



CABINET - 13TH DECEMBER 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 Cabinet 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 approve the recommendation, 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 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

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To seek Members approval, 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 7 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 available in hardcopy and electronically via the Authority's website. 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 In addition, 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.
- 5.15 The Consultation Report will be published electronically on the Sustainable Communities for Learning pages on the Council's website.
- 5.16 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.
- 5.17 Members of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee met once again on the 28th November 2023 to consider the Consultation Report and asked to

endorse the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to Statutory Notice. A vote was taken, 15 for, 0 against and 1 abstention.

5.18 **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 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 School Organisation Code 2018 - Consultation Report: Proposal for the Closure of Cwm Glas Infant School was considered by the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee at a meeting held on Tuesday 28th November 2023.

During the ensuing discussion Members received information on consultation response rates, the level of support for the proposal, and a minor error was highlighted in the categories of respondents as percentages table in the appendices. Officers provided assurances that the final report would be amended.

Having noted the content of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations are supported and should be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. By way of Microsoft Forms and with two verbal votes (and in noting that there were 15 for, 0 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

11. STATUTORY POWER

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

Author: Andrea West, Sustainable Communities for Learning Manager

Consultees: 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 and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion and 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 \(Cymraeg\)](#)

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