



CABINET
MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND
VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON
WEDNESDAY 16TH APRIL 2025 AT 1PM

Councillor S. Morgan – Chair

Councillors:

J. Pritchard (Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change), C. Andrews (Cabinet Member for Education and Communities), N. George (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Property and Highways), C. Morgan (Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces), S. Cook (Cabinet Member for Housing), E. Stenner (Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance) and E. Forehead (Cabinet Member for Social Care).

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Chief Executive), M. S. Williams (Executive Director Corporate and Regeneration) and G. Jenkins (Director Children's Services)

Also in Attendance:

R. Tranter (Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), L. Lane (Director of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), S. Harris (Director of Financial Services and S151 Officer), L. Sykes (Deputy Director of Financial Services and S151 Officer), R. Hartshorn (Director Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services), M. Lloyd (Director of Infrastructure), A. West (Placeshaping and Sustainable Communities for Learning Services Manager), S. Richards (Director of Education Planning and Strategy and Placeshaping Programme Director), T. Keohane (Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager), J. Reynolds (Sport and Leisure Facilities Manager).

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS.

The Leader reminded those present that the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here To View](#).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

There were no apologies for absence received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES – WEDNESDAY 12th MARCH 2025

RESOLVED that the minutes of the special meeting held on the 12th March 2025 be approved as a correct record.

4. MINUTES – WEDNESDAY 19TH MARCH 2025

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 19th March 2025 be approved as a correct record.

5. MINUTES – CABINET AS TRUSTEES OF BLACKWOOD MINERS INSTITUTE – WEDNESDAY 19TH MARCH 2025

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 19th March 2025 be approved as a correct record.

6. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – TO NOTE.

Cabinet was provided with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, which detailed the scheduled reports until September 2025.

Subject to the inclusion of Councillor James Pritchard as the Cabinet Member for the Caerphilly Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) report scheduled for the 21st May 2025, and that the Home to School Transport report be added once the timeline was confirmed the Cabinet Forward work programme was noted and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

7. SCHOOL ORGANISATION CODE 2018 - PROPOSAL FOR THE AMALGAMATION OF HENDRE JUNIOR SCHOOL AND HENDRE INFANTS SCHOOL.

Considered by Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 11th March 2025.

Consideration was given to the report which sought to update Cabinet on the proposed amalgamation of Hendre Junior School and Hendre Infants School with effect from September 2025.

Cabinet noted the statutory process followed in relation to the proposed amalgamation as required under the Welsh Government School Organisation Code 2018 and Section 49 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and noted that no objections were received during the formal objection period which run between 13th January 2025 and the 10th February 2025. Therefore, the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018 had been concluded and the final determination in relation to the proposal could be made.

Cabinet further noted that the current school sites would remain in operation but function as a single Primary school campus. Both schools were in the same locale within the Caerphilly basin (130 yards on opposite sides of St Cenydd Road) and there were no proposed changes to the existing shared catchment arrangements. Furthermore, the Governing bodies of both schools fully supported the proposal.

In response to a question in relation to the financial sustainability of the amalgamated school, Officers confirmed that funding would be calculated for the combined school providing more flexibility in terms of budget management. It was noted that the amalgamated school would have a larger allocation based on pupil numbers with funding calculated as a single entity rather than separately for junior and infant phases. This approach provided more flexibility in budget management, allowing for a more efficient allocation of resources.

Following consideration and discussion of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained therein be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained within the Officers report: -

1. The information contained in the report be considered.
2. The implementation of the proposal to amalgamate Hendre Junior School and Hendre Infants School with effect from September 2025 be approved.

8. SCHOOL ORGANISATION CODE 2018 - OBJECTION REPORT: PROPOSAL FOR THE CLOSURE OF RHYDRI PRIMARY SCHOOL.

Considered by the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 11th March 2025

Consideration was given to the report which sought to update Cabinet on the proposed closure of Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025.

Cabinet noted the statutory process followed in relation to the proposed closure as required under the Welsh Government School Organisation Code 2018 and Section 49 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and noted that 10 Objections were received via email.

Cabinet further noted that as outlined in the consultation document and statutory notice the current catchment area for Rhydri Primary School would transfer to the catchment area of St James Primary school and the formal Federation of the Governing Bodies of Rhydri Primary School and Bedwas Junior School would automatically dissolve on the closure of Rhydri Primary School.

Clarification was sought as to the reason why a 'Marketing Campaign' was not undertaken for this school. Cabinet was advised the Authority could not promote one school over another, however a proactive marketing campaign had been undertaken by the parents to drive up pupil numbers. Whilst an increase in pupil numbers was noted, unfortunately, the numbers were not sufficient enough to bring the school out of deficit.. Cabinet noted the projected pupil numbers and resultant financial outlook for the school and the significant challenge this presented and further noted that reasonable alternatives to closure had already been implemented.

Responding to a question in relation to support for pupils and staff during the transition, Officers confirmed the role of the 'Team Around the School' process and how the pathway of current pupils would be tracked to ensure that their individual needs were met during the transition to new schools and this support would be the same for pupils with additional learning needs. In relation to support processes for staff the Director of People Services confirmed that both collective and individual meetings had been held with staff and HR Services to discuss possible options should Cabinet be mindful to support the recommendation within the report Cabinet was assured that the priority would be to secure the best possible outcomes for staff based on the individual's preference, whether this be to secure employment within schools in the area or redeployment opportunities.

Clarification was then sought as to why the catchment area would transfer to St James Primary School and Officers explained that the transfer would ensure no impact on secondary school provision as Rhydri Primary School and St James Primary School were both feeder schools into St. Martin's Secondary School ensuring continuity for pupils transitioning to secondary education, subject to parental preference. Cabinet was reassured that there was sufficient capacity at St. James Primary School to accommodate all pupils from Rhydri Primary School, again subject to parental preference. Further assurances were given that parents would be able to express a preference in terms of primary and secondary school provision.

Cabinet placed on record their thanks to Officers for all their efforts to try and keep Rhydri Primary School resilient and for all their hard work throughout this process.

Subject to a correction to section 5.14 of the Officers report to read 'Following the outcome of the Cabinet Decision the proposal will then progress to full implementation to close Rhydri Primary School with effect from July 2025.' It was moved and seconded that the recommendations within the Officer's report be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained within the Officers report: -

1. The information contained in the Objection Report be considered.
2. The implementation of the proposal to close Rhydri Primary School and transfer its catchment area to that of St James Primary School with effect from July 2025 be approved.

9. AUTHORISATION OF OFFICERS IN PUBLIC PROTECTION - DIGITAL MARKETS COMPETITION AND CONSUMERS ACT 2024.

Consideration was given to the report which detailed the implementation of parts three and four of the Digital Markets Competition and Consumers Act 2024. Cabinet noted at the beginning of April 2025, parts three and four of the Digital Markets Competition and Consumer Act 2024 came into force. Cabinet noted that this legislation strengthened and updated consumer protection from unfair trading and gave public protection staff powers to enforce the law and protect consumers. Cabinet further noted that the 2008 regulations remained in force for 3 years but going forward enforcement would be under the new Act.

Clarification was sought as to what powers the Council had under the Act and what actions could be taken to enforce the Act. Officers explained that the powers included the right to enter business premises, examine books and documents, seize documents and compel businesses to assist in investigations. In terms of enforcement, the ultimate action would be prosecution however most businesses would be given advice and helped to comply in the first instance. Enhanced powers under the Act included seeking assurances, conjunctive actions, and imposing penalties. Cabinet was advised that the Act primarily protected consumers but also the economic wellbeing of the community and ensured an equal level playing field for legitimate businesses.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained therein be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained within the Officers report:

1. The implementation of the Digital Markets Competition and Consumers Act 2024 be noted.
2. Head of Public Protection Community and Leisure Services be authorised under the Digital Markets Competition and Consumers Act 2024. so that officers within the division can utilise delegated powers to carry out their duties.
3. It be noted that approval will be sought from full Council by the Council's Monitoring Officer to make any necessary changes to the Constitution to reflect the implementation of the Digital Markets Competition and Consumers Act 2024 as detailed in the report.

10. CAERPHILLY LEISURE AND WELLBEING HUB

Consideration was given to the report which sought additional financial support to the Caerphilly Wellbeing Hub project. Cabinet noted that against an approved match funding of £13.6m - £20m had been secured from UK Government's Levelling Up Fund towards the Caerphilly Leisure and Wellbeing Hub. However, costs for the project had increased since the original estimates in 2022 and an additional allocation of funding of £0.549m from the Community Infrastructure Levy, £0.946m from uncommitted Welsh Government capital grant, and £1.181m from the capital programme contingency on a contingency basis was being sought.

Cabinet noted that the new facility would include a six lane community swimming pool with pod pool access, learner pool, leisure pool with flumes and interactive water features, Express wellness spa including spa pool and heat treatments, children's adventure soft play integrated with sensory components, Tag Active Area, 4 court multi-purpose sports hall, 2 squash courts, 110-station fitness suite, multi-purpose community room and café providing community space.

Clarification was sought as to whether the facility would generate income compared to existing heavily subsidised leisure centre, Officers advised that the new site had substantial potential projected revenue, a difference of about £650,000 to £700,000 compared to the existing leisure centre. The new building's energy efficiency and modern standards would also contribute to cost savings and included solar panels and carbon reduction initiatives.

Responding to a question in relation to possible refurbishment of the existing building and those associated costs, Officers explained that refurbishing the current building would cost around £17m to £18m but it would still leave a 50-year-old building with ongoing issues. The new build supported by £20m from UK Government offered a far better facility for a Council funding investment of around £15m.

Cabinet noted the financial challenges facing large projects such as schools and the Leisure and Wellbeing Hub and the impact to the supply chain caused by the initial contractor unexpectedly going into receivership was also noted.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained therein be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained within the Officers report the following additional funding allocations to the Caerphilly Leisure and Wellbeing Hub project be approved.

- £0.549m from the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- £0.946m additional one-off uncommitted capital funding provided by Welsh Government in late March 2025.
- £1.181m from the capital programme contingency on a contingency basis should the remaining additional funding requirement not be addressed from other sources.

The meeting closed at 13.45 p.m.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 21st May 2025.

Chair
