

## **Minutes of Meeting with Governing Body and Staff Members of Tref y Rhyg Primary School**

<b>Date</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> October 2024
<b>Time</b>	15:45
<b>Venue</b>	Tref Rhyg Primary School

<b>Attendance</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Title</b>
Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Catrin Edwards	CE	Head of Transformation, Attendance and Governance
Daniel Williams	DW	Head of Attendance and Wellbeing Service
Sarah Nicholls	SN	21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools Assistant Project Officer
Bethan Davies	BD	Human Resources Manager
Nicole Johnston	NJ	Human Resources Officer

### **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 Tref y Rhyg 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.

<b>Number</b>	<b>Question/Comment</b>	<b>Response</b>
1.	Could you clarify the final decision date for this proposal, as there are meetings with human resources (HR) meetings being held in November.	There are different stages to the consultation. The final decision on the proposal will be made around April 2025, but HR support will be available to staff before this date.
2.	Staff will miss many opportunities to apply for further jobs. This is unfair to school staff.	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) understands that the consultation has a tight turnaround. It has worked positively in the past on previous consultations. This will not be easy, but the provisional dates are there to help staff.
3.	Staff don't know what they need to do as a decision hasn't been made yet, and they do not know what their future holds. Staff don't want to apply for other jobs if Tref y Rhyg Primary School will stay open.	We acknowledge that this is an unsettling time for staff. HR are there to offer support. The process is informed by the responses to the consultation. This is a choice for individuals to make. RCTCBC's HR team are committed to working with staff in line with the

		timescales of the consultation. Opportunities for staff may arise, and RCTCBC's HR team will be available to meet with staff to help them make these personal decisions. HR support will also be available after the final decision is made whatever the outcome of Cabinet's decision.
4.	This situation puts staff in an awful position.	Noted. We empathise and recognise that this is a difficult time for staff.
5.	This proposal is difficult for the children, who have to prepare for a big move.	We have to look at all of the factors of the proposal and encourage people to fill out the feedback form.
6.	The Consultation Document says that there will be support and transition for pupils, but not doesn't explain how. What will be in place for them? There are some additional learning needs (ALN) pupils in Tref y Rhyg Primary School and not everything is suitable for all pupils.	Some parents/carers may choose to send their children to other schools. We want to minimise the emotional impact on pupils which can be difficult as the situation is uncertain. RCTCBC want to include pupils as part of the consultation. Transition will be looked at once a final decision has been made to ensure pupils are supported. All ALN pupils will be supported, and transition events would be put on for pupils. Pupils involved in recent consultations at other schools have transitioned well.
7.	The Consultation Document states that the building is 'beyond repair'. Do you have a list of the repairs required?	Yes, RCTCBC 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools team would have access to this information. The list would sit with RCTCBC'S Corporate Estates team, but it is a list of repairs, not a list of what is necessary to make the site a 21 <sup>st</sup> Century standard school.
8.	Why has RCTCBC not made investments in Tref y Rhyg Primary School in decades? Where is the investment for Tref y Rhyg Primary School? Can you also clarify how we cannot deliver the Curriculum for Wales due to the sites 'suitability' when we have done this successfully?	<p>RCTCBC has a good record of investing in schools, for example via the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme.</p> <p>The Council has a statutory duty to manage school places and estates and the priority of need for the programme has grant criteria to secure funding. There is also capital maintenance funding available, but this works on a priority basis of which the school has received investment.</p>
9.	In the last five years Tref y Rhyg Primary School has worked hard with RCTCBC to do repairs, painting, and re-wiring. The Consultation Document said that the building is 'dilapidated' – this is insulting and incorrect. The building is watertight with no peeling paint. We repair areas that are for pupils.	That particular wording may have been taken from the condition reports of the building. Tref y Rhyg Primary School is clearly focussing on the educational environment, but the best way to assess the building is through the condition surveys.

10.	School buildings will never be on a level playing field.	Investment is based on the condition of the building as it stands and schools are prioritised accordingly. Proposals must have the intended benefits and efficiencies.
11.	We can deliver the Curriculum for Wales as well as any school. We use outdoor learning in the woods on a daily basis.	Sometimes buildings can enhance the educational environment and learning opportunities. Points were noted, and encouragement provided to include this detail in the feedback form.
12.	There is lots of outdoor learning here. We have a Dutch barn at the back of the site and a pond that was never invested in and is now condemned. Pupils don't need grass for outdoor learning. Parents/carers have food to eat because it is grown on the grounds of Tref y Rhyg Primary School.	Noted.
13.	The Consultation Document says that the building is non-compliant with the Equalities Act 2010. Tref y Rhyg Primary School has a lift that is used by parents/carers and pupils who need it. If RCTCBC was concerned about this, why was it not considered in 2018 when investment was given to Tonyrefail Community School?	<p>Surveyors make these assessments and place their views. Schools are prioritised based on their needs/condition. The condition can change as the pupils grow through school.</p> <p>It is recognised that the school does have a lift, however accessing the school entrance and grounds with level changes and thresholds can only be accessed with additional support.</p>
14.	You are adding a financial burden to parents/carers by making them travel to Tonyrefail Community School.	Noted.
15.	If Tef y Rhyg Primary School is not fit for disabled access – why is it used every year for voting? It says a lot that RCTCBC hasn't been to Tref y Rhyg Primary School before doing this consultation. The Consultation Document is not reflective of Tref y Rhyg Primary School.	Officers from RCTCBC have been to the Tref y Rhyg Primary School previously. Proposals are often not just about the physical condition of the building, but also consider important aspect such as pupil numbers, surplus spaces, for example.
16.	Where are pupils from the local houses going to go as Tonyrefail Community School will be full? It may be a community school, but it is not in the community of Tref y Rhyg Primary School.	Noted.
17.	This is a short-sighted proposal to bring forward when there are around 700 to be built.	Noted. Tref y Rhyg Primary School currently has many out of catchment pupils attending.

18.	Will you remove the out of catchment pupils from Tonyrefail Community School?	The admissions criteria will be applied strictly. We are fortunate in RCTCBC that there is an element of parent/carer choice in where children go to school. Where there are capacity pressures, the admissions criteria is applied.
19.	Why was Tref y Rhyg Primary School taken off the admissions list for nursery and reception places in 2025? Some parents/carers are being told that Cymmer Primary School is the only option.	This is not the case. The Tref y Rhyg Primary School was on the list when officers from RCTCBC's Admissions team checked. No changes have been made to the system. There is a legal process that RCTCBC must follow.
20.	Where do the projections listed in the Consultation Document come from?	Live birth data helps us calculate the projections, and the numbers are decreasing. (CE ran through Tref y Rhyg Primary School's pupil numbers with the Headteacher).
21.	What parent/carer would apply to send their child to a 'closing' school? it's unfair.	We use birth data and plans for housing developments to establish pupil projections. School places are constantly under review, and the necessary information has been provided to Welsh Government (WG).
22.	The housing data suggests that a possible 145 pupils could move to Tonyrefail East by 2026.	All local developments have been taken into account and the projections are under constant review. We encourage people to put this on the feedback forms.
23.	You are underplaying all of the figures and data to make Tref y Rhyg Primary School look awful so that RCTCBC's Cabinet decides to close Tref y Rhyg Primary School.	The WG'S School Organisation Code 2018 (11/2008) is very prescriptive with regard to what information must be included in the Consultation Document. No data has been changed.
24.	I dispute the data used to outline the poverty of the area in the Consultation Document – they are different to what I have looked at. People in a deprived area cannot afford public transport or to drive pupils to school.	We can check back on the exact source of where the data in the Consultation Document came from. Datasets are informed by the Code.
25.	Is transport for pupils changing to two miles in September for primary schools?	Transport is looked at on a case by case basis based on family addresses. A specific system is used by RCTCBC to determine the distance between schools. Policy changes were recently consulted.
26.	A safe walking route was put in when the proposal was announced. It takes 45 minutes to walk from Tref y Rhyg Primary School to Tonyrefail Community School – this is too much for young children.	Noted.

27.	The proposal is to take the heart of the community away. Parents/carers won't send their children to a closer Welsh medium school because they don't speak Welsh. The Consultation Document is damning, when Tref y Rhyg Primary School is already taking in pupils from other schools.	RCTCBC understands this is upsetting. We must look at pupil numbers, surplus spaces, projections and maintenance costs to consider all factors. We cannot invest in all schools at once.
28.	At any point, was consideration given to a federation between Tref y Rhyg Primary School and Hendreforgan Primary School?	No.
29.	The Consultation Document says there is 'little housing development' planned for the area.	All housing development has been taken into consideration. We must also consider that the out of catchment pupil numbers for Tref y Rhyg Primary School and Tonyrefail Community School are significant.
30.	Tonyrefail Community School is too big and too impersonal. A small school for the heart of our community is needed. Having out of catchment pupils is not a negative thing.	There are pupils in the catchment area of Tref y Rhyg Primary School that are going to other schools instead. We look at the economies of scale in larger schools. No assumptions can be made that close care is not present in a big school.
31.	You are taking a safe space away from this community and its pupils.	Some pupils from this area do transition to other schools. Parents/carers choose to send their children to small schools for a variety of reasons, but we must look at many more aspects. A consultation will also be held with the pupils.
32.	The pupil projections are wrong in the Welsh Language Impact Assessment. You are taking away people's choice – parents/carers won't send pupils to a Welsh school.	The projections are calculated using live birth rates.
33.	The pupil numbers at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg (YGG) Tonyrefail are going down. What would the projection numbers be for YGG Tonyrefail without taking into consideration the closure of Tref y Rhyg Primary School?	The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) sets targets needing to be met are set by the WG, and RCTCBC are doing everything we can to achieve these targets. There are no plans to close a Welsh medium school. We have to look at surplus spaces as well as pupil numbers and projections. 170 is a viable number for growth in a Welsh medium school. We also look at the pupil numbers of Tref y Rhyg Primary School and the in-catchment figures.
34.	Pupils can do extra-curricular things here too; we are no different to Tonyrefail Community School. The Consultation Document is incorrect, as we achieved the bronze Siarter	We can look into this specific information included in the Consultation Document to ensure that it is accurate.

	laith award in May 2024. There are things like this that suggest the Consultation Document was written earlier.	
35.	Tref y Rhyg Primary School was only asked about what after school clubs we had. The report is biased in favour of Tonyrefail Community School – all information for Tref y Rhyg Primary School should be shown alongside Tonyrefail Community School to have a balanced view.	All impact assessments are live documents and can be updated to reflect the information provided by both schools. If the accurate information can be provided by the school, then they will be updated.
36.	Historically, pupils had to go to a set school based on catchment areas. Why did this change?	A statutory procedure introduced in 2013 by WG gives parent/carers choice.
37.	After school clubs in Tonyrefail Community School are already full. Many pupils of Tref y Rhyg Primary School also qualify for breakfast club – there is a worry that these pupils won't get a breakfast at Tonyrefail Community School when it is needed.	Breakfast club uses a live application system. There will be some capacities set for breakfast club based on staffing numbers (for example), but this can grow. RCTCBC will work with the Headteachers to further refine the process. The point of breakfast club is to provide breakfast for those that require it.
38.	There is a worry that the distance to Tonyrefail Community School from Tref y Rhyg Primary School will impact the number of pupils attending breakfast club when there is a dire need in the community.  What will happen to the families that have such a good relationship with the Tref y Rhyg Primary School, which has taken years to develop? This is taking away the heart of the community.	Noted.
39.	Can the admissions policy go back to telling parents/carers which school to go to?	No. we must follow the statutory procedure which allows for parent/carers choice.
40.	Staff need to know what the options would be. Will there be a redundancy consultation if the school closes?	Yes. RCTCBC's HR team will work with staff through this process.
41.	The Consultation Document mentions ringfenced positions. How many additional positions will there be?	The Governing Body decides staffing matters, but RCTCBC would request that any additional posts are ringfenced for the staff of Tref y Rhyg Primary School in the first instance.
42.	We are looking at significant staff redundancies. I don't understand how we were allowed to appoint new	We understand that this is not an easy thing. The process of proposed school closures is a very closed and confidential matter and

	staff members recently, which has now placed them in a vulnerable position as a result of this proposal.	doesn't involve many officers. This is a proposal, and no decision has been made. It is important that we work with all displaced staff.
43.	Do you really think parents/carers will walk to Tonyrefail Community School to pick up their children from after school club, which could take an extra 45 minutes? There will be less opportunity for our pupils if they go to a bigger school.	There are many opportunities for pupils in larger schools. There could also be cross-phase opportunities for staff.
44.	Mixed ages class shouldn't matter with the Curriculum for Wales. Tonyrefail Community School have some mixed classes.	Smaller schools and schools with decreasing projections can face challenges. It can be a negative thing when the breadth of ages and abilities differ significantly.
45.	Why is there waiting list for in-catchment pupils in Tonyrefail Community School some pupils have been denied a place.	Admission applications can be appealed. In-catchment pupils get priority. If the proposal goes ahead, the catchments will change to include Tref y Rhyg Primary School pupils, who would then be considered in-catchment pupils. It is a risk for any parent/carer to pick an out of catchment school.
46.	The attendance will be a battle. This decision is purely about money. You need to listen to what this means for families.	RCTCBC's Cabinet will make the decision based on all of the factors. It is a difficult decision to make, and they will take into account all of the feedback of the consultation process. The emotional impact of this proposal will be made clear to RCTCBC's Cabinet.
47.	It may take time to put in place the specialist provision for ALN pupils. There is concern that it won't be a seamless transition, and there is not a lot of time if a decision on the proposal is made in April.	There is a full academic year to make submissions to the ALN Panel for specialist provision. We cannot predict what the ALN Panel will say or decide based on school submissions.
48.	Do you have figures for the local developments? Are you looking at how many houses will be built? I think RCTCBC is underestimating the developments happening in Tonyrefail.	Information was provided from RCTCBC's Planning team, and these figures will be included in our calculations. If you wish us to check specific figures, we can provide a detailed response as part of the Consultation Report.
49.	The timing of the closure doesn't make sense due to the number of local developments. There could be 98 children in the neighbouring development next year.	There is a surplus capacity in RCTCBC schools due to declining birthrates. We will share these details and include it in the Consultation Report.

#### 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](mailto:schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk).

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed at 17:48.