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To: Parents, Carers and Guardians of children attending Evenlode Primary School and Bute Cottage Nursery School; Headteacher, Staff and Governing Body of Evenlode Primary School and Bute Cottage Nursery School; Prescribed Consultees

Dear Consultee,

**Proposal 1: To amalgamate Bute Cottage Nursery School and Evenlode Primary School by;**

- **Changing the lowest age range of pupils at Evenlode Primary School from 4 to 3, to include 96 part time nursery places;**
- **Increasing the capacity of Evenlode Primary School to accommodate the 96 part time nursery places; and**
- **Discontinuing Bute Cottage Nursery School and transferring all staff and pupils of the nursery phase under the governance of Evenlode Primary School from September 2022.**

The Council consulted with prescribed consultees in accordance with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 on the proposal.

In line with the requirements of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code 2018, a consultation exercise with prescribed consultees was undertaken from 20 September 2021 to 5 November 2021. The aim of the consultation was to inform prescribed consultees about the proposal. During the consultation exercise, 238 individual responses were received by the consultation closing date of 5 November 2021. Consultees were asked for their opinion on the proposal. Of the total 238 individual responses received, 48 (20%) were in favour of the proposal, 169 (71%) were opposed, and 21 (9%) stated no opinion either way.

On 10 January 2022, following consideration of the consultation report, Cabinet determined to progress the proposal through the publication of a statutory notice. The statutory notice was published on the Council's website on 16 February 2022 and was issued to prescribed consultees and posted at the main entrances of Evenlode Primary School and Bute Cottage Nursery School. 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. To be considered as statutory objections, objections must be made in writing or by email, and sent to the proposer before the end of 28 days beginning with the day on which the notice was published ("the objection period"). As the statutory notice was published on 16 February 2022, statutory objections had to be received by 16 March 2022. 111 statutory objections were received during the statutory notice period.

**On 11 April 2022, the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Cabinet considered the objection report and all other relevant documentation and determined to approve the proposal. The objection report is available to view and download from the Council's website:**

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/living/schools/Consultations/Nursery-Provision-Penarth-Consultation.aspx>

**Hard copies of the objection report are available on request by contacting a member of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Team on:**

[sustainablecommunitiesforlearning@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:sustainablecommunitiesforlearning@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

The proposal will result in Bute Cottage Nursery being discontinued and all staff from Bute Cottage Nursery will be transferred under the governance of Evenlode Primary School. Nursery provision would continue to be provided from the existing nursery building under the proposal. It is proposed to implement the proposal on Monday 5th September 2022.

In determining the proposal, Cabinet were satisfied that the proposal will:

- Provide an extended range of 3 -11 with the inclusion of nursery school provision. This will enhance the provision available to parents and offers fewer transitions for pupils.
- Incorporate provision for 3 and 4yearolds in a high-quality Early Years and Foundation Phase setting. A nursery would enable a seamless transition for nursery age children into the reception class of the school and sustain pupil numbers for the future.
- Introduce consistent policies, strategies and pedagogy across all ages, resulting in clear expectations and a shared ethos which is understood by children, parents, and carers throughout all phases of primary education.
- Support a coordinated approach to planning for the needs of vulnerable pupils across the foundation phase. A single leadership team and governing body across each school would result in the removal of duplication of management and governance functions.
- Streamline management and administrative functions, as well as the ability to arrange joint contracts and service level agreements for buildings and other support services, resulting in available funding being utilised more effectively
- Make it easier to engage with parents particularly where they have children of both nursery and primary ages. Parents would only need to familiarise themselves with one set of policies and one set of communications.
- Result in a more efficient use of financial resources across all schools. Larger schools are also generally able to secure better value for money through economies of scale.

The reasons for the decision in respect of the factors outlined in the School Organisation Code are as follows:

## **Quality and Standards of Education**

The latest Estyn inspection for the schools noted Standards as 'Good' for Bute Cottage Nursery School and Evenlode Primary School. It is noted in the inspection reports that all pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make good progress and attainment performance is strong.

In Estyn's response to the consultation, they concluded that the proposal is likely to maintain the current standards in terms of education, provision, and leadership and management.

The Council considers these proposals would ensure the schools are able to continue providing high quality education. Amalgamation would develop continuity and progression in children's learning from the age of three. This would ensure there is a consistent approach to planning and delivery of the foundation phase (nursery to year two) and minimise the potential for disruption during transition from nursery to primary school. The introduction of consistent policies, strategies and pedagogy across all ages would result in clear expectations and a shared ethos which is understood by children, parents and carers throughout all phases of primary education. The proposal would also support a coordinated approach to planning for the needs of vulnerable pupils across the foundation phase.

## **Need for places and the impact upon accessibility of schools**

The proposal would maintain nursery provision within the area. Accessibility at the School sites would remain as existing under the proposals.

The Council has a statutory duty to provide free school transport for pupils of statutory school age who reside beyond walking distance to the nearest appropriate school. In accordance with 'The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008'.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council does not provide free school transport for nursery age children other than those children who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN). Under these proposals there are no plans to change the Council's policy on the transport of children to and from schools.

As the nursery phases would remain on their current sites with their current capacity, there are no envisaged implications for transport and learner travel arrangements.

## **Resourcing of education and other financial implications**

The main driver for the proposals is to ensure equality and consistency across primary provision in the Vale of Glamorgan, furthering the move towards the 3-11 primary model. In terms of background, in 2021/22, Bute Cottage Nursery School received a budget totalling £286,292, which equates to £6,983 per pupil (FTE). The amount of funding per pupil is significantly higher than the average funding per pupil across all primary schools which was £3,804 in 2021/22. Funding per pupil is generally higher in standalone nursery schools due to higher staffing and running costs. However, a higher budget does not equate to better educational outcomes as evidenced by the existing

educational offer throughout the Vale of Glamorgan which mainly achieve good or excellent ratings from Estyn.

It is noted within the consultation document that the proposals would result in a saving of £70k. All schools in the Vale of Glamorgan receive a delegated budget which is determined by the school funding formula. The formula is broken down into two separate sections: pupil-led funding and lump sum (or overhead) payments. Pupil-led funding allocates a set amount per pupil on roll at a school which is applied consistently across all schools. Lump sum or overhead payments are set costs which can vary across schools, this includes allocations to fund the headteacher salary and repairs and maintenance. These proposals would result in a reduction of the lump sum costs as the nursery phase would no longer require a headteacher. This saving would be re-invested into the overall funding formula and would result in a fairer distribution of school funding.

Streamlining of management and administrative functions, as well as the ability to arrange joint contracts and service level agreements for buildings and other support services, could result in available funding being utilised more effectively.

Evenlode Primary School would receive an individual budget including allocations for the nursery phase. As most of the school funding is based on the number of pupils on roll, the proposals would improve the overall budget position for Evenlode Primary School. Budgets would be shared across the nursery and primary phases to enable all pupils within the schools to receive access to high quality education and resources.

Therefore, from a Vale wide educational perspective, more pupils would benefit from a fairer distribution of funding.

### **Other general factors**

#### **Specific factors to be taken into account for proposals to add or remove nursery classes**

In accordance with paragraph 1.8 of the Code, Members should take into account the standard of nursery education and the sufficiency of accommodation and facilities offered, both in the classroom and outdoors, and the viability of any school that wishes to add nursery places; whether there is a need for additional nursery places in the area; the levels of demand for certain types of nursery education e.g. Welsh medium or provision with a religious character; the effect of the proposals on other institutions, including private and third sector providers; and the extent to which proposals will integrate early years education with childcare services or are consistent with an integrated approach.

In this case, the proposal has been identified as having the following effects:

- (a) The proposal will continue to address the need for nursery places in the area.
- (b) The proposals are consistent with an integrated approach, by providing for a single institution giving educational provision from the ages 3-11.

This proposal would have an overall positive impact on the existing and future pupils of Bute Cottage Nursery School and Evenlode Primary School. The proposal would develop continuity and progression in children's learning from the age of three. This would ensure there is a consistent approach to planning and delivery of the foundation

phase (nursery to year two) and minimise the potential for disruption during transition from nursery to primary school.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

The Equality Impact Assessment identifies that there will be a positive impact on persons with the protected characteristics of age and disability. The proposal would have a neutral impact on the remaining protected characteristics.

There is no perceived negative impact on the protected characteristics identified. Successful implementation of the proposal will enable compliance with the Equality Act (2010), as there is no real risk of direct or indirect discrimination as the Council is pursuing a legitimate aim (namely, improving efficiency of education) and the decision to publish the proposals to make regulated alterations is a proportionate means of achieving that aim.

### **Community Impact Assessment**

A Community Impact Assessment was undertaken and published alongside the consultation document. The proposal would likely have a neutral impact on the local community across 8 of the 8 measures assessed.

A key driver to all school reorganisation proposals is to improve educational outcomes for children and young people in all phases and help to narrow the inequalities in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged groups and individuals (including those from economically deprived backgrounds). These proposals have the potential to ensure that all children in the area, including those from economically deprived backgrounds, have access to a broad curriculum and are supported to achieve their full potential through the streamlining of management and governance processes and stronger collaboration and transitional arrangements between staff at nursery and primary school stages.

Overall, the proposal would likely have a neutral impact on the local community.

**Yours faithfully,**



Paula Ham, Director of Learning and Skills

Date: 06/05/2022