

**EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD
AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON
THURSDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2016**

Builth Wells and Llandrindod High Schools

The Portfolio Holder for Education advised that following consultation he was not proposing to change the recommendation to Cabinet to close Builth Wells High School and Llandrindod High School and to establish a new dual stream 11-18 secondary school that will operate across the current sites of the two schools from 1st September 2017.

County Councillor Dorrance asked if the recommendation included moving Welsh medium education from Brecon High School to Builth Wells High School as felt this would predetermine where Welsh medium education would be provided. The Portfolio Holder for Education explained that there would be a further consultation on the provision of Welsh medium education in Brecon. Councillor Dorrance asked about capacity and the Portfolio Holder advised that there were currently 134 spare places. Councillor Dorrance noted that the capacity would change as a result of the proposals.

County Councillor Gary Price asked if the Portfolio Holder felt the current leadership of the schools were weak. The Portfolio Holder said he did not but that merging the leadership teams would help improve outcomes for learners. Councillor Price asked if the Portfolio Holder had seen the email sent by the Chair of Governors of Llandrindod High School. The Portfolio Holder confirmed he had and that it would be taken into account as part of the consultation. Councillor Price noted the comments from Estyn in the consultation analysis that the proposals failed to demonstrate how they would improve standards. The Portfolio Holder replied that past experience showed that outcomes had improved. Councillor Price noted that £17m capital had been allocated for the scheme and he argued that it would be more beneficial to use the money to address the backlog of £3.5m works at both schools. Councillor Price pointed to a number of errors in the consultation analysis.

County Councillor Gwilym Williams questioned if Welsh medium education would be sustainable in Builth Wells without children attending from Brecon. He noted the improved GCSE results. He referred to Estyn's assessment that the plans were unlikely to improve standards. He called on the Cabinet to abandon the proposals until the issue of the Welsh language provision in Brecon had been determined. The Portfolio Holder for Education again confirmed that there would be a separate consultation on Welsh language provision. He advised that level 2 inclusive results remained unchanged between 2015 and 2016 and that A level A to C results had fallen from 78% in 2015 to 70% in 2016.

County Councillor John Morris asked what the costs would be to the Council if the two schools closed and was advised that Builth Wells High School had a deficit of £103,000 and Llandrindod High School a surplus of £65,900.

County Councillor Maureen Mackenzie said that the public were dismayed by the proposals and needed clarity on how standards would improve as a result of the proposals. She suggested that sharing of resources across both schools would improve standards and argued that both schools should be supported to make best use of their resources.

County Councillor Myfanwy Alexander said that there should not be a presumption that reorganisation would raise standards. She argued that the best way forward was progressive stability.

County Councillor Huw Williams asked for clarification on the provision of Welsh medium education and the Portfolio Holder advised that the proposal was for a dual stream school.

County Councillor David Meredith advised that he could not support the proposal unless any reference to Welsh medium education in Builth Wells was removed.

County Councillor Aled Davies said that the proposal had to be financially viable and that it could only be sustainable if Brecon pupils came to Builth Wells for Welsh language provision.

County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe asked if there was funding for Welsh medium provision in both Brecon and Builth. The Portfolio Holder advised that at the moment both Brecon High School and Builth Wells High School had dual streams and that if as a result of the consultation the proposal was to continue dual streams on both sites the funding would have to be found.

County Councillor Gwilym Vaughan argued that every pupil should have the choice to be educated in medium of Welsh and that they should have access to the full range of services. The Portfolio Holder noted that currently Brecon High School offered three subjects in Welsh and that Builth Wells High School offered ten.

County Councillor Meredith argued that this was because the Council had never funded Brecon High School's category 2b status and that as a result children were being transported out of county to access Welsh medium education.

County Councillor Mackenzie noted that the timescales for the Builth Wells High School and Llandrindod High School was the same as that for Brecon High School and Gwernyfed High Schools and that had been identified as a risk by Estyn. She remained dismayed by the narrowness of the proposal and didn't look at the potential for sharing resources and skills. Councillor Mackenzie proposed that the Cabinet abandon the proposals for Builth Wells High School and Llandrindod High School for a period of consolidation of up to 2 years to allow the leaderships teams of both schools to work together on joint proposals to raise standards. The proposal was seconded by County Councillor Alexander.

It was confirmed that this would not affect 21st Century Schools funding nor would it have any implication for the Brecon High School and Gwernyfed High School consultation.

The proposal was put to the vote. The Solicitor to the Council reminded Members that the vote would be a recommendation to the Cabinet and would not be binding on them. He also reminded Members that the Cabinet would not be voting as they did not wish to be seen to have predetermined the issue.

The proposal was passed by 32 votes to 9 with 3 abstentions.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the proposals for Builth Wells High School and Llandrindod High school be abandoned for a period of up to 2 years to allow the leadership teams of both schools to work together on joint proposals to raise standards.