

# Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Impact Assessment Tonmawr Primary School

## 1. Context

In preparing statutory proposals involving a school a Local Authority is required to assess the impact that the proposals may have on local families and the local community through the preparation of a Community Impact Assessment (CIA).

The Community Impact Assessment has been conducted in line with the guidance set out in Welsh Government's Circular No: 006/2013: 'School Organisation Code'.

## 2. The Assessment Process

The Community Impact Assessment has been informed by:-

- A review of existing school/community interaction <sup>1</sup>
- A composite audit of community facilities <sup>2</sup>
- Dialogue with partner Organisations to better understand current gaps in provision and their work in the community.
- Evidence from earlier school consultation events
- Desktop study of secondary data <sup>3,4</sup>
- A Scoping Study embracing the Ward of Pelenna

Interviews have been held with the school's leadership. The findings have been used to interpret the extent, type, frequency and duration of community activity on each school site.

## 3. The proposal

It is proposed to make provision for pupils in the area served by Tonmawr Primary School to receive primary phase English-medium education at Crynallt Primary School and to close Tonmawr Primary School.

Provision will be made enabling full-time pupils on roll at Tonmawr Primary School to transfer to Crynallt Primary School. In line with the Council's admission policy, parents may express a preference for an alternative school. Admission applications for

transfer from Nursery to full-time education will be required in accordance with the Council's Nursery to Reception admission arrangements.

Subject to the outcome of consultation and Cabinet approval, this change to provision will be implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015, with Tonmawr Primary School closing on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2015 (Source: Cabinet Report October 2014).

#### 4. **The Schools**

##### **Tonmawr Primary School**

Tonmawr Primary School is situated in the village of Tonmawr in Cwm Pelenna. Tonmawr is a linear development stretching from Penrhys to Mynydd Blaenafon along the Tonmawr or Dan-y – Coed Road. The school serves a largely rural area, which is of mixed social affluence.

Tonmawr Primary School is an English-medium, community school for pupils aged 3-11 years. It has 52.0 (fte) pupils on roll (*Jan 2014 PLASC*) and English is the main teaching medium. The school serves the village of Tonmawr and immediate surrounding rural area.

Tonmawr Primary School is a partner primary school to Cefn Saeson Comprehensive school where secondary phase English – medium education is provided.

68% of the pupils on roll are drawn from the school's catchment area. 23% of pupils are entitled to free school meals; this figure is lower than the County Borough average and reflects the national average. 14% of pupils have Additional Learning Needs and 14 pupils have Statements.

##### **Crynallt Primary School**

Crynallt Primary School is situated within the Cimla which forms a large residential estate on the Afan Valley Road. The Cimla stretches from the Ward of Neath South to the Ward of Pelenna on the B4287. The school serves a largely urban conurbation of mixed socio-economic profile with pockets of deprivation.

Crynallt Primary School is an English-medium, community school for pupils aged 3-11 years. It has 404 (fte) pupils on roll (*Jan 2014* PLASC) and English is the main teaching medium. The school serves the Cimla area of Neath.

Crynallt Primary School is a partner primary school to Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School where secondary phase English – medium education is provided.

87% of the pupils on roll are drawn from the school's catchment area (Oct '14). 21% of pupils are entitled to free school meals; this figure is lower than the County Borough average and lower than the national average. 21% of pupils have Additional Learning Needs and 2 pupils have Statements.

#### **5. The degree to which the school buildings are used now as a community resource**

The pupils at Tonmawr Primary School enjoy a rich menu of school based extra curricular activity including Sports Club, Nurture Club, Creative & Arts, Drama, ICT, and the Forest School Eco Project. The school offers a Breakfast Club.

Tonmawr Primary School hosts a Mother & Toddler Playgroup, Childcare provision ('Tiddlywinks') and a Wraparound facility (to 4.30 p.m.) which proves invaluable for those parents that wish to re-enter the jobs market. The Playgroup helps very young children and their parents to become familiar with the school and they are more understanding of the learning and communication difficulties of those children of Nursery and Reception age that attend the Early Years Assessment Centre.

There are many networks within the school and beyond the traditional school day that promote collaboration between the children and parents. These include:-

- Reading and Precision Spelling (& 'Jolly Phonics')
- Road Safety Education
- Importance of Play (an 8 week Programme of activity)
- Wireless Networks
- 'Flame' – Family Learning Hwb
- 'Lap' – Language and Play Hwb

- The Nature Reserve and Community Garden (& 'Groundforce' weeks)
- Thai Cooking
- Designing a CD cover with Tonmawr Male Voice Choir
- Rugby Coaching
- Grandparents and history tuition

The school is used to host a range of school/community events which include fetes, discos, concerts {St. David's and Christmas, etc}, carol service and the PTFA fund raisers to which the wider community and Senior Citizens are invited. There are very good links between the school and the Pelenna Community Council.

The Police Community Support Officer, 'Playworks' and the Reverend from St. Teilo's Church use the school. St. Teilo's Church plays an important part in the life of the school by assisting with Assemblies, Religious Education and Harvest Festivals.

The school has been recognised for being a nurturing environment and for promoting synergy with its immediate community. It has been in receipt of several Awards. These include:-

- Eco Award – Platinum standard
- Healthy Schools Initiative
- 'Eat Well Plate' – Phase 6
- Road Safety
- 'Rights' – a Respecting School
- The British Council
- Being a Fair Trade School

Some of the facilities and the provision at Tonmawr Primary School can be associated with the PTFA and the School Governing Body adding value to the site by means of fund raising or attracting external sources of grant aid. This has been accomplished by utilising the Pupil Deprivation Grant, the Childcare Sufficiency Grants, Communities First funding, etc to enhance nurture, wraparound care, play and biodiversity. Funds are also raised for Brest Cancer Wales, Neath Food Bank and during Mac Milan Coffee Mornings.

## 6. Extent of community facilities within easy reach of the existing school

The area surrounding Tonmawr Primary School is reasonably well served with amenities with the village enjoying the use of a General Stores which doubles as a Sub Post office. Tonmawr is important to the Mountain Biking fraternity with facilities at Llety Bryn Betws and Gyfylchi Farm Cottages. The Pelenna Mountain Bike Centre supported by the 'Cognition' project is world renown.

The school enjoys use of various community facilities that are within easy walking distance. These include:-

- Dan y Coed Community Centre – free use is given by the Community Council to the school to stage concerts. The Community Centre is used regularly between Monday and Friday for Senior Citizens meetings, Bingo, Youth Club, 'Tonmawr Tots', for the Ladies and Male Voice Choir, for Indoor Bowls, Photographic Club, PACT meetings, Job Club and Christmas Dinners. The Centre is well equipped and has recently been in receipt of a 'NPT Homes' Community Development Fund to refurbish its kitchen.
- Tonmawr RFC – *free use is given to the school to stage concerts and PTFA fund raising events in the Main Hall. The school enjoys free use of the Rugby field at the Whitworth Ground. The school provides players for the Mini and Junior sections of the Club which operate Under 8's right the way through to Under 14's.* The school is seen as the lifeblood of the RFC.
- St. Teilo's Church – for Craft Club and Film Night. Also in the development of the children's education and welfare and Curriculum Cymraeg.
- Evangelical Mission hall
- Bryn Betws Lodge for Field Trips (also used by the community for Boot Camp)
- Equipped Play Areas at Miles Field and Johns Terrace. Miles Field includes an Eco Project and raised beds that have been developed by Tonmawr Primary School children.
- Former Tonmawr 2000 Sports Hall – Managed by 'Pelenna Property Partnerships' and used infrequently by the school for sports when the weather is at its absolute worst. Rugby Club prefers to use Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School Sport Hall and the Tonmawr 2000 Centre may be further

converted to Industrial Units to keep pace with growing demand in the village('Coast to Coast' Energy occupy office space in Tonmawr 2000 and are expanding bringing advantages of local employment opportunities).

Under this proposal the above amenities would remain available to the children but potentially there would be less community interaction and cohesiveness if the school was to be lost.

## **7. Adverse impact of school closure upon the community**

The rich menu of extra curricular activity and school based events provided at Tonmawr Primary School could be preserved and transferred to Crynallt Primary School under this proposal. If the proposal to close Tonmawr Primary School is implemented then the relocation of the Early Years Assessment Centre will be required.

The Tonmawr Primary School has proven to be a good venue for partnership activities and it is thought by those interviewed that the village will suffer if community interaction is to be displaced following school closure because of:-

- The village losing its dynamic or identity and 'localness'
- Unemployment – of those from the village that work in the school as Cooks and Teaching Assistants, etc
- Parents less likely to return to work if local wraparound care denied (coupled to inability of car less grandparents to collect children that are schooled in a more remote location).
- Affect on local Business – reduced footfall and secondary spend at the General Stores, negligible school uniform sales for local Embroidery Company, Sub Post Office closure
- The part played in the children's life by St Teilo's Church will be lost
- Village without a school less attractive to young families – less inward investment, less Housing development, inability to retain young people, out migration

Interviews have revealed that there is concern also with:-

- The travel distance between Tonmawr and Crynallt
- No safe walking route between Tonmawr and Crynallt
- The dilution of the Healthy Schools agenda assuming children will catch a bus to Crynallt Primary School but have walked to Tonmawr Primary School.

Opinions from those interviewed points to possibly Tonmawr slipping back into its derived Communities First status (under the ‘Education and Lifelong Learning’ strand) if the local school was to close.

Attendance at Tonmawr Primary School is currently good. It is felt that children transferring to Crynallt may not have the same loyalty. Crime rates in Tonmawr are very low, amongst the best in Wales – the children show respect because of the school ethos – this could be lost.

Tonmawr Primary School is considered locally to be an accessible venue that brings people together to meet and to connect with each other. The school is considered to give Tonmawr a sense of belonging and plays an integral part in a functioning, successful community.

#### **8. Plans to mitigate impact if community provision is lost from the school**

Some of the community interaction enjoyed on the school site could transfer to community facilities that exhibit spare capacity within the village. Community buildings would need to be adapted to receive ‘Tiddlywinks’ childcare, wraparound and Nurture Club etc as neither Dan – y – Coed or the Rugby Club would currently conform to CSSIW standards. The displacement of the Out of School Hours community interaction from the school to another venue would only succeed with the necessary staffing resource. This is considered important if the children and the parents are to continue to play a full part in a community that could otherwise become isolated.

The function of the PTFA and its role in fund raising for the village would need to be protected.

#### **9. Opportunities for enhancing existing community facilities to receive additional Out of School Hours activity.**

Under the proposal to close Tonmawr Primary School, opportunities exist to make best use of Tonmawr as a safe and attractive place to live by further enhancing community based activities and facilities.

The voluntary sector and the Community Council (utilising resources beyond their precept) could grow activities and provide new, additional or improved amenities by attracting external finance from:-

- NPTCBC Minor Projects Grant
- ‘Awards for All Wales’
- ‘NPT Homes’ Community Development Fund
- Section 106 Planning Gain – Housing Development on RFC land
- And in 2016 the Pen y Cymoedd Wind Farm Community Fund

As well as many of the generic demand lead open Grant Programmes such as Welsh Government ‘Community Facilities Programme’ and the Big Lottery Fund ‘People and Places’ Programme.

Interviews have revealed that areas for regeneration and investment would include:-

- Modernising and adapting Dan – y – Coed Community Centre
- Developing a Junior Training Area at the Whitworth Ground for the RFC
- Improving the Tonmawr RFC Clubhouse
- Possible conversion of Tonmawr 2000 to receive further small Industrial Units- those that are in high demand as a means of providing local employment.

## **10. Conclusion**

The Community Impact Assessment recognises the importance of Tonmawr Primary School in providing a venue for school based events, extra curricular activity and wider community interaction. Under this proposal the school based events and extra curricular activity can be preserved and transferred to Crynallt Primary School.

The role the school plays in its community cannot be denied. The displaced community use of the school and the synergy experienced between the school and the parents/grandparents will be lost if not adequately housed. In the advent of school closure it is important that the education and welfare of the children beyond

the traditional school day is adequately protected and suitably provided for elsewhere in the community.  
All existing community facilities in Tonmawr are to be retained and under this proposal there is an opportunity to make better use of those that are under utilised.

### **Sources/References:-**

- (1) Interviews:-
  - Head and Deputy Head of Tonmawr Primary School (22.10.14)
  - County Councillor for the Ward of Pelenna (27.10.14)
  - Clerk and Community Councillors of the Pelenna Community Council (29.10.14)
  - Chair and School Governors to Tonmawr Primary School (29.10.14)
  - Staff and parents of Tonmawr Primary School (29.10.14)
  - Pelenna Property Partnership
  - Community facility providers, shopkeeper , Clergy and Committee members from Dan – y – Coed Community Centre (29.10.14) and Tonmawr RFC (24.10.14)
  
- (2) NPTCBC Local Development Plan (September 2011) identifying all community provision within the spatial area that is under review
  
- (3) Audit of community provision within the Ward of Pelenna
  
- (4) NPTCBC Neighbourhood Profile for the Ward of Pelenna
  
- (5) Welsh Government School Organisation Code: Circular No. 006/2013
  
- (6) Scoping Study (22.10.14)