



CABINET - 11TH DECEMBER 2024

**SUBJECT: POST 16, SINGLE SEX AND SURPLUS PLACES BOARD –
OBJECTION 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**

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 Objection Report and approve the recommendations via vote, to proceed to implementation and in so doing provide the final determination on the proposal.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Further to Cabinet approval gained 18th September 2024, a Statutory Notice for the proposal relating to Lewis Girls School and Lewis School Pengam was published, and the formal objection period ran between 26th September 2024 and the 24th October 2024.
- 2.2 Under Section 49 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 when objections have been received proposers must publish a summary of the statutory objections and the proposer's response to those objections ("the Objection Report").
- 2.3 17 Objections were received via email and in the medium of English.
- 2.4 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 Objection Report and make a final determination as whether to implement the proposal as outlined in the documentation.

- 2.5 Should Cabinet authorise progression of the project, a Decision letter will be published setting out clearly the reasons for the decision with reference to the School Organisation Code 2018.
- 2.6 The proposal will then progress to full implementation 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.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Cabinet Members are asked to:

- a) Consider the information contained in the Objection Report
- b) Approve the recommendation, via vote, to proceed to implementation of 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 the 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 Member approval on the recommendations outlined in 3.1 prior to making a final determination 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 Through previous discussions in 2021, the Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Board had reached an informal consensus that co-education would be

the way forward in the Upper Rhymney Valley (URV).

5.4 Having gained Board consensus at that time, Local Education Authority (LEA) officers engaged directly with the four URV Secondary Head Teachers as educational experts to consider this position further.

5.5 The URV Head Teachers agreed the following wording to reflect their position on Single Sex provision as well as the potential benefit of moving toward co-education across the Lewis Schools:

“We explore ways in which families can be brought together and re-united and avoid the division that some experience when, due to the current arrangement of schools, children from the same family are split apart at age 11”

5.6 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)

5.7 Further to Cabinet approval gained 18th September 2024, a Statutory Notice for the proposal relating to Lewis Girls School and Lewis School Pengam was published on the 26th September 2024.

5.8 The Statutory Notice was published on a school day and consultees were given 28 days to respond to the document, with at least 15 of these being school days as defined by Section 579 of the Education Act 1996.

5.9 All documentation was published in Welsh and English, complying with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards. Information was also available in other languages and formats on request.

5.10 A prescribed list of recipients as outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018 were written to and a Statutory Notice was published electronically on the Council's website.

5.11 Hardcopies of the Statutory Notice were made available at both schools and displayed in the school foyers and on/in close proximity to the entrance gates. In addition, the school's internal communication network with parents and pupils was used to raise awareness of the process and publication of the Statutory Notice.

5.12 The objection period ran from Thursday 26th September 2024 (a school day) and concluded at midnight on Thursday 24th October 2024 to provide adequate time for response.

- 5.13 A total of 17 objections were received, via email and in the medium of English during the Objection Period. Reasons for the objection included: Parental preference for single sex provision (4 mentions), Educational Standards (11 mentions), Pupil Wellbeing (11 mentions), Staff Welfare (11 mentions), Impact on local business and transport (10 mentions) and Asset/Financial savings (8 mentions).
- 5.14 Under Section 49 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 when objections have been received proposers must publish a summary of the statutory objections and the proposer's response to those objections ("the Objection Report").
- 5.15 An Objection Report in relation to the proposal has been compiled and attached as an appendix to this report to enable conscientious consideration to any responses received.
- 5.16 Once Cabinet has made the final determination, a Decision Notice will be published electronically on the Sustainable Communities for Learning page on the Council's website. All consultees will be notified via email/letter and hard copies will be available on request.

5.17 **Conclusion**

Pursuant to the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018, the formal statutory objection period has now concluded, and this report has been compiled along with the Objection Report to provide Members with the necessary information to make an informed decision as to the final determination for the proposal relating to the closure of Lewis Girls School and a regulated alteration to Lewis School Pengam to change from single sex to co-education with effect from September 2025.

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 An initial Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) for this proposal was undertaken alongside the original Consultation Document forming part of the outline consultation pack which is published on the Council's website.
- 7.2 The Integrated Impact Assessment has been reviewed to include any additional elements highlighted through the statutory consultation process. The purpose of this further assessment is to take account of any further information that has come forward through the consultation or otherwise.

Original [Link to IIA](#)

Updated [Link to IIA](#)

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 The proposal was presented to the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee at their meeting of the 26th November 2024 and considered as Item 7 of the agenda.

Following consideration of the Objection Report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal communication, this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED to:

Endorse the recommendation to Cabinet, via vote, to proceed to implementation of 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.

Vote: 15 For, 0 Against, 1 Abstention

11. STATUTORY POWER

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

Author: Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services

Consultees: Dave Street, Interim Chief Executive
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Gareth Jenkins, Interim Corporate Director for Social Services
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Councillor Donna Cushing, Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy and Place Shaping Programme Director
Andrea West, Place Shaping and Sustainable Communities for Learning Service Manager
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion and ALN
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager

Background papers:

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