



**CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

C Hanagan
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
The Pavilions
Cambrian Park
Clydach Vale CF40 2XX

Meeting Contact: Council Business – Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a Virtual meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2022-2027 COMMITTEE** to be held on **THURSDAY, 11TH JANUARY, 2024** at **10.30 AM**.

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Tuesday, 9 January 2024 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

It is the intention to live stream this meeting, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

AGENDA

**Page
No's**

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

2. CALL IN OF THE CABINET DECISION OF THE PROPOSAL TO CLOSE RHIGOS PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS TRANSFERRING TO HIRWAUN PRIMARY SCHOOL

To consider the decision taken by Cabinet on the 18th December 2023 on the Proposal to Close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring

to Hirwaun Primary School

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3. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

4. CHAIRS REVIEW AND CLOSE

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee (County Borough Councillor J Edwards and County Borough Councillor B Stephens respectively)

County Borough Councillors:- Councillor M Ashford, Councillor R Bevan, Councillor J Bonetto, Councillor R Davis, Councillor S Evans, Councillor S Evans, Councillor C Middle, Councillor K Morgan, Councillor S Morgans, Councillor G L Warren, Councillor M Powell and Councillor S Emanuel

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24

SPECIAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 JANUARY 2024

**CALL-IN: PROPOSAL TO CLOSE RHIGOS PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS
TRANSFERRING TO HIRWAUN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES &
COMMUNICATION**

1. MEMBERS WILL FIND ENCLOSED:

Appendix A – Cabinet Committee Report of the [18th December 2023](#) - 'Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language titled Proposal to Close Rhigos Primary School with Pupils Transferring to Hirwaun Primary School' (this includes the following appendices):-

A1 – Consultation Report

A2 – Estyn Response

2A, 2B, 3A and 3B – Minutes of Meetings.

Appendix B - Copy of the Cabinet Decision for the above mentioned item.

Appendix C –Extract of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules re: Call-in

Appendix D – Copy of the Call in form received from Councillors D Grehan, A Rogers and S Trask

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 To determine whether or not to refer the matter back to Cabinet for reconsideration.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On the 18 December 2023, a report was considered by Cabinet in respect of the decision to approve the recommendations outlined below:
- Note the content of the report.
 - Note the information contained within the attached Consultation Report, attached as Appendix A to the 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.
 - 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.
 - Agree 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.
- 3.2 This matter was pre scrutinised by the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee on the 14th December 2023. Cabinet Members were provided with a copy of the feedback and the comments of the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee on Friday 15th December. Members can view the webcast of this meeting [here](#).
- 3.3 The decision in respect of the above was published on the 18 December 2023 and is attached at [Appendix B](#). The feedback from the Education & Inclusion Committee was attached to the Cabinet Decision Notice for publication purposes.
- 3.4 Members are able to view the Cabinet meeting where the matter was considered by clicking [here](#) to view the recording.
- 3.5 Rule 17 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules dealing with call-in is attached as Appendix C of this report.
- 3.6 The call-in form was received on the 21st December 2023 which complied with the relevant criteria. (A copy of the prescribed call in form is attached as Appendix D)
- 3.7 The reasons for the call-in which were considered valid by the Proper Officer are presented for the Committees consideration below.

4. PROCEDURE

- 4.1 Each case for Call-in must be considered on its merits and the procedure for the conduct of the meeting will be in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 17.1B, as shown below:-

17.1 Procedure at call-in meetings held under Rule 17.1

1. Declarations of interest (including whipping declarations);
2. Welcome by the Chair followed by the outlining of the reason for the call-in meeting, to be undertaken by the Head of Democratic Services as per detailed below:-

Call –in matters raised for consideration by the committee supported by the Proper Officer :

1. There is a need to consider the negative impact of the proposal for pupils and the wider community of Rhigos especially in line with the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which requires RCTCBC to think about the long-term impact of decisions on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.
 2. There is a need to fully respect the right of the child to have their voice heard, taken seriously, and acted upon.
 3. There is a need to fully consider aspects of the proposal which are contrary to the aims of another proposal which is currently being consulted on.
 4. The decision to proceed relied upon incomplete, out of date data.
 5. There is a need to consider the merits of alternative options put forward by the consultees, and alternative options to address surplus places.
 6. There is a need to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the potential impact of the decision both positive and negative.
 7. The feedback from the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny meeting held on 14th December 2023 was not included within the Cabinet Report nor attached as an appendix prior to the decision being made and therefore was not available for public scrutiny and response.
- 3. Chair to invite the three Members, namely County Borough Councillors:**
- D Grehan, A Rogers, S Trask who have signed the call-in form to present their submissions to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as to why they consider the relevant decision should be referred back to the decision maker for reconsideration, having regard to the accepted valid reasons set out in the 'notice of call-in form.*
4. *Chair to invite relevant Director(s) to respond.*
 5. *Chair to give any Cabinet Member(s) present the opportunity to address the Committee.*
 6. *Chair to invite any other Members of the Committee to speak (and with the Chair's permission any non-Committee Members present, who are eligible to attend, and wish to speak).*

7. *If necessary, the Chair to invite any relevant Director/Cabinet Member present to respond to a Member's question.*
 8. *Chair to invite one of the three signatories to the call-in to make a final address to the Committee membership.*
 9. *Chair to put the matter to the vote.*
 10. *Legal Officer present to summarise the effect of the Committee's decision in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules 17.1(e) and 17.1(f)*
- 4.2 If the proposal to refer the matter back for reconsideration is passed then the matter will be referred back to the decision maker, namely the Cabinet. If the proposal is lost then the decision will take effect from the conclusion of this meeting.
 - 4.3 The relevant Cabinet portfolio holder(s) will be invited to the meeting to answer any questions Members of the Committee may have with regards to the subject matter of the Call In.
 - 4.4 Should any public speaker requests be received, they will be considered in accordance with the Council Scrutiny participation arrangements, as outlined within the Council's Public Participation Strategy.



APPENDIX A

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

18TH DECEMBER 2023

PROPOSAL TO CLOSE RHIGOS PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS TRANSFERRING TO HIRWAUN PRIMARY SCHOOL

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND WELSH LANGUAGE (COUNCILLOR R LEWIS)

AUTHOR(S):

Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services

Andrea Richards, Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise 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.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members:

2.1.1 Note the content of this report.

2.1.2 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.

2.1.3 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.

2.1.4 Agree 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.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To progress the proposal in accordance with the process outlined in the Welsh Government's (WG's) legislative guidance the School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018).

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Members will recall that, at the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18th September 2023, approval was given to begin a statutory process to formally consult on the proposal to close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School by no later than September 2024. The justifications for doing so were:

- 4.1.1 RCTCBC has a statutory duty through its approach to the organisation and leadership arrangements of schools to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of provision to ensure that all schools are well placed to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of the community and makes best use of public funding.

- 4.1.2 Rhigos Primary School is RCTCBC's smallest school and the number of pupils joining Rhigos Primary School has been in steady decline and pupil numbers are forecast to continue to fall in the next five years.

- 4.1.3 Allowing surplus places to remain high through inaction would directly and negatively affect the future financial viability of Rhigos Primary School and impact children's education in the future. Rhigos Primary School's budget, with a diminishing income would have less money for staff salaries, curriculum activities, equipment, running costs and maintenance of the school estate and would therefore struggle to maintain their current good education offer.

- 4.1.4 To continue to effectively manage the education provision available in the Cynon Valley area of Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT). The proposal would extend and expand upon the positive outcomes delivered through the WG's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, enabling more pupils to benefit from this significant investment which has included the provision of the new Hirwaun Primary School building.

- 4.1.5 To continue to deliver on the objectives included within the WG's Sustainable Communities for Learning rolling programme, specifically:

- Transforming learning environments and learner experience.
- Meeting demand for school places.
- Improving condition and suitability of the education estate.
- Developing sustainable learning environments.
- Supporting the community.

- 4.1.6 To continue to deliver the mission of RCTCBC's [Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Strategic Plan](#) for the years between 2022 and 2025 to ensure '*Equity and Excellence in Education and Enhanced Wellbeing for All*'.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was prepared in respect of the proposal and published on Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (RCTCBC's) website together with a Consultation Document that outlined the proposal in further detail in accordance with the requirements of the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018). This Assessment has been updated following a review of the responses received.

5.2 The outcome of Equality Impact Assessment identified:

- Positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts, upon the protected characteristics.
- Hirwaun Primary School is fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010 thereby ensuring that no pupil, staff member, parent / carer or member of the wider community is prevented from fully accessing the whole extent of the new facilities.
- There would be positive impacts on the Welsh language as, despite Hirwaun Primary School being an English medium primary school, it provides improved facilities to assist with the delivery of Welsh as a key element of the curriculum and in line with Cymraeg 2050 and RCTCBC's WESP, as we aim for the teaching of Welsh as a second language in English medium schools, to be of the highest quality.
- Hirwaun Primary School has first class facilities that ensure that all families who wish to access places at the school can be accommodated. The excellent facilities on offer may encourage more parents / carers to choose their catchment school, including the families of learners with ALN. The capacity may assist armed forces personnel and carers who may move to the area mid-academic year.

5.3 It was considered that no negative impacts were identified within the Equality Impact Assessment which would prevent approval to be sought to continue to implement the proposal. To confirm, the Action Plan included within the Equality Impact Assessment would continue to be reviewed throughout the duration of the proposal's delivery period.

5.4 In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, RCTCBC has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. So as part of seeking views on the proposal, the consultation also included the following question:

1.How would RCTCBC's proposal affect you because of your:

- Sex.
- Age.
- Ethnicity.
- Disability.
- Sexuality.

- Religion/Belief.
- Gender Identity.
- Relationship Status.
- Pregnancy.
- Preferred Language.

5.5 Of those respondents that answered this question, the majority, 136 (92.5%), gave no answer to this question. However, 4 (2.7%) commented that the proposal could negatively impact them due to their age whilst 7 (4.8%) commented that the proposal could negative impact them due to their disability.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment was prepared in respect of the proposal and was published on RCTCBC's website together with a Consultation Document that outlined the proposal in further detail in accordance with the requirements of the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018). This Assessment has been updated following a review of the responses received.

6.2 The outcome of the Welsh Language Impact Assessment identified:

- Hirwaun Primary School has recently benefitted from a £9.6M investment via the WG's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, delivering a brand new school with a high quality, 21st Century teaching and learning environment, enriching the teaching and learning experiences for both pupils and staff. The school opened its doors to the English medium pupils previously attending Penderyn Community Primary School in September 2021. It is a fully accessible school building which wholly complies with the Equality Act 2010.
- Rhigos Primary school is also within the catchment of the Welsh medium provision at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Penderyn, and tailored and individual support would be available from the Council's Welsh Language Immersion Team for any pupils wishing to continue their education, at Penderyn, through the medium of Welsh.
- Although Hirwaun Primary School is an English medium primary school, Welsh is taught as part of the curriculum and all pupils would benefit from having the opportunity to be taught in brand new facilities fit for the 21st century.
- RCTCBC aims to embed positive habits and attitudes towards the Welsh language through purposeful planning to promote the informal use of the Welsh language amongst pupils inside and outside schools. Facilitating the use of the Welsh language across the curriculum and in wider contexts in schools, to ensure a continuum of linguistic progression to support pupils in the transition between key stages, offers all pupils the opportunity to become fully bilingual and aligns with the Curriculum for Wales 2022. Pupils attending Hirwaun Primary School would continue to be encouraged and supported to do this through the achievement of the 'Cymraeg Campus' Welsh Language Charter, a framework to promote and increase the use of Welsh.

- Hirwaun Primary school is a fully accessible and fully integrated community school. A dedicated area has been designed within so that the local community are allowed to safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day. The headteacher of the Hirwaun Primary School will continue to be encouraged and supported to consider using these facilities to increase participation in the Welsh language by offering the opportunity to parents/carers and other members of the community to attend Welsh medium learning classes for adults and/or other opportunities for community engagement through the medium of Welsh.
- This could contribute towards the Welsh Government's ambitious goal of creating a million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050 and the WESP.

6.3 It was considered that no negative impacts were identified within the Welsh Language Impact Assessment which would prevent approval to be sought to continue to implement the proposal. To confirm, the Action Plan included within the Welsh Language Impact Assessment would continue to be reviewed throughout the duration of the proposal's delivery period.

6.4 In accordance with the Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015 and in compliance with RCTCBC's statutory obligations, the consultation included the following questions:

1. Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative)?
2. Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?
3. How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?

6.5 A summary of the responses received in relation to these questions can be found in the Consultation Report.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

7.1 The consultation processes in respect of the proposal have been undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018). These arrangements stipulate that a Consultation Report must be prepared prior to the publication of any Statutory Notice which will progress the proposal. It further states that Statutory Notices be published within 26 weeks of the end of the consultation should a decision be made to progress with the statutory process.

7.2 The Consultation Report, prepared in respect of the proposal contains:

- Information in respect of meetings held to discuss the proposal, with copies of the notes taken at these meetings.
- Estyn's response to the proposal and the clarification to the response.
- A summary of the responses received during the consultation period and where required the appropriate clarification to any issues raised.

- The response received by the ‘Save Rhigos Primary School’ action committee established on behalf of the community of Rhigos.
- 7.3 As stated above, Estyn’s full response can be found within the consultation report however, in summary, Estyn considered that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision and outcomes for pupils in the area. The response further states that the *‘local authority has set out a clear rationale for its proposal. It outlines strongly the many advantages of closing Rhigos Primary School, with all pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary school’*.
- 7.4 The ‘Save Rhigos Primary School’ action committee, established on behalf of the community of Rhigos, undertook three separate petitions to the proposal. In total, 784, 974, and 65 signatures were added to the petitions respectively by the consultation deadline, these will be counted as three responses. In addition, 236 written responses were received, 89 in writing / or via email and 147 via online survey.
- 7.5 Governing Body and staff meetings outlined in the Consultation Report were held virtually face-to-face. Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached as Appendix 2 (A to B) to the Consultation Report.
- 7.6 School Council meetings outlined in the Consultation Report were held in the corresponding schools. Pupils were given a children and young people’s version of the Consultation Document and Consultation Response. Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached as Appendix 3 (A to B) to the Consultation Report.
- 7.7 Two drop in sessions were also arranged so that members of the public could discuss the proposal with Officers from RCTCBC’s Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services and provide any feedback at the session. They took place in Rhigos Primary School and Hirwaun Primary School on Monday 6th November 2023 at 15:00 to 18:00 and Tuesday 7th November at 15:00 to 18:00 respectively. Attendees were asked to complete and submit a Consultation Response Form.
- 7.8 Out of the 239 responses were received, 3 (1.3%) were in favour of the proposal, 226 (94.5%) were against the proposal, 1 (0.4%) was unsure and 9 (3.8%) did not provide an answer. This is outlined in the table that follows.

Summary of Consultation Responses		
Determination	Number	%
In Favour	3	1.3
Against	226	94.5
Unsure	1	0.4
Not Answered	9	3.8
Total	239	100.0

- 7.9 To confirm, **all** of the comments and issues raised during this consultation have been reviewed by RCTCBC’s Cabinet Members.

8. THE STATUTORY PROCESS

- 8.1 The Statutory Notice for the proposal would refer to the:
- 8.1.1 Closure of Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School by no later than September 2024.
- 8.2 If agreed, and subject to the matter not being called in for consideration by Scrutiny, the Statutory Notice would be published in January 2024, and would allow for a minimum 28 day period for objections.
- 8.3 If any objections are received during this period, in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018), an Objection Report would be prepared. This matter would then be reported to a future meeting of the Cabinet for Members to consider.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There will be no capital funding implications should the proposal go ahead, and revenue savings accrued from the closure of Rhigos Primary School would be reinvested into supporting pupils' education in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 9.2 Given the 2.8 mile distance between Rhigos Primary School and Hirwaun Primary School, all pupils residing in the Rhigos catchment area would qualify for home to school transport to Hirwaun in line with the statutory provision as identified within Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. Additional revenue implications resulting as a consequence of the closure of Rhigos Primary School, including the increase in home to school transport costs, would be identified as the proposal is developed and incorporated into RCTCBC's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements.
- 9.3 Financial projections show that progressing with the proposals would have a positive impact upon the budgetary position of Hirwaun Primary School. Further information on the current and projected budgetary positions of both schools affected by the proposals were included in the Consultation Document presented to Cabinet on 18th September 2023.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 Powers for Councils to develop school organisation proposals are governed by the:
- The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.
 - The WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018).
- 10.2 Council's must, when exercising functions under Part 3 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, act in accordance with any relevant

requirements contained in the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018) and must have regard to any relevant guidelines contained in it.

11. LINKS TO RCTCBC'S CORPORATE PLAN, NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

11.1 There are links between RCTCBC's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Service's School Modernisation Programme and RCTCBC's Corporate Plan for the years 2020 to 2024, 'Making a Difference', specifically:

- **People:**
 - Encouraging all residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing:
 - Delivering new indoor and outdoor sporting facilities available for community use and enhancing existing sporting facilities such as changing rooms and outdoor play areas.
 - Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do:
 - Improving the social, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people by increasing the range of specialist services available on our school sites and within our communities.
- **Places:**
 - Ensuring RCT is one of the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion where residents feel safe:
 - Supporting the voluntary, community and faith sectors to help build active communities, creating the capacity for meeting the needs of residents within their communities.
- **Prosperity:**
 - Ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education.

11.2 There are links to RCTCBC's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Strategic Plan for the years between 2022 and 2025, specifically:

- **Strategic Priority 3:**
 - Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable pupils and their families.
- **Strategic Priority 5:**
 - Delivering 21st century learning environments and innovative services for our pupils and communities.

11.3 The proposal in this report would lead to a more efficient use of RCTCBC's education estate supporting RCTCBC's Think Climate, Making RCT Carbon Neutral by 2030, for the years 2022 to 2025. The closure of an energy inefficient school would contribute towards achieving the overarching objective of RCTCBC's carbon reduction targets to become carbon neutral by 2030. It also aligns with the WG's ambition of a carbon neutral public service by 2030 and the wider goal of a net zero carbon Wales by 2050 as set out in the WG's Net Zero Carbon Strategic Plan: 2022. The investment at Hirwaun Primary School has seen a number of sustainable technologies incorporated into the design

including a rainwater harvesting system, photo-voltaic panels, electric vehicle charging facilities and biodiversity areas on the school site.

11.4 Due regard has been made to all seven wellbeing goals and the five ways of working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which requires RCTCBC to think about the long-term impact of decisions on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

11.5 The proposal could contribute towards achieving some of the seven wellbeing goals by:

- **A Healthier Wales** – Accommodation at Hirwaun Primary School consists of enhanced outdoor spaces and sports facilities. As well as supporting the full range of curriculum activities these facilities are also available for community use.
- **A More Equal Wales** – The wider catchment area for Hirwaun Primary School and the way the school is used would bring neutral or positive socio-economic impacts to all of the vulnerable groups over an extended geographical area.
- **A Wales of More Cohesive Communities** – Hirwaun Primary School is a fully accessible and integrated community school with a dedicated area designed within so that the local community can safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.
- **A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language** – Although Hirwaun Primary School is English medium, Welsh is taught as part of the curriculum and all pupils would benefit from having the opportunity to be taught in brand new facilities fit for the 21st century (as is currently the case there is also the option to attend Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Penderyn and engage the support of the Welsh language Immersion Team to support transition, subject to parent/carer choice).
- **A Globally Responsive Wales** – The new school at Hirwaun has been built to BREEAM excellent standards and the school can use sustainability features of the building, e.g., photo-voltaic panels, rainwater harvesting and biodiversity, to further develop extra-curricular activities which encourage healthy lifestyles for the school and wider community.

11.6 The proposal could contribute towards achieving some of the five ways of working by:

- **Long Term** – The proposal forms a part of RCTCBC's wider 21st Century School Organisation Strategy and supports the better strategic management of RCTCBC's education estate.
- **Prevention** – RCTCBC believes that the proposal represents the best opportunity to safeguard and sustain educational standards for the future and provides a platform for further improvement.
- **Integrations** – Hirwaun Primary School is a fully accessible and integrated community school. A dedicated area is provided within the school so that the local community and parents/carers can safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.

- **Collaboration** – RCTCBC would continue to work effectively with internal and external partners to ensure the changes brought about by these proposals would meet the short and long term needs of pupils, parents/carers, staff and the wider community.
- **Involvement** –The proposal is made in accordance with the School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018) and seeks the views of a prescribed list of stakeholders including pupils, parents/carers, staff and the wider community. As such face to face meetings were held with Governing Bodies, staff and School Councils of both Rhigos Primary School and Hirwaun Primary School.

11.7 As stated in paragraph 5.1 above, an Equality Impact Assessment which further details the contribution of the proposal to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 has been prepared.

12. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

12.1 The proposal to close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School (subject to parental choice) is relevant to the specific wards covered by these catchment areas.

13. CONCLUSION

13.1 RCTCBC has a statutory duty through its approach to the organisation and leadership arrangements of schools to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of provision to ensure that all schools are well placed to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of the community and makes best use of public funding.

13.2 Rhigos Primary School is RCTCBC's smallest school and the number of pupils joining Rhigos Primary School has been in steady decline, pupil numbers are forecast to continue to fall in the next five years. To note, since the commencement of the consultation period in relation to this proposal, the number of statutory pupils at the school has reduced from 51 to 49.

13.3 Allowing surplus places to remain high through inaction would directly and negatively affect the future financial viability of Rhigos Primary School and impact children's education in the future. Rhigos Primary School's budget, with a diminishing income would have less money for staff salaries, curriculum activities, equipment, running costs and maintenance of the school estate and would therefore struggle to maintain their current good education offer.

13.4 The proposal seeks to provide the opportunity for more pupils to benefit from the significant investment delivered via the WG's Sustainable Communities for Learning programme in the Cynon Valley. Consultation outcomes suggest that there is strong opposition to the proposals but the rationale for change highlights many potential benefits.

Estyn confirmed that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision and outcomes for pupils in the area. The response further

states that the *'local authority has set out a clear rationale for its proposal. It outlines strongly the many advantages of closing Rhigos Primary School, with all pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary school'*.

- 13.5 It is recommended therefore, that Members consider the contents of the attached Consultation Report, and to give officers approval to publish an appropriate Statutory Notice in January 2024 which will trigger the Objection Period and progress this proposal.

Other Information:

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee.

Contact Officer(s):

Andrea Richards, Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation.

Lisa Howell, 21st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

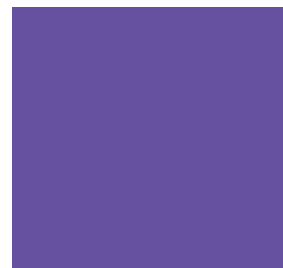
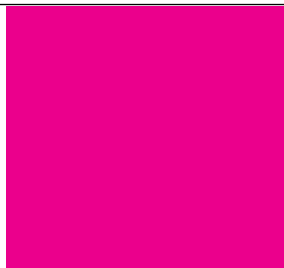
18TH DECEMBER 2023

**ITEM: PROPOSAL TO CLOSE RHIGOS PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS
TRANSFERRING TO HIRWAUN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Background Papers:

Appendix A – Consultation Report.

21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS



CONSULTATION REPORT

CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO CLOSE RHIGOS PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS TRANSFERRING TO HIRWAUN PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Consultation Report and Appendices are also available on the 'Get Involved' page on Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's website.

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg / This document is available in Welsh.



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1. Proposal

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) wishes to seek the views of stakeholders on the proposal to close Rhigos Primary School. The pupils of Rhigos Primary School will instead attend Hirwaun Primary School.

It is proposed that Rhigos Primary School will close with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School by no later than September 2024.

The proposal is made in accordance with the Welsh Government's (WG's) School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018). Section 2.1 of the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) refers to elements of school organisation that require the publication of proposals, including:

- The closing of a maintained school.

Details of the proposal and the rationale behind it are fully outlined in the Consultation Document and Impact Assessments that were circulated to all the stakeholders. The link to these documents is below:

[Consultation on a proposal to close Rhigos Primary | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/consultation-on-a-proposal-to-close-rhigos-primary)

2. Purpose of the Consultation Report

This Consultation Report is prepared in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018). Its purpose is to inform the stakeholders listed below of the outcome of the consultation held between 2nd October 2023 and completed at 17:00 on 17th November 2023.

3. Who Have We Consulted With?

A copy of the Consultation Document, which fully outlined and explained our proposal, was sent to the following stakeholders. The Consultation Document was also published on RCTCBC's website.

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

- The Governing Bodies of:
 - Rhigos Primary School.
 - Hirwaun Primary School.
 - Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Penderyn.
- Parents / carers, prospective parents / carers (where possible), and staff members of:

- Rhigos Primary School.
- Hirwaun Primary School.
- Pupils of:
 - Rhigos Primary School.
 - Hirwaun Primary School.
- Neighbouring local authorities.
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan authorities.
- Welsh Ministers.
- Members of the Senedd for the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf constituencies and regional Members of the Senedd for the area.
- Members of Parliament for the Rhondda, Cynon, and Taf constituencies.
- Estyn.
- Teaching and staff trade unions.
- Central South Consortium Joint Education Service.
- Police and Crime Commissioner for the area.
- Childcare providers.
- Mudiad Meithrin.
- Menter Iaith.
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.
- Children and Young People's Partnership.
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.
- Welsh Language Commissioner.
- Rhigos Community Council.
- Hirwaun and Penderyn Community Council.

4. Consultation Process

All stakeholders identified were sent a link to electronic copies of the Consultation Document, and those that requested paper copies received them. The table that follows also outlines the meetings that were convened with the Governing Bodies and Staff Members and School Councils of Hirwaun Primary School and Rhigos Primary School.

School(s) Affected	Group	Time/Date	Venue
School Council			
Rhigos Primary School	School Council	Monday 6 th November 2023 at 13:30 to 14:30	Rhigos Primary School
Hirwaun Primary School	School Council	Tuesday 7 th November at 13:30 to 14:30	Hirwaun Primary School
Governing Body and Staff			
Rhigos Primary School.	Governing Body and Staff.	Thursday 26 th October 2023 at 15:30 – 17:00.	Rhigos Primary School.

Hirwaun Primary School.	Primary	Governing Body and Staff.	Thursday 26 th October 2023 at 15:30 – 17:00.	Hirwaun Primary School.
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All Governing Body and staff meetings outlined in the previous table were held face-to-face. Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached at Appendix 2 (A to B). These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made during the meetings, with the responses provided where appropriate.

All School Council meetings outlined in the previous table were held in the corresponding schools. Pupils were given a children and young people’s version of the Consultation Document and Consultation Response Form. Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached at Appendix 3 (A B). These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made during the meetings, with the responses provided where appropriate.

Two drop in sessions were also arranged so that members of the public could discuss the proposal with officers from RCTCBC’s Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services and provide any feedback at the session. The table that follows also outlines the dates and times of the meetings.

Public Drop in Session		
Parents/carers and members of the local community.	Monday 6 th November 2023 at 15:00 to 18:00.	Rhigos Primary School.
	Tuesday 7 th November at 15:00 to 18:00.	Hirwaun Primary School.

At the two drop in sessions all attendees were requested to sign in so that the level of attendance could be recorded. The attendance registers indicate that at the session held in Rhigos Primary School a total of 69 people signed in, however it should be noted that attendance was perceived to be higher than this number as some attendees did not sign in. At the session held in Hirwaun Primary School 3 people attended. Attendees cumulatively included Governing Body members, local Elected Members, local residents, parents / carers, pupils and staff.

Where appropriate, attendees were asked to complete and submit a Consultation Response Form.

5. Summary of Consultation Responses

Responses to the questions raised at the Governing Body and staff meetings and School Council meetings are summarised in the notes of the meetings attached at Appendix 2 (A to B) and Appendix 3 (A B) respectively.

The ‘Save Rhigos Primary School’ action committee, established on behalf of the community of Rhigos, undertook three separate petitions to the proposal. In total, 784 signatures were added to an online petition, this has been classed as one response for the

purpose of this report and 974 and 65 signatures were added to two separate paper petitions, these have been classed as two responses for the purpose of this report.

In addition to this, 236 written responses were received, 89 in writing / or via email and 147 via online survey. Where emails from individuals had been sent to numerous recipients these have been counted as one response.

In total, 239 responses were received. 3 (1.3%) were in favour of the proposal, 226 (94.5%) were against the proposal, 1 (0.4%) was unsure and 9 (3.8%) did not provide an answer. This is outlined in the table that follows.

Summary of Consultation Responses		
Determination	Number	%
In Favour	3	1.3
Against	226	94.5
Unsure	1	0.4
Not Answered	9	3.8
Total	239	100.0

In compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018), a summary of the written responses received during the consultation period are detailed in the table that follows along with clarification (where required).

For completeness it should be noted that there were a number of responses received that made statements and comments in relation to political issues, staff conduct, and wider Council issues that are unrelated to the specific requirements of a school organisation consultation, and as such these comments have not been included within the summary below. For those respondents that wish to raise any further concerns on such matters then there is the opportunity to do so outside of this consultation process, more information on how to make your views known can be found on RCTCBC's website.

To confirm, all of the comments and issues submitted during the course of this consultation have been made available and reviewed by RCTCBC's Cabinet Members.

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
Additional Learning Needs (ALN)	What support will there be for the pupils with ALN?	<p>All pupils with ALN will continue to be supported. The Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act provides detailed guidance on the duties and responsibilities of local authorities (LAs) in meeting the ALN of children and young people. Children and young people have ALN if they have a learning difficulty which calls for an additional learning provision to be made for them.</p> <p>The ALN Code for Wales (2021) recommends that Early Years and school settings adopt a graduated response to meeting ALN. A graduated response means that progressively greater expertise and</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>support can be brought in to address the difficulties a child or young person may be experiencing. Additional or different provision should be made depending on the severity of the child/young person's level of need.</p> <p>This duty and responsibility in this regard will be met regardless of which school a child attends.</p>
The pupils of Rhigos Primary School will get lost in a school the size of Hirwaun Primary School.	<p>As detailed above, there is a duty and responsibility placed on local authorities for all pupils to receive the support they need regardless of the size of the school.</p> <p>Creating larger schools can build capacity within staffing structures and enable opportunities for developing more specialist wellbeing and/or family liaison posts which will clearly benefit more vulnerable children and families.</p>
Admissions	
My child will not be attending Hirwaun Primary.	Choosing a school is parent / carer choice. Applications will be dealt with in accordance with the School Admissions Code.
What if I don't want my child to attend Hirwaun Primary School?	
Reports of issues with registering for a place at Rhigos Primary School for September 2024.	<p>During the school application period between September 1st to November 10th, RCTCBC received on-line applications for pre-nursery, nursery and reception places for Rhigos Primary School for the September 2024 academic year.</p> <p>To note there was a period of time during the admissions period that all parents across RCT were unable to apply online due to essential works being undertaken on the system from October 2nd to October 3rd. This message was posted on RCTCBC's web site.</p> <p>The admissions team have confirmed that they did receive a phone call from a Rhigos parent requesting a hard copy of the admissions form, however it transpired that the parent had already successfully applied for a place online. The parent was informed of this at the time.</p>
Is fulltime nursery provision available in Hirwaun Primary School.	Hirwaun Primary School currently offer full time nursery provision.

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme	Clarification	
Extra-curricular activities	How will pupils' access after school clubs?	<p>The provision of after school clubs are the responsibility of the individual schools and whilst these provisions are considered to be important, it should be noted that post school activities are not a statutory requirement.</p> <p>As is the case across RCT, there will be no home to school transport provision available purely to access these activities, transport will be provided at the start and end of the normal school day only.</p>
	The consultation document states the proposal will provide more opportunities for extracurricular activities but given the transport issues this will be reduced.	<p>This is in reference to the multiple accessible spaces available in Hirwaun Primary School, internally and externally, that can be utilised for such purposes. The fully accessible facilities at Hirwaun Primary School by their very nature do provide more opportunities.</p> <p>The transport provision is as stated above.</p>
	There are lots of extracurricular activities already on offer in Rhigos.	<p>This is not disputed; the Consultation Document states that the view of RCTCBC is that Rhigos Primary School is a good school. It is noted within the Community Impact Assessment that after school clubs run at both schools.</p>
	Will the range of after school clubs still be available at Hirwaun?	<p>This was confirmed in the Community Impact Assessment where it states, '<i>There are after school clubs being run at both Rhigos and Hirwaun Primary School, and clubs currently running at Rhigos Primary School can continue at Hirwaun</i>'.</p>
Breakfast Club	<p>How will pupils access breakfast club?</p> <p>The provision of breakfast club is the responsibility of the individual schools and whilst this provision is considered to be important, it should be noted that pre-school activities are not a statutory requirement. Therefore, there will be no home to school transport provision available purely to access this provision, transport will be provided at the start and end of the normal school day, as is currently the case for all schools across RCTCBC.</p> <p>However, if any child travelling on the school bus wishes to have a breakfast once they get to school then arrangements will be put in place to ensure that they receive one.</p> <p>The breakfast club operating in Hirwaun Primary School is very popular with an average of 53 pupils receiving a breakfast every day. The average daily number for pupils accessing a breakfast in Rhigos is 13 so there will be plenty of space available for any</p>	

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	pupils wishing to have a breakfast to do so. These figures have been calculated as a daily average of the attendance of the first half term of the 2023/24 academic year.
	Rhigos was voted Best Breakfast Club in Wales 2022. RCTCBC are aware of this impressive achievement and rightly the school community are very proud. A statement of congratulations was provided by the Director of Education and Inclusion Services at the time the award was received. Catering Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf have responsibility for delivering breakfast clubs in partnership with schools.
Building Condition	Why was the property condition survey used four years old? Property condition surveys are carried out cyclically on a five yearly basis which aligns with an industry standard timescale, so the survey used is still valid. The WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) states that: <i>'Information about the quality of accommodation at all existing schools likely to be affected by the proposals including reference to the Local Authority's most recent (property) condition survey using the categories of the original 21st Century Schools Survey'</i> This information has been included in compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018). The 2019 property condition survey was the most recent undertaken and so this was used accordingly. To note, a copy of the condition survey was shared with those who requested it during the consultation period.
	How much work has been undertaken at Rhigos Primary School since the property condition survey was undertaken? Lots of work has been undertaken at Rhigos Primary School since the property condition survey was undertaken in 2019. Works include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Replacement windows and doors.• New fencing and gates.• New drainage and resurfacing.• Repairs to roof areas.• Mechanical and electrical upgrades.
	How much money has been spent at Rhigos Primary School since 2019? Including the cyclical maintenance checks over £180,000 has been spent at Rhigos Primary School. This can be broken down as follows:

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works funded through the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for repairs and maintenance – £94,084. • Works funded directly by RCTCBC – £79,736. • Works funded by the school's delegated budget – £7,876.
Why hasn't the work identified within the property condition survey been undertaken?	<p>Some work of the work identified in the property condition survey has been undertaken, as listed above. Works are undertaken proactively and reactively across all 116 school sites, and as such have to be prioritised within the budgets available.</p> <p>In addition, lots of work has also been undertaken that was not identified in the property condition survey, including health and safety and safeguarding works.</p> <p>The property condition survey identifies the condition of a building at a point in time and is used as a tool for RCTCBC to manage its estate. In total, RCTCBC has 115 schools across 116 sites to manage, regular visits are undertaken by RCTCBC's Corporate Maintenance Team and issues are flagged up on a priority basis and undertaken when required. Rhigos Primary School has been in regular contact with, and has been visited regularly by, the RCTCBC's Corporate Maintenance Team.</p>
Why hasn't the RCTCBC looked after its buildings?	<p>RCTCBC has an obligation to ensure that its buildings are safe, watertight and warm, and that's what it has done. As stated above there have been regular visits to Rhigos Primary School by RCTCBC's Corporate Maintenance Team and its contractors, and it also undertakes cyclical maintenance checks and surveys of its mechanical and electrical equipment.</p> <p>All schools in RCTCBC buy into a building maintenance SLA and work is undertaken and managed through this SLA. On many occasions RCTCBC has paid for works at Rhigos Primary School that have been the responsibility of Rhigos Primary School's Governing Body, due to the school not having the required budget for the works to be undertaken.</p>
Why is one of the buildings at Rhigos Primary School deemed 'end of its life / beyond economical repair'?	<p>The term 'beyond economical repair' is a classification given to an asset where that asset requires repairs likely to be more expensive than its replacement value. It does not mean that the building is unsafe.</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>What does this mean?</p>
	<p>Why was permission denied for a member of the Action Group to undertake their own survey?</p> <p>RCTCBC has 116 school sites to manage and as such it is important that there is consistency in the way surveys are undertaken so that it can appropriately manage its education estate and prioritise works. A third party looking at one particular school would not be comparable with our in-house procedures given the subjectivity of the survey process.</p> <p>The survey undertaken in 2019 was free from prejudice.</p>
	<p>How does Rhigos Primary School not comply with the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>In terms of the physical site and the school buildings at Rhigos Primary School these are largely inaccessible, however, there is scope for improvement. Looking just at the protected characteristic 'disability', the school site is largely non complaint. Given the topography and the age of the buildings there will inevitably be some areas of the school and site that are inaccessible for those with mobility difficulties or for wheelchair users. In addition, there is no hygiene room available at the school.</p> <p>Building Bulletin 99 (BB99): Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects, is what all local authorities in Wales use as a guide to build new schools. BB99 states the following: <i>In the context of classroom layouts 'fully inclusive' means that which enables a pupil using a wheelchair to access all areas of the room, and therefore, all activities easily, without any disruption to classroom layouts.</i></p>
Community Impact	<p>The Community Impact Assessment is lacking in information.</p> <p>To confirm, what has been included within the Community Impact Assessment is in line with the requirements of the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018).</p> <p>However, as advised in the published Community Impact Assessment, this document has been revisited and updated following a review of the comments received throughout the duration of the consultation process. The updated version of the Community Impact Assessment will be available on RCTCBC's website once the Consultation Report is formally published.</p>

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
	What will happen to the Rhigos Primary School site? It's mentioned in the Consultation Document that it could be used for the community.	<p>Considerations and options of any potential future use of the Rhigos Primary School site will be consulted upon separately.</p> <p>Should the proposal go ahead, colleagues in RCTCBC's Community Development Team will work with the local community of Rhigos to identify any viable and sustainable options for a community use. RCTCBC's Community Development Team will also be able to support any potential community groups to identify and apply for any funding that may be available to secure to develop any provision.</p>
	The children will lose their cultural identity if the school closes; their 'Cynefin'.	<p>There will be many opportunities for all pupils to learn about their local area and cultural identity as they navigate the curriculum for Wales and develop their enquiry based learning.</p> <p>Hirwaun is only approximately 2 miles from the village of Rhigos, and so the expectation is that this will not be lost for any pupils.</p>
	Will the parent and toddler group currently running at Rhigos be moved to Hirwaun?	RCTCBC are aware that there is a parent and toddler group running at Rhigos Primary School for a day a week. There is a dedicated community room available at Hirwaun Primary School so should the group leader want to establish a parent and toddler group at Hirwaun then this can easily be accommodated.
Educational Outcomes	<p>Pupils from Rhigos Primary School will not have the same educational experience at Hirwaun Primary School.</p> <p>Both schools should be reinspected by Estyn prior to a decision being reached.</p>	<p>In compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) the response to the proposal from Estyn has been provided in full at Appendix One.</p> <p>Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011 / 2018 and the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. However, Estyn are a statutory consultee in such matters and as such have provided their opinion on the overall merits of the school organisation proposals.</p> <p>Estyn have considered the educational aspects of the proposal and their conclusion is that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision and outcomes for pupils in this area.</p>
	Why close a 'good' school to one that required 'Significant Improvement'.	The consultation document acknowledges that Rhigos Primary School is a good school. That is not disputed.

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
		<p>Hirwaun Primary School's inspection was undertaken in 2018 and the following year, in 2019, a follow up visit was undertaken by Estyn which judged that sufficient progress had been made in relation to the recommendations.</p> <p>As a result, Estyn removed Hirwaun Primary School from the list of schools requiring 'Significant Improvement' with no further visits required. An inspection provides a snapshot of the school at that moment in time, Hirwaun Primary School would not have been removed from the category should any of Estyn's concerns remained.</p> <p>It is important to note that school performance and improvement is not static and this does fluctuate over time. At the time of writing, both schools are accessing core support from Central South Consortium school improvement services. Neither school is deemed to be in need of enhanced support due to presenting issues.</p>
	Ability to successfully deliver the Curriculum for Wales (CfW).	<p>The Consultation Document acknowledges that the teachers at Rhigos are providing pupils with a great education, however it also sets out the challenges in delivering the (CfW) in a small and aging school.</p> <p>At no point does it state within the Document that staff at Rhigos Primary School are not delivering upon their obligations in terms of delivering the CfW, the Consultation Document highlights the difficulties of doing so within the defined parameters at the school in relation to its size and age, and the ongoing challenge this will create in view of the projected falling numbers at the school. The possibilities for more distributed models of leadership are inevitably more restricted in smaller schools due to the smaller size of the workforce.</p>
	Teacher/parent interactions will be lessened, and relationships will be diminished as a result of the pupils being transported to school on a bus.	<p>There are already children from the community of Penderyn who travel to Hirwaun Primary School on home to school transport and so the school has well established systems in place to ensure that parents and carers are kept fully informed of any issues that have arisen during the school day, and should the proposal go ahead this communication will continue in order to support both the new pupils joining the school and their families.</p>
Pupil Numbers and Capacity	How are the pupil projections calculated?	In terms of pupil projections, RCTCBC collects birth data from Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board covering the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf Ely

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>areas. This provides the births and postcode for each child. There is also an allowance for new housing developments and existing pupils on roll allowing for predictions to be accurate.</p> <p>In relation to the pupils already in school the cohort survival method is utilised, where the number of pupils in each year group is assumed to be the number in the preceding year group during the previous academic year multiplied by a constant.</p>
Why was Hirwaun Primary School built with so much capacity?	<p>RCTCBC's current Local Development Plan (LDP), adopted in 2011, has a significant housing allocation identified as part of a strategic site within the current Hirwaun Primary School catchment area. In addition, at the time the new school in Hirwaun was being developed there was tourism and commercial opportunities being designed as well as the plans for the dualling of the A465. Given the attention that was and still is focussed upon this specific area on a regional scale, it would have been remiss of us not to include additional capacity at that juncture.</p> <p>RCTCBC's Revised LDP is currently being prepared and so we do not know what, if any, new housing allocations will be included within the new LDP for this area, however, should the same housing allocation be identified within the new LDP then the surplus capacity at Hirwaun Primary School will be sufficient to cater for the number of pupils the development will generate.</p> <p>Comments made in relation to the size of Hirwaun School being anything other than to plan for the pupil places required for the potential new development are refuted.</p>
There is surplus capacity in a lot of schools across RCT, why is just Rhigos affected.	<p>There is a statutory duty placed on Councils to effectively manage its school places. All school places, capacities, admissions and projections are kept under constant scrutiny. RCTCBC has implemented reorganisation proposals affecting over 40 schools over the last 10 years and all schools will continue to be reviewed.</p> <p>Information on the capacity of all schools affected by proposals must be included within all school organisation documents in compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018). Without the inclusion of this information the consultation would not be valid.</p>

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
		<p>This proposal has been prepared for consultation for a number of reasons, the rationale for closure is not purely based on one thing alone. The capacity of the school is included for information, amongst many other data sets, as it provides stakeholders with a wider picture of the proposal presented.</p>
Rural School Categorisation	<p>Why isn't Rhigos Primary School classed as a rural school?</p>	<p>The WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) contains a list of rural schools for the procedural presumption against the closure of rural schools. As such, it is specified within the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) that The National Statistics Urban Rural classification has been used as the basis of the designation of rural schools for this purpose.</p> <p>The rural schools listed were identified as being located within villages in the sparsest context, other (hamlet or dispersed) in sparsest context and other (hamlet or dispersed) in less sparse context. There are no schools in RCT on the list of rural schools as there are no schools that meet the above classifications for this singular purpose.</p> <p>For clarification, on the Office of National Statistics website, Rhigos itself does have a rural classification, as in fact does Hirwaun, but neither meet the specified criteria to be included on the list as defined above.</p>
	<p>The Council was in receipt of a Small and Rural School Grant from the Welsh Government that was allocated to Rhigos Primary, this demonstrates that the Council acknowledges its rural status.</p>	<p>This is correct. Rhigos Primary School was one of the schools in receipt of funding awarded via this grant. Since 17/18 there have been 13 schools across RCT that have been a recipient of this grant.</p>
Transport and Travel	<p>The home to school transport costs have not been made available.</p>	<p>There will inevitably be a cost for home to school transport and this has been acknowledged in the Consultation Document and listed as a disadvantage in the assessment of the proposal.</p> <p>Should the proposal go ahead, any new home to school transport contract will be competitively tendered. As the number of pupils attending Hirwaun Primary School will factor into the size of the transport</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>required and consequently have an impact upon the service costs, this financial information remains unavailable.</p>
<p>There will be no active travel opportunities for those pupils who currently walk to school.</p>	<p>RCTCBC acknowledges that pupils living in Rhigos will need to travel to Hirwaun Primary School either by bus or by car. This information is included within the Community Impact Assessment and is not in dispute, however what is also included within the Assessment is how this will be partly mitigated by the opportunities the new school will provide given the many outdoor facilities at Hirwaun Primary School.</p> <p>The Community Impact Assessment states <i>‘Those pupils that will be travelling by bus or car under the new arrangements will still have the opportunity to experience the outdoors and gain plenty of fresh air given the plentiful opportunities on the Hirwaun Primary School site. External canopies, the outdoor classroom, the spacious yard, the MUGA, the sports field, gardens etc all present multiple opportunities to support and nurture health and well-being for pupils and staff’.</i></p>
<p>Hirwaun Primary School is further away than Rhigos Primary School so the carbon footprint will be increased.</p>	<p>Given the distance between Hirwaun Primary School and Rhigos Primary School, all pupils residing in the current Rhigos Primary School catchment area will qualify for home to school transport, therefore negating the need for numerous car journeys to the school.</p> <p>If the proposal were to go ahead, RCTCBC will close an energy inefficient building with pupils moving to an existing energy efficient building, so implementing this proposal will have an overall positive impact upon the carbon footprint.</p>
<p>If there is an emergency, how will my child get home if I don't have a car?</p>	<p>There are already children from the community of Penderyn who travel to Hirwaun Primary School via home to school transport and so Hirwaun Primary School has well established systems in place to ensure that parents / carers are kept fully informed of any issues that have arisen during the school day. Should the proposal go ahead this communication will continue in order to support both the new pupils joining the school and their families.</p> <p>Hirwaun Primary School, as do all schools, have a duty of care to look after the care and wellbeing for all pupils. If any issues or emergencies arise during the school day, as is currently the case, the staff at Hirwaun Primary School will ensure that they do all</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>they can to support any families that cannot attend Hirwaun Primary School.</p>
<p>The traffic outside Hirwaun Primary School is already busy.</p>	<p>Hirwaun Primary School has been built with a dedicated staff and visitor car park, as well as an onsite bus drop off facility. As part of the planning obligations for the project, an off-site school drop off / community car park was constructed. This additional parking has significantly reduced the congestion outside Hirwaun Primary School at the start and end of the school day. To note Rhigos Primary School has neither a dedicated staff nor community car park within the vicinity.</p> <p>Since this work has been undertaken, neither RCTCBC or the Hirwaun Primary School have received any recent complaints in relation to parking and traffic congestion.</p> <p>Given that all pupils currently residing in the Rhigos Primary School catchment will qualify for home to school transport, there is an expectation that the impact upon the traffic, as a result of the proposal, is minimal.</p>
<p>I'm not happy for my child to travel unaccompanied on a school bus.</p>	<p>RCTCBC's Integrated Transport Unit successfully transports thousands of children a day to schools throughout RCT from the ages of 3 to 19. Understandably there can be a great deal of anxiety for all parents when their child travels on a school bus for the first time, this can also be the case for pupils travelling for the first time, however there is strict criteria in place that transport providers must adhere to in order to ensure the safety and safeguarding of the pupils, which is of paramount importance to us.</p>
<p>The cost and frequency of public transport from Rhigos to Hirwaun is prohibitive for regular use.</p>	<p>Unfortunately, the cost and operation of the public transport in the area is not within the remit of RCTCBC to manage.</p> <p>As all pupils living in Rhigos will have the opportunity to utilise the home to school transport provision we anticipate that the number of journeys required on public transport to be minimal.</p>
<p>Should the pupils numbers attending Hirwaun be lower than expected, would the home to school transport</p>	<p>No, in compliance with distance criteria contained within Welsh Government's Learner Travel Measure, this transport provision would remain in place regardless of the numbers of pupils transported.</p>

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
	provision cancelled?	be
Impact on Pupils	Transition arrangements.	<p>If the proposal were to go ahead, there will be targeted support for all pupils from Hirwaun Primary School and Rhigos Primary School. Meaningful and positive transition is an integral part of ensuring that pupils settle into their new school setting with little disruption to their well-being and education. This is supported by providing effective pastoral and academic support and structured opportunities for learners to become familiar with the new school environment and staff.</p> <p>Advice and support will be provided by RCTCBC to both schools involved to ensure that the transition process is as smooth and seamless as possible.</p>
	Pupil well-being has not been considered.	<p>The well-being of all pupils has been considered and is paramount. The transition arrangements that will be delivered, as noted above, ensure there will be lots of opportunities to help the pupils navigate the change and happily settle into their new school as quickly as possible.</p> <p>Further information is included within the Equality Impact Assessment, in addition RCTCBC considers that the proposal benefits the children and young people in accordance with the seven core aims set out within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p>
	The children from Rhigos will feel like outsiders as they attend a school outside of their community.	<p>Hirwaun Primary School already welcomes children from other communities, the catchment area was extended to include pupils from Penderyn in 2021 and there are also a number of pupils that attend from outside the current catchment area. The new pupils from Penderyn were welcomed into the Hirwaun Primary School family and they have successfully settled into their new school. To provide reassurance we can confirm that they are not treated any differently which I'm sure will also be the case for any pupil from Rhigos wishing to attend Hirwaun.</p>

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
Impact on Staff	What support is available for staff?	<p>RCTCBC has well established Human Resource (HR) policies and procedures that give reassurance to staff and employers about the management of organisational change.</p> <p>HR Council officers have already visited all staff in Rhigos Primary School, and all are aware of the processes that may follow and the operational and personal support that is on offer.</p>
Legitimacy of the Consultation Process	The consultation period was too short.	The WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) sets out the parameters for the consultation. It states that consultees must be given at least 42 days to respond to the document. For this consultation, consultees were given 47 days which exceeds the statutory obligation placed upon us in this regard.
	The information presented in the documentation is biased in favour of Hirwaun Primary.	<p>The purpose of the Consultation Document is to present a proposal, and the fact that this is just a proposal at this point in time is clearly referenced throughout all documentation made available during this period. To confirm, all information presented has been done in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018).</p> <p>Some responses specifically question the choice of the images used in the documentation. To clarify, the same data for both schools has been included in the 'Where we are now' section of the Consultation Document, with external images of both schools included. Further information and images on Hirwaun Primary School were included within the 'Where we'd like to be' section as this sets out the perceived benefits of moving pupils from Rhigos to Hirwaun. There is no bias intended, merely the logical and coherent setting out of the proposal.</p> <p>RCTCBC refutes this comment.</p>
	The data presented within the documentation is out of date.	<p>The data presented within the report is in compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018).</p> <p>All data sets provided were the most up to date at the time of writing. Those included are in accordance with the information prescribed within the Code. To clarify, in terms of the pupil numbers reported, there is a distinction made between statutory aged pupils and non-statutory aged pupils.</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>The Estyn information included in the report is taken from the most recent inspections undertaken in Hirwaun and Rhigos Primary Schools respectively in 2018 and 2019. This is in accordance with the Code where it states consultation document must contain 'information from the most recent Estyn reports for each school.'</p> <p>The Condition Survey information included in the report is taken from the most recent survey undertaken in 2019. This is in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) where it states that 'information about the quality of accommodation at all existing schools likely to be affected by the proposals including reference to RCTCBC's most recent condition survey'.</p>

In accordance with the Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015 and in compliance with RCTCBC's statutory obligations, the consultation included the following questions:

1. Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative)?
2. Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?
3. How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?

The table that follows provides a summary of the responses received from those respondents that answered the questions. As a result of the responses received, the Welsh Language Impact Assessment accompanying the proposal will be updated accordingly.

Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015: Summary of Consultation Responses						
Questions	Responses					
	No		Yes		Not Sure	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language?	43	29.3	24	16.3	80	54.4
Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?	No		Yes		Not Sure	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
	42	26.6	20	13.6	85	57.8
How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be	Positive Effects Increased		Negative Effects Decreased		Not Sure	

<p>increased, or negative effects be decreased.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Medium Schools – The only way it will increase the positive effects of the Welsh language is to send children to a Welsh medium school. • Teach More Welsh – Teaching more Welsh in schools will increase the positive effects of the Welsh language. • Transferring to Welsh Medium Schools – The proposal may result in additional children transferring to the neighbouring Welsh medium primary, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Penderyn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller Classes – Teachers in a larger class will have more responsibility and less time to focus on every pupil, therefore the Welsh language be negatively affected. 	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1260 192 1407 224">Number</th> <th data-bbox="1420 192 1513 224">%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1260 232 1407 264">140</td> <td data-bbox="1420 232 1513 264">95.2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Number	%	140	95.2
Number	%						
140	95.2						

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, RCTCBC has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. So as part of seeking views on the proposal, the consultation also included the following question:

1. How would the proposal affect you because of your:

- Sex.
- Age.
- Ethnicity.
- Disability.
- Sexuality.
- Religion/Belief.
- Gender Identity.
- Relationship Status.
- Pregnancy.
- Preferred Language.

Of those respondents that answered this question, the majority, 136 (92.5%), gave no answer to this question. However, 4 (2.7%) commented that the proposal could negatively impact them due to their age whilst 7 (4.8%) commented that the proposal could negatively impact them due to their disability. As a result of responses received, the Equality Impact Assessment accompanying the proposal will be updated accordingly.

6. Response from Estyn

In compliance with the WG’s School Organisation Code, statutory document 011 / 2018 the response to the proposal from Estyn has been provided in full at Appendix 1. Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the WG’s School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) and the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn considered that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision and outcomes for pupils in this area. The response states that the ‘local authority has set out a clear rationale for its proposal. It outlines strongly the many advantages of closing Rhigos Primary School, with all pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary school’.

In accordance with the WG’s School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018), the areas of the response from Estyn that require clarification are documented in the table that follows.

Response from Estyn	
Estyn Response	Clarification
The proposal has also considered the impact of the proposal on the quality and standards in education including separate sections on outcomes, provision, leadership, and management. While the sections on outcomes and provision appear to be fair and reasonable, the section on leadership and management is too generic and doesn’t focus specifically enough on the implications of the proposal on leaders in both schools. The proposal identifies that transferring pupils from Rhigos Primary School to the newly built Hirwaun Primary School would provide extensive outdoor space, including green space, for pupils to learn and play. It assumes fairly that pupil wellbeing and attitudes to learning would benefit from a diverse and engaging outdoor space. It further notes that a fit-for-purpose school building would help create a better learning	There will be staffing implications for those staff employed at Rhigos Primary School. For example, there will be certain roles that are currently replicated in Hirwaun Primary School’s staffing structure. Staff will be concerned about the security of their jobs which is why these concerns will be addressed as soon as possible during the statutory consultation process, consulting with staff and utilising RCTCBC’s ‘Managing Change Policy’ to explore options for staff affected.

Response from Estyn	
Estyn Response	Clarification
environment. The proposer identifies that if the proposal comes about it is likely to have a positive impact on the delivery of the curriculum at the school.	

7. Assessment of Consultation

There were a lot of highly emotive and passionate responses received during the consultation period which is important to note. Correspondence was received from staff, pupils, parents/carers, past pupils, members of the communities and from those elected locally and regionally. Rhigos Primary School is clearly a much loved school, and should a decision be made to close; it is recognised that there would be a feeling of loss by the community. This is acknowledged within this report, as it is within the Community Impact Assessment.

In accordance with WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018), a further assessment of the proposal has been undertaken. This involved a review of the same matters assessed in formulating the proposal, in conjunction with giving due consideration to the responses and comments received during the consultation period. The proposal was reassessed against:

- the likely impact on quality and standards in education,
- the likely impact on the community, and
- the likely effect of different travelling arrangements.

After further consideration of the proposal, and consciously considering the responses received to the proposal, the conclusion reached is that the proposal remains to be the most appropriate and as such no amendments to the proposal have been made.

8. Conclusion

No information that has been presented during the consultation is deemed to necessitate a change to the Consultation Document, as such the information contained within it remains unchanged. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal should be wholly implemented with no amendments.

The recommendation of this report is that a Statutory Notice be published, to reflect the proposal as consulted upon with no modifications, in order to progress the implementation of this proposal.

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Estyn's response to the proposal to close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School

This report has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals. Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer.

The proposal is the closure of Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School.

Summary/ Conclusion

Estyn considers that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision and outcomes for pupils in the area.

Description and benefits

The local authority has set out a clear rationale for its proposal. It outlines strongly the many advantages of closing Rhigos Primary School, with all pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School. It is proposed that pupils who are in the Rhigos Primary School catchment area will instead go to Hirwaun Primary School, where there is a brand new 21st Century building and new facilities. Hirwaun Primary School's catchment area would extend to include the current catchment area of Rhigos Primary School and would therefore cater for pupils aged 3 and 11 years of age requiring English medium education in both communities.

The local authority provides a suitably detailed description of the proposal. This includes a background to the proposal and an estimated timetable for statutory procedures. It is proposing that Rhigos Primary School will close resulting in pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School no later than September 2024.

The proposer identifies clearly and fairly the expected benefits and disadvantages when compared with the status quo and how they will manage any risk. One of the main advantages detailed in the proposal is that the pupils of Rhigos Primary School will benefit from the fully accessible, brand new primary school in Hirwaun, which would provide an improved learning environment with first class facilities. Most of the

risks are deemed as low impact. One risk is deemed as having medium impact following implementation of the proposal which is that existing Rhigos Primary School staff may not be retained.

The local authority has considered four alternative options, including maintaining the status quo. It lists the advantages and disadvantages of each option and these appear to be fair and reasonable.

The proposer has considered the impact of the changes on learner travel arrangements. The proposal sets out that the local authority has exercised discretionary powers afforded to it under the provisions of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 to make a more generous provision to pupils. The eligibility criterion for walking distance for pupils at their nearest suitable school has been set at 1.5 miles, instead of 2 miles as required by the measure. This is provided to pupils who meet the 1.5 mile eligibility criterion from the start of the foundation phase (the start of the school term after their third birthday), which seems reasonable.

The local authority has usefully demonstrated the impact of the proposal on surplus places. The projected pupil numbers at Rhigos Primary School over the next five academic years for statutory school aged pupils falls consistently year on year, from 51 pupils in 2023 to a projected 36 pupils in 2028. The projected pupil numbers for Hirwaun Primary School for the next five years demonstrates that there is capacity for all current and future pupils of Rhigos Primary School to attend.

The proposal takes a detailed account of the impact of the proposal on Welsh medium provision within the local authority and the extent to which the proposal supports the targets in the local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The local authority aims to embed positive habits and attitudes towards the Welsh language through purposeful planning to promote the informal use of the Welsh language amongst pupils inside and outside schools. Hirwaun Primary School will continue to be encouraged and supported to do this through the achievement of the 'Cymraeg Campus' Welsh Language Charter, a framework to promote and increase the use of Welsh.

The local authority has appropriately considered the financial implications of the proposal. It states that there is no need to invest additional capital as Hirwaun Primary School is a new build. If the proposal progresses, Hirwaun Primary School will receive an increase on their funding formula as a result of the additional pupils on roll. In addition, the modern building design and fabric at Hirwaun Primary School is more energy efficient which also has a positive impact upon the running costs of the school, as well as delivering benefits in terms of sustainability and reducing carbon emissions.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The local authority has considered the quality of outcomes, provision and leadership and management at the school which include the outcomes of the last Estyn inspection report for both schools. Rhigos Primary School was inspected by Estyn in February 2019 and the outcomes in the five inspection areas were judged to be good. Hirwaun Primary School was inspected by Estyn in 2018. The care, support and guidance area was judged to be good, three other inspection areas were adequate whilst teaching and learning experiences was unsatisfactory. As a result of the inspection in 2018, Estyn placed Hirwaun Primary School in the reported category of 'Significant Improvement.' In response to the outcome of the core inspection, Hirwaun Primary School was required to draw up an action plan to address the recommendations, subject to review by Estyn. In July 2019, Estyn removed Hirwaun Primary School from the list of schools requiring 'Significant Improvement'.

The proposal has also considered the impact of the proposal on the quality and standards in education including separate sections on outcomes, provision and leadership and management. While the sections on outcomes and provision appear to be fair and reasonable, the section on leadership and management is too generic and doesn't focus specifically enough on the implications of the proposal on leaders in both schools. The proposal identifies that transferring pupils from Rhigos Primary School to the newly built Hirwaun school would provide extensive outdoor space, including green space, for pupils to learn and play. It assumes fairly that pupil wellbeing and attitudes to learning would benefit from a diverse and engaging outdoor space. It further notes that a fit-for-purpose school building would help create a better learning environment. The proposer identifies that if the proposal comes about it is likely to have a positive impact on the delivery of the curriculum at the school.

The proposal considers the impact of the proposal on vulnerable groups, including children with Additional Learning Needs. It does note that moving pupils to Hirwaun Primary School from Rhigos will result in greater capacity and space for additional needs intervention and support. In terms of accessibility, Hirwaun school is fully accessible and compliant with the Equality's Act 2010.

The proposal takes a detailed account of the impact of the proposal on the community. These considerations include the positive impact of additional facilities on the Hirwaun site for community use and that the current Rhigos site is not compliant with the Equalities Act 2010. The proposal also considers the 'out of hours' support for pupils. For example, breakfast club and private after school care will be provided on the new site if the proposal materialises.

Appendix 2 (A) - Minutes of Meeting with Governing Body and Staff Members of Hirwaun Primary School

Date	26 October 2023
Time	15:30
Venue	Hirwaun Primary School, Hirwaun

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Catrin Edwards	CE	Head of Service Transformation, Data Systems, Admissions and Governors
Nicola Goodman	NG	Lead for Strategic Planning and MIM
Kylie Lewis	KL	21 st Century Schools Officer
Bethan Davies	BD	Human Resources Manager
Bethan Hill	BH	Headteacher of Hirwaun Primary School
N/A	N/A	Governing Body and Staff Members of Hirwaun Primary School

1. Welcome and Introductions

CE welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

2. Consultation Overview

CE provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document.

3. Staff and Governor Questions

The Governing Body and staff members of Hirwaun Primary School were invited to ask questions. The questions raised from the Governing Body and staff members and the responses provided are summarised in the table that follows.

Number	Question/Comment	Response
1.	BH noted that Hirwaun Primary staff have been through this process previously with the changes to Penderyn Primary School. BH stated Hirwaun Primary School staff are neutral in this process; should Rhigos Primary School close and pupils transfer to Hirwaun Primary School, staff will endeavour to work hard to welcome pupils and ensure pupils settle quickly.	Noted.
2.	If Rhigos Primary School were to close, how would this impact on pupil numbers at Hirwaun Primary School?	BH explained Hirwaun Primary School has the capacity for future growth and could accommodate additional pupils in the future.

Number	Question/Comment	Response
3.	If pupils from Rhigos Primary School moved to Hirwaun Primary School, what impact would this have on class sizes?	BH explained this would depend on how many pupils transferred to Hirwaun Primary School should the proposal proceed, and in which year group they join. It is difficult to predict at this stage.
4.	Would Hirwaun Primary School receive funding for any additional pupils?	Yes. CE duly explained that following the consultation process, if it is agreed that the proposal is to proceed to close Rhigos Primary School, and if pupil numbers increase in Hirwaun Primary School, the school would receive additional funding.
5.	What would the impact be on lunchtimes, in terms of numbers of lunchtime staff etc?	CE duly explained if it is agreed that the proposal is to proceed to close Rhigos Primary School, and if pupil numbers increase in Hirwaun Primary School, the school would receive additional funding for additional lunchtime staff.
6.	Would only current Rhigos Primary School pupils be entitled to school transport to Hirwaun Primary School, or future pupils also?	CE explained any current, and future pupils from Rhigos, who live a specified distance from Hirwaun Primary School, or for whom there is no safe available walking route, would be entitled to free school transport as per the Welsh Government's Learner Travel Policy.
7.	Would pupils from Aberdare Town Church in Wales Primary School still be at Hirwaun Primary in September 2024?	NG explained that pupils from Aberdare Town Church in Wales Primary School are temporarily sited at Hirwaun Primary School whilst works are ongoing at their school. Those works are progressing well as such that pupils will return to Aberdare Town Church in Wales Primary School by September 2024.
8.	Would staff from Rhigos Primary School be guaranteed employment elsewhere?	<p>BD informed the meeting that should the decision be made to close Rhigos Primary School, those staff members would be under a notice of redundancy. Under the Management of Change Policy, staff would be eligible to seek redeployment. Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) works hard to secure the redeployment of staff and has positive previous experiences of this happening.</p> <p>BH stated that staff from other schools have previously been redeployed to Hirwaun Primary School.</p> <p>BD explained RCTCBC would consult with Trade Unions and all staff of Rhigos</p>

Number	Question/Comment	Response
		<p>Primary School to achieve the desired outcome.</p> <p>CE stated redundancy packages would be available for those staff who may choose that option.</p> <p>Staff and governors present acknowledged this is an emotional time for everyone at the school, and the whole community of Rhigos.</p>
9.	What have the residents of Rhigos said about the proposals?	CE explained that as part of the consultation process, drop-in sessions have been arranged at both schools for members of the public to talk to RCTCBC Officers and voice their opinions. For those who are not able to join in person, they could participate in the consultation process by completing the online survey.
10.	Staff and governors stated if Rhigos Primary School were to close and pupils transferred to Hirwaun Primary School, it would have an impact on current Hirwaun Primary School pupils; therefore, parents should be kept informed of discussions.	<p>BH explained it is difficult to plan anything at present until we know the outcome of the proposals.</p> <p>CE reiterated that the proposal to close Rhigos Primary School has not been decided upon at this stage, however, if the decision at the end of the process is to close Rhigos Primary School, RCTCBC would support with the transition of pupils.</p>
11.	If it is decided that Rhigos Primary School will close, will RCTCBC Officers return to Hirwaun Primary School to explain the next steps of the process?	CE confirmed that if required, RCTCBC could arrange further meetings to discuss the next steps.
12.	Would there be a change to the Governing Body of Hirwaun Primary School?	CE explained should the number of pupils in Hirwaun Primary School increase, the composition of the Governing Body would need to be looked at to see if any changes needed to be made. This could be reviewed at a later date.

4. Closing Remarks

The Governing Body and staff members were informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The Governing Body and staff members were encouraged to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed at 16:30.

Appendix 2(B) - Minutes of Meetings with Governing Body and Staff Members of Rhigos Primary School

Date	26 October 2023
Time	15:30
Venue	Rhigos Primary School, Rhigos

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Andrea Richards	AR	Service Director 21 st Century Schools and Transformation
Lisa Howell	LH	21 st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Tim Britton	TB	Head of Achievement RCT (Primary Sector)
Anneli Hunt	AH	Governor Support Officer
Sarah Nicholls	SN	21st Century Schools Assistant Project Officer
Ellen Williams	EW	Human Resources Manager
Mrs J Mundy	JM	Headteacher of Rhigos Primary School
N/A	N/A	Governing Body and Staff Members of Rhigos Primary School

1. Welcome and Introductions

GD welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

2. Consultation Overview

GD provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document.

3. Staff and Governor Questions

The Governing Body and staff members of Rhigos Primary School were invited to ask questions. The questions from the Governing Body and staff members and the responses provided are summarised in the table that follows.

Number	Question	Response
1.	Can you explain why the Consultation Document used information from surveys carried out in 2019?	The information from the 2019 condition surveys is the most current data available and is valid in line with industry standards.
2.	Why was the backlog maintenance not addressed by Rhondda Cynon Taf Cuntly Borough Council (RCTCBC)?	The condition surveys represent a point in time and help to establish if the buildings are safe, watertight and warm. Some repairs and improvement works have been carried out at Rhigos Primary School by RCTCBC.
3.	RCTCBC have a duty to maintain the building.	The maintenance of the school building must work on a partnership approach with the Governing Body as they have a responsibility under Local Management of schools to undertake repairs and maintenance.
4.	The Early Years building was constructed in 1950, why did RCTCBC not address the issue when it came to its 'end of life' (after 20 years)?	The 2019 condition survey outlines the condition of the building and suggests that the school building has reached the end of its life. The building is not worth further investment from RCTCBC due to the age, condition and type of structure. There are 115 schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and RCTCBC is currently working through its School Modernisation Programme of investment. It is a challenge to prioritise invest in all schools in RCT and RCTCBC must prioritise schools that cause the most concern. Though the Early Years building is safe, it would not benefit from further investment.
5.	Too much investment is being put into schools that are not full. Money was recently invested into Rhigos Primary School by the community, not by RCTCBC.	Noted. The Council has invested in the school and also undertaken repairs and maintenance with the co-support of the Government Body, due to the costs of the work.
6.	Consultation Document is not accurate. The details of the building are not correct.	Details of the building were drawn from the 2019 condition survey, which is the most current information available.

Number	Question	Response
7.	Why is Rhigos Primary School not a rural school?	Rural schools are a Welsh Government classification. RCTCBC do not have the power to designate schools as rural schools.
8.	Why are there no rural schools in RCT?	This is a Welsh Government designation. All rural schools are listed in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2 nd Edition) (011 / 2018).
9.	The school building must be safe as pupils are still being allowed to use it. Where do the pupil figures and pupil projections come from? The nursery figures are not accurate.	The buildings are 'safe, watertight and warm' and perfectly safe due to planned maintenance works identified. Pupil projections come from live birth data from school catchment areas. There is a trend of declining data. Pupil projection figures are not guaranteed, however, that is the data that is available currently.
10.	How can we believe that the pupil numbers are correct?	RCTCBC must look at predictions and trends based on the data that is available. RCTCBC has to make efficient use of resources to make difficult decisions based on the data.
11.	The Hirwaun Primary School pupil numbers in the report are incorrect.	<p>We must work with the data given to us and look at the Local Development Plan to take into account housing in the catchment areas.</p> <p>The numbers are correct, the data used is the most accurate taken from the PLASC data sets. The projections and future capacity include information from the Local Development Plan to take into account of housing in the catchment area.</p>
12.	What happens if pupils from Rhigos Primary School go to Hirwaun Primary School, as well as pupils who will come from the new houses?	There is currently enough space for both. RCTCBC is currently drafting the new Local Development Plan, which is a plan for 10 years. If there are more housing developments allocated, and there is not enough capacity at Hirwaun Primary School, then the Local Development Plan will reflect this demand.

Number	Question	Response
13.	When did RCTCBC start to write the Consultation Document?	The decision to write the Consultation Report was recent. No definitive date can be given, however, work on the report began late in the last academic year.
14.	Why did RCTCBC allow two permanent members of staff to be taken on at Rhigos Primary School if the consultation was a recent decision? No support given to staff.	Proposals are highly confidential and cannot be shared with stakeholders before they have been shared with elected Members and the wider community. HR do provide support to our employees during management of change process. Occupational Health have offered and will continue to offer support to staff. RCTCBC cannot assume that the proposal would be agreed, and so must go through the consultation process.
15.	RCTCBC could have looked at a school restructure – there are no contingencies.	This was a confidential proposal; no information could have been shared widely. These proposals are highly emotive and RCTCBC has been successful in the past at supporting staff who need to find new roles.
16.	Concerns over pupils when moving schools	The process of change is managed and pupils will receive supported transition if the proposal goes ahead.
17.	Concerns over wellbeing of pupils and staff had no time to process the news. Staff should have had training and support when dealing with pupils after the Consultation Document came out.	Noted.
18.	Don't believe staff will be supported.	Noted.
19.	How can RCTCBC say that Rhigos Primary School can't deliver the New Curriculum for Wales? The statements in the Consultation document are open to challenge. While RCTCBC does recognise that Rhigos Primary School is a good school, some of the statements made are hurtful.	The Consultation Document states that a bigger school will assist with the delivery of the new Curriculum for Wales. The information in the report is factual. Comments can be fed back to RCTCBC as part of the consultation.

Number	Question	Response
20.	Is RCTCBC promoting failure? Good schools are not receiving investment while other schools are. If we were a failing school, would we have had investment?	It is good that Rhigos Primary School has done well, and Estyn will also feed into the consultation. Any comments can be fed back to RCTCBC as part of the consultation and the transition process.
21.	Is the decision already made?	No it has not. RCTCBC's Cabinet will see all comments that are submitted as part of the consultation process and the meetings taking place.
22.	If we waited, would Rhigos get a new school?	RCTCBC must look at the cost of investment against pupil numbers and demonstrate value for money. The Consultation Document is looking at all points and aspects that form part of this case.
23.	You are using Rhigos Primary School as a plaster for Hirwaun Primary School.	Noted.
24.	Rhigos Primary School currently get EP visits, as does Hirwaun Primary School. These visits would be lost if pupils go to Hirwaun Primary School.	The number of sessions for each school is taken into account, and applications for further visits can be made if necessary. No EP visits will be lost.
25.	There will be more additional learning needs demand on the staff of Hirwaun Primary School.	It is likely that there will be more capacity for resources to provide for ALN pupils at Hirwaun Primary School as it is a bigger school. All Hirwaun Primary School staff have a duty to ensure that the needs of pupils are met and provision made.
26.	How will pupils access breakfast club in Hirwaun Primary School? Pupils of Rhigos Primary School currently walk to breakfast club.	Yes, there is a breakfast club at Hirwaun Primary School. There may be some flexibility with the timing of breakfast club at Hirwaun Primary School, and in our experience, there could be capacity to access breakfast club in time at Hirwaun Primary School (before the school day begins) from using school transport.
27.	Will there be any transport for after school clubs?	There will be no extra transport for after school clubs. The management of after

Number	Question	Response
		school clubs are decisions of the Governing Body.
28.	No transport for after school clubs will reduce the number of extra-curricular activities for pupils of Rhigos Primary School. Currently, around 70.0% of Rhigos Primary School pupils attend extra-curricular activities and opportunities.	Noted.
29.	What if pupils don't go to Hirwaun Primary School?	RCTCBC cannot regulate where parents send their children to school. This is a matter of parental choice out of the available schools.
30.	How much would a bus cost to transport pupils to Hirwaun Primary School?	This would depend on the number of pupils that would require transportation.
31.	It is chaos at Hirwaun Primary School during pick-up time, there were cameras there last week to look at traffic congestion.	Concerns can be put down as part of your response to the consultation.
32.	Is this already a 'done deal' or not?	The decision has not been made yet – this is a proposal. Any parents who don't want to send their children to Hirwaun Primary School would have to make arrangements to apply to other available schools if the proposal to close is approved.
33.	Applications to RCTCBC to admit pupils to Rhigos Primary School are already being directed to Hirwaun Primary School.	This is not the case.
34.	This process undermines parents. There is an obligation to parents, pupils and staff – the process should reassure parents that it is only a proposal currently.	The community will have an opportunity to voice concerns at the drop-in sessions arranged.
35.	Parents are happy with the mixed classes at the school, and RCTCBC should respect that.	The wider school community will have an opportunity to voice concerns at the drop-in sessions arranged.

Number	Question	Response
36.	What is happening to parents who are looking into applying for a school place at Rhigos Primary School but are being directed to Hirwaun Primary School?	This shouldn't be happening. Parents can apply for a place in both schools.
37.	How will parents be reassured that this is only a proposal?	The Council recognises that this is a complex process and that there is a lot of information to go through that form part of the consultation. Assurances were given than this is a proposal.
38.	The image of Rhigos Primary School in the Consultation Document is not representative of the school and gives a bad impression. There are no internal images of the school used (like there are with Hirwaun Primary School) – this makes Rhigos Primary School look bad when next to the images of the new school at Hirwaun.	Noted.
39.	When will the report be published and when will the decision be made?	The report will go to RCTCBC's Cabinet in December or January. The decision will be made to move on with the process and start the statutory notice period. All dates and information will be shared as soon as it is available to all stakeholders. Any comments to the consultation can be used as an objection if the individual wishes.
40.	How will pupils of Rhigos Primary School learn about the community of Rhigos, instead of learning about Hirwaun? Concerns over the loss of heritage.	The schools are not that far away from each other. Please make any comments known as part of the consultation process.

4. Closing Remarks

The Governing Body and staff members were informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The Governing Body and staff members were encouraged to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed at 17:00.

Appendix 3 (A) - Minutes of Meetings with School Council of Hirwaun Primary School

Date	Tuesday 7 th November 2023
Time	13:50
Mode	Face to Face

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Andrea Richards	AR	Service Director 21 st Century Schools and Transformation
Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Grace Zecca-Hanagan	GZH	21 st Century Schools Project Officer
Lisa Howell	LH	21 st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Tim Britton	TBC	Head of Achievement (Primary Sector)
Mrs Bethan Hill	JM	Headteacher at Hirwaun Primary School
N/A	N/A	School Council of Hirwaun Primary School

1. Welcome and Introductions

Officers in attendance introduced themselves to the School Council and thanked them for attending the meeting. The School Council introduced themselves.

2. Consultation Overview

GD provided the School Council with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document. It was also confirmed that the pupils had all received a hard copy of the children's version of the Consultation Document.

3. School Council Questions

The School Council of Hirwaun Primary School were invited to ask questions and makes comments. The questions and comments made are summarised in the table that follows along with their response, where necessary.

Number	Question	Response
1.	I think we should go ahead with the proposal but the children from Rhigos Primary School may want to stay with their friends.	Hirwaun Primary School will try to keep friendship groups together.
2.	It would be good to make more friends.	Noted.
4.	It is nice for children from Rhigos Primary School to have more space.	Noted.
5.	It would be a pleasure to have the children from Rhigos Primary School with us at Hirwaun Primary School.	Noted.
6.	It is nice for the children at Rhigos Primary School to experience some of the facilities	Noted.

Number	Question	Response
	that we have here at Hirwaun Primary School.	
7.	What would happen to the teachers at Rhigos Primary School.	It is too early to say what changes may happen as the proposal is yet to be decided.
8.	<p>The children talked about some of the clubs that take place at Hirwaun Primary School including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choir. • Football. • Gardening. • Rugby. • Netball. • Fitness. • Coding. • French. • Art and craft. • Beat ball. <p>Year three children also take part in swimming lessons.</p>	Noted.
9.	The children at Hirwaun Primary School talked about their vision. They explained that this is revisited periodically.	Noted.
10.	The children at Hirwaun Primary School talked about enquiry based learning and the benefits that this has on their learning.	Noted.
11.	<p>The children at Hirwaun Primary School commented that they would welcome the children of Rhigos Primary School visiting.</p> <p>The children at Hirwaun Primary School commented that they would show the children of Rhigos Primary School:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chrome books. • Learning tools. • How kind the school community is. • Where all the toys are. • The after school clubs. • The art pieces that they have worked on. • The sports facilities. • The school layout and how the school day operates. • The multi-use games area. <p>The children commented that a good transition event would include:</p>	Noted.

Number	Question	Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making craft activities and posters to welcome the children of Rhigos Primary School. • Friendly activities to get to know each other. • Different work stations. • Circle time. • Playtimes, at Hirwaun Primary School there is one playtime and a lunch time. 	
12.	<p>The headteacher explained that Hirwaun Primary School is open to the local community at certain times of year celebrate with the community, such as Harvest and Christmas.</p> <p>The children at Hirwaun Primary School also go out to the community and they commented that they would be exited to extend this to the community of Rhigos.</p>	Noted.
13.	The children at Hirwaun Primary School also commented that they have a book fayre every year. Year six pupils are given the opportunity to help work at the book fayre.	Noted.
14.	The children at Hirwaun Primary School said that they have fun events like school discos.	Noted.
15.	<p>There are lots of committees at Hirwaun Primary School such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Council. • Rights Respecting Schools Committee. • Eco Committee. • Sports Leaders. • Criw Cymraeg. <p>These are appointed to every September, so if the proposal goes ahead the children of Rhigos Primary School would be welcome to participate.</p>	Noted.
16.	What do the children at Rhigos Primary think about moving schools?	They are a bit worried about change. The children at Rhigos Primary School love their school and don't want it to close. However, we are listening to all of your views, and they will form part of any decision made.
17.	We will be opening a clothes sale as part of the Eco Club.	This is a great idea to be renewable.
18.	What colour school uniform do the children at Rhigos Primary School wear?	The children at Rhigos Primary School wear burgundy jumpers.

Number	Question	Response
19.	How long have you all worked at the Council for?	All of the officers gave an outline of how long they work at the Council for and what job they do.
20.	<p>The children at Hirwaun Primary School talked about their school trips that they have been on including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pantomime. • Heatherton. • Caerphilly Castle. • Santa's Toy Mine. • Cantref Farm. • Gruffalo Trail. • Dare Valley Country Park. • Teddy Bears Picnic. <p>Visitors also come into the school including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animated dinosaurs. • World War Two exhibition. 	Noted.

4. Closing Remarks

The School Council were informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The School Council were encouraged to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed at 14:45.

Appendix 3 (B) - Minutes of Meetings with School Council of Rhigos Primary School

Date	Monday 6 th November 2023
Time	13:45
Mode	Face to Face

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Andrea Richards	AR	Service Director 21 st Century Schools and Transformation
Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Grace Zecca-Hanagan	GZH	21 st Century Schools Project Officer
Lisa Howell	LH	21 st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Sarah Corcoran	SC	Head of Achievement and Wellbeing
Mrs Janine Mundy	JM	Headteacher at Rhigos Primary School
Mrs Rebecca Murphy	RM	Deputy Headteacher and School Council Lead at Rhigos Primary School
N/A	N/A	School Council of Rhigos Primary School

1. Welcome and Introductions

Officers in attendance introduced themselves to the School Council and thanked them for attending the meeting. The School Council introduced themselves.

2. Consultation Overview

The children presented a PowerPoint presentation entitled 'Save our School'. The pupils were thanked and officers confirmed that this would be shared with the Council's Cabinet.

GD provided the School Council with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document. It was also confirmed that the pupils had all received a hard copy of the children's version of the Consultation Document.

3. School Council Questions

The School Council of Rhigos Primary School were invited to ask questions and make comments. The questions and comments made are summarised in the table that follows along with their response, where necessary.

Number	Question	Response
1.	What if your parents don't drive and you miss the school bus?	If you miss the bus, you will have to arrange your own transport. We would hope that you wouldn't miss the bus, as most parents are very organised and would help you catch the school bus on time.
2.	What will you do with Rhigos Primary School if it closes?	If the proposal goes ahead, we will work with the community of Rhigos to see if the school building could be used within the community.
3.	Will there be buses for breakfast and after school clubs?	There will be one bus for the school at the start and end of the school day, depending on the time of breakfast club and the home to school transport, you may be able to attend breakfast club.
4.	I have moved school lots and it is not nice. Some schools don't have as many play times as we do at Rhigos Primary School, and they have classes that are bigger.	Most schools have three play times, but we will check how many play times they have at Hirwaun Primary School.
5.	Why do you want to close Rhigos Primary School?	We clarified the points already discussed in the children's version of the Consultation Document
6.	What about our siblings?	Parents will have the option about what primary school they would like their child to attend. If you have siblings, there will be plenty of space for them to attend Hirwaun Primary School.
7.	Would we all be able to go on the yard at play time at the same time, like at Rhigos Primary School?	We will check how play times at Hirwaun Primary School operate.
8.	When Penderyn Primary School became a Welsh medium primary school, I had to leave and attend Rhigos Primary School, an English medium school. If Rhigos Primary School closes, that would mean I will have to change schools again.	We are sorry to hear this.
9.	When will we find out if Rhigos Primary School will close.	The consultation timeline was provided, and it was explained that if the proposal is approved it would go ahead by September 2024.

Number	Question	Response
10.	Will you set up days when we can visit Hirwaun Primary School.	Absolutely, this is an incredibly good idea, and we will make arrangements for all pupils of Rhigos Primary School to visit Hirwaun Primary School if they wish.
11.	Will a year six pupil have to move to Rhigos Primary School before starting comprehensive school?	No, if agreed these proposals is approved it would go ahead by September 2024. By this date, pupils who are currently in year six would become year seven pupils and would be in secondary school.
12.	If we make a friend and they don't live in Rhigos, could they play in our park.	I'm sure these arrangements could be made with your parents.
13.	It would be nice to go to a newer school.	It is often the people that make a place, and we understand how important Rhigos Primary School is to you all.
14.	Why are you taking the proposal further if we are saying that we do not want Rhigos Primary School to close.	This is part of the process. We clarified the points already discussed in the children's version of the Consultation Document.
15.	Rhigos Primary School is still in quite good condition.	We can see that you have made a wonderful environment.
16.	Will we still get to learn through the enquiries that we have picked?	The new Curriculum for Wales started last year, in many schools its taught through an enquiry based approach. We will check what approach is used at Hirwaun Primary School.
17.	If Rhigos Primary School closes, will we have to change our school uniform?	Hirwaun Primary School has established its school uniform. We cannot confirm that the school uniform at Hirwaun Primary School would be changed immediately, however, this may happen in time.
18.	How will you help us fit into a different school's vision.	Any school's vision is about ensuring the best teaching and learning for children, and we would hope that Hirwaun Primary School is an inclusive school that will help you fit in. In addition, transition events will be arranged for you to visit Hirwaun Primary School.
19.	If we move schools, will we be able to have school discos and assemblies?	We are sure that these will be offered at Hirwaun Primary School.
20.	Will all our teachers and friends be able to come with us?	It is too early to say what changes may happen as the proposal is yet to be approved.
21.	Are you going to bring the oldest lady in Rhigos to Hirwaun Primary School?	Potentially, Hirwaun Primary School is a community school, and they would welcome members of the community visiting.

Number	Question	Response
22.	Will the School Council change?	Hirwaun Primary School has many clubs, offering lots of opportunities for those who wish to take part.
23.	Why did you pick Hirwaun Primary School?	We looked at many things, including pupil numbers, how close Rhigos Primary School is to another school. Hirwaun Primary School has lots of space and is close to Rhigos Primary School. Change can be very worrying; however, it can be positive as it gives you lots of opportunities.
24.	Will there be a football team at Hirwaun Primary School?	We will check with the school but we do know they participate in lots of sports and activities.
25.	Are there breakfast clubs at Hirwaun Primary School?	Yes, Hirwaun Primary School has a breakfast club.
26.	My headteacher is the best headteacher.	We are all pleased that you feel happy with your headteacher.
27.	I don't want to change schools because we think Rhigos Primary School is the best school.	We are all pleased that you feel happy with your school.

4. Closing Remarks

The School Council were informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The School Council were encouraged to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed at 14:50.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

DECISION MADE BY: Cabinet DATE DECISION MADE: 18 December, 2023

Cabinet Members Present:

Councillor A Morgan (Chair), Councillor M Webber (Deputy Chair),
Councillor G Caple, Councillor A Crimmings, Councillor R Lewis,
Councillor C Leyshon, Councillor M Norris and Councillor B Harris

Other Councillor(s) in Attendance:-

Councillor D Grehan
Councillor K Morgan
Councillor A Owain Rogers

Agenda Item : 3

**SUBJECT: Proposal to close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to
Hirwaun Primary School**

1. DECISION MADE:

Agreed –

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.

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

N.B – Attached to the Decision Notice is a letter 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.

2. REASON FOR THE DECISION BEING MADE:

The need to advise 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.

3. LINKS TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES/FUTURE GENERATIONS - SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

The proposal would lead to a more efficient use of RCTCBC's education estate supporting RCTCBC's Think Climate, Making RCT Carbon Neutral by 2030, for the years 2022 to 2025. The closure of an energy inefficient school would contribute towards achieving the overarching objective of RCTCBC's carbon reduction targets to become carbon neutral by 2030. It also aligns with the WG's ambition of a carbon neutral public service by 2030 and the wider goal of a net zero carbon Wales by 2050 as set out in the WG's Net Zero Carbon Strategic Plan: 2022. The investment at Hirwaun Primary School has seen a number of sustainable technologies incorporated

into the design including a rainwater harvesting system, photo-voltaic panels, electric vehicle charging facilities and biodiversity areas on the school site.

Due regard has been made to all seven wellbeing goals and the five ways of working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which requires RCTCBC to think about the long-term impact of decisions on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

The proposal could contribute towards achieving some of the seven wellbeing goals

- **A Healthier Wales** – Accommodation at Hirwaun Primary School consists of enhanced outdoor spaces and sports facilities. As well as supporting the full range of curriculum activities these facilities are also available for community use.
- **A More Equal Wales** – The wider catchment area for Hirwaun Primary School and the way the school is used would bring neutral or positive socio-economic impacts to all of the vulnerable groups over an extended geographical area.
- **A Wales of More Cohesive Communities** – Hirwaun Primary School is a fully accessible and integrated community school with a dedicated area designed within so that the local community can safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.
- **A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language** – Although Hirwaun Primary School is English medium, Welsh is taught as part of the curriculum and all pupils would benefit from having the opportunity to be taught in brand new facilities fit for the 21st century (as is currently the case there is also the option to attend Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Penderyn and engage the support of the Welsh language Immersion Team to support transition, subject to parent/carers choice).
- **A Globally Responsive Wales** – The new school at Hirwaun has been built to BREEAM excellent standards and the school can use sustainability features of the building, e.g., photo-voltaic panels, rainwater harvesting and biodiversity, to further develop extra-curricular activities which encourage healthy lifestyles for the school and wider community.

The proposal could contribute towards achieving some of the five ways of working by:

- **Long Term** – The proposal forms a part of RCTCBC's wider 21st Century School Organisation Strategy and supports the better strategic management of RCTCBC's education estate.
- **Prevention** – RCTCBC believes that the proposal represents the best opportunity to safeguard and sustain educational standards for the future and provides a platform for further improvement.
- **Integrations** – Hirwaun Primary School is a fully accessible and integrated community school. A dedicated area is provided within the school so that the local community and parents/carers can safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.
- **Collaboration** – RCTCBC would continue to work effectively with internal and external partners to ensure the changes brought about by these

proposals would meet the short and long term needs of pupils, parents/carers, staff and the wider community.

- **Involvement** –The proposal is made in accordance with the School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018) and seeks the views of a prescribed list of stakeholders including pupils, parents/carers, staff and the wider community. As such face to face meetings were held with Governing Bodies, staff and School Councils of both Rhigos Primary School and Hirwaun Primary School.

4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO DECISION BEING MADE:

The consultation processes in respect of the proposal have been undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018). These arrangements stipulate that a Consultation Report must be prepared prior to the publication of any Statutory Notice which will progress the proposal. It further states that Statutory Notices be published within 26 weeks of the end of the consultation should a decision be made to progress with the statutory process.

Further detail in respect of the consultation can be found at section 7 of the report.

5. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY A COMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL:

[Cabinet – 18th December 2023](#)

[Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee - 14th December 2023](#)

6. PERSONAL INTERESTS DECLARED:

County Borough Councillor A Rogers declared the following personal interest in respect of the item: "I am a Governor of Rhigos Primary School"

7. DISPENSATION TO SPEAK (AS GRANTED BY STANDARDS COMMITTEE):

N/A

8. (a) IS THE DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL-IN BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

Yes

Note: This decision will not come into force and may not be implemented until the expiry of 3 clear working days after its publication to enable it to be the subject to the Call-In Procedure in Rule 17.1 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

The closing date for Call-In is 5pm on the 21 December 2023

8.(b) IF NO, REASONS WHY IN THE OPINION OF THE DECISION-MAKER THE DECISION IS EXEMPT OR NON APPLICABLE:

- I. COUNCIL / SCRUTINY FUNCTION (CALL IN IS THEREFORE NON APPLICABLE):-

Reason: N/A

II. URGENT DECISION:-
Reason N/A

8.(c) IF DEEMED URGENT - SIGNATURE OF PRESIDING OFFICER OR DEPUTY PRESIDING OFFICER OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE CONFIRMING AGREEMENT THAT THE PROPOSED DECISION IS REASONABLE IN ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES FOR IT BEING TREATED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 17.2:

.....
(PRESIDING OFFICER)

.....
(Dated)

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

PUBLICATION

Publication on the Council's Website:- **Monday, 18 December 2023**

APPROVED FOR PUBLICATION: ✓

15th December 2023

Re: Pre-Scrutiny of a draft cabinet report: ‘Proposals to close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School’

Dear Cabinet Members,

I have been instructed by this Council’s Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee to convey the comments and observations of Members in relation to the **Proposals to close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School** before its consideration at the Cabinet meeting on 18th December 2023

The Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee gave feedback and comments in respect of the proposal at its meeting on the 14th December 2023. Members undertook a constructive discussion in respect of the recommendations from the Director of Education & Inclusion. In advance of scrutinising the content of the draft Cabinet report, Committee received representations from the two local members, Councillor Karen Morgan and Councillor Adam Rogers. The Chair also facilitated the opportunity for a member of the public to make representation upon this proposal.

Members can view the full discussion and debate of the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny, in respect of this item of business [here](#)

In summary, the following points were raised:

- Members raised a number of concerns regarding home to school transport arrangements and potential additional costs the Council would incur, should these proposals be adopted. In particular, a number of members felt that the draft Cabinet report was lacking information with regards to these additional costs.
- A number of members sought reassurance that should Cabinet support the recommendations of the report, that ‘age-appropriate travel’ would be a priority particularly for younger pupils as they felt parents would be compelled to drive their children to school if this was not a consideration. In respect of this point members noted the potential additional carbon footprint created by the proposals. A number of members referenced a need for Cabinet to consider these proposals in the wider context of Climate Change, and the need to encourage residents to utilise active travel more in the future.
- A Member noted that with the yet unknown numbers of pupils qualifying and using home to school transport, the cost savings made may be minimal versus the costs of transporting pupils to schools using a more pollutive mode of transport.
- Cabinet were asked to consider the recommendations of the Director, in the context of the Future Generations & Well-being Act.

- A Member sought clarification on how the proposal will align with RCTCBC's educational goals and strategies but was pleased to hear that as a school reorganisation proposal, it would ensure that RCT has sustainable schools for the future and align with the Local Authority's five strategic priorities and maintain high quality standards.
- All members were sympathetic to the concerns of parents, but a number of members also acknowledged that allowing the number of surplus places to remain high would have a detrimental impact on the future financial viability of Rhigos Primary School and impact children's education in the future. A number of members cited these reasons, as important in Cabinet's deliberations.
- A member queried whether or not a business case could be made or had been considered for investment in the repair and maintenance of the current school. A number of members acknowledged the recent investment in a new school for Hirwaun and the capacity available at this school. Many members referenced the improvement facilities and learning environment provided by a modern school.
- A number of Members sought reassurance that these concerns are mitigated, where possible, and should Cabinet be minded to progress with this proposal, the authority look to put in place sufficient support for pupils and parents during transition. In addition, that the school buildings, where appropriate, are used for community benefit. The example of after schools clubs or extra circular activities was referenced.
- A Member raised concern regarding the high volume of objections to the proposal particularly from the residents of Hirwaun and sought clarity on what improvements can be put in place to the access and egress to Hirwaun Primary School to ensure that it can safely accommodate further pupils who may travel by bus or by car. The Member also explored the importance of equity of access to provisions such as after school clubs and parents' evenings for those who can't access transport or where public transport may not be reliable (aligning with the anti-poverty agenda which is a priority of the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee).
- A Member referred to Estyn's report (which they considered an important factor) and sought assurance that the standards of teaching in Hirwaun Primary School will be as good as that in Rhigos Primary School.

At the conclusion of the Committee's discussions in respect of the proposal, Members recognised the challenges that the proposal would present for individuals and the community should they be adopted by Cabinet and wished for their comments to be considered and conveyed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christian Hanagan". The signature is stylized with a large initial "C" and "H".

Christian Hanagan
Service Director Democratic Services and Communication

EXTRACT FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES**17. Call-In****17.1 Rules**

- (a) Where a decision is made by the Cabinet, an individual Member of the Cabinet, a Committee of the Cabinet, an Area Committee, under joint arrangements or a Key Decision is made by an Officer (under the General Scheme of Delegation), it must be published on the Council's website by the responsible proper officer within 2 clear working days of it being made. A copy will also be available at the main offices of the Council. All Members of the Council will be sent copies of the records of all such decisions within the same time scale, by the person responsible for publishing the decision.
- (b) That notice will bear the date on which it is published and will specify that the decision will come into force and may then be implemented, on the expiry of 3 clear working days after the publication of the decision, unless any 3 Non-Executive Members object to it and call it in for review under these procedure rules.
- (c) During that period the Proper Officer shall call-in a decision for scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if so requested in the specified format by any 3 Non-Executive Members and, shall then notify the decision taker of the call-in. Following the expiry of the 3 clear working day period in which a decision can be called-in the Proper Officer shall convene a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on such a date as he/she may determine. Where possible the Proper Officer will consult with the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as to a suitable date and in any case the meeting will be held within 5 clear working days of the expiration of the relevant call-in period (only in exceptional circumstances will the Chair (in his/her absence the Vice-Chair) of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider extending this time limit).
- (d) As soon as the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee acts as a signatory to a call-in he/she shall cease to be the Chair for all purposes for the duration of the call-in process. If this situation arises then for the purposes of these Overview and Scrutiny Procedure rules references to 'Chair' of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be read as a reference to the 'Vice-Chair' of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In the situation where both the Chair and Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee act as signatories to a call in then the Chair of the meeting in respect of matters relating to the call-in shall be selected from the rest of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee membership by majority vote.
- (e) If, having considered the decision, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee refers it back to the decision making body or person for reconsideration or the matter to full Council, it must set out in writing the nature of its concerns. If referred to the decision maker they shall then reconsider within a further 5 clear working days, amending the decision or not, before adopting a final decision. This decision shall take effect and be implementable on the date and time immediately following the closure of the relevant meeting
- (f) If following an objection to the decision, the Overview and Scrutiny

Committee does not meet within the period set out above, or does meet but does not refer the matter back to the decision making person or body, the decision shall take effect on the date and time immediately following the closure of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

- (g) If the matter was referred to full Council and the Council does not object to a decision which has been made, then no further action is necessary and the decision will be effective in accordance with the provision below. However, if the Council does object, the Council will refer any decisions to which it objects back to the decision making person or body, together with the Council's views on the decision. That decision making body or person shall choose whether to amend the decision or not before reaching a final decision and implementing it. Where the decision was taken by the Cabinet as a whole, or a Committee of it, a meeting will be convened to reconsider within 5 clear working days of the Council's request. Where the decision was made by an individual, the individual will reconsider within 5 clear working days of the Council's request.
- (h) If the Council does not meet, or if it does but does not refer the decision back to the decision making body or person, the decision will become effective on the date of the Council meeting or expiry of the period in which the Council meeting should have been held, whichever is earlier.
- (i) In order to ensure the call-in is not abused, nor causes unreasonable delay, certain limitations are to be placed on its use. These are:
 - (i) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may only call-in a total of 3 decisions per 2 month period;
 - (ii) any 3 Non-Executive Members (from either (i) at least 2 political groups or (ii) in the case of an unallocated Member(s) – that unallocated Member(s) and a Member(s) from a political group) are needed for a decision to be called in;
 - (iii) once a Member has acted as a signatory to a call-in under paragraph 17 (call-in) above, he/she may not do so again until the period of 2 months has expired; and
 - (iv) No Education Co-opted Members may request a decision be called in.
- (j) The Proper Officer (in consultation with the Monitoring Officer) may veto any request for call-in if it falls outside the remit of this scheme.
- (k) Save in exceptional circumstances all Members requesting a matter be called in must attend the meeting at which the matter is being considered.
- (l) A request for call in, made in accordance with these Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, can be submitted either by hand to a Democratic Services officer using the designated call-in form (a copy of which is available on request from Democratic Services) or via electronic mail (email). Any request submitted via email must be sent by one of the three signatories to the call-in and emailed to the following email address – scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk. For the purposes

of checking compliance with these rules the email will have been deemed to be received at the time it is received into the Scrutiny mailbox. In order to be a valid call in request any request submitted via email must include all of the same information and details as is required to be completed in the designated hardcopy call-in form. Attaching a copy of the call in form to the email is acceptable. The three signatories to the call in request should keep an audit trail of their agreement to collectively submit the call in request. This will only be requested by the Proper Officer in the event of there being any dispute that a member (or members) did not consent to being a signatory to the call in request.

17.1A Reference to a 'clear working day' in these Overview and Scrutiny procedure rules is defined as the following:-

A complete period of 24 hours (excluding weekends and Bank Holidays), beginning and ending at midnight on the day in question.

Therefore, by way of example, for the purposes of these call-in rules it shall exclude the day on which the relevant Cabinet decision notice is published and the day on which the call-in meeting is held.

17.1B Procedure at call-in meetings held under Rule 17.1

- (1) Declarations of interest (including whipping declarations).
- (2) Welcome by Chair outlining reason for call-in meeting as per details recorded on the call-in request.
- (3) Chair to invite the three Members who have acted as signatories to the call-in to present their submission(s) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as to why they consider the relevant decision should be referred back to the decision maker for reconsideration, having regard to the reasons set out in the call-in request.
- (4) Chair to invite relevant Director(s) to respond.
- (5) Chair to give any Cabinet Member(s) present the opportunity to address the Committee.
- (6) Chair to invite any other Members of the Committee to speak (and with the Chair's permission any non-Committee Members present, who are eligible to attend, and wish to speak).
- (7) If necessary, the Chair to invite any relevant Director/Cabinet Member present to respond to a Member's question.
- (8) Chair to invite one of the three signatories to the call-in to make a final address to the Committee membership.
- (9) Chair to put the matter to the vote.
- (10) Legal Officer present to summarise the effect of the Committee's decision in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules 17.1(e) and 17.1(f) and thereafter communicate the Committee's decision to the Proper Officer.

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**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES – RULE 17
SCRUTINY CALL IN FORM**

THIS FORM MUST BE:

- (A)** SIGNED BY THREE MEMBERS FROM AT LEAST TWO DIFFERENT POLITICAL GROUPS (or in the case of an unallocated member(s) that unallocated member(s) and a member(s) from a political group).

- (B)** EMAILED TO C. HANAGAN, SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS – scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk OR HAND DELIVERED TO:- THE PAVILIONS, CAMBRIAN PARK, CLYDACH VALE, CF40 2XX WITHIN THE TIMESCALE NOTIFIED WITHIN THE CONSTITUTION

DETAILS OF DECISION

Decision of Cabinet

Date of Publication of decision:

18th December 2023.....

Subject of Decision...

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

Decision Called in (Please quote from the record of decision)

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.

Has the matter previously been subject to Scrutiny?

Y	X
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
N	

Reason for calling in decision (Please use separate sheet if necessary)

Please see separate sheet

Names	Signature	Group
Cllr D Grehan		Plaid Cymru
Cllr A O Rogers		Plaid Cymru
Cllr Sam Trask.		Welsh Conservatives

Date:...21st December 2023.....

For Office use only by the Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications.

Date & Time of Receipt.....21st December
3PM.....

Officer Receiving.....

Accepted as a valid Call-in:

To be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Signature: Date:

Reasons for Call In – Decision to progress to Statutory Notice for the Proposal to close Rhigos Primary School

1. There is a need to consider the negative impact of the proposal for pupils and the wider community of Rhigos especially in line with the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which requires RCTCBC to think about the long-term impact of decisions on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.
2. There is a need to fully respect the right of the child to have their voice heard, taken seriously, and acted upon.
3. There is a need to fully consider aspects of the proposal which are contrary to the aims of another proposal which is currently being consulted on.
4. The decision to proceed relied upon incomplete, out of date data.
5. There is a need to consider the merits of alternative options put forward by the consultees, and alternative options to address surplus places.
6. There is a need to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the potential impact of the decision both positive and negative.
7. The feedback from the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny meeting held on 14th December 2023 was not included within the Cabinet Report nor

attached as an appendix prior to the decision being made and therefore was not available for public scrutiny and response.

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