



## **SPECIAL CABINET – 16<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025**

**SUBJECT:           CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF  
BEDWAS LEISURE CENTRE, CEFN FFOREST LEISURE  
CENTRE AND NEW TREDEGAR LEISURE CENTRE**

**REPORT BY:       CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND  
ENVIRONMENT**

### **1.     PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1   The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet approval to undertake a consultation exercise on a proposal to close Bedwas Leisure Centre, Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre, and New Tredegar Leisure Centre.

### **2.     SUMMARY**

2.1   In 2018, the Council adopted a Sport and Active Recreation Strategy (SARS) for the period 2019-2029. The Vision for sport and active recreation is “to encourage healthy lifestyles and support our residents to be more active, more often”. The strategy references poor levels of health in certain areas of the county; reducing budgets; the large number of facilities across the County and the deteriorating quality of our older buildings as well as increasing population and consumer demand as some of the key challenges it is seeking to overcome.

2.2   In July 2023 the Council embarked upon a programme of transformation and change titled Mobilising Team Caerphilly (MTC) with the aim of supporting the Council to take a proactive and targeted approach to meet the financial challenges within the public sector and deliver a balanced budget

2.3   A number of Council services were identified to be included within the MTC programme for formal review and this included the Sport & Leisure Service. The formal review process commenced with the aim of accelerating the decision making associated with delivering the aims and objectives of the SARS in respect of delivering a more financially sustainable future offer through a programme of facility rationalisation

2.4   Utilising the tools and processes associated with the MTC project approach, an outline business case has been completed and determined that consideration

should be given to the closure of Bedwas, New Tredegar and Cefn Fforest Leisure Centres to support the aims and objectives of the SARS and support the councils approach and requirement to delivering a balanced budget and a sustainable Sport and Leisure Service model.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve a consultation exercise regarding the proposal that Bedwas Leisure Centre, Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre, and New Tredegar Leisure Centre close on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2025.

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

- 4.1. To secure a more efficient and financially sustainable future leisure facilities offer in accordance with the adopted Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019 - 2029
- 4.2. To support the Council's requirements to achieve a balanced budget

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 Caerphilly Council operates more leisure centres than any other Local Authority in Wales. The Council's Sport and Leisure service employs approximately 250 staff and has a net budget of circa £4.2 million. In 2018, the Council adopted a Sport and Active Recreation Strategy for the period 2019-2029. The Vision for sport and active recreation is "to encourage healthy lifestyles and support our residents to be more active, more often". The strategy references poor levels of health in certain areas of the county; reducing budgets; the large number of facilities across the County and the deteriorating quality of our older buildings as well as increasing population and consumer demand as some of the key challenges it is seeking to overcome.
- 5.2 The 5-year review of the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy (SARS) was a celebration of the successful implementation up to that point. There are a plethora of sporting and leisure opportunities in the county borough delivered together with a range of partners and investment in facilities is significant; noting that the pandemic occurred in that initial period of the SARS as well. In addition, the service provides sporting facilities at the Centre for Sporting Excellence and Oakdale Athletics Hub. To maximise the opportunities available to all partners, Sport & Leisure have taken the lead role at Blackwood Comprehensive School, Islwyn High School and Ysgol y Gwyndy in making those sports facilities available for community use. The replacement of Caerphilly Leisure Centre with a new Leisure and Well-being Hub will also be an important step towards addressing those challenges,
- 5.3 Significant financial challenges remain, however. A Sport and Leisure service review was established in 2024 within the Mobilising Team Caerphilly

programme to assist delivery of the key outcomes of the SARS including securing a more efficient and financially sustainable future offer. The Strategy envisages a rationalisation of facilities which will result in 4 strategic, high quality, multi service leisure centres that are managed by the authority's Sport and Leisure Service. The 4 strategic leisure centres are Risca, Caerphilly, and Newbridge, and one in the Bargoed/Aberbargoed areas to serve the north of the county borough. The service review has developed proposals for the closure of 3 of the other leisure centres at Bedwas, Cefn Forest and New Tredegar.

#### **5.4 Bedwas Leisure Centre**

Bedwas Leisure Centre was built in 1974 and is co-located with Bedwas High School. Leisure facilities provided include a swimming pool, training/meeting room, and a full size, dual use 3G pitch. In 2023/24 there were 98,383 visitors to the centre. The net annual revenue budget in 2024/25 is £252,369 and 6.28 full time equivalent staff work there. The most recent building condition survey undertaken in October 2024 identified repair and basic maintenance works totalling £334,453 and further detail is provided in Appendix 1.

5.5 There is currently no requirement for secondary schools in Wales to teach swimming or include it in PE lessons, although secondary schools include swimming as part of GCSE provision. There is also a small primary school swimming provision timetable. Caerphilly Leisure Centre will be able to accommodate all the primary school swim sessions from Bedwas Leisure Centre, though this may need adjustment to the Centre timetable.

5.6 An investment of circa £350,000 was recently made into the provision of a full-size dual use 3G pitch replacing the outdated Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) on the site which can continue to be open for community use out of school hours and on weekends. The management aspects of this can be fulfilled by Caerphilly Leisure Centre, who already operate the 3G provision at Ysgol Y Gwyndy. The cost to run this facility has been budgeted at £25,000 per annum. As a result, no community bookings currently using the 3G facility outside of school hours will be affected if the leisure centre closes.

#### **5.7 Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre**

Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre was built and opened circa 1967. Leisure facilities provided include a standard 25m 4-lane swimming pool, a learner pool of 5m in length and a depth ranging from 0.4 to 0.8m with interactive games and water jets, a sauna and steam room, and a small fitness suite. In 2023/24 there were 97,162 visitors to the centre. The net annual revenue budget in 2024/25 is £441,602 and 9.79 full time equivalent staff work there. The total forecast expenditure needed for repair and basic maintenance works for the whole property based on the latest condition survey undertaken in September 2024 is £288,764 and further detail is provided in Appendix 1.

5.8 There is a primary school swimming provision timetable at Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre which can be accommodated at Heolddu & Newbridge Leisure Centres.

There are currently 440 children enrolled on Learn 2 Swim lessons at Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre. Newbridge and Heolddu Leisure Centres are co-located with secondary schools, and, in liaison with the schools, changes to the swimming pool timetable would allow these places to be accommodated.

- 5.9 Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre currently manage the community use of the 3G pitch at Blackwood Comprehensive School outside of school hours and this responsibility can be managed from Heolddu or Newbridge Leisure Centre should Cefn Fforest close.

#### 5.10 **New Tredegar Leisure Centre**

New Tredegar Leisure Centre was built and opened circa 1978. Leisure facilities provided include a sports hall with an indoor 3G playing surface, a fitness suite, a dance studio, a small kitchen and a Youth Wing which caters for 11 years old upwards, Youth Services, including, Youth Forum, Healthy Living Projects, and an IT Suite. In 2023/24 there were only 10,002 visitors to the centre. The net annual revenue budget in 2024/25 is £144,848 and 1.72 full time equivalent staff work there. The total forecast expenditure needed for repair and basic maintenance works for the whole property based on the latest condition survey undertaken in September 2024 is £144,684 and further detail is provided in Appendix 1.

- 5.11 If New Tredegar Leisure Centre were to close the bookings at the sports hall 3G can be accommodated at Rhymney Leisure Centre (at Idris Davies School). The bookings here would be managed in line with the Sport & Leisure priority booking system.

- 5.12 The Youth Service and the Positive Futures sports development programme run from the centre, and it is anticipated that alternative provision could be delivered from local community centres such as Tir-Phil and Phillipstown or Markham Community Leisure Centre.

#### 5.13 **Conclusion**

It is proposed that a consultation exercise is undertaken on a proposal to close Bedwas Leisure Centre, Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre, and New Tredegar Leisure Centre from 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025. Further details regarding the proposed consultation can be found in paragraph 10 below. Feedback from the consultation exercise will help shape recommendations within a further report for Cabinet consideration at a future date to be agreed.

## 6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 As indicated in the report, several of the financial figures are estimates and are based on a number of assumptions. This includes the assumption that the sites close on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025 and that staff will be redeployed or exit the service by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025. It is assumed that there will be 40% of property costs until sites are disposed of. An assumed reduction in statutory

maintenance costs is based on actual spend in 2023/24. An assumption has been made that some of the income (50% for Bedwas and Cefn Fforest, 30% for New Tredegar) is retained as it is anticipated that customers will go to other leisure centres in the event of their closure. The financial estimates in this report do not consider savings or costs in other support services such as building cleaning and waste.

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 Integrated Impact Assessments have been undertaken in relation to the potential closure of each of these leisure centres and there is the potential for some negative impacts associated with longer travel distances to alternative facilities. The Council has a 10-year Sport & Active Recreation Strategy 2019–29 (SARS) which sets out the blueprint for current and future service delivery. The SARS identifies the need for rationalisation and savings to support investment in better quality, more sustainable, fit for purpose and fit for future facilities in strategic locations.
- 7.2 The 4 strategic leisure centres are at Caerphilly, Heolddu in Bargoed, Newbridge, and Risca. All communities in the county borough except Rhymney are within a 5-mile travelling distance of one of the 4 strategic leisure centres. The nearest strategic leisure centre to Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre is Heolddu Leisure Centre 2.8 miles away. The nearest strategic leisure centre to Bedwas is Caerphilly Leisure Centre 1.8 miles away. The nearest strategic leisure centre to New Tredegar is Heolddu Leisure Centre 3.9 miles away. Each of the 4 strategic centres are in a town centre location, or close to, and are more accessible via public transport. The 4 strategic centres are also open for much longer hours than the smaller leisure centres are currently, with increased provision.
- 7.3 The Integrated Impacts Assessments can be accessed from the links below. Feedback from the consultation exercise will be used to further develop the Integrated Impact Assessment.

[Link to Integrated Impact Assessment - Bedwas LC](#)

[Link to Integrated Impact Assessment - Cefn Fforest LC](#)

[Link to Integrated Impact Assessment - New Tredegar LC](#)

## 8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The annual revenue budgets associated with the 3 leisure centres are as follows:

	Maintenance £	Net Leisure Centre Budget £	3G Pitch Costs £	Total £
<b>Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre</b>	52,693.18	441,602.00		<b>494,295</b>
<b>New Tredegar Leisure Centre</b>	13,582.00	144,848.00		<b>158,430</b>
<b>Bedwas Leisure Centre</b>	40,663.78	252,369.00	- 25,000.00	<b>268,033</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>106,938.96</b>	<b>838,819.00</b>	<b>- 25,000.00</b>	<b>920,758</b>

As stated above, the cost to run the 3G pitch at Bedwas Leisure Centre has been budgeted at £25,000 per annum.

8.2 If the leisure centres were to close the following Medium Term Financial Plan savings have been identified totalling £1,182,652:

	MTFP Saving 2025/26 £	MTFP Saving 2026/27 £	MTFP Saving 2027/28 £	Total £
Close Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre	148,273	313,596	32,427	<b>494,295</b>
Close New Tredegar Leisure Centre	67,128	80,598	10,704	<b>158,430</b>
Close Bedwas Leisure Centre	57,186	193,258	17,589	<b>268,033</b>
Adjust for 50% of income transferring to other sites	174,596	87,298		<b>261,894</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>447,183</b>	<b>674,750</b>	<b>60,719</b>	<b>1,182,652</b>

An assumption has been made that some of the income (50% for Bedwas and Cefn Fforest, 30% for New Tredegar) is retained as customers will go to other leisure centres in the event of their closure.

- 8.3 Closure of the leisure centres would render the sites surplus to the service areas requirements, and they would be subject to a disposal process. As such some potential one-off costs property have been estimated associated with demolition and dilapidations totalling £750,000. In addition, redundancy and pension strain costs of £225,210 have been estimated. A total of £975,210 in one off costs have been estimated should the three leisure centres close. Every effort will be made to manage and minimise the one-off costs, the costs detailed are assumed to be worse case position. A decision will be required on how to fund one off costs, this could be from in year revenue savings or from the Medium Term Financial Plan Contingency Reserve under delegated powers approved by Council on the 24th July 2024.
- 8.4 The Council's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy (2019-2029) makes the case for rationalisation enabling some savings to be used to enable investment alongside innovation and transformation. This includes an "invest to save" strategy enabling the future rationalisation of some facilities, to help achieve a more sustainable future service alongside investment of some savings secured to enhance the quality and customer offer at strategic sites as well as in local communities. This issue does not relate to leisure facilities alone and the development of a strategy to address the replacement and sustainability of the Council's assets is being considered under the Mobilising Team Caerphilly programme.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Meetings have been held with the staff at New Tredegar; Cefn Fforest and Bedwas Leisure Centres and the Trade Unions and they will continue to be kept updated. Staff will also have the opportunity to engage in the consultation process.
- 9.2 As stated, feedback from the consultation exercise will help shape recommendations within a further report for Cabinet's consideration. Any changes that impact on staff will be in accordance with relevant HR policies and in consultation with staff and Trade Unions as appropriate.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 The consultees listed below have been consulted on this report and Councillor Shane Williams, Vice Chair of Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee responded with the following comments:

As a general comment the report says consideration should be given to support the closure of the three leisure centres to meet the objective of the sports and recreation strategy, which it adds is supposed "to encourage

*healthy lifestyles and support our residents to be more active, more often*". Closing a swimming pool – in the case of Cefn Fforest -that attracts over 97,000 users a year will surely contradict that objective.

I am very concerned that all three leisure centres are being discussed in the same report, when they all offer different services and have a marked difference in the number of users at each centre. Proposing to consult on the future of all three at the same time is not going to accurately reflect the need, use and impact of each facility.

Surely we should have, as outlined in the original strategy, individual consultations and individual reports for each centre.

Bedwas for example will still allow for the 3g pitch to be open for community use, so the main focus or impact will be the closure of the swimming pool. This pool has a small number of users and a small primary school provision. There is another swimming pool very close by, which it is suggested can accommodate with some timetable change the primary school provision.

New Tredegar is a small centre with a small number of users a year. But it's the impact on those specific users, like positive futures and the youth service, will have to be properly considered.

And Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre is an entirely different proposition again. I am extremely concerned by the assumptions in the report, not least the assumption at 8.2, that people will simply go elsewhere.

over 97,000 users a year there is no evidence to support such a claim, there is no evidence to show how people can or will go elsewhere, given the service is not replicated elsewhere. No reference either is given to the disability groups that use the centre.

Furthermore, some 14 schools use Cefn Fforest alone. The report states as fact, that 440 primary school children will be able to use Heolddu or Newbridge Leisure centres after liaising with the schools. There has been no liaising with the schools, there is no breakdown as to how this will be managed or what other costs those schools will have to incur.

Given the very differing circumstances that apply to each of these centres, surely there should be individual consultations and individual reports. Conducting a consultation in the way proposed, is not going to accurately determine the need or the value of each centre. Nor will it properly measure the individual impact.

Running a consultation in this way is the wrong approach and it will not lead to better informed, decision making.

- 10.2 Cllr Andrew Whitcombe, Chair of Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee responded stating that he concurs with Cllr William's comments



above. The other consultees listed below have been consulted on this report and their views have been incorporated accordingly.

10.3 Subject to Cabinet approval it is intended that a seven week public consultation be undertaken regarding the proposed closure of New Tredegar; Cefn Fforest and Bedwas Leisure Centres. The consultation will seek views on the detail described within this report and will build upon the Integrated Impact Assessment for the proposal. It is proposed that the consultation will include:

- Consultation process publicised including promotion of face-to-face drop in engagement session dates/locations;
- Consultation for period of seven weeks;
- Digital engagement page along with frequently asked questions and survey. Hard copies of survey are also available at locations to be agreed prior;
- Email to signpost stakeholder groups to various opportunities to participate in consultation;
- Face to face drop in engagement sessions to be held. Locations and timings to be agreed in discussion with local members;
- Targeted engagement with existing users the leisure centres;
- Targeted engagement with stakeholders;
- A Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting will provide a further opportunity for elected members to consider and comment upon the proposal.

10.4 Within the consultation survey there will be three distinct sections relating to each of the three leisure centres which people can complete depending on which they are interested in. These sections of the survey will be analysed individually and reported in separate sections of the consultation report. The drop in sessions will also be held in each of the leisure centres. There will also be three different stakeholder lists for each of the three leisure centres, so when it comes to the more targeted consultation, engagement will be with current users at each of the sites separately and specifically about their views on the relevant centre. Feedback from the consultation exercise will help shape recommendations within a further report for Cabinet consideration at a future date.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

Author: Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure

Consultees: Councillor Chris Morgan, Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces  
Councillor Andrew Whitcombe, Chair of Housing and Environment

Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Shane Williams, Vice Chair of Housing and Environment  
Scrutiny Committee  
Dave Street, Interim Chief Executive  
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment  
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate  
Services  
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer  
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services  
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer  
Leanne Sykes, Deputy Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer  
Paula Beaman, Corporate Finance  
Jeff Reynolds, Sport and Leisure Facilities Manager  
Jared Lougher, Sport and Leisure Development Manager  
Hayley Lancaster, Engagement Manager  
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services  
Liz Lucas- Head of Customer and Digital Services- Programme  
Director for Service Transformation  
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy and  
Programme Director Placeshaping  
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer  
Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure

Appendix 1: Repair and Maintenance Costs

Background Papers:

**[Caerphilly Council Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-29](#)**

**[Report to full Council 24<sup>th</sup> July 2024 entitled: "Provisional Revenue Budget  
Outturn for 2023/24"](#)**