



## **CABINET - 18<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024**

**SUBJECT: POST 16, SINGLE SEX AND SURPLUS PLACES BOARD –  
CONSULTATION REPORT: PROPOSAL TO CLOSE LEWIS  
GIRLS SCHOOL AND MAKE A REGULATED ALTERATION  
TO LEWIS SCHOOL PENGAM**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND  
CORPORATE SERVICES**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members in respect of the Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Board recommendation to close Lewis Girls School and make a regulated alteration to Lewis School Pengam to change from single sex to co-education with effect from September 2025.
- 1.2 Members are asked to consider the information contained in the Consultation Report and approve the recommendations, via vote, to proceed to Statutory Notice.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The proposal to close Lewis Girls School and make a regulated alteration to Lewis School Pengam to change from single sex to co-education with effect from September 2025, went to formal consultation between the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024 and the 15<sup>th</sup> July 2024.
- 2.2 To discharge the Council's duty under the School Organisation Code 2018, there is now a requirement for Cabinet members to give due regard to the content of the Consultation Report and determine whether or not it is appropriate to move to the next stage in the process.
- 2.3 A Consultation Report has been compiled and attached as an annex to this report. The Consultation Report summarises each of the issues raised by consultees. Any emerging themes that have been raised through gathering the views of consultees during the consultation process have been responded to by means of clarification with supporting reasons.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 Members are asked to: -

- a) Consider the information contained in the Consultation Report
- b) Approve the recommendations, via vote, to proceed to Statutory Notice in relation to the proposal to close Lewis Girls School and make a regulated alteration to Lewis School Pengam to change from single sex to co-education with effect from September 2025

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To ensure Members are updated on progress in respect of the Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Board recommendation to close Lewis Girls School and make a regulated alteration to Lewis School Pengam to change from single sex to co-education with effect from September 2025.
- 4.2 To seek Members approval on the recommendations, via vote, to proceed to the publication of a Statutory Notice in respect of the proposal.
- 4.3 To assist the Council in discharging its duties in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018.

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 The Post 16, Single Sex Surplus Places Board was set up in 2019 to develop recommendations for change that would be considered by Caerphilly's Cabinet.
- 5.2 The Board is made up of a wide range of stakeholders including Head Teachers, College Representatives, Scrutiny Members, Governor Representatives, TU Representatives, EAS representatives and Local Education Authority Officers.
- 5.3 The Board's initial work focused on the development of a set of proposals for a sustainable approach to 6th form provision across the whole of the County Borough.
- 5.4 The Upper Rhymney Valley (URV) Sixth Form Partnership and the Caerphilly Sixth Form Partnership were subsequently formed with schools working together to ensure as broad a curriculum could be offered to learners as sustainably as possible.
- 5.5 The Board has recently been reconvened to conclude its work by developing recommendations to Cabinet in respect of single sex provision across the Lewis Schools and reducing the level of surplus places, specifically across Secondary Schools within the Upper Rhymney Valley.

- 5.6 The Board met on the 31st January 2024 and the 6th February 2024. Members considered a presentation that built on the previously established informal consensus on Single Sex provision and addressing surplus places, as well as providing additional information that the Local Authority had been tasked with establishing to aid decision-making.
- 5.7 At its meeting of the 6th February 2024, the Board voted unanimously in support of the recommendation that Council should formally consult stakeholders with a view to:
- (1) moving from Single Sex provision to co-education in the Upper Rhymney Valley
  - (2) locating Lewis catchment pupils at the Lewis School Pengam site, while retaining the Lewis Girls School site to manage the transition over a number of years (minimising impact on exam pupils and enabling staff and pupils to be integrated over an appropriate timeframe)
- 5.8 The “Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Board – Further Recommendations to Cabinet” report was considered by a special meeting of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 20th March 2024 and Cabinet on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2024.
- 5.9 Further to Cabinet approval gained on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2024, formal consultation for the proposal was carried out between the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024 and the 15<sup>th</sup> July 2024.
- 5.10 A prescribed list of recipients as outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018 were written to and a consultation document was published in Welsh and English, both in hardcopy and electronically via the Authority’s website based. Reasonable access to information was promoted from an Equalities perspective and other formats were available, including a child friendly version.
- 5.11 Members of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee who met on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024 in their capacity as a consultee under the School Organisation Code 2018, had the opportunity to consider the information contained in the consultation pack and provide their views which have been noted as part of the minutes of the meeting and summarised in the Consultation Report.
- 5.12 The consultation period ran for 42 days (with at least 20 of these being school days) to provide adequate time for response and conscientious consideration has been given to any responses received.
- 5.13 There were 591 responses received in respect of the proposal as outlined in 1.1. In addition, a number of pupils from both schools engaged in the consultation process through ‘learner voice’ sessions which have been reported on separately. These are broken down into more detail in the Consultation Report.

- 5.14 A Consultation Report has been compiled and has been attached as an annex to this report. The Consultation Report summarises each of the issues raised by consultees. Any emerging themes that have been raised through gathering the views of consultees during the consultation process have been responded to by means of clarification with supporting reasons. In addition, Estyn has provided a formal response in consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal which is included in the Consultation Report.
- 5.15 The Consultation Report has been published electronically on the Sustainable Communities for Learning pages on the Council's website.
- 5.16 Consultees who have indicated in their consultation response that they wish to be notified have been advised by letter or email of the availability of the Consultation Report along with the key stakeholders identified in the School Organisation Code 2018.

#### 5.17 **Conclusion**

Pursuant to the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018, formal consultation has now concluded in relation to this proposal and this report has been compiled along with the Consultation Report to provide members with the necessary information to make an informed decision as to whether to progress the proposal to the next statutory stage which would entail permission to publish a Statutory Notice. 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 at this stage. An Objection Report will then be brought before Cabinet in addition to an updated Integrated Impact Assessment, and at this point, a final determination regarding the proposal will be requested.

### 6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report. The process outlined by Welsh Government is being adhered to ensure transparency, balanced and open decision making.

### 7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 A full Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been completed in relation to the proposal to ensure compliance with the socio-economic duty, Sections 1 to 3 of Equality Act 2010.

[Link to IIA](#)

- 7.2 Subject to Cabinet approval to progress to Statutory Notice, the IIA will be further reviewed and updated after this stage. The purpose of this further assessment is to take account of any further information that has come forward through the

consultation stages or otherwise, to further support conscientious consideration prior to final determination.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 None at this stage and it will not be until the consultation has concluded that a decision on next steps, and therefore costs, can be made.
- 8.2 There will be further reports to Scrutiny and Cabinet as next steps are determined and any further proposals are developed.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 This will be dependent on specific proposals that will be taken forward albeit the Trade Unions have been briefed and will continue to be briefed as the consultations progress.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 This proposal was presented to the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024. Comments and responses are summarised as follows:
- 10.2 **Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Comments - 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024**

Members sought further detail on the anticipated number of years the Lewis Girls School will remain open if the proposals go ahead and the financial impact of this transition period. The committee was advised that the consultation report details an anticipated two-year transition period with a detailed breakdown of how the transition will take place. This shows where certain year groups would attend Lewis Girls school site and Lewis school Pengam. With regard to the financial impact, it was explained that the funding formula for the premises costs for the two schools would remain during the two-year period, therefore there would be no impact on the schools during the transition. The ambition for the local authority and both head teachers is for a smooth transition.

A member referred to the catchment areas table in the consultation report which included the distances to other schools, the member sought clarification on what point the distance to other schools is taken from. It was explained that both the catchment area and the distances are taken from Lewis School Pengam, this is included because Welsh Government ask that impact on nearby schools is considered for this type of consultation.

Members noted that concerns were raised about the phased approach and the timeline and asked what the main concerns raised. The scrutiny

committee was advised that respondents felt it is important that pupils are supported during the transition period, some mentioned that children are mixed at primary school level therefore it would be better to transition from primary to secondary with all their peer group.

Members were advised that if the decision is made to close Lewis Girls school and progress to statutory notice a further report and a team around the school will be established to provide support to not only the staff and pupils plus but everyone at the school to ensure that they are supported during the transition.

Members received assurances from Mr Parry Head of Lewis school Pengam, that up to this point their role was to facilitate the consultation and ensure that as many people as possible had the opportunity to participate. They now have an indication of the views, and the next step is to manage any concerns if the closure proceeds. There is work to build upon in terms of the existing partnership work between the two schools for the sixth forms, which has demonstrated to the community how well they can work together.

Mr Parry also stated that stated there that there was nothing in the consultation responses that caused huge concern and he has every confidence that the staff in both schools can address the issues raised.

Ms Denton Head of Lewis Girls school agreed with the points raised and stated that the emerging themes in the consultation responses did not have any surprises and she is confident that both the local authority and the schools staff working in partnership can put in plans to address them.

Following the debate the scrutiny committee noted the contents of the report and recommend to Cabinet to proceed to Statutory Notice in relation to the proposal to close Lewis Girls School and make a regulated alteration to Lewis School Pengam to change from single sex to co-education with effect from September 2025

This was supported by a majority 10 for 0 against 0 abstentions.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

### **11.1 School Organisation Code 2018 (Welsh Government) School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013**

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#### Background Papers

Link to Consultation Report – [Lewis Girls School and Lewis School Pengam](#)