

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS – REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PROVISION IN THE NORTH OF THE BOROUGH – CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS.

1 Introduction

1.1 This executive summary explains the reasons and consultation arrangements in relation to proposals to extend Cwmffrwdroer and Garnteg Primary Schools (and in the case of Cwmffrwdroer to add a nursery unit, and explains the next stage of the process.

2 Purpose of Report

2.1 To provide details of consultation arrangements in respect of these two proposals.

3 Key Messages

3.1 Torfaen County Borough Council's 21st Century Schools proposals were well received by Welsh Government. For some parts of Torfaen it will result in new schools. Unfortunately however, for some local communities it will mean the closure or amalgamation of their schools. This is not something new in Torfaen – since its inception, the council has been carrying out school reorganisation work to upgrade the estate involving a mixture of closures, amalgamations, refurbishments and new builds.

3.2 The 21st Century Schools programme has been well documented, with the council taking the decision to include every school as part of it in October 2010. The council sought the views of all interested parties on its programme during a series of roadshows that were held across the county borough in March 2011. The outcome of this public engagement was reported to cabinet in July 2011, and this report seeks approval to move forward on specific proposals to extend Cwmffrwdroer and Garnteg Primary Schools as identified in Band A (2014 to 2019) of the programme.

3.3 In April 2015 Torfaen's Cabinet agreed to commence consultation on the expansion of the current Cwmffrwdroer and Garnteg Primary Schools, and in the case of Cwmffrwdroer, the establishment of a nursery unit at the school thereby extending the age range from 4 to 11 to 3 to 11. .

3.4 It is proposed that these changes are implemented during the Autumn/Spring terms 2016/2017.

4 Background

4.1 Torfaen's primary school estate has some schools that:

- are trying to operate in buildings or grounds which are not fit for purpose and have an unaffordable maintenance backlog

- are too small to be run economically in today's financial climate
- have significant surplus capacity in their local cluster of schools
- are not located where the demand for school places is concentrated.

These proposals will go some way to addressing these concerns.

4.2 The council has to reduce surplus capacity in its schools and has been set targets by the Welsh Government to reach those targets by 2015. The 21st Century Schools Programme in Torfaen and across Wales is intended to achieve these issues in a strategic rather than piecemeal way.

5 Issues and findings

5.1 The regulations require that consultees must be given at least 42 days to respond to the document, with at least 20 of these being school days. Taking this into account, the consultation period will begin on Monday 1st June 2015 and close on Monday 13th July 2015. .

5.2 Consultation will be initiated through the publication of a consultation document, and distributed to prescribed consultees contained within the School Organisation Code 2013, inviting views on the proposal. Consultation will also be undertaken with children and young people.

5.3 The consultation document will include contextual information about the proposals, outline the changes being considered, the rationale for these, details of the consultation process and incorporate a response form. Consultees will be advised of the availability of an online version to complete and also contact addresses to send in comments via e-mail.

5.4 The consultation process will also be promoted online, via the Torfaen Council website and social media channels. In addition, public consultation events will be held as follows:

- Wednesday 10th June 2015, 3.30 - 6.30pm at Cwmffrwdoer Primary School
- Thursday 2nd July 2015, 3.30 – 6.30pm at Garnteg Primary School

These “drop in” events will allow interested parties to attend at a time that is convenient for them.

6 Key Issues.

6.1 Statutory consultation is necessary, because the proposals will see the capacity of both schools increase by at least 25%, and the age range will be extended at Cwmffrwdoer to accommodate a nursery.

6.2 Specifically, Cwmffrwdoer Primary School will increase from its current 210 place

capacity to 315 places, and its age range extended from 4 to 11 to 3 to 11 to accommodate a 52 Part Time Equivalent (PTE) Nursery.

6.3 In the case of Garnteg Primary School, its capacity will increase from 224 to 420 places. The existing nursery provision will remain unchanged.

7 What happens next?

7.1 The following indicative timeline details what happens next and sets out the statutory process:

- Initial consultation on process (6 weeks) – June/July 2015
- Cabinet receive report on outcome of consultation and consider next steps – September 2015
- If agreed, statutory notices are published(28 day objection period) – October 2015
- Objections considered and next steps considered – November 2015
- If agreement is reached to proceed, construction period begins – January 2016
- Proposals implemented – Autumn/Spring Terms 2016/17

8 Conclusion / Summary

8.1 The implementation of these proposals will form an essential part of Torfaen's 21st Century Schools Programme, in terms of:

- managing surplus places effectively
- allowing the Local Authority to rationalise its building stock and therefore have fewer schools to maintain and fund
- being able to provide a high standard and breadth of education for all the pupils in the community.
- Larger schools are more viable financially and fewer, cost inefficient small schools

9 Further information

If further information is required regarding these proposals please contact Mark Horton Tel: 01495 766910 or email: mark.horton@torfaen.gov.uk

9 Recommendations

9.1 The recommendation is that Members note the outcome of the consultation exercise and agree:

- a) to publish statutory notices to discontinue **Pontnewynydd Primary School** with the dispersal of pupils to neighbouring schools (predominantly **Penygarn Primary School**) with effect from 1st September 2015
- b) to adjust/reallocate catchment areas as follows:
 - current Pontnewynydd Primary School to Penygarn Primary School
- c) to receive a further report in September 2014 following the end of the statutory notice period with a view to making a recommendation on how to proceed.