



## **EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025**

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

**REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members in respect of the proposed closure of Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025.
- 1.2 Members are asked to consider the information contained in the Objection Report and endorse the recommendations to Cabinet, via vote, to proceed to implementation.
- 1.3 Cabinet will then make a final determination on the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2025 as to whether or not to implement the proposal following the process outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018 and supporting documentation.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Further to Cabinet approval gained 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024, a Statutory Notice for the proposal relating to the closure of Rhydri Primary School was published, and the formal objection period ran between 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025 and the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025.
- 2.2 Under Section 49 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 when objections have been received proposers must publish a summary of the statutory objections and the proposer's response to those objections ("the Objection Report").
- 2.3 10 Objections were received via email and in the medium of English.
- 2.4 To discharge the Council's duty under the School Organisation Code 2018, there is now a requirement for Cabinet members to give due regard to the content of the Objection Report and make a final determination as whether to

implement the proposal as outlined in the documentation.

- 2.5 Should Cabinet authorise progression of the project, a Decision letter will be published setting out clearly the reasons for the decision with reference to the School Organisation Code 2018.
- 2.6 The proposal will then progress to full implementation to close Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025 and as outlined in the Consultation Document and the Statutory Notice, the current catchment area for Rhydri Primary School would transfer to the catchment area of St James Primary School.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Prior to a report being presented to Cabinet, Scrutiny Members are asked to:
  - a) Consider the information contained in the Objection Report
  - b) Endorse the recommendation to Cabinet, via vote, to proceed to implementation of the proposal to close Rhydri Primary School and transfer its catchment area to that of St James Primary School with effect from July 2025.

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

- 4.1 To ensure Members are updated on the progress in respect of the proposal to close Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025.
- 4.2 To seek Member endorsement on the recommendations to Cabinet outlined in 3.1 prior to Cabinet making a final determination in respect of the proposal.
- 4.3 To assist the Council in discharging its duties in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018.

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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.

- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 Further to Cabinet approval gained 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024, a Statutory Notice for the proposal relating to the closure of Rhydri Primary School was published, and the formal objection period ran between 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025 and the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025.
- 5.5 The Statutory Notice was published on a school day and consultees were given 28 days to respond to the document, with at least 15 of these being school days as defined by Section 579 of the Education Act 1996.
- 5.6 All documentation was published in Welsh and English, complying with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards. Information was also available in other languages and formats on request.
- 5.7 A prescribed list of recipients as outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018 were written to and a Statutory Notice was published electronically on the Council's website.
- 5.8 Hardcopies of the Statutory Notice were made available at the school and displayed in the school foyer and on/in close proximity to the entrance gates. In addition, the school's internal communication network with parents and pupils was used to raise awareness of the process and publication of the Statutory Notice.
- 5.9 The objection period ran from Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025 (a school day) and concluded at midnight on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025 to provide adequate time for response.
- 5.10 A total of 10 objections were received, via email and in the medium of English during the Objection Period. Reasons for the objection included: Pupil and Staff Wellbeing (4 mentions), Pupil Numbers (5 mentions), Transfer of pupils to alternative provision (4 mentions), Community Impact (2 mentions), Travel and Transport (1 mention).
- 5.11 Under Section 49 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 when objections have been received proposers must publish a summary of the statutory objections and the proposer's response to those objections ("the Objection Report").
- 5.12 An Objection Report in relation to the proposal has been compiled and attached as an appendix to this report to enable conscientious consideration to any responses received.
- 5.13 Once Cabinet has made the final determination, a Decision Notice will be published electronically on the Sustainable Communities for Learning page on

the Council's website. All consultees will be notified via email/letter and hard copies will be available on request.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Pursuant to the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018, the formal statutory objection period has now concluded, and this report has been compiled along with the Objection Report to provide Members with the necessary information to make an informed decision as to the final determination for the proposal relating to the closure of Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025.

## **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 An initial Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) for this proposal was undertaken alongside the original Consultation Document forming part of the outline consultation pack which is published on the Council's website.
- 7.2 The Integrated Impact Assessment has been reviewed to include any additional elements highlighted through the statutory consultation process. The purpose of this further assessment is to take account of any further information that has come forward through the consultation or otherwise.

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/caerphillydocs/iiia/iiia-rhydri-html-eng>

## **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 & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

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

Consultees:

Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive  
Richard Edmunds, Chief Executive  
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 & Strategy / Place Shaping Programme Director  
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer  
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer  
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion & ALN  
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager  
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement  
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager  
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services  
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer  
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services  
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager

Appendices:

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/caerphillydocs/consultations/objection-report-rhydri-eng>