



## **EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 15<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2024**

**SUBJECT: SCHOOL ORGANISATION CODE 2018 - PROPOSAL FOR  
THE CLOSURE OF RHYDRI PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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

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

1.1 The purpose of the report is to officially consult with Members in respect of the proposed closure of Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 The conclusion of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> 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.
- 2.3 Approval to proceed to consultation was received from Cabinet on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2024.
- 2.4 The consultation process will proceed in line with the requirements of Welsh Government Statutory Code document no 011/2018 - School Organisation Code 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2018 where exemptions do not apply.
- 2.5 The purpose of the report is to consult with members on the proposal in their capacity as a 'consultee' under the School Organisation Code 2018.

2.6 The consultation period for the proposal commenced on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024 and ends midnight on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 Members are asked to:

a) Note the information contained in the report and the attached consultation pack.

b) To provide views as part of the consultation process for the proposal which will be noted as part of the minutes of this meeting and included in the Consultation Report which will be presented to Cabinet as part of the decision making process.

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

4.1 To ensure Members are consulted with regards to the outlined proposal and assist the Council in discharging its duty in consulting stakeholders in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018 where applicable.

### **5. THE REPORT**

#### **5.1 Rhydri Primary School**

5.1.1 Rhydri Primary School provides education to pupils between the ages of 3 and 11 and has a published capacity figure of 91 places with a published admission number of 13.

5.1.2 At time of writing, the number of pupils anticipated to attend the school in September 2024, is 39 pupils (31 Full Time and 8 Part Time) with 79% of these pupils residing outside of the catchment area of the school. Based on the anticipated numbers for September 2024, surplus places will be at 62% and projected to increase in future years as the number of pupils predicted to attend the school is anticipated to decline linked to a reduction in live birth rates in the area and parental preference.

5.1.3 The projected pupil numbers and resultant financial outlook for the school provides a significant challenge to the Head and School Governors to agree a balanced budget to maintain the school and an appropriate staffing level which has led to a request to the local authority to consider closing the school from July 2025.

5.1.4 Under the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010, Individual school budgets are determined using a locally agreed funding formula in accordance with factors which are learner led. Schools must be able to demonstrate via a

financial action plan that the school will work to deliver a balanced budget. However, the Head Teacher and Governing Body have acknowledged that Rhydri Primary School is facing a significant financial deficit with pupil numbers projected to further decrease moving forward.

- 5.1.5 Reasonable alternatives to closure, which included reduction in the number of classes and federation with Bedwas Junior School have already been implemented by the Head Teacher and Governing Body in partnership with the Local Authority but deemed not viable or sustainable moving forward.
- 5.1.6 In order to progress the proposal for the closure of Rhydri Primary School by July 2025, a consultation exercise is required in line with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018 and approval to proceed to consultation was received from Cabinet on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2024.
- 5.1.7 The consultation period for the proposal commenced on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024 and will close midnight on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024.
- 5.1.8 Following consultation, all the comments received during the consultation period will be compiled into a Consultation Report as prescribed by Welsh Government.
- 5.1.9 The Consultation Report will be taken to Cabinet who will then decide as to whether to proceed, make changes or not to proceed with the proposal.
- 5.1.10 Should Cabinet decide to proceed, a Statutory Notice will be published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. 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. To be considered as statutory objections, objections must be made in writing and sent to the Council within the notice period. Formal Responses can only be registered following the publication of a statutory notice.

## 5.2 **Conclusion**

- 5.2.1 Members are asked to note the information contained in this report and the supporting consultation pack documentation with a view to providing views on the proposal in their capacity as a 'consultee' under the School Organisation Code 2018.
- 5.2.2 Members views will be included in the Consultation Report which will be taken to Cabinet who will then decide on how the proposal will progress as outlined in 5.1.9 and 5.1.10.

## **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](#)

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Under the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010, Individual school budgets are determined using a locally agreed funding formula in accordance with factors which are learner led.
- 8.2 Schools must be able to demonstrate via a financial action plan that the school will work to deliver a balanced budget.
- 8.3 The Council's Education Finance Team have been working closely with the school for a number of years, however, the Head Teacher and Governing Body have acknowledged that Rhydri Primary School is facing a significant financial deficit with pupil numbers projected to further decrease moving forward and are unable to demonstrate via a financial action plan their ability to reverse the deficit.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 This will be dependent on specific proposals and will be considered as part of the consultation process.
- 9.2 The Council's Human Resources Team will work closely with all relevant parties to ensure that processes are adhered to, and support is provided as required.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 The draft report was distributed as detailed below. All comments received have been reflected in this version of the report.

## 11. STATUTORY POWER

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

Author: Andrea West, Place Shaping and Sustainable Communities for Learning Service Manager

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive  
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services  
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment  
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities  
Councillor Donna Cushing, Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee  
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy; Place Shaping Programme Director  
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

Appendices:

[Link to Consultation Document – Rhydri Primary School](#)