



## CABINET - 24<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2024

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

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

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Members approval on the recommendation to proceed to consultation in respect of the closure of Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025.
- 1.2 To ensure Members are apprised of the rationale for the proposal and relay the views of the Head Teacher and School Governing Body.

### 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.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet Members are asked to:
  - a) Note the contents of this report
  - b) Approve the recommendation, via vote, to proceed to consultation on the proposal to close Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025.

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

- 4.1 To seek Member approval to proceed to consultation stage in respect of the proposal to close Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025
- 4.2 To assist the Council in discharging its duties in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018 where this statutory legislation applies.

#### **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 pupil roll is 45 pupils (Full Time Equivalent) with over 50% of these pupils residing outside of the catchment area of the school. Surplus places are currently at 50% 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 ability of 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.
- 5.1.7 Subject to Cabinet approval, a prescribed list of recipients as outlined in the code will be written to. A consultation document will be published in both hardcopy and electronically via the Authority's website based on the recommendation for closure. Reasonable access to information will be promoted from an Equalities perspective and other formats will be made available on request.

- 5.1.8 The consultation period will be for 42 days (with at least 20 of these being school days) to provide adequate time for consideration and response and conscientious consideration will be given to any responses received.
- 5.1.9 The principles of engagement outlined in the Local Authority's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020 will also be acknowledged and the team will engage with any additional 'interested parties' as required, through appropriate channels to ensure the dissemination of information and provision of a suitable platform for the consultees to make their views known is made available.
- 5.1.10 Following the consultation period, a consultation report along with any responses received will be collated and reported back to Members, where a decision will be made as to whether to proceed with the proposal as outlined and publish a Statutory Notice.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Members are asked to note the information provided and give approval to proceed to consultation stage in respect of the proposal to close Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report.

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

- 7.1 Not required at this stage in the process. A full Integrated Impact Assessment will be completed at the relevant stage in the process.

## **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 This proposal was presented to the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024. Comments and responses are summarised as follows:

### **10.2 Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

#### **Comments on School Organisation Code 2018 - Proposal for the Closure of Rhydri Primary School.**

Members sought information on where the children currently attending Rhydri Primary school will go if the school closes. The committee were advised that this information will be included in the consultation document, it will advise of the options and catchment schools available to families.

Members commented that children moving to other schools may have home to school transport needs, it was noted that over 50% of children at Rhydri live outside the catchment area of the school.

Following the debate the scrutiny committee noted the contents of the report and recommend to Cabinet to proceed to consultation on the proposal to close Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025.

This was supported by a majority 13 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions.

## **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  
Gareth Jenkins, Interim Director for Social Services  
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities  
Councillor Teresa Parry, 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  
Steve 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  
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer  
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services  
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager

Background Papers:  
None