

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

27th September 2016

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Arwel Jones
Portfolio Holder for Education**

**SUBJECT: Llanbister C.P. School and Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P.
School**

REPORT FOR: Decision

Summary

1. Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 26th January 2016, the authority carried out formal consultation on closure of Llanbister C.P. School and Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School
2. The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet members of the responses received to the consultation and to determine whether or not to proceed with the statutory process to close Llanbister C.P. School and Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School
3. The report is supported by the following appendices:

Llanbister C.P. School

Appendix A – Consultation Document – Llanbister C.P. School

Appendix B – Consultation Report – Llanbister C.P. School

Appendix C – Minutes of meetings with School Council, staff, governors and parents / community – Llanbister C.P. School

Appendix D – Impact Assessments – Llanbister C.P. School

Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School

Appendix E – Consultation Document – Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School

Appendix F – Consultation Report – Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School

Appendix G – Minutes of meetings with School Council, staff, governors and parents / community – Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School

Appendix H – Impact Assessments – Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School

General

Appendix I – Extract from minutes of County Council on 8th September 2016

Background

The Consultation Periods

4. On the 26th January 2016, Cabinet considered reports in relation to Llanbister C.P. School and Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School and approved the commencement of consultation on closure of the two school from the 31st December 2016. The consultation periods commenced on the 11th February 2016, and were due to end on the 24th March 2016. However, the consultation periods were extended, and eventually ended on the 5th May 2016.
5. The consultation documents were available on the Council's website throughout the consultation period. The documents were also distributed to stakeholders as required by the School Organisation Code (2013). The consultation documents that were issued are attached as Appendix A (Llanbister) and Appendix E (Llanfihangel Rhydithon).
6. Consultees were invited to respond to the consultations by either completing online consultation forms, filling in paper copies of the forms and returning them to the School Modernisation Team, or by writing to the School Modernisation Team.
7. During the consultation periods, meetings were held with the following at each school:
 - The School Council
 - Staff
 - Governors
 - Parents / community

Consultation Responses – Llanbister C.P. School

8. A total of 194 written responses were received to the consultation. This includes responses received via the online response form, the paper response form, other written responses and responses from pupils received using the questionnaire in the young people's version of the consultation document.
9. All issues raised during the consultation period, including those raised in written responses and those raised in the consultation meetings, are listed in the Consultation Report (attached as Appendix B), along with the authority's response to these issues.

10. Concerns were raised relating to the capacity of the named receiving school, namely Crossgates C.P. School. Information was also received which suggests that pupil numbers are likely to increase significantly at Llanbister C.P. school to a point where the school will have more than 50 pupils on roll. Reference was also made to the impact of the additional travel to Crossgates C.P. School or the nearest alternative school on pupil well-being and the possible impact closure of the school would have on the community.

Consultation Responses – Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School

11. A total of 129 written responses were received to the consultation. This includes responses received via the online response form, the paper response form, other written responses and responses from pupils received using the questionnaire in the young people's version of the consultation document.
12. All issues raised during the consultation period, including those raised in written responses and those raised in the consultation meetings, are listed in the Consultation Report (attached as Appendix B), along with the authority's response to these issues.
13. Concerns were raised relating to the capacity of the named receiving school, namely Crossgates C.P. School. Information was also received which suggests that an increase in pupil numbers is likely at Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School, and reference was made to the impact of additional travel to Crossgates C.P. School or the nearest alternative school on pupil well-being and the possible impact closure of the school would have on the community.

Proposal

14. The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code outlines the statutory procedures for school reorganisation proposals. Following consultation, the Code states that the decision-maker (the Cabinet) can consider the following ways forward:
 - To publish the Proposal as consulted on with any appropriate modifications;
 - To abandon the Proposal;
 - To significantly recast the Proposals and re-consult.

Llanbister C.P. School

15. Consideration has been given to the specific circumstances of Llanbister C.P. School and the issues raised during the consultation, and on the 8th September 2016, the Council discussed the following recommendation in respect of the school:

To abandon the Proposal and to bring a new report back to Cabinet with **draft recommendations** for Llanbister C.P. School in accordance with the Schools Reorganisation Policy 2015, by no later than the end of November 2016.

Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School

16. Consideration has been given to the specific circumstances of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School and the issues raised during the consultation. On the 8th September 2016, the Council discussed the following recommendation in respect of the school:

To approve the publication of a Statutory Notice in respect of closure of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School from the 31st August 2017.

At the meeting, the Council voted to support an alternative recommendation which would retain educational provision in Dolau.

17. Having taken this into consideration, the recommendation in respect of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School has been revised. The new recommendation is as follows:

To abandon the Proposal and to bring a new report back to Cabinet with **draft recommendations** for Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School in accordance with the Schools Reorganisation Policy 2015, by no later than the end of November 2016.

One Powys Plan

18. 'Transforming Learning and Skills' is one of the priorities within the One Powys Plan. Within this priority, the Plan states that *'We need to re-organise schools (primary, secondary and post 16) to ensure affordability, sustainability and appropriate leadership capacity.'*

Options considered/available

19. The School Organisation Review Panel (SORP) discussed a range of possible options in relation to Llanbister C.P. School and Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School with the governing bodies before agreeing the draft proposals to close the schools. These were outlined in the papers considered by Cabinet on the 26th January 2016, and were also listed in the Consultation Documents issued in respect of the proposals (Appendix A and E).
20. Following the consultation period and publication of the Consultation Report, the following options are available to Cabinet:

- To publish the Proposal as consulted on with any appropriate modifications;
- To abandon the Proposal;
- To significantly recast the Proposals and re-consult.

Preferred Choice and Reasons

21. The preferred choice is to abandon the current Proposals in respect of Llanbister C.P. School and Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School. The reasons for this are:
- Increase expected in pupil numbers at the two schools
 - The impact of significant additional travel for some of the pupils
22. However, resilience of leadership capacity at both schools is a significant concern. In addition, the Authority remains concerned about the standards of education at Llanbister C.P. School, as the school is currently in Special Measures.
23. It is recommended that a new report is brought to Cabinet with **draft recommendations** for Llanbister C.P. School and Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School in accordance with the Schools Reorganisation Policy 2015, which considers the circumstances of the two schools alongside the Authority's aspiration for primary education, which is to have 'headteachers with no classroom responsibilities.'
24. It is recommended that a new report is brought back to Cabinet with draft recommendations by no later than the end of November 2016.

Sustainability and Environmental Issues/Equalities/Crime and Disorder,/Welsh Language/Other Policies etc

25. The Equality Impact Assessments and Community Impact Assessments in respect of the original proposals have been updated following the consultation period, and are included in Appendix D and Appendix H. In addition, Integrated Impact Assessments have been produced in relation to the original proposals, these are also included in Appendix D and Appendix H.

Children and Young People's Impact Statement - Safeguarding and Wellbeing

26. The authority's Schools Transformation Programme is intended to improve educational outcomes for children and young people. This aligns with the aspiration to improve safeguarding and well-being for children and young people.

Local Member(s)

Cllr Hywel Lewis: I am delighted at the Portfolio Holder for Education's new recommendation for Llanfihangel Rhydithon CP School. I would now ask that the Portfolio Holder and officers enter into a meaningful dialogue with the school and all those concerned with it to ensure the current quality education received by the children of Dolau continues for the future children of the area.

Other Front Line Services

N/A

Support Services (Legal, Finance, Corporate Property, HR, ICT, Business Services)

The Corporate Solicitor comments as follows: Would support the recommendations and can confirm that legal advice will continue to be provided to support the same.

The Finance Business Partner comments as follows: The estimated savings in relation to closure of both schools for the 2016/17 financial year totalled £157k, net of transport costs, and excluding any redundancy costs.

The Schools Service has a savings target in the MTFS for Transformation for the 2017/18 financial year of £120k. The current savings projected to be achieved against the £120k are £96k. This currently leaves a projected shortfall of £24k.

Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc

N/A

Corporate Communications

Communications Comment: This issue is of significant public interest and Cabinet's decision should be publicised widely by press release and through all the council's social media channels

Statutory Officers

The **Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer)** has commented as follows: I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report.

The **Strategic Director Resources (Section 151 Officer)** notes the comments made by Finance. The projected shortfall of £24k will require further savings to be identified.

Members' Interests

The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If Members have an interest they should declare it at the start of the meeting and complete the relevant notification form.

Recommendations:	Reason for Recommendations:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To receive and consider the Consultation Reports in respect of the Proposals to close Llanbister C.P. School and Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. Schools 2. To abandon the Proposal in respect of Llanbister C.P. School and bring a new report back to Cabinet with draft recommendations for Llanbister C.P. School in accordance with the Schools Reorganisation Policy 2015, by no later than the end of November 2016. 3. To abandon the Proposal in respect of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School and bring a new report back to Cabinet with draft recommendations for Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School in accordance with the Schools Reorganisation Policy 2015, by no later than the end of November 2016. 	<p>To provide a sustainable model of primary education</p>

Relevant Policy (ies):	School Transformation Policy		
Within Policy:	Y	Within Budget:	Y

Relevant Local Member(s):	Cllr John Brunt, Cllr Hywel Lewis
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Marianne Evans
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	End of November 2016

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Background Papers used to prepare Report: