

Date/Dyddiad 24 March 2021
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To: Parents, Carers and Guardians of children attending Cowbridge Comprehensive School; Headteacher, Staff and Governing Body of Cowbridge Comprehensive School; Prescribed Consultees

Dear Consultee,

Proposal to increase the number of primary school places in Cowbridge from September 2022 by;

- **Changing the age range of Cowbridge Comprehensive School from 11 - 19 to 3 - 19;**
- **Increasing the capacity of Cowbridge Comprehensive School from to 1,586 places to 1,796 places to accommodate 210 English medium primary school places with an additional 48 part-time nursery places; and**
- **Constructing a new school building on the Cowbridge Comprehensive School site to accommodate the primary and nursery places.**

The Council consulted with prescribed consultees in accordance with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 on the proposal.

In line with the requirements of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code 2018, a consultation exercise with prescribed consultees was undertaken from 16 March 2020 to 23 November 2020. The aim of the consultation was to inform prescribed consultees about the proposal. During the consultation exercise, 251 individual responses were received by the consultation closing date of 23 November 2020. Of the total 251 individual responses received, 83 (33%) were in favour of the proposal, 163 (65%) were opposed, and 5 (2%) stated no opinion either way. On 17 December 2020, the Council published the consultation report which provided an overview of the feedback received during the consultation period and outlined the Council's response to any issues raised.

On 21 December 2020, following consideration of the consultation report, Cabinet determined to progress the proposal through the publication of a statutory notice. The statutory notice was published on the Council's website on 13 January 2021 and was issued to prescribed consultees and posted at the main entrances of Cowbridge Comprehensive School. 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 or by email, and sent to the proposer before the end of 28 days beginning with the day on which the notice was published ("the objection period"). As the statutory notice was published on 13 January 2021, statutory objections had to be received by 9 February 2021. 92 statutory objections were received during the objection period.

On 22 March 2021, the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Cabinet considered the objection report and all other relevant documentation and determined to approve the proposal. The objection report is available to view and download from the Council's website:

Hard copies of the objection report are available on request by contacting a member of the 21st Century Schools Team on: 21stcenturyschools@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

This proposal will result in an additional 210 English medium primary school places and 48 part-time nursery places in Cowbridge. A new self-contained building will be constructed on the Cowbridge Comprehensive School site to accommodate the primary and nursery phases.

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

- Ensure the Council is able to accommodate the future demand for English medium primary education in Cowbridge.
- Enable 'excellent' provision at Cowbridge Comprehensive School to continue whilst catering for a greater pupil population.
- Provide innovative and creative learning environments which are adaptable to change and will challenge and support children to reach their full potential.
- Increase the level of community access and interaction through the use of the school's educational facilities whilst meeting the needs of the school.

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

Quality and Standards of Education

As noted in the response received from Estyn, 'the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards of education and provision in the area.' In the most recent Estyn inspection in April 2019, Cowbridge Comprehensive School was judged to be 'excellent' in all five inspection areas. Estyn summarised that 'strong, assured leadership, careful curriculum planning and consistently effective teaching to educate and inspire young people have been successful in securing exceptionally high levels of pupil attainment and wellbeing at Cowbridge Comprehensive School.'

The governing body and senior leadership team of Cowbridge Comprehensive School will be responsible for the primary phase. The governing body will need to update its terms of reference to reflect the inclusion of the primary phase. The composition of the governing body will also need to reflect this with staff and parent representatives for the primary phase. The governing body and headteacher will be responsible for developing a staffing structure for the new all-through school to ensure appropriate skills and experience. The governing body's committee structure will also be reviewed to ensure there is sufficient challenge and oversight in relation to the primary phase.

The senior leadership of Cowbridge Comprehensive School have been fully supportive of this proposal and the Council believes that this proposal will ensure Cowbridge Comprehensive School is able to continue providing excellent quality and standards in education whilst catering for a larger pupil population and age range.

The response from pupils also noted numerous opportunities for younger and older pupils to benefit from each other.

Based on previous experiences, the Council considers there to be a number of benefits associated with the all-through school model, including:

- A consistent vision and shared values across education phases.
- Shared professional learning community.
- Consistent engagement with parents across the primary and secondary phase.
- Expertise across the full age range.
- Professional development opportunities for staff within a through school environment.
- Increased focus on the key transitions particularly between Key Stage 2 and the secondary phase ensuring that gains in learning are built upon year by year with the minimum of disruption as the child moves through the learning structure(s).
- One single accountability and inspection regime, including a single Improvement Partner from the Consortium.
- A single budget across the school, simplifying financial management.
- Opportunity to realise cost efficiencies from co-location on a single site and rationalisation of support service contracts such as grounds maintenance.
- Removal of duplication of data returns and pupil census data.

Need for places and the impact upon accessibility of schools

The main driver for this proposal is to meet increased demand for English medium primary education in Cowbridge as a result of recent and proposed housing developments.

The Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Plan (LDP) 2011-2026 provides the local planning policy framework for the Vale of Glamorgan and was adopted by the Council on 28 June 2017. A number of housing developments in Cowbridge have been included in the Council's Local Development Plan 2011 - 2026. The largest of these developments being the 'Land to the north and west of Darren Close' with 475 dwellings. This development has obtained planning permission and construction has begun on site.

There is limited capacity at the existing primary schools serving the development. On 4 November 2019, the Council's Cabinet approved a phased approach to expanding primary provision in Cowbridge with an expansion of English medium provision being delivered as part of phase one and Welsh medium primary provision being expanded as part of phase two. English medium expansion was identified as the priority due to limited capacity and projections indicating that existing provision would be insufficient to meet future demand.

Y Bont Faen Primary School has previously been oversubscribed from catchment applications. In September 2019, the school breached its admission number to accommodate an additional 10 catchment pupils.

This proposal will result in an additional 210 primary places 48 part-time nursery places. The additional capacity would be phased in with 30 reception and 48 part-time nursery places available from September 2022. This will ensure that the capacity increases in line with demand.

As the increased demand is being generated from within the existing catchment area for Y Bont Faen Primary School, both Y Bont Faen and the proposed primary phase of the 3-19 school will

share a catchment area. This will avoid creating an unnecessary divide within the Cowbridge community by splitting the town into two separate catchment areas. When applying for school places, parents/carers are able to identify more than one preference. Those resident within the catchment area would be able to apply for both schools to minimise the chance of not being allocated a place. Admissions arrangements and catchment areas are reviewed by the Council on an annual basis.

Overall, the proposal will support the Council to meet its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. The proposal will also result in a more efficient supply and demand for school places within the catchment area, avoiding transporting pupils to alternative schools across the Western Vale.

Resourcing of education and other financial implications

The Council's 21st Century Schools Programme is a long-term strategic investment. The proposal will see a £5m investment to establish a primary school building on the Cowbridge Comprehensive School site to accommodate 210 primary pupils and 48 part time nursery pupils. This spend is in line with other primary school schemes delivered as part of the programme. An additional £400k is also available to support the Council's target of achieving net-zero carbon by 2030. This will ensure the building meets net-zero (operational) carbon, following the approach utilised to design the new Llancarfan Primary School, which will be the first net-zero carbon primary school building in Wales when completed later this year. The building will also meet BREEAM Excellent standard and achieve the highest rating of A for the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

The construction of the building will be primarily funded using Section 106 contributions received to provide additional school places emanating from nearby housing developments.

The 3-19 all-through school will receive a delegated budget for the primary phase from September 2022. As outlined above, the additional capacity will be phased in with 30 reception places and 48 part-time nursery places available from September 2022. Due to the additional fixed costs associated with running the primary phase, this will result in a high level of funding per pupil during the first few years. However, this will balance out as the number of pupils on roll increases over the transition period. This approach has been utilised previously and avoids the proposal negatively affecting neighbouring schools through increased transfers. Additional transition revenue funding is regularly made available to support school organisation projects.

The all-through school would receive a single budget allocated using the Council's Schools Funding Formula. The estimated revenue cost of operating the school in the first year will be £5.673M (excluding post 16 pupils which are funded by a Welsh Government Grant). This will rise to £6.034M when the school reaches full capacity. The revenue budget delegated for Cowbridge Comprehensive School for 2020/21 is £5.366M. The additional revenue cost will be met from within the delegated schools budget via the funding formula.

The governing body of Cowbridge Comprehensive School will be responsible for developing a staffing structure for the all-through school, including developing the leader of the primary phase role. Any proposed changes to staffing will be subject to full consultation with staff and the relevant trade unions where necessary.

The proposal will lead to an increase in employment opportunities at the school as additional pupil numbers and expansion of the age range would lead to growth in future staffing levels. The governing body of Cowbridge Comprehensive School will need to consider an increase in the staffing structure for the additional pupil numbers from September 2022.

Other general factors

Equality Impact Assessment

The Equality Impact Assessment identifies that there will be a positive impact on persons with the protected characteristics of age, disability and gender reassignment/ identity. The proposal will support the school to ensure that it has the improved facilities to promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those with different protected characteristics.

There has been no perceived negative impact on the protected characteristics identified. Successful implementation of the proposal will enable compliance with the Equality Act (2010), for example by providing a fully accessible building with gender neutral facilities.

Community Impact Assessment

The Community impact assessment identifies that the proposal will likely have a positive impact on the local community across 7 of the 8 measures assessed. The proposal will likely have a neutral impact on the local community across 1 of the 8 measures assessed.

The proposal would enable Cowbridge Comprehensive School to continue its success while catering for a greater pupil population. It would provide innovative and creative learning environments which are adaptable to change and would challenge and support children to reach their full potential. The proposal would maintain and increase the level of community access and interaction through the use of the school's educational facilities whilst meeting the needs of the school.

Cowbridge Comprehensive School currently offers a range of activities for pupils outside of the normal school day. It is proposed that as a minimum all existing facilities for pupil's parents and the community would continue.

It is concluded from the Community Impact Assessment that the proposal to increase the number of English medium primary school places in Cowbridge would better meet the needs of the wider community to ensure the sustainable balance between supply and demand for school places.

Overall, the proposal will likely have a positive impact on the local community.

Yours faithfully,



Paula Ham, Director of Learning and Skills