

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT COUNTY HALL AND ON ZOOM ON TUESDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

PRESENT

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)

County Councillors J Berriman, J Brignell-Thorp, J Charlton, S Cox, S C Davies, M J Dorrance, P Roberts, D Selby and D A Thomas

In attendance: County Councillors J Brignell-Thorp, A Davies, B Davies, GD Jones, G Thomas, E Vaughan.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor R Church.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported.

3. LLANFYLLIN / NORTH WELSHPOOL CATCHMENT REVIEW

Cabinet considered the findings of the review of education in the Llanfyllin / North Welshpool catchments which had restarted in April 2023. The report set out a revised preferred way forward for the catchment. If accepted, individual proposals would be brought forward and consulted on.

The report also set out the comments of local members, County Councillors Aled Davies, Bryn Davies, Arwel Jones, Lucy Roberts and Gwynfor Thomas. Councillors Aled Davies, Bryn Davies and Gwynfor Thomas expanded on their comments in the meeting. Councillor Aled Davies stressed the importance of capital investment and said there was risk of savings being lost if parents chose to send their children to different schools. It was confirmed that the Council had a legal duty to provide pupils transport from their home to the nearest school even if it was in a neighbouring local authority. Councillor Bryn Davies highlighted the need for bilingual outcome Welsh medium education in the area fully supported by Trochi.

Councillor Elwyn Vaughan speaking as the Chair of WESP also noted the need for Trochi support. Councillor Gwynfor Thomas presented the recommendations of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee. The Committee had made 11 recommendations which would receive a formal response.

The Scrutiny Committee and local members were thanked for their comments. It was stressed that at the heart of the vision for schools transformation was learner entitlement so that every pupil had the same opportunity through the curriculum for Wales. Smaller schools did not have the same capacity as bigger schools to deliver the curriculum.

RESOLVED

- i) That, subject to the statutory processes as outlined in the School Organisation's Code, the Council's indicative preferred way forward for schools in the Llanfyllin / North Welshpool catchment is as follows:

Llangedwyn C. in W. School, Llanfechain C. in W. School, Llansantffraid C. in W. School

- To close Llangedwyn C. in W. School, pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School.
- To explore with Llansantffraid C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School the possibility of establishing a dual sited school in the area
- To provide a new building in the future to replace Llansantffraid C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School

Ysgol Bro Cynllaith, Ysgol Pennant, Ysgol Llanrhaeadr

- Ysgol Pennant and Ysgol Llanrhaeadr to continue to operate as standalone schools. Support Ysgol Llanrhaeadr to move along the language continuum.
- To consider, when appropriate, the possibility of establishing a dual sited school in future.
- To close Ysgol Bro Cynllaith, Powys-based pupils to transfer to Ysgol Llanrhaeadr. Trochi support to be provided to enable pupils to transfer to the Welsh-medium stream if they wish to do so.

Brynhafren C.P. School, Ardleen C.P. School, Carreghofa C.P. School, Llandysilio C. in W. School

- To close Brynhafren C.P. School, pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys
- To explore with Ardleen C.P. School, Carreghofa C.P. School and Llandysilio C. in W. School the possibility of establishing a new multi-sited school in the area, with the potential of a new build at a later stage
- To explore the possibility of establishing Welsh-medium early years/primary provision in the area.

Ysgol Llanfyllin and Ysgol Meifod

- Provide a new community campus for pupils aged 4-18 in Llanfyllin, replacing the current Ysgol Llanfyllin buildings, when capital funding is available.
- To support Ysgol Llanfyllin to move along the language continuum.

- **Options for Ysgol Meifod to be considered alongside the building development in Llanfyllin.**

ii) To bring back proposal papers in respect of Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Brynhafren C.P. School in October 2023.

iii) To bring back a proposal paper in respect of Ysgol Bro Cynllaith early in 2024.

iv) To undertake further activity to implement the indicative preferred way forward in accordance with the timeline outlined in 2.41 of the report.

4. YSGOL BRO CAEREINION LANGUAGE CATEGORY
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Cabinet was asked to give approval for commencement of the statutory process to move Ysgol Bro Caereinion along the language continuum to make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Bro Caereinion from dual-stream to Welsh-medium. This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025.

County Councillor Gareth Jones spoke as a local member to say that the governors welcomed the proposal. He stressed the need for appropriate support to be put in place. He noted that the change was happening organically with no new pupils entering the English stream and asked whether there could be a two year delay introducing this for admissions to Year 7. Officers acknowledged that there were concerns from the parents of pupils in the English medium stream, but it was felt that this was the right option. If accepted there would be a programme of support by Trochi. It was stressed that no decisions had been taken yet and that there would be full consultation on the proposals.

County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan spoke as Chair of WESP to welcome the proposal and to call for support for pupils and parents. County Councillor Aled Davies spoke as the leader of the opposition. He said there were concerns for other schools in the area and he called on the Cabinet to release its blueprint for the schools' estate. County Councillor Bryn Davies argued that bilingual outcome Welsh medium education should be the norm but expressed concern that there wouldn't be enough pupils for the school to be viable.

County Councillor Gwynfor Thomas presented the comments and recommendations of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee. On school transport, which had been raised by Scrutiny, the Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys advised that he felt that a review of the policy was due, but that Welsh Government first needed to bring forward the learner transport measure.

The Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys thanked members for their comments. He said that the proposal showed the Cabinet's commitment to Welsh medium education in Montgomeryshire.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approves commencing the statutory process on the following proposal in order to move Ysgol Bro Caereinion along the language continuum:

- **To make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Bro Caereinion from dual stream to Welsh-medium.**
- **This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025.**

This would mean that:

- English-medium provision would be phased out gradually year by year, starting with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025 –pupils would be taught in Welsh-medium classes and become fully bilingual i.e. fluent in both Welsh and English.
- Additional Welsh language support would be provided alongside the change e.g. Trochi provision, Welsh language training for staff and parents.

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)