours raised concerns relating to the future use of the Cwm Glas Infant School site. Subject to the proposal gaining approval and the closure of Cwm Glas Infants School, the existing school building and site would then be classified as surplus to educational requirement and become an unallocated Corporate Asset. Future use of the building and site would then be subject to a stringent series of tests to ensure legitimate Council use, Welsh Language and Local Community use are considered in the first instance.

Reasonable Alternatives Identified

Following the consultation period, the Council is required to carry out a further assessment for the proposal. The purpose of this further assessment is to take account of any further information that has come forward through the consultation or otherwise.

As outlined in the Consultation Document, the proposal under consideration is to close Cwm Glas Infant School . This was the preferred option as identified through the options appraisal process and scored against the critical success factors of Strategic fit, Educational fit, Accessibility, Financial fit and Environmental impact.

Through the consultation process and the comments returned, there is evidence that there is a positive level of support in relation to Cwm Glas Infant School. However, no reasonable alternatives have been highlighted that have not already been discounted at Options Appraisal Stage as a result of the Consultation Process.



NEXT STEPS

Recommendation

In reviewing the proposal to take account of further information that has come forward through the consultation and in consideration of the likely impact on quality and standards in education, the community and travelling arrangements, it is the recommendation of this report that the proposal is progressed as outlined in the Consultation Document, namely:

- **Closure of Cwm Glas Infant School**

Currently the pupils at Cwm Glas Infant School transition to Coed Y Brain Primary School at Key Stage 2. The proposal seeks to transition the pupils at Foundation Phase, to deliver inclusive all-through primary school provision from September 2024.

This will result in the closure of Cwm Glas Infant School.

Decision Making

To deliver our reforms across the entire system, we will need a bold commitment to effective collaboration along with integration of services where appropriate. This will include Welsh Government, the teaching profession and the wider education workforce, our key partners in local authorities, diocesan authorities, regional services, Estyn and others. Successful implementation of any proposal will require effective and honest engagement between all facets of the education system and our local communities and we are committed to providing the conditions to enable this to happen.

Cabinet Members are asked to:

- a) Consider the information contained in the Consultation Report
- b) Approve the recommendation, via vote, to proceed to Statutory Notice in relation to the proposal to close Cwm Glas Infant School by July 2024

Reporting, Notification and Publishing of Information

Should Cabinet decide to proceed with the proposal, a Statutory Notice will be published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 provides that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so. To be considered as statutory objections, objections must be made in writing and sent to the Council within the 28-day period.

Cabinet will then consider the outcome of the Statutory Notice at a future meeting and determine whether to implement the proposal having given due consideration to all the information provided.

In the event of objections, the Council will publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and Cabinet's response to those objections within 7 days or the day of the determination of the proposal. This report will be available for all persons to view on the Council website and paper copies will be available on request.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Annex 1 :

[Consultation Notification Letter](#)

[Consultation Document](#)

[Integrated Impact Assessment](#)

Annex 2:

Estyn's Full Response

This report has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals. Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer.

Summary/ Conclusion

Caerphilly County Borough Council are consulting on their proposal to close Cwm Glas Infant School with effect from July 2024. It is Estyn's view that this proposal is likely to at least maintain the standard of education provision in the area.

Description and benefits

The council has presented a clear rationale outlining the reasons for the proposal. Due to continued and projected falling rolls at Cwm Glas Infant School, the headteacher and governing

body are now unable to set a balanced budget with an appropriate staffing level, therefore the decision has been made to pursue closure.

Under current arrangements, pupils at Cwm Glas Infant School transition to Coed Y Brain Primary School at the end of Year 2. This proposal seeks to bring forward transition to the start of the early years phase which would allow pupils to receive an 'all-through' primary provision from September 2024.

The council has provided a suitably detailed description of the proposal along with an estimated timetable for statutory procedures. As pupils already transition to Coed Y Brain Primary School, the council states that there are no requirements for interim arrangements. The consultation document states that additional support would be available to families where required.

The council has included a useful 'Children and Young People's Consultation Document' which accompanies the main consultation document. This document refers to a list of Frequently Asked Questions available on the council website however these do not yet appear to be in place.

The council has outlined the advantages and disadvantages of this proposal appropriately. The main advantages noted are a significant reduction in surplus places along with the provision of wider opportunities for pupils in a larger, primary provision. The consultation outlines additional benefits in terms of easing arrangements for families with primary aged siblings which appear to be appropriate.

The council states that it will manage risks pro-actively in accordance with its risk management procedures. The consultation notes that transition arrangements are already well established between the two schools and therefore any risks would be minimal. This appears to be a reasonable statement.

The council has considered a range of options which include consideration of reduced staffing levels, shared use of the building to help offset costs and collaboration or federation with another school in the area. The council has identified reasons as to why each has been discounted in favour of school closure. These reasons appear to be fair and reasonable. However, although the council states that further discussions will be made with both schools concerning the impact on staffing, potential impact on staff is not made explicit within the 'Benefits' and 'Disbenefits' section.

The council has considered the impact of the proposal on transport arrangements. Both schools share the same catchment area and the distance between the two schools is 1.1 miles. Pupils from Cwm Glas Infant School currently transition to Coed Y Brain Primary School at the end of Year 2 and 'safe travel' routes are already established. The council does not anticipate that the proposal will affect transport arrangements, and this appears to be a reasonable statement.

The council has demonstrated the impact of the proposal on surplus places. There are currently 50.88% surplus places at Cwm Glas Infant School and 32.23% surplus places at Coed Y Brain Primary School. It is reasonable for the proposal to suggest that surplus places will reduce significantly as a result of the intended closure.

The council has appropriately considered the financial costs of the proposal. The consultation document states that Coed Y Brain Primary School has existing capacity to fully accommodate all current and future pupils from Cwm Glas Infant School and therefore requires minimal further investment. Savings will be realised through the upkeep and maintenance of a single site which benefits from a greater energy efficiency rating.

The local authority has provided a Welsh Language Impact Assessment as part of this proposal.

The local authority has provided a Community Impact Assessment as part of this proposal. The local authority note that the two schools are English medium and anticipates that the proposal will have minimal impact on the Welsh medium offer across the borough and this is a reasonable assumption.

NB. Estyn provides their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals and does not evaluate the Welsh Language Impact Assessment or the Community Impact Assessment.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The council has considered the educational aspects of the proposal by outlining the benefits of a primary school provision over an infant school provision. The benefits are outlined under curriculum, quality of teaching and professional development. The consultation implies that standards should improve under a single vision, a smoother continuity of provision and access to a wider range of enrichment activities.

The consultation suggests that the provision of increased opportunities to learn alongside a wider age range of peers will improve well-being and attitudes to learning across both settings. In addition, pupils would have access to a wider range of extra-curricular activities and wraparound school care.

The consultation outlines perceived benefits of learning under one management team. The local authority claims that these benefits will stem from unified leadership of the curriculum and quality of teaching and learning under one whole school development plan. In terms of continuity for learners across the primary phase, this is a reasonable statement.

The consultation does not make comment on each school's most recent Estyn report but does provide a link to the Estyn website. Cwm Glas Infant School was last inspected in 2017 and Coed Y Brain Primary School in 2023. Neither inspection report outlines any serious shortcomings.

The local authority has considered the impact of the proposal on vulnerable groups through the completion of a full Integrated Impact Assessment. The assessment considers the impact of the proposal on all protected characteristics and notes that Coed Y Brain Primary School is accessible to pupils and the wider community regardless of other specified characteristics. The consultation concludes that there are no perceived negative impacts, and this seems reasonable.

With regard to pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), the local authority states that it would continue to provide support for ALN pupils. The local authority also states that it is unlikely that the Special Needs Resource Base at Coed Y Brain Primary School will be affected by this proposal. This appears to be appropriate.

The council has considered the impact of this closure on the local community. The consultation states that as Cwm Glas Infant School is a feeder school to Coed Y Brain Primary School, there will be minimal impact on other local primary schools. This is a reasonable statement. The council also states that both schools currently have limited community use. Should the proposal go ahead, the council states that the Cwm Glas building will be prioritised for Welsh language and local community use in the future.

Report prepared by:

Sustainable Communities for Learning Team
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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 28TH NOVEMBER 2023

**SUBJECT: ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL
SERVICES AND HOUSING FOR 2022/23**

REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee of the key messages that have been identified in the preparation of the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services and Housing for 2022/23.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Part 8 of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) requires Directors of Social Services in Wales to publish an annual report about the exercise of the Local Authority's social services functions. The attached report has been written in a format that is compliant with the requirements of the SSWBA.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee are requested to note the contents of my Annual Director's Report for 2022/23 prior to its submission to Council on the 29th November 2023 for its publication.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Statutory guidance requires the Corporate Director of Social Services and Housing to present the Annual Report to Council for its adoption.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1. This report is an opportunity for me as the Statutory Director of Social Services to provide a summary of the effectiveness of Caerphilly County Borough Council in delivering Social Services to its citizens.

- 5.2 The format and content of the report is prescribed by CIW and outlines in some detail how we addressed our priorities for the financial year in question.
- 5.3 The report lays out how we addressed our key priorities for 2022/23 and what our priorities are for 2023/24.
- 5.4 A key challenge faced during the year has been our ability to recruit and retain staff in a variety of care related roles. This is not an issue solely for Caerphilly CBC but a problem nationally. We have worked hard with colleagues from within the Council, the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and independent sector partners to share ideas and resources to overcome these challenges.
- 5.5 The continued fallout from the Covid 19 pandemic coupled with the cost of living crisis has placed significant financial pressures on the independent care sector. Whilst we have taken steps to offset some of these challenges, we continue to make representations to Welsh Government around an all Wales solution to market stability.
- 5.6 Whilst the pandemic was clearly challenging for everyone involved in social care services we have also taken some of the learning from the way we delivered services during that period to ensure services are sustainable moving forward and meet the long term needs of some of our service users. Our reconfiguration of our day services is an example of this and will mean that these services will be fit for purpose for years to come.
- 5.7 Once again I would like to put on record my gratitude to all the staff in the County Borough who have played a part in delivering Social Services, whether they be employees of the Council or staff employed by our Independent or third sector partners.

5.8 **Conclusion**

Following presentation to Council on 29th November 2023, my Annual Director's Report will be made available to Welsh Government, CIW, members of the public via the Council's website, partner agencies and stakeholders.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 There are no assumptions made or presumed in this report.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 This report has no decision-making requests and an integrated impact assessment does not apply.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Over the past 2 years the Directorate has received significant amounts of grant funding which has enabled us to respond to and recover from the Covid 19 pandemic. Whilst some grant funding was received in 2022/23 it is clear that this will start to reduce of the next few years.

8.2 The Directorate underspent by £432,000 against its allocated budget, despite pressures in areas such as:-

- Independent sector residential care for children
- Nursing care for older people
- Supported living for people with learning disabilities

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 In order to produce my Annual Director's Report a wide range of information sources are taken into account including feedback from our customers and regulators/ inspectors. This feedback has been incorporated into my report where relevant.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Part 8 of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

Author: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
street@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees: Cllr Teresa Parry, Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Brenda Miles, Vice Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Elaine Forehead, Cabinet Member for Social Care
Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Mark S. Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Jo Williams, Head of Adult Services
Gareth Jenkins, Head of Children's Services

Appendices:
Appendix 1 Annual Report of the Director of Social Services and Housing 2022/2023

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Caerphilly County Borough Council

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES & HOUSING 2022-2023



CREU CYMUNEDAU GOFALGAR
CREATING CARING COMMUNITIES



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1. Introduction

I am pleased to introduce my Annual Report for 2022/23 as Statutory Director of Social Services & Housing for Caerphilly County Borough Council. This is my opportunity to reflect on the achievements and challenges for the year concerned. It is important at the start of this report I am able to confirm that all the identified service priorities for the year have been met. The report also outlines our priorities for the year 2023/24.

Given the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, the increasing demands for services and the ongoing financial challenges faced by Local Government, delivering against these priorities and maintaining consistently high quality services has been a significant achievement in itself.

The resilience and commitment of our workforce is commendable. Although we have ongoing challenges in relation to recruitment and retention. Caerphilly is fortunate to be able to rely on staff who are passionate about what they do, feel supported to deliver good services and are genuinely committed to improving outcomes for our citizens. This is the case for both the staff who we directly employ and those we rely on from our commissioned service.

Overall performance across the Directorate has been strong despite significant pressures emerging from the NHS in terms of hospital discharge as well as pressures in children's services relating to complexity of needs and non-availability of services.

Our ability to respond to people both in the community and in hospitals has been hampered by a very fragile independent sector care market. We will continue to work with these key partners to ensure that these essential services remain in place to meet identified need.

The workload relating the Regional Partnership Board continues to increase as does the strategic influence of the Board on day to day operational delivery.

Going into 2023/24, there will be exceptional challenges because of the continued cost of living crisis, ongoing health issues and the wider pressures on families. However, my staff are enthusiastic and determined to continue to deliver the best possible services across every element of Social Services.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave Street', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Dave Street
Corporate Director - Social Services & Housing

2. Director's Summary of Performance

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, performance reporting was suspended by Welsh Government. Local authorities were instead required to submit 'check point data', initially on a weekly and then fortnightly basis to monitor the impact of the pandemic particularly in relation to work load demands and staff resourcing including absences. For 2022-2023 this checkpoint data has been reviewed and is now submitted monthly. For the first year it was agreed that comparative data will not be published. At the same time, Welsh Government has undertaken a review of the national performance data set and have implemented a National Performance Framework that will be reported on at the end of the 2023/24 financial year.

As a result, I am unable to provide the traditional 3 year comparative performance data for Adult and Children's Services. However, the Directorate Performance Assessment (DPA) was presented to Scrutiny Committee on 20th July 2023 and the key messages were as follows:

Adult Services:

The numbers of people receiving services remains constant however, due to the national shortage of domiciliary care workers in an average month there were 577 hours of care that could not be provided. The number of people waiting for the provision of a care package was, on average, 70 at any one time.

There was an increase in the number of assessments and reviews completed across adult services.

Children's Services:

For Children's Services, the numbers of referrals progressing for assessment remained relatively stable however, complexity of the issues presented was increasing. The numbers of children included on the Child Protection Register and the number becoming Looked After were also reported to be stable at this time.

Overall performance was noted to be positive with no exceptions to report.

The Directorate Performance Assessment report can be found here: [Social Services DPA](#)

3. How are people shaping our services?

Caerphilly Social Services is committed to making sure that people can make their voice heard, whether this is about how our services are developed and delivered in the future or whether it is about a service they are receiving now. We do this in a number of different ways including, undertaking surveys, contract monitoring processes, Responsible Individual visits to care homes, complaints and compliments, consultation events and feedback from Regulatory Inspections.

The most important way of ensuring people's voices are heard and listened to is through every contact that our staff have with service users. This starts from the first point of contact with the Directorate. Our staff have all received Collaborative Communication training to provide them with the skills to have 'meaningful conversations' to identify 'what matters' to people including the personal outcomes the individual wants to achieve and the support networks they may already have in place to rely on to meet these outcomes. Any plans to provide care or support are co-produced to ensure people's voices and choices are recorded and responded to appropriately.

All of our Regulated services are registered under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act (RISCA) 2016 and inspected by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). In line with requirements, all our registered services have completed Quality Assurance Reports which are submitted to CIW. Routine inspections of care homes have continued and the inspection reports and annual returns are all available on the CIW website: [Home | Care Inspectorate Wales](#)

Engagement meetings have continued to be held with the CIW link Local Authority Inspector and the Senior Management Team

Social Services has a Statutory process that has to be followed when someone is unhappy with our services and wishes to make a complaint. We endeavour to ensure that the handling of complaints is quick and effective with the result that the majority of issues are able to be resolved as early as possible.

The Annual Social Services Complaints and Compliments Report for 2022/23 was reported to Scrutiny Committee on 12th September 2023 and can be accessed via the following link: [Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2022-23.pdf \(caerphilly.gov.uk\)](#)

During the year, the Directorate received 189 complaints, this is an increase on the 135 complaints received in the previous year. The Social Services Complaints and

Information Team put significant effort into attempting to resolve issues to the customer's satisfaction at Stage 1 of the process and it is really positive to report that the majority of complaints continue to be resolved at this stage.

The Complaints and Information Team record whether complaints are upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. This enables the Directorate to note any themes and trends from the findings to improve future practice and identify any isolated incidents of poor practice that may require attention.

Of the 189 complaints received at Stage 1, the following outcomes were noted:

- 20 were closed with 3 being withdrawn by the complainant, 2 being referred to other agencies and 15 being subject of other processes where the issues raised could be more appropriately resolved i.e. ongoing legal proceedings
- 13 complaints were upheld
- 8 complaints were partially upheld
- 147 complaints were not upheld
- 1 complaint was ongoing at the year end

Of the 13 complaints upheld:

- 5 related to Adult Services
- 3 related to Children's Services and
- 5 related to the Corporate Complaints Procedure

The Directorate received 11 requests to progress complaints to a Stage 2 formal investigation with 7 being dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedures and 4 progressing to Independent Investigation. In addition, there were 9 contacts by our customers to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) – a slight decrease on the previous year. Of these:

- In 5 cases, the PSOW confirmed that Caerphilly had followed due process
- In 2 cases, Caerphilly had been unable to follow procedures and so the matters were referred back to the Council to conclude
- 1 complainant withdrew their complaint and
- In 1 case, Caerphilly were asked to complete a Stage 2 investigation (included in the figure reported above).

The Directorate appreciates the importance of learning from complaints and representations and that equal emphasis needs to be placed on learning from positive outcomes.

Praise is received by teams in the form of thank you cards, letters and emails and these are sent to the Complaints and Information Team for them to record. In 2022/23, 233 compliments were received, of which 166 (71%) related to Adult Services and 67 (29%) related to Children's Services. This is an increase on the previous year which is due to improved recording processes. The percentage split is similar to previous years and reflects the nature of the services being delivered by the two areas.

In addition, annual survey responses by some service areas results in positive feedback that can be used to measure the success of the Directorate in those areas.

4. Promoting and improving the well-being of those we help

As stated in Section 3 above, staff within Caerphilly's Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Service are trained to undertake 'meaningful conversations' with service users, their families and carers about what really matters to them.

'Meaningful conversations' start with IAA staff the first time someone contacts us. These conversations concentrate on people's strengths, on working with people to maintain or regain their independence and utilising their own skills and networks to achieve their desired outcomes wherever possible.

It is important to acknowledge that the majority of contacts for Children's Services are from professionals and as a result the 'what matters' conversations with the child and/or their family are unable to take place until an assessment for Care and Support has commenced.

A guiding principle for Caerphilly Social Services is the promotion and maintenance of independence.

For Children's Services, this means supporting families to stay together and maintaining children within their homes and communities wherever it is safe to do so. This is underpinned by timely assessments of need and creative solutions being sought to help keep families together.

Whilst some families may have a negative view of Children's Social Services to start with, we ensure that children, young people and their parents and carers are fully involved in the assessment process and that they help to shape and influence their plan for care and support. Working in this way helps to improve working relationships over time.

To ensure that they have the opportunity to participate in consultations or purely making their views known all children have access to an Independent Advocate who can support them in meetings to ensure their voices are heard. We were the first Local Authority to develop a statutory Parent Advocacy service jointly funded by Families First. Welsh Government subsequently provided funding to pilot the roll out of the model across the other four Gwent Local Authorities.

Supporting people to retain or regain their independence is a key objective for all who work within Social Services.

We have full access to the national citizen's wellbeing database called DEWIS so that people can have quick and easy access to information directly from a website rather than having to make a call to Social Services and/or speaking to a professional where they may prefer not to. We have a dedicated lead officer to further progress the development of DEWIS.

Adult Services have introduced an assessment service for domiciliary care to look to promote people's independence wherever possible using a 'Reablement' approach. This has enabled people to be discharged from hospital and be assessed in their own homes.

In addition, we have worked with the Aneurin Bevan Health Board to have access to their domiciliary care services to discharge people from hospital who require a large package of care. Thus we have reduced their length of stay and enabled them to return to their own home which improves their well-being.

We have opened a coffee shop staffed by 12 individuals with a learning disability who previously attended day services. We have employed 7 individuals on the Council's terms and conditions and are looking to increase this number.

How we addressed our priorities for 2022/23:

- We embedded the intake model of assessment for care to promote people's independence, choice and control with very positive results. The first 3 months data showed only 34% of people who went through the assessment services required a long term package of care.
- We have established a regional post to increase the take up of Direct Payments to allow individual's choice of how their care and support is delivered to best meet their needs, to standardise practice and to promote the service.
- Learning from Caerphilly was shared across Wales to support the successful roll out of Parental Advocacy in Children's Services

What are our priorities for 2023/24?

- To refresh the collaborative conversations training for assessment care management staff across adult services and develop the mentor's role to focus on having 'what matters' conversations
- To embed the reablement outcomes focused care planning across adult services

5. Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being

Caerphilly recognises the importance of working with people and our partners to improve outcomes for all service users and this will continue to be a priority for us going forward.

Caerphilly are active partners in the Gwent wide Children and Families Partnership which continues to prioritise the development of integrated approaches to supporting children and young people including the development of Windmill Farm, a regional residential assessment resource managed by Newport City Council in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board serving the five Gwent Local Authorities.

The Gwent wide Attachment Trauma Service has continued to offer advice, consultation and training to Caerphilly social work teams with the aim of supporting children and young people to remain living at home or remain in stable foster placements.

In response to the Welsh Government's policy to 'Eliminate Profit in Children's Residential Care' Children's Services gained Corporate and Political approval to expand in-house residential care provision including additional children's homes, supported accommodation for young people Leaving Care and for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). These plans will see the opening of two small children's homes and an additional UASC property during 2023/24.

Across Adult Services, we continue to develop services to prevent unnecessary admission to hospital and facilitate a safe timely discharge for individuals who have to be admitted. The Community Resource Team (CRT) has placed community staff in Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr to work with individuals, their families and Health professionals. Initiatives include access to the Health Board's Domiciliary Care runs and the development of 'step closer to home' beds in care homes for temporary placements to prevent people staying in hospital once they are medically stable.

We have recognised that increasing numbers of people are experiencing lower level mental health issues and they were falling between existing services. In response we have developed a Team to address this gap. The Team work with people with anxiety, low mood, low self-esteem and related issues. The Mental Health Workers provide emotional support throughout interventions and individuals are able to access the service by telephone during office hours. The service also supports individuals with

housing, income, benefits, employment and healthy living where necessary, all utilising a wide variety of statutory, voluntary and third sector agencies.

As part of the Council's Place Shaping Programme, Cabinet agreed to allocate capital funding to develop two new respite facilities – one for adults and one for children. These developments will replace and increase existing provision to continue to support parents and carers in their unpaid caring roles.

How we addressed our priorities for 2022/23:

- We worked with the Health Board to enable people to remain in the community by implementing Welsh Government's 6 goal approach.
- We worked with regional colleagues to introduce Bridging the Gap, a framework to support unpaid carers, this is funded from the Regional Integration Fund.
- Demolition has commenced on site for the development of the new respite houses for adults and for children.
- Two properties have been purchased to develop 2 bedded children's homes.
- We continue to support the National Transfer Scheme by offering accommodation for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children identified for transfer by the Home Office and an additional 4 bedded house is being planned to accommodate the young people.

What are our priorities for 2023/24?

- To work with the Health Board to implement the system resilience plan to enable people to remain at home or be discharged from hospital in a timely manner.
- To increase capacity for respite for children with disabilities by re-registering an existing provision to provide additional support to parent/carers.
- To progress the design of the respite houses for adults and children.
- To continue to expand children's residential care and supported accommodation for young people across the Borough.
- To continue to support the National Transfer Scheme by offering accommodation for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

6. Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm

Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults is one of the highest priorities for the Council and the Corporate Safeguarding Board is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Social Services.

Safeguarding is everybody's business and is a key theme running through the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. Consequently, we make sure that our staff, contractors and partners are aware of their responsibilities in this area. A Corporate Safeguarding Policy is in place and a programme of training and awareness raising is in place. Each service area has an identified Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and periodic practice development groups are held to support the DSO's.

The Corporate Safeguarding Board produces an Annual Report for Elected Members and the 2022/23 Report was shared with Scrutiny Committee on 11th July 2023. The report can be accessed via the following link: [Corporate Safeguarding Annual Reporting 22-23.pdf \(caerphilly.gov.uk\)](https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/~/media/2023/07/23/Corporate-Safeguarding-Annual-Reporting-22-23.pdf)

The arrangements for improving safeguarding policies, procedures and practice across the region are led by the South East Wales Safeguarding Boards for Adults and Children (SEWSB) and the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Board. These Boards are supported by a Business Unit funded by the statutory partners and hosted by Caerphilly. The Boards have clear governance structures and their work is supported by a range of sub groups. Caerphilly are active partners on these Boards.

Within the Council, responsibility for children's and adults safeguarding sits within Children's Services. Although discrete service areas, they are managed by one Service Manager and capacity and resilience has been improved as a result.

Decisions are made on all children's referrals within 24 hours ensuring full compliance with statutory procedures. The Wales Safeguarding Procedures are fully embedded across the Directorate and the National Safeguarding Training Framework is scheduled to be fully implemented by the end of 2023.

How we addressed our priorities for 2022/23:

- We continued to embed learning from Adult and Child Practice Reviews.
- We reviewed the priorities of the Regional Safeguarding Board's 3-year Plan.

- We implemented the National Safeguarding Training Framework from November 2022 with further updates expected during 2023.
- We continued to support the development of a Council wide Learning Management System (LMS) to record safeguarding training attendance and compliance.
- We await the findings from Internal Audit following their review of the Corporate Safeguarding Self-Assessment processes.

What are our priorities for 2023/24?

- To continue to embed learning from Adult and Child Practice Reviews
- To implement a Council wide Learning Management System (LMS) to record safeguarding training attendance and compliance.
- To respond to the findings of the Internal Audit of the Corporate Safeguarding Self-Assessment processes.
- To respond to the changing requirements of the National Safeguarding Training Framework.

7. Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society

Supporting children Looked After and young people Leaving Care to reach their full potential and achieve positive outcomes is a key priority for Children's Services and the Corporate Parenting Group.

Caerphilly has a proven track record of supporting young people into further and higher education and a number of Care Leavers have gained Degrees and similar qualifications. 50% of Care Leavers continued to be engaged in education, training or employment 12 months after leaving care.

We recognise that it is important for people to be more self-reliant and maintain their independence enabling them to participate fully in society and their local community. We have embedded the DEWIS information system so people can access information for themselves 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Enabling all adults to achieve their outcomes has been a key feature in the delivery of alternative day services in response to the Covid pandemic. The learning from delivering services in a different way that meets individual needs will be key to commissioning a modern, fit for purpose, day service provision going forward. I acknowledge that the changes around day services have been challenging for some of our service users and their family members, but I am confident in time that these changes will be seen in a positive light.

The opening of a coffee shop staffed by individuals who previously attended day services has been very well received and is used regularly by local residents. This is a great example of what can be achieved by delivering services differently.

How we addressed our priorities for 2022/23:

- We commissioned an independent organisation to produce a model of day services, this was agreed by Cabinet and is based on good practice across the country.

What are our priorities for 2023/24?

- To look at opening another coffee shop in Newbridge leisure centre to enable more people to have the opportunity to learn and develop skills.
- To look at employing individuals in catering under the Council's terms and conditions.

8. Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

We want to support children, young people and adults to be as socially active as possible, to feel they can make decisions for themselves and keep themselves safe.

We have embedded the “what matters conversations” across the Directorate and trained staff to enhance their skills to focus on outcomes, the strengths and assets of people, their families and networks.

We recognise that people having fulfilling relationships with those they are close to is really important for their well-being.

For children Looked After, maintaining contact with their families and their home communities is really important and Children’s Services do everything they can to ensure contact arrangements meet the needs of everyone involved and are positive events.

Within Adult Services, we continued to recruit carers to our Shared Lives Scheme to enable us to offer more choice and increase the number of placements we are able to offer in family homes to people of all client groups. We also made funding available to allow adaptations to people’s homes, such as ramps and showers to allow people to remain independent.

We have continued to facilitate Carers Groups across the county borough to enable carers to meet socially over a coffee. Our Carers Team attend many events to promote their service and their efforts have been recognised.

We recognised that we had more work to do on supporting relationships and this became a priority for us going forward in terms of expansion of the My Mates club.

Within Children’s Services, wherever possible and whenever safe to do so, we ensure children are placed as close to their home communities as possible in order to support their links with their family and home.

There are increasing demands being placed on us to recruit more foster carers in order to meet the needs of children and young people. We continue to run a radio recruitment campaign which has helped increase the enquiries we receive but we continue to see the highest rate of enquiries comes from ‘word of mouth’ recommendations from existing foster carers. We are fully engaged in the Foster

Wales developments for recruitment, retention and support services for foster carers.

Recruitment of all staff but particularly Qualified Social Workers is a significant and growing challenge and Caerphilly supports the national approaches being undertaken by the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) and Social Care Wales (SCW).

How we addressed our priorities for 2022/23?

- We expanded South East Wales Shared Lives Scheme with the Health Board to provide a service for older adults with mental health problems.
- We worked with partners in the third sector to develop mechanisms to allow individuals to establish and maintain friendships.
- We continued the secondment scheme for staff to undertake the Social Work Degree.

What are our priorities for 2023/24?

- To further expand the South East Wales Shared Lives Scheme to include Rhondda Cynon Taff County Council to provide a larger service for long term and sessional support.
- To implement a hub with partners to look at how outcomes for people are met.
- Continuation of the secondment scheme for staff to undertake the Social Work Degree.
- To work with Corporate Human Resources to identify ways of addressing the wider recruitment and retention challenges across the Service.

9. Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

Children's Services actively support children Looked After to engage in education and training and provide individual support wherever necessary. Children are encouraged to make the best use of their leisure time and are supported to engage in community activities wherever possible.

Children's Services has a well established operational protocol with Housing to ensure we can provide appropriate support to young people facing homelessness. We have a range of supported accommodation available including shared living provision, supported lodgings and supported tenancies. As stated in Section 5, we intend to expand our in-house provision of children's homes and other accommodation options to meet the needs of our children and young people.

The Council is committed to developing dementia friendly communities so people can be supported to participate in normal activities of daily living such as shopping, banking and eating out. You will see the dementia friendly signs in local establishments and many people wearing the blue flower badge indicating they have been trained as a dementia friend.

Within Adult Services care homes, you can see many different displays and themes reflecting people's earlier lives. These change regularly and can reflect current events. The homes are now divided into small house units each with its own staff team so they can really get to know the residents. The physical environment within some of the homes has also changed with the introduction of primary colours reflecting people's choice of their bedroom door and communal areas are brighter and more defined.

With our partners we expanded our Shared Lives Scheme to look at a health initiative which provides placements with families to prevent people going into hospital and/or facilitating them being discharged to a family home. This enables people to have time to recover, receive more therapy interventions and have an assessment of their needs in more appropriate surroundings. We are committed to this alternative model of accommodation.

How we addressed our priorities for 2022/2023:

- We have employed people with a learning disability on the Council's terms and conditions to work in our café.

- Building work commenced on the Mill Road flats project which is now part of the regional strategic capital plan
- We continue to develop children's residential care and supported accommodation for young people across the Borough (*also in Section 5*)

What are our priorities for 2023/24?

- To further increase the number of people we employ in our day opportunities projects.
- To open an additional respite facility for children with disabilities.

10. How we do what we do?

Our workforce and how we support their professional roles

Our staff are our greatest asset; a skilled and motivated workforce are essential to safeguard and support vulnerable people, promote independence and enhance service delivery. Ensuring that frontline practitioners and managers are supported and well trained is crucial to the success of our service. Our workforce has been relatively stable with good staff retention. However, we are seeing increasing challenges in recruiting to specific posts across both Adult and Children's Services and increasing pressures around retention due to the Council's current salary scales no longer being competitive with neighbouring Local Authorities.

We have a joint Workforce Development Team with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and they are responsible for delivering a training and development strategy that supports development opportunities for staff at all levels in Social Services.

The Authority holds workforce development responsibility for the whole care sector. The Care Sector employs over 3,000 staff with approximately 50% employed by the local authority and 50% by independent and third sector. There are significant demand and supply challenges for staff to deliver Domiciliary Care and this is a UK wide crisis.

We continue to second staff to undertake the Social Work Degree.

Our financial resources and how we plan for the future

Budget management is embedded as a core function of Divisional Management Teams (DMTs) and the Senior Management Team (SMT) with the Financial Services Manager being a member of the Senior Management Team. Budget reports are discussed at DMT's and SMT on a regular basis.

For the financial year 2022/23 the Directorate underspent by £432,000.

The most significant growth in demand during 2022/2023 has continued to be in the following areas:

- Independent sector residential care for children
- Nursing care for older people
- Supported living for people with learning disabilities

The financial pressures being faced by the UK Government, Welsh Government and subsequently Local Government are growing and whilst the financial situation for 2022/23 was relatively stable, there are significant concerns for 2023 and beyond.

Ongoing reliance on time limited grant funding streams from Welsh Government undermines longer term sustainability. Whilst the transition of the Integrated Care Funding (ICF) to the Regional Integration Fund (RIF) has afforded a short period of stability to the current funding arrangements, Welsh Government's intention is for RIF funding to taper incrementally with the expectation that Council funding will meet the increasing shortfalls in funding. This position is being challenged across Wales.

Our partnership working, Political and Corporate leadership, governance and accountability

Part 9 of the Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act places a key emphasis on partnership working and to this end the Directorate is a key partner of the Greater Gwent Regional Partnership Board (RPB) with the other four local authorities in Gwent and the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

The work of the RPB has a major influence over the work of Social Services in Caerphilly and in particular with Health. Since its inception the RPB has produced:

- An Area Plan
- A Market Position statement which outlines the provision of existing services and what services may be required in the future.
- An Annual report which pulls together all of the work of the RPB.

Further information on the work of the RPB and copies of the above reports can be found at its website at www.gwentrpb.wales/home.

However, our partnership working is not limited to the RPB. We have a significant range of services provided with other local authorities and partners including:

- A joint workforce development team with Blaenau Gwent
- A Gwent frailty Service developed in conjunction with the four other local authorities and the health board
- A joint Regional Safeguarding Board covering all partners across Gwent.
- A Shared Lives scheme run on behalf of six local authorities and the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

- A joint regional Adoption Service and
- A Regional MyST Programme

Political support for Social Services in Caerphilly remains strong. I am a member of the Council's Corporate Management Team which meets weekly to consider key decisions on strategic and operational priorities, prior to these issues / decisions going onto Scrutiny / Council.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services attends the Social Services Scrutiny Committee with senior managers. Scrutiny Committee, consisting of sixteen elected members, meets every six weeks to oversee the performance of the Directorate and to consider any policy / service developments prior to them being considered by Cabinet.



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatau eraill ar gais.
This document is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.

