

# NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board

9<sup>th</sup> November 2017

### REPORT OF HEAD OF TRANSFORMATION ANDREW THOMAS

#### MATTER FOR DECISION

**WARDS AFFECTED:** Cymmer, Glyncorwg, Gwynfi, Margam, Taibach, Port Talbot, Bryn & Cwmafan, Pelenna

#### STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME – FUTURE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE UPPER AFAN VALLEY

##### Purpose of report

1. To obtain Cabinet Board approval to consult on the future of secondary education in the upper Afan Valley.

##### Executive summary

2. The Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education. This will involve reviewing the number and type of schools the Council has in its area and assessing whether or not best use is being made of resources and facilities in order to ensure future provision is sustainable.
3. Secondary education in the upper Afan Valley is provided at Cymer Afan Comprehensive school as part of a federation of five schools, four primary and one secondary.
4. Cymer Afan Comprehensive is a small secondary school. A school with 600 pupils<sup>1</sup> or fewer is generally regarded as a small secondary school. Currently, Cymer Afan Comprehensive school has 226

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<sup>1</sup> Estyn 2013: 'School Size and Education Effectiveness'

pupils on roll. Pupil numbers are not forecasted to increase sufficiently to change its small secondary school status.

5. Cymer Afan Comprehensive school building has significant surplus places. It has capacity for approx. 640 pupils but with 226 pupils on roll it is carrying nearly 65% surplus capacity.
6. At £7,111<sup>2</sup>, 'per pupil' funding at Cymer Afan Comprehensive school is significantly higher (60%) than the average for the Council's schools; equal to c.£2,600 for each pupil or an additional c.£595k allocated to the schools budget share. The average for secondary sector school in Neath Port Talbot is £4,476 whilst the lowest is £3,910.
7. Cymer Afan Comprehensive school has backlog maintenance and accessibility costs amounting to c.£3m. The site is assessed as overall condition C, with many of the building and mechanical elements are nearing the end of their life span and will require replacing within the next 2-4 years.
8. There is suitable, alternative English-medium provision available within the County Borough at Ysgol Newydd Margam, which offers a new build 21<sup>st</sup> Century school, and at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive school. There is also suitable English-medium provision at Maesteg Comprehensive school.
9. The Council is proposing to make arrangements for pupils from the upper Afan Valley to receive their secondary education at Ysgol Newydd Margam, a £30m investment by the Council in a new build school with 21<sup>st</sup> century school facilities.
10. Teaching and learning opportunities are increased in new build, state of the art facilities and an evaluation of a new, 21<sup>st</sup> century school build in Neath Port Talbot has shown high levels of satisfaction and support from the pupils, their parents and stakeholders.

## **Background**

11. The Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education.

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<sup>2</sup> School budget share allocation 2017/2018

Having the right schools in the right place and ensuring that they are fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner is the challenge facing the Council. Achieving this will involve reviewing the number and type of schools the Council has in its area and assessing whether or not best use is being made of resources and facilities.

12. Implementing the Council's Strategic School Improvement Programme (SSIP) involves reviewing existing provision and determining the number and type of schools needed to deliver education effectively and efficiently across the County Borough. It will most likely lead to substantial change involving opening new schools, closing existing schools, merging or amalgamating schools, federating schools and promoting new initiatives that support collaborative working between schools.
13. The Council has determined to review its provision on the basis of:
  - educational standards
  - the need for places and the accessibility of schools
  - the quality and suitability of school accommodation
  - effective financial management
14. In 2013, the five schools of the upper Afan Valley, namely: Cymer Afan Primary, Croeserw Primary, Glyncorwg Primary, Pen Afan Primary and Cymer Afan Comprehensive (secondary), formed a federation in order to address falling school roles and the consequent reduction in revenue funding.

### **The Proposal**

15. Consultation on the future of secondary education in the upper Afan Valley is being brought forward under a proposal to make arrangements for pupils who would otherwise attend Cymer Afan Comprehensive School, School Road, Cymmer, Port Talbot SA13 3EL to receive their secondary education at Ysgol Newydd Margam, Bertha Road, Margam, Port Talbot, SA13 2AN and to discontinue Cymer Afan Comprehensive School.
16. If approved the proposal will take effect on the 1st September 2019 with Cymer Afan Comprehensive School closing on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019.

17. Ysgol Newydd Margam is a new 3-16 ‘all-through’, middle school, opening on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018 in a new build facility in Margam, Port Talbot. (*Ysgol Newydd Margam is a working name for the school, the official name has yet to be determined.*) Ysgol Newydd Margam replaces Dyffryn School and Groes Primary School which are both due to close on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2018.

### **Information about Cymer Afan Comprehensive School**

18. Cymer Afan Comprehensive School is an English-medium community school for boys and girls aged 11-16 years. Since September 2013 it has been part of a five school federation in the upper Afan Valley.
19. Cymer Afan Comprehensive school is a small school. It is one of only five established mainstream secondary schools in Wales with fewer than 300 pupils, one of which is set to close in 2018.

#### **– Pupil Numbers**

20. As at October 2017, there were 226 pupils on roll. There has been a 36% (127) fall in pupil numbers over the past ten years with a 2016 low of 210. Pupil numbers for this period are shown in table 1 below.

*Table 1*

| <i>Cymer Afan Comp.</i> |                       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |         |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---------|
|                         | January annual census |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | October |
| Year                    | 2007                  | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2017    |
| Pupil numbers           | 353                   | 343  | 351  | 326  | 302  | 288  | 266  | 244  | 216  | 210  | 213  | 226     |

21. Forecasts based on January annual census returns suggest a potential increase of 54 pupils by 2021 (table 2). However, Cymer Afan Comprehensive will still be a small secondary school with numbers returning only to 2013 equivalent levels. Pupil numbers are projected to fall slightly in 2022/23.

Table 2

| Cymer Afan Comp. |                       |                   |      |      |      |      |      |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                  | Annual census January | January forecasts |      |      |      |      |      |
| Year             | 2017                  | 2018              | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Pupil numbers    | 213                   | 221               | 220  | 241  | 267  | 259  | 260  |

22. With the physical capacity to accommodate 641 pupils (table 3) the school has a significant surplus capacity of 65% (415 places). Even at the forecasted high in 2021 there will still be 58% surplus capacity at the school, leaving the school notionally over half empty. This level of surplus capacity has revenue and capital costs associated with maintaining the school.

Table 3

| Cymer Afan Comp. |                 |                         |                |                         |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
|                  |                 | Jan 2017                |                | Jan 2023                |
|                  | School capacity | October 2017 Pupil Nos. | Surplus places | Projected Pupil Numbers |
| Pupil numbers    | 641             | 226                     | 415            | 260                     |

– **Funding: school budget share**

23. Revenue costs associated with maintaining a small secondary school are significantly higher than for those schools with greater pupil numbers. This is reflected in the high ‘per pupil’ funding at Cymer Afan Comprehensive school which is significantly higher than the average for the Council’s schools (table 4). This cost has increased annually and since 2015/16 ‘per pupil’ funding at Cymer Afan Comprehensive School has exceeded the average for the Council’s schools by nearly 60%.

Table 4

|                         | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Cymer Afan Comp.        | £5,613  | £6,054  | £6,325  | £6,344  | £6,861  | £7,156  | £7,156  | £7,111  |
| Local Authority Average | £4,179  | £4,240  | £4,384  | £4,441  | £4,438  | £4,480  | £4,476  | £4,476  |

– ***Federation in the upper Afan Valley***

24. The five school federation in the upper Afan Valley comprises four primary schools and one secondary school, i.e. Cymer Afan Comprehensive.
25. Pupil numbers attending the local schools had been falling, putting pressure on the schools to deliver teaching and learning in the context of reduced budget allocations. As such, the governors of the upper Afan Valley schools, supported by officers of the Council, moved to a federated arrangement as, at that time, it offered the best way forward for supporting the pupils and the schools.
26. Federation is the process whereby a group of schools decide to work in formal partnership under a single governing body. Schools within a federation maintain their own delegated budgets and identity but are able to explore the advantages of sharing resources such as facilities, IT, staff, school buildings, etc.
27. Removal of a school from the federation will, undoubtedly, change the current federated structure and operational arrangements but should not diminish the benefits that can be realised from a formal collaborative working arrangement.

**Information about Ysgol Newydd Margam (*the proposed receiving school*)**

28. The new, 21<sup>st</sup> century build, 3-16, 'all-through' middle school will provide for 1200 secondary age pupils. (It will also provide for 210 full-time primary age pupils, 45 nursery age pupils specifically from the catchment area currently served by Groes Primary school.)
29. A new build school provides the opportunity to deliver a stimulating teaching and learning environment in state of the art, 21<sup>st</sup> century facilities that will impact positively on the self-esteem and well-being of pupils and will aim to improve the learning outcomes for all children across the ability range.
30. With a new school comes more choices and improved opportunities because of better facilities. Estyn<sup>3</sup>, report that the attainment and achievement of pupils improves significantly when they move into

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<sup>3</sup>Estyn 2007: 'An evaluation of performance of schools before and after moving into new buildings or significantly refurbished premises'

new or significantly refurbished buildings, particularly when schools are in areas with high levels of social and economic deprivation.

31. Ysgol Newydd Margam will provide adaptable ICT facilities suitable for learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Mobile technology will be integrated with a sound pedagogical base to provide pupils with enhanced learning experiences, equipping them with the key skills and motivation needed to raise standards.
32. The new build school will be an exciting place for pupils and staff both internally and externally. It will have spacious, light and airy classrooms, with access to a range of high quality and appropriate spaces for social interaction. The 2015 report, 'Clever Classrooms', found that well designed schools can significantly boost children's academic performance in reading, writing and maths. The school will allow for the delivery of a pupil centred, inclusive and skills based curriculum that extends to social and sporting activities. It will aim to promote equality and inclusion by providing facilities, sporting and cultural.
33. Following the first year of operation, an evaluation of the transfer to a new, 21<sup>st</sup> century school build in Neath Port Talbot has shown high levels of satisfaction and support from the pupils, their parents and stakeholders.

Table 5

| <i>Secondary age pupil forecasts</i> |                       |                   |      |      |      |      |      |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                                      | Annual census January | January forecasts |      |      |      |      |      |
| Year                                 | 2017                  | 2018              | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Ysgol Newydd Margam                  | N/A                   | 787               | 826  | 848  | 843  | 847  | 855  |
| Cymer Afan Comp.                     | 213                   | 221               | 220  | 241  | 267  | 259  | 260  |
| Total:                               | N/A                   | N/A               | 1046 | 1089 | 1110 | 1106 | 1115 |

34. Ysgol Newydd Margam has been built to accommodate 1200 secondary age pupils. In September 2018, when the school opens it is anticipated that 787 pupils will transfer from Dyffryn School. Assuming all pupils from Cymer Afan Comprehensive school transfer to Ysgol Newydd Margam in September 2019 the total number of secondary age pupils on roll is forecast to be 1046

increasing to 1115 in 2023. As such there is sufficient accommodation for the total combined forecasted pupil numbers (table 5 above).

## **Quality of Teaching and Learning**

### **– Outcomes**

35. Cymer Afan has 38% of pupils entitled to free school meals and 45% with identified additional learning needs. This places the school in benchmarking group 5. The school was inspected in April 2015 and both the current performance and the prospects for improvement were judged to be adequate. Estyn monitored the school and in November 2016 the school was judged to have made good progress in respect of the key issues for action.
36. Estyn (2015) report that standards are 'adequate' and note that 'When compared with their attainment in previous key stages, pupils make sound progress'.
37. In 2016/2017 the school was judged to be in the yellow support category of the National Categorisation system, which indicates it is an effective school with many aspects of performance which are self-improving.
38. Estyn report that wellbeing is 'good' at Cymer Afan Comprehensive School and that pupils are generally polite and well behaved. Estyn also report that 'many pupils enjoy their lessons and most have positive attitudes to learning'.
39. In 2015/2016 attendance improved to 92.3% from 91.5%, resulting in the school performing in the top 50% when compared to similar schools.
40. In the first year of operation the secondary pupil cohort at Ysgol Newydd Margam will comprise pupils who would otherwise have attended Dyffryn School. In this regard, whereas Ysgol Newydd Margam has yet to open, the current performance at Dyffryn School serves as a helpful comparator, as the new school would wish to build on the strengths of existing provision.
41. Dyffryn School has 20% of pupils entitled to free school meals and 24% with identified additional learning needs. The school is placed



in benchmarking group 3. The school was inspected in April 2014 and both the current performance and the prospects for improvement were judged to be good. The school's performance at key stage 4 in the indicators that include English and Mathematics place the school consistently in the top 50% of similar schools, with a drop to quartile 3 in 2015.

42. Dyffryn School is currently in the yellow support category (2016/2017). Estyn report that pupil wellbeing is good and that pupils treat each other with respect, listen to each other's views and co-operate very well when working together. They enjoy coming to school, and behave very well in lessons and around the school. Attendance data indicates the school is consistently above similar schools and is currently almost 94% (2016-2017 data).
43. Estyn<sup>4</sup> also state that 'large primary and secondary schools tend to perform better than small and medium size schools'. 71% of secondary schools with less than 600 pupils require follow up activity after an Estyn inspection, compared to 46% of schools with more than 1,100 pupils. 21% of the smaller schools will be placed in a statutory category (significant improvement or special measures) while just 4% of larger schools will require the same level of support. In the same report, Estyn also state that the performance of pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 is generally better in large secondary schools, and note that large secondary schools can provide more appropriate levels of challenge and support.

– ***End of Key Stage 3 Data***

44. Performance indicators for Key Stage 3 place Cymer Afan Comprehensive School consistently in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> quartile for core subjects at level 5+ and at level 6+. In 2016 57% of pupils attained the expected level 5 or above in the core subjects of English, Maths and Science compared to 71% of pupils in similar schools, 78% in Neath Port Talbot and 86% across Wales.
45. In 2015 and 2016 Dyffryn School Key Stage 3 data also places the school in quartile 3 and 4 for core subjects at level 5+ and at level 6+. Pupils are performing above the local authority average and just below similar schools and schools across Wales in all core subjects.

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<sup>4</sup> Estyn 2013: 'School Size and Education Effectiveness'

– **Key Stage 4**

46. Results at Key Stage 4 at Cymer Afan Comprehensive School have shown a steady improvement over three years in all key indicators with a significant rise in 2016.

*Table 8*

| <b>Cymer Afan</b>    | <b>2014</b> | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b> |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Level 2 Inc. E/W & M | 31          | 33          | 59          |
| Level 2              | 85          | 93          | 96          |
| Level 1              | 97          | 98          | 100         |
| CSI                  | 31          | 33          | 49          |

47. Results for level 2 (5A\*-C grades) show the school is performing better than similar schools, schools in Neath Port Talbot and schools across Wales as a whole, and since 2014 the school has been placed consistently in quartile1. In 2016 59% of pupil attained 5 A\* - C GCSEs including English and maths, a 26% increase from 2015.

*Table 9*

|                      | <b>Cymer Afan</b> | <b>Family</b> | <b>LA</b> | <b>Wales</b> |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------|--------------|
| Level 2 Inc. E/W & M | 59                | 42            | 61        | 60           |
| Level 2              | 96                | 78            | 89        | 84           |
| Level 1              | 100               | 91            | 95        | 95           |
| CSI                  | 49                | 36            | 57        | 58           |

48. At Dyffryn School results for level 2 also indicate that the school is consistently in quartile 1 when compared to similar schools, and also performs well against schools in Neath Port Talbot and across Wales.

*Table 10*

| <b>Dyffryn</b>   | <b>2014</b> | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b> |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Level 2 Inc. E/M | 51          | 48          | 75          |
| Level 2          | 98          | 94          | 96          |
| Level 1          | 99          | 97          | 100         |
| CSI              | 51          | 47          | 73          |

49. 75% of pupils attained 5 GCSEs at A\*-C grades including English and maths in 2016, an increase of 27%. The school is performing well in every key indicator when compared to the family of similar schools, other schools across Neath Port Talbot and schools across the whole of Wales.

Table 11

|                      | Dyffryn | Family | LA | Wales |
|----------------------|---------|--------|----|-------|
| Level 2 Inc. E/W & M | 75      | 62     | 61 | 60    |
| Level 2              | 96      | 86     | 89 | 84    |
| Level 1              | 100     | 98     | 95 | 95    |
| CSI                  | 73      | 59     | 57 | 58    |

– **Provision**

50. Estyn report that 'Cymer Afan Comprehensive 'has a warm, happy and friendly ethos that respects the United Nations' *Rights of the Child*,' and learning experiences are judged to be good. The school supports pupils well and works with a wide range of agencies to promote health and wellbeing. This has a positive impact on improving pupils' behaviour, engagement and attitudes to learning
51. At Dyffryn School Estyn report that learning experiences are good with an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, which include sport and music. Teaching is also judged to be good and pupils demonstrate motivation and engagement in learning. Pupils benefit from strong care, support and guidance and safeguarding arrangements are good.
52. Estyn report in 'School Size and Education Effectiveness' (December 2013) that 'curriculum provision tends to be broader and more balanced in large secondary schools'. Cymer Afan Comprehensive is a small secondary school with 226 pupils on roll. Delivering the range and breadth of the curriculum can be more challenging in a small school, placing increased burdens on a small number of staff.
53. Dyffryn School has been subject to school reorganisation and will become part of the new 3-16 school in Margam from September 2018. The school will occupy new build premises providing the opportunity to deliver a stimulating teaching and learning environment in state of the art, 21st Century facilities that will aim to improve the learning outcomes for all children across the ability range. With a new school comes more choices and improved opportunities because there is more space and better facilities.
54. Cymer Afan Comprehensive School is dependent on the support of 14-19 partnerships and works well with other providers to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to study a broad mixture of

academic and vocational courses. In larger schools there is more autonomy and less dependency on partnership and a wider range of options can be made available due to economies of scale.

55. Dyffryn School was judged by Estyn to have excellent partnership working, and 'has established highly effective partnerships that have had a significant impact on sustaining high standards of pupil attainment and wellbeing'.
56. Estyn report that in larger schools teaching is good or better in 63% of lessons, while just under 50% of teaching is good or better in smaller schools. Sharing good practice across departments is easier in a larger school with more staff, and gives teachers opportunities to better develop curriculum planning and delivery through closer working with colleagues.

– ***Leadership and Management***

57. Estyn report in 2015 that leadership and management at Cymer Afan Comprehensive was adequate. They noted that 'The warm, and caring ethos developed by leaders has resulted in improvements in pupils' behaviour, engagement and attitudes to learning'. However, they also report that leadership has not had enough impact in ensuring good progress in indicators that include English and Maths.
58. The school has experienced some instability in recent years with a number of changes in key leadership roles. Recruitment of a permanent Headteacher has proved difficult and currently the school has an acting Headteacher seconded from another secondary school in Neath Port Talbot. The post has recently been advertised nationally on a number of occasions but the school has failed to appoint a permanent head teacher.
59. Leadership and management at Dyffryn School are judged to be good and the school has been successful in sustaining high outcomes for pupils.

– **Quality of accommodation**

60. Cymer Afan Comprehensive School site has received some investment over recent years, including replacement of the main boiler and controls.
61. The site is categorised as overall condition C, i.e. poor, elements are exhibiting major defects and/or not operating as intended. Many of the building and mechanical elements are nearing the end of their life span and will require replacing within the next 2-4 years. Backlog maintenance and accessibility costs amount to c.£3m.
62. Ysgol Newydd Margam is a c.£30m investment in a new build 21<sup>st</sup> century school which will be an exciting place for pupils and staff both internally and externally. It will have spacious, light and airy classrooms, with access to a range of high quality and appropriate spaces for social interaction.
63. New build facilities offer improved teaching and learning opportunities and can have significant impact on the attainment and achievement of pupils.

**Options that have been considered**

64. The Council has the responsibility for ensuring that it is making the very best use of resources and facilities in order to deliver high quality educational experiences and opportunities for children and young people.

**Option 1** – Status quo: maintain the existing five school federation in the upper Afan Valley.

65. The high cost of maintaining a small secondary school is not efficient use of Council resources.
66. The benefits of a new, 21<sup>st</sup> century school environment will not be realised by maintaining the status quo, and so opportunities for improved teaching and learning experiences would be lost.
67. Implementing the proposal to close Cymer Afan Comprehensive School would effectively remove backlog maintenance and accessibility costs of c.£3m. Maintaining the secondary school at

the existing site would require significant investment and is not considered to be the best use of resources.

68. Cymer Afan Comprehensive School is operating with 65% surplus places; this is not sustainable in the long term. For a secondary school of less than 300 pupils it is unlikely that a business case could be developed to secure grant funding for a new 21<sup>st</sup> century school build or a replacement facility.
69. For the purpose of consultation, this is not the preferred option of officers.

***Option 2*** – Federate with another secondary school

70. In a federation schools are managed by a single governing body which takes decisions about matters such as staffing structures and expenditure. Under single leadership and governance there are potential teaching and learning benefits, staff development opportunities and efficiencies that can arise from a federated arrangement. A single governing body will be able to pool resources, maximise staff expertise and share facilities. A federation also presents the opportunity to co-ordinate curriculum provision and employ whole school teaching/learning strategies that will improve school performance and enhance educational experiences.
71. Although a federated arrangement with another secondary school would retain secondary education in the upper Afan Valley and avoid an increase in annual transport costs, it does not address the high costs of maintaining a small secondary school. Neither will it deal with the significant surplus places at Cymer Afan Comprehensive school and ongoing cost of building maintenance and repair. Importantly, it does not enable the pupils of the upper Afan Valley to benefit from education in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century school environment.
72. For the purpose of consultation, this is not the preferred option of officers.

***Option 3*** – Build a new ‘all-through’ middle school to replace the existing secondary and four primary schools.

73. The benefits of a 21<sup>st</sup> century school teaching and learning environment would be realised and significant backlog maintenance and repair liabilities would be removed together with significant surplus places. However, delivering secondary phase education would still be a challenge given the small number of secondary age pupils.
74. For the purpose of consultation, this is not the preferred option of officers.

**Option 4** – Make arrangements for the pupils to receive their secondary education at Ysgol Newydd Margam and close Cymer Afan Comprehensive School.

75. A new build school provides the opportunity to deliver a stimulating teaching and learning environment in state of the art, 21<sup>st</sup> century facilities that will impact positively on the self-esteem and well-being of pupils and will aim to improve the learning outcomes for all children across the ability range. With a new school come more choices and improved opportunities because of better facilities.
76. An evaluation of a new, 21<sup>st</sup> century school build in Neath Port Talbot has shown high levels of satisfaction and support from the pupils, their parents and stakeholders.
77. Cymer Afan Comprehensive School has backlog maintenance and accessibility costs amounting to c.£3m. The site is assessed as overall condition C, i.e. poor, elements are exhibiting major defects and/or not operating as intended. This option would remove these financial liabilities. There are school budget share revenue savings to be made from educating the pupils of the upper Afan Valley at Ysgol Newydd Margam, savings that will be reinvested into the education budget.
78. Delivering the range and breadth of the curriculum can be more challenging in a small school, placing increased burdens on a small number of staff. A larger school is better placed to offer a wider range of options due to economies of scale and, in general, curriculum provision is broader and more balanced.
79. Ysgol Newydd Margam is within reasonable travel distance for pupils living in the upper Afan Valley.

80. For the purpose of consultation, this is the preferred option of officers.

**Option 5** – Make arrangements for the pupils to receive their secondary education at a secondary school other than Ysgol Newydd Margam and close Cymer Afan Comprehensive School.

81. There are two other secondary schools that are near to the upper Afan Valley. They are Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School, Cimla, Neath and Maesteg Comprehensive School, Maesteg.
82. Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School has surplus capacity. However, at present it cannot offer the 21<sup>st</sup> century new build facilities that will be available at Ysgol Newydd Margam. Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School is some 9 miles for the furthest communities of the upper Afan Valley.
83. Maesteg Comprehensive is a school under the control of Bridgend County Borough Council. As such, its admission arrangements are outside the control of Neath Port Talbot. Security of admission for pupils from the upper Afan Valley could not be guaranteed at this juncture. A formal agreement with the neighbouring Authority would need to be put in place. Bridgend County Borough Council would be a consultee in the consultation process. Information indicates that nearly 50 pupils from Neath Port Talbot attend Maesteg Comprehensive school, nearly 30 of which are in year 7 and year 8. Maesteg Comprehensive School is the nearest secondary school to the upper Afan Valley, some 7 miles for the furthest community.
84. For the purpose of consultation, this is not the preferred option of officers.

### **Impact on pupils and parents**

85. Transfer to Ysgol Newydd Margam will provide greater opportunities for pupils to access a wider range of specialist staff and facilities and increase opportunities for learning.
86. The pupils directly affected by this proposal will be current year 7, year 8 and year 9 at Cymer Afan Comprehensive School and future transfers from the primary sector schools. A new intake in 2019 will also impact on the pupils at Ysgol Newydd Margam.



87. Transfer to Ysgol Newydd Margam will involve a daily travel journey of approx. 13 miles from the furthest communities.
88. Whereas this proposal for consultation is based on making provision for pupils from the upper Afan Valley to receive their education at Ysgol Newydd Margam, in respect of a school they wish their child to attend parents are entitled to express a preference for admission at an alternative school, which will be granted subject to the availability of places. For community schools in Neath Port Talbot, the Council's admission policy will apply.

### **Impact on travel arrangements**

89. Support with home to school travel will be made available in line with the Council's Home to School Transport policy. Secondary age pupils living 3 miles or more from their nearest suitable school are entitled to assistance with travel. As the designated receiving school, the Council will consider Ysgol Newydd Margam to qualify as a nearest suitable school.
90. The distance between the upper Afan Valley and Ysgol Newydd Margam is more than 3 miles, therefore assistance with travel will be provided to eligible pupils. Support with home to school travel will be made available in line with the Council's Home to School Transport policy. The Council is also obliged to provide transport to the nearest suitable school including schools in another Authority's area.
91. Annual cost of home to school transport is estimated to be in the region of c.£130k. Ysgol Newydd Margam has been designed to accommodate school transport generated by an increased pupil intake.

### **Impact on governors**

92. The five schools in the upper Afan Valley are managed by a federated governing body. The federation should continue following the closure of Cymer Afan Comprehensive School, albeit with a revised structure and purpose.
93. Cymer Afan Comprehensive School will continue to exist and be managed by the federated governing body until its closure.

## **Impact on special needs education provision**

94. There is no specialist unit for pupils with statements of special educational needs at Cymer Afan Comprehensive School. Pupils with additional learning needs, including children with statements of special educational needs, are supported in a mainstream setting with appropriate funding for this purpose. The same arrangements will apply at Ysgol Newydd Margam.

## **Financial impact**

95. The cost of the £30m new build investment at Ysgol Newydd Margam is not dependent on this proposal.
96. Revenue funding for schools is distributed on an annual basis by means of an approved formula. This ensures school budget shares are allocated on a simple, objective and measurable basis, and that recurring revenue costs are both predictable and clearly expressed. The funding formulas for the primary and secondary sectors were last revised in 2011. Consultation is currently underway on a proposed revision to the primary sector formula.
97. Ysgol Newydd Margam will be funded according to the Council agreed formula for allocating school budget shares which will reflect the number of pupils on roll including additional pupils as a result of this proposal.
98. Revenue savings for reinvestment into the education budget will be as a result of efficiencies in terms of cost of delivery through economies of scale; Ysgol Newydd Margam will be a large school. In this regard, the proposal supports the Council's effective management of its education budget and promotes the more equitable distribution of funding across local secondary sector schools.
99. However, there will be an additional recurring revenue cost as a result of the additional transport required, estimated at c.£130k annually.
100. Prior to consultation, officers will be assessing the potential cost of redundancy associated with this proposal.

101. As part of the consultation process consideration will be given to alternative use of the vacated site, including its resale and/or its demolition; estimated values and costs of which have yet to be calculated.

### **Equality impact assessment**

102. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be required to fully progress this proposal. This will be completed prior to consultation. Some information required to undertake a full EIA will need to be obtained direct from the school. A full EIA will inform the consultation document and the subsequent consultation report presented to Members' for consideration.

103. Both Cymer Afan Comprehensive school and Ysgol Newydd Margam (when open) are inclusive for pupils of all ethnic groups and ethnicity is not a criterion under the Council's School Admissions Policy.

### **Workforce impacts**

#### **– *School staff***

104. There are 23.6 full-time teaching staff and 39 support staff with contracts attached to Cymer Afan Comprehensive school. Pupil teacher ratio is higher than the average for the Council's secondary sector schools (table 12) but this needs to be interpreted in the context of the arrangements across the federation.

105. Should a decision be taken to close school, staff with contracts attached to Cymer Afan Comprehensive school will be declared redundant. Employees identified at risk of redundancy will be supported by the Council's policies and HR staff.

106. Employment for some may continue within the federation whilst there is also the potential for employment opportunities at the receiving school because of increased numbers.

107. The governing bodies of schools in Neath Port Talbot have pledged to employ redundant staff where possible.

Table 12

|                 | 2017 |
|-----------------|------|
| School          | 9.0  |
| Local Authority | 16.6 |
| Wales           | 16.5 |

– **Centrally employed staff**

108. Centrally employed staff will be managed via the Council's staff employment processes.

– **Staff support**

109. As part of the process all school based staff will be supported by the relevant school policies and procedures which will include full consultation. Previous experience has shown that as a result of school reorganisation some staff take the opportunity to undertake new challenges elsewhere. Employees identified at risk of redundancy will be given access to the Council's prior consideration register. The Council is committed to supporting staff at risk of compulsory redundancy and has secured the support and goodwill of the teacher associations/trade unions and governing bodies across the Council, via an employers' pledge. The Council has a proven track record for supporting staff in such situations.

**Legal impacts**

110. The proposal requires the discontinuation of a school. The School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (the Act) provides the legislative framework by which the Council may implement the proposal. The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code imposes on the Council requirements and guidelines on matters relating to school organisation, including consultation.

111. Pupil travel arrangements will be in line with the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008; the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014; and the Council's Home to School Travel Policy 2017.

112. Revenue funding will be in line with the requirements of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998; the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010; and the Council's approved formula for funding schools.

113. The management of staff affected by the proposal will follow the relevant school policy and procedure requirements.

114. The legislation referred to above is available using the electronic links in the section on background papers, below.

### **Risk management**

115. A risk assessment has been carried out under the Council's Risk Management Policy 2015.

116. The potential risks associated with the proposal comprise the Council's reputation, educational standards, financial management, staff employment and service delivery.

117. Potential risk areas in implementing the proposal include:

- resistance to change leading to lack of pupil, parent and staff support
- educational standards not maintained
- loss of community facilities
- increased home to school travel time impacting on attendance and performance
- staff anxiety about job security
- negative impact on existing federation

118. Failing to implement the proposal will result in the following teaching/learning and financial benefits not being fully realised, particularly in relation to:

- providing a stimulating and innovative teaching and learning environment that will impact positively on the self-esteem and well-being of all pupils and staff
- access to a wider range of staff expertise
- opportunities for wider peer group interaction
- a more efficient and effective use of resources, and savings from economies of scale
- greater protection against the impact of a schools funding formula review
- reduction in the number of surplus pupil places

119. The benefits of implementing the proposal will mitigate the effects of identified risks. A new school provides greater prospects for improving educational attainment for pupils.

120. The full risk assessment is attached to this report as appendix A.

### **Community usage impact assessment**

121. A Community Impact Assessment (CIA) will be required to fully progress this proposal which will be completed prior to consultation. Some information required to undertake a full CIA on community usage at the school will need to be obtained direct from the school.

122. Whereas the need to understand and mitigate the impact of a school reorganisation proposal on a community is a right and proper consideration, the deciding factor in determining school organisation proposals should be one of securing the best educational offer for pupils.

123. Co-locating services and making full use of school premises are strategies that can assist in driving down the cost of delivering a public service, such as education, as well as providing much needed service benefits for a local community.

124. However, the main purpose of a school is the delivery of high quality educational experiences for children and young people in order to raise standards. In this regard, school organisation proposals should be guided by a school improvement agenda and this should be applied to schools of whatever size, character or location.

125. A full CIA will inform the consultation document and the subsequent consultation report presented to Members' for consideration.

### **Welsh Language impact assessment**

126. Officers are satisfied that provision for Welsh language will be at least comparable with the provision currently offered at Cymer Afan Comprehensive School and that implementing the proposal should result in a positive impact on Welsh language development.

127. At Cymer Afan Comprehensive school the Welsh dimension is strongly supported. There are many valuable opportunities provided to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the history,

culture and industry of Wales. All pupils follow an appropriate course in Welsh in key stage 4, and a majority of pupils gain a qualification in Welsh at GCSE.

128. Whereas Ysgol Newydd Margam has yet to open, the experience at Dyffryn School serves as a helpful benchmark as the new school would wish to build on the strengths of existing provision. At Dyffryn School almost all Year 10 pupils follow the full GCSE course in Welsh second language, with many pupils following the course at the higher level. This was reported by Estyn to be strength of the school, who also noted that the school has been effective in promoting positive attitudes to the learning of Welsh.
129. The school is working towards improving pupils' Welsh language skills beyond formal Welsh lessons, and to encourage greater pupil self-confidence when using the language.
130. The full Welsh language assessment is attached to this report as appendix B.

### **Consultation period**

131. This school organisation proposal is being brought forward under the Council's Strategic School Improvement Programme. Formal consultation is required in line with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, July 2013, which specifies the procedures to be followed, including the content of the consultation document and those to be consulted.
132. Subject to approval, it is intended to consult on this proposal between: Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2017 and Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> Jan.2018.
133. Responses to the consultation for consideration by Members will be reported to Education, Skills and Cabinet Board on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018.
134. If, following consideration of the responses, Members decide to progress the proposal then a 28 day period will follow for the submission of objections.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Publication of consultation document                      | Mon. 11 <sup>th</sup> December 2017                              |
| Period for submitting responses                           | Mon. 11 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 2017 – Sun. 28 <sup>th</sup> Jan.2018 |
| Consultation report published                             | Thurs. 15 <sup>th</sup> February 2018                            |
| Consideration of consultation responses by ESC Cab. Board | Thurs. 15 <sup>th</sup> February 2018                            |
| Proposed implementation date                              | September 2019   |

### **Recommendation**

135. Having given due regard to the impact assessments accompanying this report, it is recommended that, in line with Section 48 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, Members approve:
- consultation on the future of secondary education in the upper Afan Valley to be brought forward under a proposal to make arrangements for pupils who would otherwise attend Cymer Afan Comprehensive school to receive their secondary education at Ysgol Newydd Margam and to close Cymer Afan Comprehensive school; and as from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019.

### **Reasons for proposed decision**

136. This decision is necessary to comply with the formal consultation required of the Council by the School Organisation Code. Subject to the outcome of consultation, implementation of the proposal will enable the Council to promote high educational standards and the fulfilment of every child's potential. It will also enable the Council to meet its duty to secure efficient education in its area.



## Implementation of the decision

The decision is proposed for implementation after the 3-day call-in period.

## Appendices

Appendix A: Risk assessment

Appendix B: Welsh language impact assessment

## List of background papers

- a. Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Board – February 2013  
[https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Children,%20Young%20People%20and%20Education%20Cabinet%20Board/20130207/Agenda/\\$CYPEB-0702013-REP-EL-AT.doc.pdf](https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Children,%20Young%20People%20and%20Education%20Cabinet%20Board/20130207/Agenda/$CYPEB-0702013-REP-EL-AT.doc.pdf)
- a) Strategic School Improvement Programme Principles Paper: September 2008  
[https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20080924/Agenda/\\$CAB-240908-REP-EL-KN.doc.pdf](https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20080924/Agenda/$CAB-240908-REP-EL-KN.doc.pdf)
- b) Welsh Government - School Organisation Code: July 2013  
<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130719-school-organisation-codes-en.pdf>
- c) School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013  
[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/1/pdfs/anaw\\_20130001\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/1/pdfs/anaw_20130001_en.pdf)
- d) Learner Travel (Wales) Measure: 2008 & the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance: 2014.  
[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2008/2/pdfs/mwa\\_20080002\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2008/2/pdfs/mwa_20080002_en.pdf)  
<http://gov.wales/docs/det/publications/140616-ltogg-en.pdf>
- e) Home to School Travel Policy: 2017  
[https://www.npt.gov.uk/pdf/NPT\\_Home\\_to\\_School\\_Travel\\_Policy\\_2017.pdf](https://www.npt.gov.uk/pdf/NPT_Home_to_School_Travel_Policy_2017.pdf)
- f) Neath Port Talbot Council school admission policy  
<https://www.npt.gov.uk/media/7870/nptcbc-community-school-admission-arrangements-2018-2019-determined.pdf>
- g) Federation process of maintained schools in Wales  
<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/140522-guidance-on-federation-of-schools-en.pdf>
- h) School Standards & Framework Act 1998  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/contents>
- i) School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2010/824/contents/made>
- j) Estyn  
<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/search>

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