



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

24th JANUARY 2024

PRE- SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the feedback and comments of the items that were pre-scrutinised by the Council's thematic Scrutiny Committee's following its last Committee cycle.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the comments and observations of the Scrutiny Committees following pre-scrutiny of the items listed within section 5 of the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The need for Members to be aware of the comments and observations of the Council's Scrutiny Committees prior to their consideration of the items listed within the Cabinet agenda for the 24th January 2024.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In response to the [Local Government & Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#), where there is now a requirement for greater consideration of Cabinet decisions in Scrutiny, the Council's Scrutiny Committees place a greater emphasis on identifying items for pre-scrutiny to support and improve the decision making process
- 4.2 Members are reminded that the purpose of pre- scrutiny activity is to provide the key "critical friend" challenge and influence the decisions before they are made to contribute to policy and service improvement.
- 4.3 The Council's Scrutiny Committees continue to have the opportunity to scrutinise and comment on a number of reports in advance of Cabinet's consideration to bring a different perspective to the decisions being made and enabling Cabinet decisions to

be more informed. Effective scrutiny helps support the efficient delivery of public services and drives improvements within the Council's services.

5. ITEMS CONSIDERED FOR PRE-SCRUTINY

5.1 Outlined below are the items that have been pre-scrutinised in line with each Committees Terms of reference for Cabinet consideration:

Committee	Report	Comments
Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee	'PROPOSALS TO CLOSE RHIGOS PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS TRANSFERRING TO HIRWAUN PRIMARY SCHOOL'	<p>Due to publication timelines, a Letter from the Committee providing the feedback of the Committee was provided to Cabinet in advance of the meeting on the 18th December 2023 and was made available as part of the Cabinet Decision Notice.</p> <p>In summary, the following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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-
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		<p>poverty agenda which is a priority of the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
Community Services Scrutiny Committee	PRE SCRUTINY - REVIEW OF THE STRATEGY OF DEALING WITH CONTAMINATED LAND IN RCT	<p>The Contaminated Land Strategy will be taken forward through a Delegated Decision and the feedback of the committee will be appended as an appendix to this decision. A copy of the feedback can be found as Appendix A to this document.</p> <p>In summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members recognised the importance of having a Contaminated Land Strategy and were supportive of the proposal to renew this. Members were mindful of the challenges given the lack of funding available and raised their concerns in relation to the impact of significant weather events and the potential to cause contamination requesting further clarification on the process of assessing flood risk management. Overall Committee noted its support in favour of the proposals.
Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee	PRE-SCRUTINY OF THE REVISED LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN	<p>Due to publication timelines, a Letter from the Committee providing its feedback will be provided to Cabinet in advance of the meeting and will be available on the Cabinet Web Page for the 24th January 2024 Committee meeting.</p>

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 Details of the Scrutiny involvement and consultation are highlighted within section 5 of the report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 None

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 none

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES

10.1 The work of all Councillors, through pre-scrutiny of Cabinet decisions is fundamental to the work of the Council and subsequently the delivery of the Corporate Plan

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 It is recognised that scrutiny is a vital component of good governance and improves Councils' decision making, service provision and cost effectiveness.

11.2 The undertaking of pre-scrutiny by the relevant Scrutiny Committee will strengthen accountability and assist Cabinet Members in taking any future decisions on these matters.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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24th January 2024

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COMMUNICATION**

Item: **PRE – DECISION SCRUTINY**

Background Papers