

Date/Dyddiad 10 March 2017
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To: Parents, Carers and Guardians of students attending Barry and Bryn Hafren Comprehensive Schools, Barry and Y Daith Pupil Referral Unit;
Parents, Carers and Guardians of pupils attending feeder schools linked to Barry and Bryn Hafren Comprehensive Schools, Barry;
Headteacher, Staff and Governing Body of Barry and Bryn Hafren Comprehensive Schools, Barry and the Management Committee of Y Daith Pupil Referral Unit; and
Prescribed Consultees

Dear Consultee,

Proposal to establish new English medium mixed-sex secondary schools in Barry

On 6 March 2017, the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Cabinet determined the proposal to transform secondary education in Barry by closing the existing single sex English medium Barry Comprehensive and Bryn Hafren Comprehensive schools and establishing two new mixed-sex, 11 – 18 English medium comprehensive schools on the current sites of Barry Comprehensive and Bryn Hafren Comprehensive schools from September 2018.

The Council held a full consultation with prescribed consultees that concluded with the issue of a statutory notice on the proposal. Cabinet, in making its decision, considered all previous Cabinet reports relating to the proposal; the responses to the consultation as set out in the Consultation Report and the statutory objections received together with the local authority response as set out in the Objection Report. Taking all matters into account, Cabinet has approved the proposal. As a result two new English medium mixed-sex secondary schools will be established on the current sites of Barry Comprehensive and Bryn Hafren Comprehensive schools from 1 September 2018.

It was noted that there were 3 statutory objections. The main concerns of objectors are summarised in the objection report together with the response from the local authority. The objection report is available to view on the council website at www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/barryschools or a hard copy is available on request to the address above or e-mail MMatthews@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

In determining the proposal, Cabinet were satisfied that the proposal will:

- Enable further improvements to educational outcomes and standards in the area;
- Maintain access and parental preference for English medium provision in the area;
- Continue to provide a mix of English medium, Welsh medium and faith provision within Barry and surrounding area;
- Reduce surplus places in the Barry area
- Deliver the transformational change necessary for all students to achieve their full potential and as a result to contribute to the regeneration of Barry.

The reasons for the decision in respect of the factors outlined in the School Organisation Code are as follows:

Quality and Standards of Education

Estyn commented in their response to the consultation exercise: “The proposer has given a clear rationale for the proposal. This includes addressing the poor quality of the school buildings and ensuring future provision of mixed sex secondary provision in the Barry area. The proposer clearly states that it believes that establishing two new mixed sex schools will strengthen and improve the provision for learners and the wider community. It also states reasonably that the two new schools will provide greater opportunities for curriculum development”.

The Councils clear ambition is that educational outcomes in the Vale of Glamorgan are the best in Wales and match those of the most successful authorities in England with similar socio-economic profiles. The proposal will help deliver that ambition.

The two new schools will provide greater opportunities for curriculum development enabling the provision of a broad and relevant curriculum. Girls and boys will have access to a very broad range of high quality courses and specialist teachers. Enhanced provision for students with special educational needs will be available at both schools.

The two new schools will have a clear and ambitious vision for the success of their students to enable further improvements to educational outcomes, including attendance and performance of all students at GCSE and post 16 qualifications.

During the transition stage following the determination, the Council will take all practicable steps to minimise disruption for all pupils by working closely with both schools.

The proposal will provide much needed investment in both schools, and will help deliver the transformational change necessary for all students to achieve their full potential.

Need for places and the impact on the accessibility of schools

The proposal will ensure that there is a sustainable balance between the supply and demand for secondary school places across Barry for the long term. The proposal will reduce surplus places in the Barry area and retain English, Welsh and faith provision.

Under the proposals there are no plans to change the Council’s policy on the transport of students to and from schools. Free school transport eligibility will remain unchanged as a result of this proposal. The available safe walking routes to schools used for the assessment of free school transport will not alter as a result of this proposal albeit some students may no longer qualify for free school transport if they choose to apply for a school within 3 miles of their home address.

Estyn state “the proposer has suitably considered the impact of the proposal on learner travel arrangements”.

Resourcing of education

Funding is provided through the school funding formula which allocates the majority of funding for schools on the basis of pupil numbers. The establishment of two new mixed-sex secondary schools would result in funding being allocated to the schools on the same basis as for other secondary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan.

This proposal will mean that significant capital investment will be made in establishing the new schools and developing state of the art facilities. The estimated cost of the scheme is £44M. It is anticipated that part-funding would be provided by the Welsh Government under Band B of its 21st Century Schools Programme. The remainder of the capital funding would be contributed by the Council.

Specific factors in the consideration of school closures

An Advisory Board was established in January 2016 to review options for establishing mixed-sex English medium schools in Barry. An engagement strategy was developed to ensure the views of students, teachers, parents, governors and trade unions would be at the centre of the development of any new proposals.

Following the engagement strategy, the Board felt it necessary for two new, mixed-sex schools to be established in order to achieve the scale of transformation required to meet the desired outcomes for mixed-sex secondary education Barry, which includes a rebranding of the schools. This rebranding is not limited to the school name, as a number of changes will be necessary to ensure inclusion of both sexes, regardless of school sites, and to facilitate new joint working, especially across sixth form provision.

The option to close both schools was endorsed by Cabinet on 4 July 2016 and by the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee on the 3 October 2016.

The decision is subject to the call in procedures as set out in the Council's constitution which allows decisions taken by Cabinet to be reviewed. Should a call in of the decision take place, all stakeholders will be informed.

Yours sincerely



Paula Ham
Director of Learning and Skills