

**THE PROVISION OF ENGLISH-MEDIUM PRIMARY SCHOOL
PLACES IN THE LLANRUMNEY AREA**

**EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS (COUNCILLOR SARAH
MERRY)**

AGENDA ITEM: 3

Reason for this Report

1. This report is to inform the Cabinet of responses received following consultation on proposals to rationalise English-medium primary school places in the Llanrumney area, including a proposal to close Glan-yr-Afon Primary School in August 2019.

Background

2. The Llanrumney area is served by Bryn Hafod, Glan-yr-Afon, Pen-y-Bryn, St Cadoc's Catholic and St Mellon's CiW English-medium Primary Schools. Welsh medium provision is available at Ysgol Bro Eirwg and Ysgol Pen y Pil, which serve parts of Llanrumney, Rumney, Trowbridge and Old St Mellons.
3. Current English-medium primary school capacity in the Llanrumney area can accommodate up to 1,342 pupils (age 4-11). In January 2017, the number of primary aged pupils on roll (excluding nursery) was 1073, resulting in an overall surplus capacity of 269 places (20%).
4. At its meeting on 12 July 2018, the Council's Cabinet agreed a recommendation to hold public consultation on proposals to rationalise English-medium primary school places in the Llanrumney area, including a proposal to close Glan-yr-Afon Primary School in August 2019.

Issues

5. The consultation period ran from 10 September until 22 October 2018.
6. The consultation process involved:
 - Publication of a Consultation Document outlining background, rationale and implications to parents, local childcare providers, Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of nearby schools, all

- Members of local wards and other stakeholders (a copy of the consultation document can be seen at Appendix 1);
- Publication of a summary document setting out the main points of the consultation document was distributed to parents at Glan-yr-Afon Primary School and was available to download from the Council website (a copy of the summary document can be seen at Appendix 2);
 - Meetings with Staff and Governors at Glan-yr-Afon Primary School;
 - A public meeting held at the John Reynolds Centre at which the proposal was explained and questions answered (notes from the meetings can be seen at Appendix 3);
 - Drop-in sessions at the school and Llanrumney Hub, where officers were available to answer questions (notes from the drop in sessions can be seen at Appendix 4);
 - A workshop session at Glan-yr-Afon Primary School to provide an opportunity for the children to ask questions, learn more about the proposal and give their views (details of the workshop session can be seen at Appendix 5);
 - A consultation response slip for return by post or e-mail, attached to the consultation document;
 - An online response from at www.cardiff.gov.uk/21st Century Schools.
7. The views expressed at Council organised meetings, and on paper or electronically through the appropriate channels, have been recorded.

Responses received regarding the proposal during the consultation period

8. In total 146 responses were received with the majority of respondents (63%) resident in the local area.
9. Formal responses were received from:
- Local Ward Members;
 - Estyn;
 - The Governing Body of Glan-yr-Afon Primary School;
 - The Interim Headteacher of Glan-yr-Afon Primary School;
 - The Staff of Glan-yr-Afon Primary School;
 - Flying Start Health Visitors.
10. The response from Estyn set out that it was Estyn's view that closing Glan-yr-Afon Primary School would not have a detrimental effect on the standard of English-medium education in the Llanrumney area.
11. Copies of the full responses can be seen at Appendix 6.
12. A "Save our School" petition, with 244 signatures was also received.
13. A majority of views expressed during the consultation period were in support of keeping Glan-yr-Afon Primary School open, with 93% of respondents not agreeing with the proposal; 6% agreeing and 1% who did not answer this question.

14. A summary of the responses received and appraisal of views expressed can be seen at Appendix 7. A summary analysis of the 146 responses received are included in Appendix 8.

Summary

15. The consultation on the provision of English-medium primary school places in the Llanrumney area invited comments on proposals, which included the closure of Glan-yr-Afon Primary School from 31 August 2019 and all pupils on roll at the school transferring to other schools in Llanrumney, or elsewhere depending on parental preference.
16. A clear majority of stakeholders in the Llanrumney community who responded to the consultation expressed opposition to the proposal to close Glan-yr-Afon Primary School.
17. Concerns expressed by stakeholders in respect of the proposal relate to:
 - The removal of English-medium community primary school places in 'lower Llanrumney'. For parents of children at Glan-yr-Afon Primary School, home to school proximity is an important criterion when choosing a school and logistical issues associated with having to travel further to an alternative primary school is a major concern;
 - The geography/topography of the local area and the distance needed to be walked by those families wanting to access English-medium community provision;
 - The impact of closure on current pupils of the school, families of those children and school staff. There were particular concerns around those children in Year 5 who would have to make two transitions within a short period of time;
 - Concerns that current sibling and friendship groups would be separated in particular for those families who would not want their children to transfer to a catholic school;
 - The perception that the area has experienced a sequence of loss of educational and wider social provision, including Llanrumney High School, the closure of Rumney High School and the location of the new Eastern High some distance from the community;
 - The potential for an increasing number of families to opt for English-medium primary school provision given the improving profile of Eastern High School;
 - Uncertainty around the proposal to increase the admission number of St Cadoc's RC Primary School not being progressed;
 - The limited community education options available to parents not wishing to take up places at a catholic school;
 - Recent challenges faced by the school which in the view of those who responded to the consultation, have been a catalyst for the decline in pupil numbers;

- A desire from a number of respondents for the school to be provided with an opportunity to build on the recent progress in improving the standard of education;
 - The impact of planned, and potential, housing developments in the local and wider area that would result in the need for additional places;
 - The co-location of Flying Start provision and the benefits associated with such provision in this area;
 - The future use of the site.
18. Respondents submitted a number of alternatives to closure which included:
- Amalgamation with another local community school;
 - A reduction in the size of the school to one form of entry and federation with another school;
 - A reduction in the size of the school to one form of entry and consolidation of accommodation in the Foundation Phase;
 - Utilising part of the building for other educational purposes, or the transfer of another school onto the site.

Response to views expressed

19. In view of the responses received and further considerations set out below, it is recommended that the proposal to close Glan-yr-Afon Primary School from 31 August 2019 is not progressed as outlined in the original consultation report.
20. As a temporary measure, it is proposed to reduce the capacity of Glan-yr-Afon Primary School from 292 places (1.4 forms of entry) to 210 places (1 form of entry) from September 2020. Consultation on the 2020/21 admission arrangements for community schools will take place in December 2018 – January 2019 in accordance with the requirements of the Admissions Code. This consultation will include a proposed Published Admission Number of 30 places for Glan-yr-Afon Primary School.)
21. The Council acknowledges the concerns raised by stakeholders. However the issue of surplus capacity in the Llanrumney area, with a greater number of places in primary schools than children who wish to attend those schools remains.
22. At January 2018, there were 261 surplus places (19.4%) in English-medium primary schools serving the area. The number of surplus places at Glan-yr-Afon Primary School was 140 (47.9%).
23. Where there is a higher than necessary number of school places, resources are being deployed inefficiently that could be better used to improve the quality of education for all learners.

24. Combined with this are the difficulties associated with operating a primary school with such a high proportion of its 292 places unfilled. The size of the school and the low number of children on roll means that the school will continue to face financial difficulties. The condition of the school building is poor and suitability has also been assessed as poor. The school continues to need a high level of professional support.
25. It is agreed that securing high quality sustainable primary education places aligned with early years provision is a priority for the Llanrumney area.
26. It is also recognised that the existing capacity and take up of places combined with future demand from new and planned developments in the local and wider area requires further consideration.
27. Any future proposals brought forward to ensure a better match between the supply of and demand for English-medium places in the Llanrumney area would need to consider:
 - The need to reduce the number of surplus English-medium primary school places;
 - The organisation of primary school places in the Llanrumney area;
 - How high quality early years education provision could best be provided and enhanced in the area;
 - How high quality primary education can be sustainably and economically provided through leadership and governance arrangements;
 - The impact of housing developments in the local and wider area, including primary school provision to serve the new housing development at St Edeyrns;
 - The financial implications.
28. It is therefore proposed that further work be undertaken to develop modified proposals for consideration by Cabinet in early 2019, to allow for the number of surplus places to be reduced within the context of concerns expressed by respondents that English-medium provision be retained in the local Llanrumney area, the enhancement of early years provision and family support in the local area and wider education provision in the Llanrumney and Old St Mellons area.
29. Any new proposals to reorganise English-medium primary school places in the area would be subject to further consultation.

Local Member consultation

30. Local members were consulted as part of the consultation. They asked that the Cabinet reject the proposal and come back with a comprehensive plan for how the provision of English medium primary school places in the Llanrumney area can be addressed for future years. A copy of their response can be seen at Appendix 6.

Reason for Recommendations

31. The consultation has identified a range of views and issues that are significant concerns for stakeholders and for those living in the immediate locality of Glay-yr-Afon Primary School. It is therefore considered advisable for additional work to be undertaken to establish the viability of modified proposals which address the issues that informed the original proposal but which also take account of views expressed and the potential for wider change in the locality.

Financial Implications

32. The recommendations to this report include the recommendation that the published admission number for Glan-yr-Afon Primary School will be reduced from 41 to 30, from September 2020. As schools' revenue budgets are predominantly predicated on the basis of pupil numbers, any reduction in pupil numbers would mean that Glan-yr-Afon's revenue budget would potentially reduce in comparison to previous years, should overall pupil numbers reduce. However, it would be reasonable to expect that the cost of operating the school could decrease in line with this, particularly if the number of classes within the school reduces. A reduction in the overall budget for the school could present challenges in terms of ensuring a balanced budget, particularly if there are any historic deficit balances which need to be recovered as part of the annual budget setting process. Therefore, it is critical that the school is able to contract its current expenditure levels to be able to operate within a reduced budget. As part of this, consideration will need to be given to any exit costs, should there be a need to reduce the overall staffing compliment within the school.
33. The other recommendations to this report seek approval for alternative proposals to be considered and brought to a future Cabinet meeting. This recommendation does not, in itself result in any direct financial implications. However, any alternative proposals that are developed will need to consider a range of financial aspects. These include revenue issues, such as financial resources required to fund pupil places, additional learning needs requirements, transport implications and capital financing requirements, should any significant work to buildings be required. Also, should the alternative proposals result in the opportunity to dispose of school sites, consideration will need to be given to future use of the sites, demolition costs and costs associated with disposal of a capital receipt. Any capital receipt will need to be prioritised for use in meeting the capitals receipts target connected to the funding of the School Organisational Plan Programme.

Legal Implications

34. Under the Education Act 1996, the Council has a general statutory obligation to promote high standards of education and to provide sufficient school places for pupils of compulsory school age.

35. Admission numbers of schools are part of the Council's admission arrangements and therefore the statutory consultation within the School Admission Code and the Education (Determination of Admission Arrangements) Regulations 2006 would also need to be followed if following consultation these proposals are taken forward.
36. A local authority can make proposals to discontinue a community school under section 43 of the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. The Council is required prior to publishing its proposals to undertake a consultation on those proposals in accordance with section 48 of that Act and the School Organisation Code. The earlier cabinet report gave authorisation to carry out that statutory consultation. Any proposals must be the subject of full and fair consultation and due regard must be had by the Cabinet to the responses before a final decision is taken.
37. The decision about these recommendations has to be made in the context of the Council's public sector equality duties. The Council also has to satisfy its public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties, Councils must in making decisions have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics. The Protected characteristics are: age, gender reassignment, sex, race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality, disability, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, religion or belief – including lack of belief. If the recommendations in the report are accepted and when any alternative options are considered, the Council will have to consider further the equalities implication and an Equality Impact Assessment may need to be completed.
38. The Council also has to consider its obligation under section 88 and schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 to prepare and implement an accessibility strategy. The strategy should increase disabled pupils' access to the curriculum and improve the physical environment and the provision of information. Section 84 and 85 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Assessing Demand for Welsh Medium Education (Wales) Regulations 2013, set out the statutory obligations for all local authorities to prepare, submit, publish and revise Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs).
39. The Council has to be mindful of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards when making any policy decisions and consider the impact upon the Welsh language, the report and Equality Impact Assessment deals with all these obligations. The Council has to consider the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and how this strategy may improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural *well-being* of Wales.

HR Implications

40. Whilst the report recommends not progressing a proposal for closure at this stage, there still remains significant HR implications for the Governing Body of Glan-yr-Afon Primary School to consider. The Governing Body will need to consider addressing their budget deficit position whilst reviewing their staffing establishment alongside the decline of the number of pupils currently on roll.
41. This will require full staff and trade union consultation and support will be provided by HR People Services.
42. Where a reduction in the levels of staffing is required, a key aspiration for the Council is to achieve staff reductions as far as possible either through voluntary redundancy or redeployment, rather than compulsory means. The Council is committed to maximising opportunities for school staff to secure employment in other Cardiff schools and therefore facilitates a redeployment process under the School Redeployment and Redundancy Policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note that consultation on the 2020/2021 admission arrangements will include a proposed reduction of the Published Admission Number of Glan-yr-Afon Primary School from 41 places to 30 places;
2. Authorise officers to explore the viability of modified proposals to the closure of Glan-yr-Afon Primary School;
3. Authorise officers to bring a further report to Cabinet for consideration setting out details of how the provision of community English medium primary school places in the Llanrumney area can be addressed.

SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	NICK BATCHELAR Director of Education & Lifelong
	7 December 2018

The following appendices are attached:

- Appendix 1: Consultation document
- Appendix 2: Summary document
- Appendix 3: Notes of public consultation meeting
- Appendix 4: Notes of drop-in sessions
- Appendix 5: Child workshop structure
- Appendix 6: Formal responses to consultation
- Appendix 7: Summary of responses
- Appendix 8: Summary analysis of responses
- Appendix 9: Equality Impact Assessment