



CABINET – 30TH NOVEMBER, 2016

SUBJECT: CWMCARN HIGH SCHOOL – PLANNED CLOSURE

REPORT BY: CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members in relation to the planned closure of Cwmcarn High School and associated developments.

2. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 2.1 The report links directly to the Education for Life, sustainability and regeneration strategies, particularly in the context of provision of modern fit for purpose teaching and learning environments.
- 2.2 The report contributes to the Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2016. In particular, as follows :
- A prosperous Wales as it details improved outcomes for learners,
 - A healthier Wales, supporting vulnerable learners can improve their well-being and add educational achievement.
 - A more equal Wales, a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background is; and.
 - A Wales of cohesive communities (in the context of improving quality of life with attractive, viable, safe and well connected communities).

3. THE REPORT

- 3.1 At their meeting on 27th June, 2016, the Governing Body of Cwmcarn High School regrettably made the very sad and difficult decision to seek to close the school. This is despite their best efforts to keep the school open and due to the unprecedented circumstances (asbestos, relocation, falling pupil rolls) that the school has found itself in since 2012. The Chair of Governors wrote to the Welsh Government (WG) on 29th June to advise of their decision.
- 3.2 This decision was sought in line with Section 80 of The Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

- 3.3 Welsh Government replied to the Chair of Governors on 5 July 2016 advising for the above closure proposal to take place, the Welsh Ministers will require sufficient information to carefully consider the request. In essence, the request by Welsh Government was for more detailed information akin to when a school closure is proposed.
- 3.4 The Chair of Governors submitted this detailed information to Welsh Government by letter dated 20 July, 2016.
- 3.5 Welsh Government's Cabinet Secretary for Education wrote to the Chair of Governors on 5 October 2016 advising that she had consented to the Governing Body issuing notice under the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to discontinue the school in view of the Governing Body's decision on 27 June.
- 3.6 The Chair of Governors, on behalf of the Governing Body, wrote to Welsh Government's Cabinet Secretary for Education on 10 October, 2016, to give Welsh Ministers two years written notice of their intention to discontinue the school. The Council was also informed of this decision at that time by letter.
- 3.7 In order to plan for potential closure, the Council submitted a £3m business case to Welsh Government (21st century schools) on 21 July, 2016. This was agreed by the School Strategy Board and proposed:
- additional classrooms at Newbridge School to manage the initial bulge and to accommodate any Cwmcarn High School pupils who advised that they wished to transfer there at the date of decision to discontinue Cwmcarn High School, and
 - undertake demolition works at both Cwmcarn High school and Newbridge School.
- 3.8 The business planning process was considered by the 21st Century Schools Team in Welsh Government. Welsh Government's Cabinet Secretary for Education subsequently approved the business case, in principle, on 14 September, 2016. This decision was without prejudice to the decision regarding the Governing Body's request under section 80 of the School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to discontinue Cwmcarn High School and is subject to the Council agreeing to making a 50% contribution towards the capital investment costs of the works outlined in the business case to Newbridge and Cwmcarn Schools in the sum of £1.5 million.
- 3.9 There is still considerable work required over the next 2 years to facilitate the Governing Body's decision to close Cwmcarn High School, e.g., planning regarding school budget, staffing issues and pupil admission arrangements.
- 3.10 The Council, along with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) and the school, are working collaboratively to ensure the pupils' education is not disadvantaged.
- 3.11 It is proposed to provide further update reports as the detail emerges in relation to the Governing Body's decision.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Impact Assessment screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and no potential for unlawful discrimination has been initially identified affecting one or more of the target equality groups.

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 5.1 The decision of the Governing Body has prompted the Council to plan and have regard to long term needs of children and young people, attempting to improve and prevent poor life chances.
- 5.2 The report contributes to the 5 ways of working in the context of a long term strategy and vision, integration approach, preventing problems occurring or getting worse (limited alternative school places) and collaborating to meet the objectives.
- 5.3 This report contributes to the Well-being Goals and in particular in the context of :
- Corporate planning,
 - Risk management,
 - Workforce planning,
 - Financial planning, and
 - Asset management

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Cwmcarn High School has been experiencing budgetary problems in recent years and that has been exacerbated by recent dramatic falling rolls. It is estimated that the accumulated deficit will be in the region of £1million when the school is discontinued. Every effort will be made to minimise this deficit amount over the next 2 years.
- 6.2 The Council will need to consider setting aside an amount of £1.5 million to meet its 50% share of the £3 million cost for the capital investment proposed to Newbridge and Cwmcarn Schools. Proposals for utilising Council's reserves are due to be considered by Cabinet.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Council has been working closely with Cwmcarn High School and been successful to date in seeking alternative employment for Cwmcarn High School staff. Other secondary schools have been extremely supportive in facilitating these arrangements. This process will be ongoing for the next 2 years and will be undertaken in accordance with appropriate Council HR policies.
- 7.2 The Headteacher of Newbridge School has continued in her role as Executive Headteacher of Cwmcarn High School. This arrangement is working well.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The draft report was distributed as detailed below. All comments received have been reflected in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members are requested to :-
- note the update in respect of the Governing Body's decision to discontinue the school in 2 years;
 - agree the capital investment in relation to Newbridge and Cwmcarn Schools and allocating £1.5 million as CCBC's 50% match funding.

- agree that officers continue to work with the Governing Body and staff at the school regarding the planning of the school budget, staffing and admission issues; and
- note that regular update reports will be provided as the situation develops.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To provide an update in relation to the planned closure of Cwmcarn High School and to agree a way forward for the next 2 years.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013
The School Organisation Code. Welsh Government (2013)

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 Kathryn Peters, Corporate Policy Manager
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 Headteacher, Newbridge School (also Executive Headteacher of Cwmcarn High School).

Background Papers
 21st Century Schools files
 Council report 23 November 2010 (SOP)
 Council report 3 November 2011 (SOP2)
 School Organisation Code (2013)
 Business Case (SOP) July 2016