



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL
CABINET**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 18 December 2023 at 10.30 am.

This meeting was live streamed, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present:

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

Councillor M Webber Councillor G Caple
Councillor A Crimmings Councillor R Lewis
Councillor C Leyshon Councillor M Norris
Councillor B Harris

Non-Committee Members in attendance

Councillor K Morgan
Councillor D Grehan
Councillor A Rogers

Officers in attendance

Mr P Mee, Chief Executive
Mr B Davies, Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Ms L Davies, Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr S Williams, Director for Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Mr D James, Service Director – Prosperity & Development
Mr N Elliott, Director of Social Services
Ms R Hope, Head of Service for Public Protection and Regulatory Services
Ms A Richards, Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion

83 Declaration of Interest

The Deputy Leader, County Borough Councillor M Webber declared the following personal interest in respect of item 4 of the agenda - Consultation on the proposals to realign Additional Learning Needs mainstream Learning Support Class Provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf: "I am a Governor of Heol y Celyn Primary School and I am an Interim Governor of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Awel Taf."

84 Minutes

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20th November 2023 as an accurate record.

85 Proposal to close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services advised Members of the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of the proposal to close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School by no later than September 2024.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language took the opportunity to thank those who had responded to the consultation process, particularly the young people. The Cabinet Member provided assurance that all submissions had been reviewed by the Committee in detail. It was acknowledged that from the responses received, there was an evident passion from the community of Rhigos for the future of its young people. The Cabinet Member concluded his initial submission by stating that the passion for the best educational outcomes, prospects and facilities was shared by the Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member noted from the report that it had been identified that it would be challenging to deliver the new curriculum for Wales from the current building and asked the Director to provide further clarity in that respect. The Director advised that Hirwaun Primary School was a 21st Century School, meaning the learning environment had been developed fit for the 21st Century Learning in terms of digital and technology requirements. It was added that the school also has design features including outdoor areas for structured learning; and that it includes a large space which enables school staff to use flexibly.

The Cabinet Member then sought confirmation in respect of the rural status of the school. The Director informed the Cabinet that the Welsh Government School Organisation Code 2018 contains a list of rural schools and specifies that the National Statistics Urban Rural Classification has been used as the basis of the designation of rural schools. The Director confirmed that there were no schools within RCT on the list of rural schools as there are no schools that meet the specific classifications. The Director explained that although the Office of National Statistics lists both Hirwaun and Rhigos as rural classification, neither meet the specified criteria to be contained within the above-mentioned list.

The Leader acknowledged the responses stating that Rhigos is good school with positive outcomes but spoke of the fundamental issue, which was the decline in pupil numbers and questioned how robust the data is. Referring to a consultation response, the Leader questioned whether there had been a decline in pupil numbers at the school since the start of the consultation and whether that could be attributed to the uncertainty of the school and the proposal before Members. The Director advised that at the start of the consultation there were 57 pupils at the school and that since this time, the number of statutory pupils had since reduced from 51 to 49. The Director explained that the change was due to pupils moving to the Welsh Medium school in Penderyn. In terms of how numbers are projected, the Director advised that it had been calculated in accordance with the

guidance issued by Welsh Government and were based on live birth data for the area. The Director advised that estimated projections indicated that there would only be 37 pupils of statutory school age at Rhigos Primary School in 2027-28, although it was acknowledged that this was an estimation and that families move in and out of the locality.

The Deputy Leader took the opportunity to thank the Scrutiny Committee for the valuable contribution. The Deputy noted and sympathised with the concerns raised from the consultation and acknowledged that with change comes worry. The Deputy Leader spoke of a similar change in her ward and acknowledged that concerns were raised by parents and care givers but spoke of the hard work of officers and the governing body to ensure the best provision is available for the young people.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services noted that the Scrutiny Committee queried the future use of the building and asked if the commented had been addressed, should the proposals be supported. The Director advised that considerations would need to be consulted upon separately but that the Council could work with the community to identify any viable and sustainable options for community groups and to identify and potentially apply for funding. To date, no representations had been made from the community in respect of the future use of the building.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure noted from the consultation responses and from the Scrutiny discussions that the potential carbon footprint impact and the use of Home-to-school transport by parents had been raised as a point of concern. The Cabinet Member queried whether the carbon footprint had been considered, particularly in respect of the fact that Hirwaun is a new 21st Century School. The Director confirmed that the modern building design and fabric at Hirwaun Primary School had an EPC rating of A and had been built to be more energy efficient, which would have a positive impact on the overall running cost of the school. The Director added that Hirwaun Primary School also had EV charging facilities on site, which would contribute to the delivery of the Council's climate commitments. The Director advised that Rhigos Primary School, due to its age, had not been built to be energy efficient.

The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities questioned what support would be provided for transition if the proposals were to progress. The Director acknowledged that the proposals were incredibly emotive from a children and young people, staff and community perspective. The Director assured the Cabinet that a seamless transition would be a priority, should the proposals be agreed and stated that officers had a lot of experience in effective transition. It was explained that for the most vulnerable of learners, a child centred approach would be adopted to ensure all needs are met. All learners would experience extensive transition activities and events such as stem projects, sporting projects and musical projects to strengthen opportunities for social interaction and for developing relationships and partnerships. The Director stated that minimising the risk of anxiety for children transferring would be imperative.

With the agreement of the Leader, the following Non-Committee Members were granted permission to address the Cabinet:

- County Borough Councillor A Rogers
- County Borough Councillor K Morgan

With the agreement of the Leader, the following member of the public was granted permission to address the Cabinet:

- Ms M Evans – Chair of Governors

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language thanked the Non-Committee Members and Chair of Governors for their submissions at the meeting. Following consideration of the comments at the meeting and upon reflection of the consultation responses received, the Cabinet Member was of the view that the proposals before Members was of the best interest for the pupils. Referring to the projected decline in numbers at Rhigos Primary School, the Cabinet Member questioned the future viability of the school and spoke of its ageing setting. The Cabinet Member was encouraged by Estyn's consultation response which acknowledged the Local Authority's rationale behind the proposals; and was also encouraged by the modern facilities and opportunities offered at Hirwaun Primary School for pupils to benefit from. As such, the Cabinet Member was in support of the recommendations contained within the report.

Following consideration of all evidence and contributions, the Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity was in agreement that to progress with the proposals would be the right way forward.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the content of the report;
2. To note the information contained within the attached Consultation Report, attached as Appendix A to this Cabinet Report, which includes a summary of correspondence received during the consultation, including the full response from Estyn, feedback received from the online survey, and notes of the meetings held;
3. To note the feedback from Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee which met on 14th December 2023 provided by the Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication; and
4. To progress the proposals to the next stage of the consultation process by issuing an appropriate Statutory Notice which will trigger the start of the Objection Period.

Note: Prior to the meeting, a letter was circulated to Cabinet Members from the Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication on behalf of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee who met on 14th December 2023 to undertake pre-scrutiny the Cabinet report.

86 Consultation on the proposals to realign Additional Learning Needs mainstream Learning Support Class Provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf

The Head of Inclusion Services advised Cabinet Members of the outcome of the publication of the Statutory Notices in respect of the proposal to realign Learning Support Class (LSC) provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language took the opportunity to thank those who had responded to the consultation. The Cabinet Member commented that the proposal before Members would help the

Local Authority meet its statutory duty under new legislation from Welsh Government and recognised that it was an area that had seen a significant increase in demand and complexity.

The Cabinet Member stressed that the proposals would not equate to a reduction in service but would instead have an additional circa £424,000 of investment into the service. However, the Cabinet Member recognised that a small number of pupils would be affected by the changes, if agreed.

The Cabinet Member voiced his support for the proposals and welcomed the establishment of the two Welsh Medium Primary phased learning support classes at the new Welsh Medium School in Rhydyfelin for pupils with additional learning needs; and felt that this would further enhance choice for parents and guardians.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information contained within the report and the Objection Report in Appendix 1, which includes details of objections received during the Statutory Notice period, and the comments given in response to the objections.
2. To implement the proposals as published in the Statutory Notices which includes:

Proposal 1: Relocation of the Observation and Assessment LSC at Penrhiwceiber Primary School to Abercynon Community Primary School taking effect from September 2024.

Proposal 2: Transfer the LSC for pupils in years 3-6 with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Abercynon Community Primary School to create a through provision in the Primary Phase at Perthcelyn Primary School taking effect from September 2024.

Proposal 3: Establish one Early years Assessment and Intervention LSC for pupils under statutory school age with significant presenting needs at Abercynon Community Primary School taking effect from April 2024.

Proposal 4: Establish two Welsh medium Primary Phase LSCs at the new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin (YGG Awel Taf) for pupils with significant ALN taking effect from September 2024.

Proposal 5: Establish one LSC for pupils in years 7-11 with ASD at the new 3-16 school on the Hawthorn Primary/High School site (Ysgol Afon Wen) taking effect from September 2024.

3. To the publication of the relevant Decision Notices in respect of any proposals taken forward as required by the School Organisation Code.

Cabinet Members' comment and approval, an update on the Cabinet Work Programme on the proposed list of matters requiring consideration by Cabinet over the 2023-2024 Municipal Year.

The Deputy Leader thanked the Director for the report and was content with the content of the Cabinet Work Programme, noting its flexibility.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To approve the Work Programme for the 2023-2024 Municipal Year (with appropriate amendment where necessary) and receive a further update on a 3 monthly basis.

88 Aberdare Town Centre Strategy

The Service Director of Prosperity and Development updated Members on the response to the formal consultation exercise undertaken on the draft Aberdare Town Centre Strategy as agreed by Cabinet on 28th June 2023 and to highlight the changes made to the document in light of the responses received. The report also sought approval from Cabinet to formally adopt the Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity commented that the process undertaken was a positive example of pre-engagement and thanked the officers for their commitment. The Cabinet Member welcomed the proposals and was pleased to note that the majority of respondents were in favour of the plans for the Aberdare town centre.

The Deputy Leader was also in support of the recommendations contained within the report and was pleased to note that the document would strengthen following the robust consultation process.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To consider the findings from the formal consultation exercise undertaken in respect of the draft Aberdare Town Centre Strategy and supporting documents;
2. To review and approve the range of revisions made to the Strategy following completion of the formal consultation;
3. To approve the final Aberdare Town Centre Strategy and support the development of projects under the 'investment themes' included in the Strategy.

89 Risk Management Strategy

The Service Director of Finance and Improvement Services set out the Council's updated Risk Management Strategy for Cabinet Member consideration.

The Service Director assured the Cabinet that the Council's Risk Management Strategy is kept under regular review, with the latest update agreed by the Council's Cabinet in July 2022, as endorsed by the Governance and Audit Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services welcomed the

endorsement of the Risk Management Strategy by the Governance and Audit Committee.

The Cabinet Member was satisfied that the Strategy before Members ensures that the Council's risk management arrangements continue to be fit for purpose. The Cabinet Member spoke positive of the toolkit, which had been devised to assist managers when undertaking risk management and had proven to be an asset.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To approve the Council's updated Risk Management Strategy, as endorsed by the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting on 12th October 2023.

90 Pre-Scrutiny Committee Feedback

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication provided Cabinet with the feedback and comments of the items that were pre-scrutinised by the Council's thematic Scrutiny Committee's following its last Committee cycle.

The Service Director drew Members' attention to section 5 of the report, which outlined the following items that had been pre-scrutinised in line with the Committee's Terms of reference:

- Proposal to declare a new additional Licensing Scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation in 2024 – Community Services Scrutiny Committee; and
- Day Services for Older People - Community Services Scrutiny Committee.

The Deputy Leader took the opportunity to thank the Scrutiny Committee for the comments and observations and welcomed the constructive engagement of Scrutiny Members towards the next two items of business.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the comments and observations of the Scrutiny Committees following pre-scrutiny of the items listed within section 5 of the report.

91 Day Services for Older People

The Director of Social Services made recommendations with regards to the future delivery of the Council's day services for older people.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care thanked the Director for the comprehensive report and thanked the Community Services Scrutiny Committee for its observations and comments.

The Cabinet Member took the opportunity to emphasise that there was a strong rationale behind the proposed changes and stated that the proposals would deliver positive benefits for service users. The Cabinet Member noted that most clients were not from the locality of individual locations.

Prior to speaker submissions, the Deputy Leader took the opportunity to speak of a recent visit undertaken by herself and the Leader to Cwrt yr Orsaf Extra

Care in Pontypridd, following concerns raised. The Deputy Leader spoke positive of her visit and the vast amount of modernised facilities available to service users, such as a large restaurant, beauty salon, cinema room and large garden. Furthermore, the Deputy Leader spoke of the wider facilities in Pontypridd, available to users, such as Ynysangharad Park.

With the agreement of the Leader, the following Non-Committee Member was granted permission to address the Cabinet:

- County Borough Councillor D Grehan

With the agreement of the Leader, the following Trade Union representative was granted permission to address the Cabinet:

- Mr C Jones – GMB

Note: Prior to the meeting, correspondence from GMB was circulated to Cabinet Members for consideration by the Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication.

The Leader thanked the speakers for their contributions. In terms of concerns raised around the shared access to some of the facilities, the Leader spoke positive of the large space and advised that there were also dedicated rooms available to clients. In terms of the facilities, the Leader confirmed that the design meets the specification for the type of facility and explained that it was designed to be a shared use for clients within the facility and to provide other clients with support. The Leader took on board the concerns of the Trade Union representative and commented that he would be happy to meet outside of the meeting to discuss matters further.

The Director of Social Services advised that Practice Solutions were initially commissioned to undertake a review of the day services and residential model and it was recommended that a new service model is implemented. The Director acknowledged that positive comments were made in respect of Tonyrefail but circumstances had changed since 2019. The Director spoke of the pandemic but also recognised that facilities had since been developed at Cwrt yr Orsaf; and was of the view that it would meet the needs of the service users of Tonyrefail.

In terms of concerns around the space available, the Director spoke of the importance of socialisation and integration of individuals and advised that the facility would provide them with the opportunity to integrate with other individuals, often with the same level of needs.

In terms of concerns raised around the wet room facilities, the Director advised that within Cwrt Yr Orsaf, there was a dedicated ceiling hoist available, which was not available at the Tonyrefail facility. The Director advised that the addition would support individuals with higher accessibility demands. It was acknowledged that there were fewer toilet facilities within Cwrt Yr Orsaf, but based on the needs of individuals, the Director was confident the facility would meet the needs. The Director emphasised the importance of ensuring dignity and care for all service users of the facility.

In terms of concerns raised in respect of the elevator, the Director did not believe this to be a barrier for the service users and felt that the suitability of the building was fit for purpose.

In terms of concerns raised in respect of transport, the Director noted that

approximately 42% of individuals would benefit in terms of travel time. The Director assured Members that all routes would be considered to ensure individuals spend as little time on public transport as possible but recognised that many individuals enjoy the journey.

The Leader clarified that although 42% of individuals would have a shorter journey as a result of the proposals, the journeys would be significantly shorter, whereas for those individuals with longer journeys as a result of the proposals, the journeys would not be significantly longer in time. The Leader felt that in terms of transport, the proposals were on balance.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care thanked all participants for their comments. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that since the pandemic, there had been a decline in use of traditional services and believed that the modern settings would provide greater opportunities for service users, with no loss of service provision. The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care felt that the proposals before Members would assist in tackling loneliness and better support the health and wellbeing of individuals.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information provided in this report, the Equality Impact Assessment (including Socio-Economic Duty) and Welsh Language Impact Assessment;
2. To approve that Trecynon Day Centre and Cwmni Dda Day Centre are combined by March 2024, and future provision is provided from Cwmni Dda as set out in paragraph 5.2 of the report; and
3. To approve that the day service provision provided from Tonyrefail Day Centre is transferred on a phased basis to Cwrt yr Orsaf Extra Care in Pontypridd by March 2024 as set out in paragraph 5.6 of the report.

92 Proposal to declare a new additional Licensing Scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation in 2024

The Head of Service for Public Protection and Regulatory Services presented the report to Cabinet on the effectiveness of the 2019 Additional Licensing Scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and propose the Council declare a New Additional Licensing Scheme for HMOs from April 2024, in accordance with the provisions of the Housing Act 2004.

The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities took the opportunity to thank officers for the comprehensive report; and noted the successful implementation of two recommendations made during the last review to review the administration scheme and to speed up the application process; both of which, work to create a more efficient licensing system.

The Cabinet Member was confident that over the years, the additional licensing scheme in addition to the mandatory licensing scheme had worked proactively to regulate Houses in Multiple Occupation in Rhondda Cynon Taf and had been vital in ensuring ensure residents are safe and to minimise the impact of shared houses. The Cabinet Member also noted that the Schemes allow the Council to work with landlords and to use action when necessary for those who are non-compliant.

The Cabinet Member thanked the Community Services Scrutiny Committee for

its involvement and agreed with its recommendation to include an additional fire safety condition to be in line with the Building Safety Act 2022.

The Deputy Leader echoed the Cabinet Member's comments and was supportive of the proposal. The Deputy Leader welcomed further communication with the University, to ensure the wellbeing of the young people using HMO's for educational purposes.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the findings of the Evaluation of the 2019 Additional HMO Licensing Scheme in Rhondda Cynon Taf and the feedback from the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on 21st November 2023;
2. To approve the declaration of a New Additional Licensing Scheme for HMOs in Rhondda Cynon Taf, to come into force when the current scheme ends on 31st March 2024 and instruct officers to make the necessary arrangements in accordance with the provisions of the Housing Act 2004;
3. To approve the continued inclusion of all types of HMO within the scope of the new 2024 Scheme;
4. To approve the standard licensing conditions to be placed on all HMO licences granted by the Council under both the Mandatory Licensing Scheme, and the new Additional Licensing Scheme from April 2024 (in addition to any bespoke conditions relevant to individual licences); and
5. To approve the proposed fee structure as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.

93 To consider passing the following Resolution:

It was **RESOLVED**: "That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act".

94 Internal Audit Service

Following the consideration of the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director for Finance, Digital and Frontline Services containing exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to the financial affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), it was **RESOLVED** that the proposed way forward for the future arrangements for the delivery of the Council's Internal Audit Service be implemented.

This meeting closed at 12.20 pm

**Councillor A Morgan
Chair.**