



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY 16TH JULY 2024 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor T. Parry - Chair
Councillor B. Miles - Vice Chair

Councillors:

E.M. Aldworth, C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, P. Cook, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C. Gordon, T. Heron, J. Roberts, J. Simmonds, J Winslade, and K. Woodland.

Cabinet Members:

Councillors C. Andrews (Education and Communities), and S. Cook (Housing).

Together with:

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), G. Jenkins (Interim Director of Social Services), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), A. West (Place Shaping and Sustainable Communities for Learning Service Manager), J. Southcombe (Finance Manager), J. Baker (Principal Finance Officer), N. Rutter (Digital Communications Officer), C Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

Also in attendance:

Councillor C. Morgan, and co-opted Members T. Millington (Parent Governor Representative), and P. Ireland (NEU).

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here To View](#).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from D. Street (Deputy Chief Executive), Councillors D. Cushing, A. Leonard, and S. Skivens, co-opted Members M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative), K. Cole (NEU), and D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 20TH MAY 2024.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th May 2024, be approved as a correct record. By show of hands (and in noting there were 13 For, 0 Against, and 1 Abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 20th May 2024 (minute nos. 1 – 11) be approved as a correct record.

4. EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 4TH JUNE 2024.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th June 2024, be approved as a correct record. By show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 4th June 2024 (minute nos. 1 – 7) be approved as a correct record.

5. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE.

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

6. EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report informed the Committee of the Forward Work Programme planned for the period July 2024 to March 2025.

Members requested an additional report for the Forward Work Programme to include recent improvements/repairs for schools, together with an update on current asbestos status at schools. Members were advised that there would be a school property report to include condition survey outcomes, recent improvements/repairs and asbestos conditions. It was agreed that this could be added for the new year.

A Member noted that 13 Caerphilly schools are participating in the Food for Fun Summer enrichment programme and requested a report on the outcome of the programme and, if it is successful, details on how more participation could be encouraged next year. The Member was happy for this to be an Information item, and it was suggested for inclusion in the Autumn.

A Member requested a future report on homelessness in the County Borough. The Member was advised that his question could be asked at the Joint Scrutiny due to be held on 18th July which would include performance measures on this issue. The Member was also advised that any reports that had been referred to the relevant Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee, would be forwarded for information. The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor S. Cook also assured Members of the most recent homelessness figures and invited the Member to contact him directly if he wished to discuss a specific issue.

A Member referred to the Cabinet Forward Work Programme and the report on Sport Caerphilly Disability Sports Camps scheduled for 16th October 2024, and requested if this could be referred to the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee. Members were advised via the online meeting 'chat' that this was a matter for the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee and is being considered at their meeting on 17th September 2024.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved, subject to the amendments. By show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers, as amended, be published on the Council's website.

7. CABINET REPORTS

It was confirmed that there had been no requests for any of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

8. SCHOOL ORGANISATION CODE 2018 – PROPOSAL FOR THE CLOSURE OF RHYDRI PRIMARY SCHOOL.

Councillor C. Andrews (Cabinet Member for Education and Communities) introduced the report which sought Members endorsement on the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to consultation in respect of the closure of Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025 and to ensure Members were apprised of the rationale for the proposal and relay the views of the Head Teacher and School Governing Body.

Members were advised that due to the falling rolls at Rhydri Primary School which are projected to decrease further in future years, meetings were arranged by the Head Teacher and the Governing body with Local Authority representatives including the Chief Education Officer, to discuss the future viability of the school. The conclusion of the meeting held on 14th March 2024, agreed the school could no longer maintain a balanced budget, therefore a decision was made by the Governing Body of the School to pursue closure of Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025.

A Member sought confirmation on where the children currently attending Rhydri Primary school would attend if the school closed. Members were advised that this information will be included in the consultation document, and it will advise of the options and catchment schools available to families. The Member also noted that some children moving to other schools may have home to school transport needs, which could be affected by attending schools in a different location.

Following consideration of the information contained in the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

To proceed to consultation on the proposal to close Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025.

9. ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORTS FOR 2023-2024.

Councillor S. Cook (Cabinet Member for Housing) introduced the report which presented the 2023-2024 Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report, the Forward Work Programme and Safeguarding Key Activity Data to Scrutiny Committee for information.

Members were advised that the Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report, attached as appendix 1, offered valuable assurance in relation to the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements and provided updates on the progress made in implementing the Forward Work Programme, attached at appendix 2, and Key safeguarding activity data was also reported and attached at appendix 3 for information.

Members were also advised that the Annual Reports were presented to the Corporate Safeguarding Board on 3rd May 2024 where they were ratified, and approval was given for them to progress to Social Services Scrutiny Committee on 16th July 2024 and directly into Cabinet on 17th July 2024. The reports are for information purposes and there are no decisions required.

A Member noted that only 31 Councillors and CMT members had completed the training on the safe recruitment policy and queried whether there were any plans to increase these numbers. Members were advised that an email had been circulated to encourage completion of the training, which was now available online, and to date, 42 Councillors had now completed the training, and further reminders were due to be sent to those remaining.

The Member asked if the Land and Property Services had now completed their self-assessment return form as mentioned in the report. The Member also sought an update on the level of resources available for group B and C training for internal staff. The committee noted that the Land and Property Services have completed the self-assessment return. The Member was advised that group B training would normally be rolled out by internal E-Learning. Group C training needs to be completed by over 1200 staff and through regional safeguarding board funding has been identified to commission an external trainer.

A Member queried whether a date had been set for the roll-out of the training package referred to in paragraph 5.6 of the report. Members were advised that this information would be confirmed to Members following the meeting. The Member also clarified that the deadline of 10th May, referred to in paragraph 5.9 had been met and the work had been completed.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the three reports and the progress made in implementing the Forward Work Programme.

10. SCHOOL ORGANISATION CODE 2018 – PROPOSAL FOR THE AMALGAMATION OF HENDRE JUNIOR SCHOOL AND HENDRE INFANTS SCHOOL.

Councillor C. Andrews (Cabinet Member for Education and Communities) introduced the report which sought Scrutiny endorsement on the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to consultation, in partnership with each Governing Body, in respect of the amalgamation of Hendre Junior School and Hendre Infants School with effect from September 2025.

Members were advised that the report provided a background to the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018, and it outlined processes and practical aspects of amalgamation. The report also identified the Schools and Governing Bodies who wished to proceed to formal consultation in partnership with the Local Authority (LA).

A Member commented that the schools have already been working closely together and that they are also physically located close to each other.

A Member queried the potential impact of the amalgamation on the schools' budgets. Members were advised that should the amalgamation go ahead there will be one school and one budget, and the funding formula for each school budget contains a lump sum so there will be one lump sum element. However, in terms of managing the budget this will be compensated as the budget will be easier to manage and more flexible.

Following consideration of the information contained in the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

To proceed to consultation, in partnership with each Governing Body, in respect of the amalgamation of Hendre Junior School and Hendre Infants School with effect from September 2025.

The meeting closed at 6.04 pm.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd September 2024.

CHAIR