

SUBJECT:	REVIEW OF SCHOOL PLACES IN CALDICOT TOWN
MEETING:	INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER DECISION
DATE:	16th DECEMBER 2020
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide Councillors with an update on the statutory consultation process concerning the provision of Primary School places in Caldicot Town which was undertaken between January and March 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To receive an overview of the feedback received during the statutory consultation process concerning the proposals to increase the capacity of Dewstow Primary and Archbishop Rowan Williams CIW Primary Schools.
- 2.2 To agree to enter into a further statutory consultation process during the Autumn term, 2021 concerning English Medium Primary School Places in Caldicot Town, allowing for wider and more in depth engagement with key stakeholders.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Background

- 3.1 The School Organisation Code (2018) places responsibility on local authorities in Wales for ensuring that there are sufficient and suitable school places to educate its children and young people.
- 3.2 On 16th December 2020, the Council's Cabinet agreed to enter into statutory consultation processes concerning a review of English Medium Primary school places in the Caldicot Town area of the cluster. More specifically, to enter into a statutory consultation process that proposed to increase the capacity of Archbishop Rowan Williams and Dewstow Primary Schools from 210 places to 280 places.
- 3.3 The proposal to the increase in capacity at Archbishop Rowan Williams VA Primary School was brought forward in partnership with the school's governing body in recognition of the school's voluntary aided status.
- 3.4 The review of school places across Caldicot town was instigated following concerns that the provision of English medium primary school places in the town area is insufficient to support the forecasted demand.

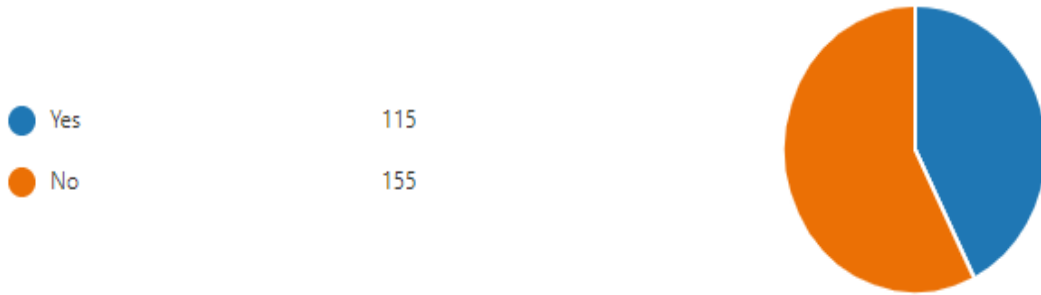
- 3.5 On an annual basis, the Council completes Planning of School Places returns to the Welsh Government. This return analyses the County's position with regards to potential surplus places and projected demand.
- 3.6 Across the Caldicot cluster there are 15.1% surplus places (combined English and Welsh Medium) as at September 2020. The English Medium proportion currently stands at 12.1%.
- 3.7 However, concerns rest with the provision of school places within the Primary schools serving in the 'Town' area of the cluster. The schools identified under this criteria are:
- Archbishop Rowan Williams Church in Wales Primary School
 - Castle Park Primary School
 - Dewstow Primary School
 - Durand Primary School
 - Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin
- 3.8 For the 'Town' schools, the surplus places position is calculated as 11.5% (September 2020), however, within the English Medium sector the proportion is only 2.6%. 3 of the 4 English medium Schools listed above have no available places in any year group, with the fourth school holding a 10% surplus places (the level identified as being appropriate by Welsh Government).
- 3.9 As a result of this position, it is often the case that the Council is unable to comply with the parental preference of families residing within the town area of the cluster, with some young people required to travel in excess of 4 miles to alternative schools in the cluster. This has implications for home to school transport costs.
- 3.10 This position is exacerbated by virtue of the fact that there is significant housing development planned over the next 5 years. The following schemes have received Planning approval:

Development	Catchment School	No of Dwellings
Sudbrook Shipyard	Archbishop Rowan Williams CIW Primary	46
Sudbrook Papermill	Archbishop Rowan Williams CIW Primary	212
Crick Road	Archbishop Rowan Williams CIW Primary	285
Church Road	Castle Park Primary	130
Total Town		673

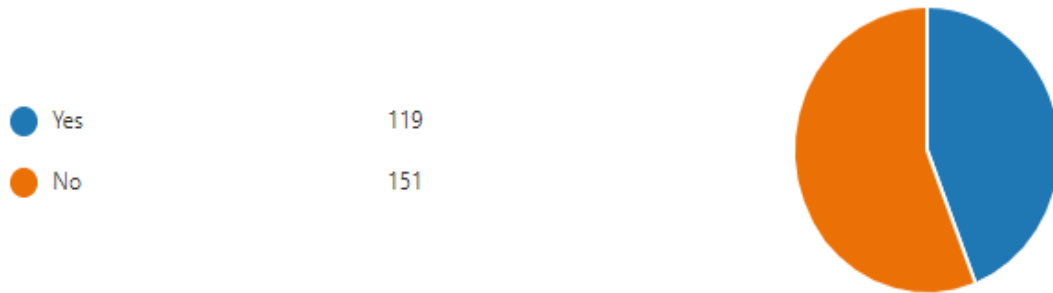
- 3.11 The building works at Sudbrook Shipyard and Sudbrook Papermill have commenced, and, the Council anticipates that approximately 134 primary aged pupils could arise from the developments between now and 2024.
- 3.12 As a result of the shortfall in school places within the town area, the Council has been successful through planning processes in securing section 106 education contributions from the developers to the sum of £1,595,504 to invest in creating additional school places.

The consultation

- 3.13 Following the decision made by Cabinet on 16th December 2020, the Council opened the statutory consultation process on 18th January 2021 for a period of 6 weeks, concluding on 2nd March 2021.
- 3.14 In line with the requirements of Welsh Government's School Organisation code (2018), statutory consultation processes that relate to school organisation proposals must take place for a minimum of 42 days, 20 of which must be school days. However, in recognition of the global pandemic relating to Coronavirus, the Welsh Government temporarily relaxed these regulations to allow statutory processes to continue during times where schools were unable to deliver face to face learning.
- 3.15 All statutory consultees, including staff, governors, parents and young people likely to be affected by proposals were informed of the proposals and advised of the opportunities of how they can contribute to this statutory process.
- 3.16 The National restrictions arising as a result of the global pandemic removed the opportunities for officers to engage face to face with statutory consultees during the consultation period. However, following online engagement sessions were undertaken to allow opportunities for the proposals to be discussed in greater detail, as well as enabling consultees to informally feedback their views:
- **11th February 2021** – Consultation with parents and Community of Archbishop Rowan Williams VA Primary School
 - **23rd February 2021** - Consultation with parents, governors and Community of Dewstow Primary School
 - **24th February 2021** – Wider Consultation event with Caldicot Community
- 3.17 The formal statutory consultation period concluded on 2nd March 2021, allowing for the formal responses to this consultation to be reviewed and analysed. A total of 270 responses were received, providing very much a mixed view on the presented proposals.
- 3.18 When asked the question "*Do you agree with the proposals to increase the capacity of Archbishop Rowan Williams VA Primary from 210 to 280 school places*", the following feedback was received:



3.19 When asked the question “Do you agree with the proposals to increase the capacity of Dewstow Primary from 210 to 280 school places”, the following feedback was received:



3.20 An analysis of the responses (received in favour of proposals) highlights the following key themes of support:

Theme 1	Children within the community should be able attend their local / catchment school
Theme 2	The Education infrastructure in Caldicot requires investment to support the planned housing developments
Theme 3	Both Archbishop Rowan Williams and Dewstow Primary are experiencing regular oversubscription within catchment
Theme 4	Both Schools have sites suitable for extension
Theme 5	The environment at Dewstow Primary is already set up to deliver mixed age teaching
Theme 6	Archbishop Rowan Williams should be chosen as it is subject to the majority of housing developments

3.21 The analysis of the responses (received in opposition to the proposals) highlights the following key themes of concern:

Theme 1	A concern that the increase in capacity will lead to increased class sizes
Theme 2	A view that funding should be used to support the development other schools in the cluster, especially as Dewstow is already a relatively new school

Theme 3	A concern that the proposals will not have a positive impact on Welsh Medium Education
Theme 4	A concern that the increased capacity of the schools will lead to more congestion around the site
Theme 5	A view that Dewstow Primary is not catchment for any of the new developments so should not receive investment

- 3.22 There are two areas that drew specific concern and which are worth specific mention. The first was that the money afforded to the local authority to develop additional school places comes with specific constraints and has to be spent on providing additional school places. Whilst some schools in the town would value the opportunity to spend monies on improving their learning environments this was not what the funding allows us to do.
- 3.23 The second area is concerned with the impact that the investment in English medium schools could have on the Welsh medium school in Caldicot, Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin. Whilst it is recognised that the additional provision of English Medium places could impact on Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin the authority is currently investing in the Welsh medium school by extending it to a 210 capacity school and providing nursery provision on the school site through the Cylch Meithrin provision.
- 3.24 Both of these factors will be drawn out more fully in the next consultation.

Conclusion

- 3.25 The consultation process has provided us with valuable feedback on the presented proposals. We were pleased to receive a great deal of support totalling 234 responses across both proposals, providing us with reassurance that there is significant support for proposals proceed to next stages of this statutory process.
- 3.26 However, it was also concerning that 306 responses (57%) were received across both proposals that were not in favour of the options put forward for consultation. Scrutinising these responses, it would suggest that there are areas on which we should reflect prior to moving to the next stages of this consultation process.
- 3.27 The recommendation formed under 2.2 of this report would enable us to engage in a more in depth consultation, and with National restrictions beginning to lift, enable officers to engage face to face with members of the community prior to determining how the forecasted shortfall in Primary School places within the area should be addressed.

4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

The consultation document set out 5 options considered prior to arising at the proposals outlined in this report. These were:

- i) Do Nothing and maintain the status quo
- ii) Increase the capacity of 1 school in the town to 315, and increase of 105 school places across the town
- iii) Increase the capacity of 2 schools in the town to 315, and increase of 210 school places across the town

- iv) Increase the capacity of 1 school in the town to 420, and increase of 210 school places across the town
- v) Increase the capacity of 2 schools in the town to 280, and increase of 140 school places across the town

Option 5 was considered to be the preferred option for consultation, which we proposed to deliver through increasing the capacity at Archbishop Rowan Williams and Dewstow Primary Schools.

The feedback received during the consultation stage of this process will be used for inform the proposed next stage of consultation as recommended under 2.2 of this report.

5. REASONS:

The Council has a responsibility as part of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to consult with appropriate stakeholders when giving consideration to any significant school reorganisation proposals.

The Council has consulted on proposals to increase the capacity of Archbishop Rowan Williams and Dewstow Primary Schools, however, the feedback received from the consultation undertaken between 18th January and 2nd March 2021 would suggest that there are benefits in re-entering into a further stage of consultation where face to face engagement events can operate

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The Council has been successful in securing section 106 education contributions to invest in the supply of school places within the town, ensuring our future provision is sufficient to meet demand.

The table below details the funding that has been secured by the Council to support these proposals:

Development name	No of Dwellings	Secured S106 Claim
Sudbrook Shipyard	46	0
Sudbrook Papermill	212	439,286
Crick Road	285	811,078
Church Road	130	345,140
Total	673	1,595,504

The costs associated with the extension of Archbishop Rowan Williams CIW Primary and Dewstow Primary Schools is estimated to be in the region of £1,150,500 (build costs), allowing a contingency of approximately £445,004 to invest in the external areas of the school sites, which will be required to support an increase in School capacity.

The above costings would need to be reviewed in any next stages of consultation taken forward during the Autumn term 2021, reflecting the increase in construction costs that have become apparent since the global pandemic.

7. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

A copy of this document as approved during the initial stage of this consultation process is attached.

This will be reviewed and updated in readiness for any future consultation during the Autumn term 2021 as per recommendation 2.2.

8. CONSULTEES:

CYP DMT

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Welsh Government School Admission Code 2013
School Organisation Code (2013)

10. AUTHOR:

Matt Jones, Access Unit Manager

11. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644585

E-mail: matthewdjones@monmouthshire.gov.uk