

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
30th April 2014**

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Steve Davies, Portfolio Holder for HR
ICT and Communications**

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor David Jones

Will the Portfolio Holder give details of the publicity provided by his department prior to the county-wide consultation on ALN and is he satisfied that everyone had enough information to make a meaningful contribution to the proposed changes?

ALN Consultation Publicity

The information below lists the work carried out to raise awareness of the ALN consultation and the meetings held. (The consultation period ran from 3rd February, 2014 to 17th March, 2014.)

Direct Correspondence

Primary and secondary headteachers were informed at a conference held prior to the consultation period that the consultation would start on February 3rd.

On the 3rd February, letters were sent to parents of primary and secondary school pupils (via the schools) highlighting the consultation. Parents were referred to the consultation document online or to their local school which was provided with a paper copy. Additionally, the letter invited parents to contact the Schools Service for a paper copy if they preferred.

Letters were also sent to schools and governors the same week, along with a large number of other stakeholders, including trade unions, local politicians, all community and town councils in the county, any third parties involved in ALN provision, Welsh Government and neighbouring authorities.

Media

Media enquiries

The council started to receive media enquiries on the subject on 5 February and has received six in total. Below is the breakdown:

- **6/2/14 South Wales Evening Post Online**

12-year-old Swansea Valley autistic girl writes heartfelt letter to save special education units

A Swansea Valley girl with autism has written an open letter to councillors in a heartfelt plea to save several special education units from closure...

[Reactive statement provided]

- **6/2/14 BBC Online**

Fears over Powys education units closure proposals

Protest groups have criticised a council's move to close specialist units for children with additional learning needs in Powys...

[Reactive statement provided]

- **7/2/14 Western Mail**

Pg 14 – Protestors aim to block school cuts

Thousands of people have signed an online petition fighting plans to shut all units for children with additional learning needs at schools in Powys...

[Reactive statement provided]

- **14/2/14 County Times**

Pg 2 – ‘Lifeline’ blow to special needs children

Children with special needs will be denied “an absolute lifeline” if council plans to close specialist units are approved, say parents...

[Reactive statement provided]

The following information was provided in response to the above four enquiries:

“The council is proposing changing the way it provides education for children between the ages of 3 and 11 with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

The proposals have been developed following the Estyn inspection of the council in 2011 and its follow up visit in 2012 which found 'important shortcomings' in our existing ALN provision.

Our consultation document can be found by visiting www.powys.gov.uk/haveyoursay

Anyone wishing to comment on the proposals have until 5pm on Monday 17 March to do so."

Another two media enquiries were received, see below:

- **11/3/14 BBC Wales – ALN Update**
- **11/3/14 ITV Wales – ALN Update**

The following statement was provided in response to the above two enquiries:

*Powys County Council Cabinet Member, Councillor Graham Brown said:
"Consultation on the proposed changes to the way education is delivered for primary age children who have Additional Learning Needs (ALN) will end on Monday (March 17). The funding proposals for the service identified as part of the annual budget process have been removed by the council with the shortfall met from general reserves.*

"Feedback and analysis from the consultation exercise will be reported back to the cabinet for further discussion. No date has yet been set for that discussion."

News releases

PR 5943 – Views sought on ALN education proposals (see copy release at Appendix 1)

This news release was issued on 13 February 2014 and was sent to the following media outlets:

- Hereford Times
- Radio Hafren
- BBC Online
- MyNewtown
- Daily Post
- Mid Wales Journal
- South Wales Evening Post
- Western Mail
- Shropshire Star

Coverage

- **18/2/14 Hereford Times Online**

Changes for Hay-on-Wye's Additional Learning Needs youngsters
Big changes in the way children with Additional Learning Needs are educated in Hay-on-Wye are being planned from September...
[Pro-active news release]

- **27/2/14 Hereford Times**

Pg 26 – Pupils with ALN 'may go to local school'
Big changes in the way children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) are educated in Hay-on-Wye are being planned...
[Pro-active news release]

PR 5947 - Further ALN information published (see Appendix 1)

This news release was issued on 19 February 2014 and was sent to the following media outlets:

- Hereford Times
- Shropshire Star
- BBC Online
- MyWelshpool
- ITV Wales
- County Times
- Cambrian News
- Oswestry & Border Chronicle
- Daily Post
- Mid Wales Journal
- BBC Newsgathering Wales
- South Wales Evening Post
- MyNewtown
- Western Mail
- Brecon & Radnor Express

Coverage

- **27/2/14 Brecon and Radnor Express**

Pg 3 – Campaigners step up specialist units fight
Further information on specialist education units proposed for closure has been published by Powys County Council...
[Pro-active news release]

- **28/2/14 County Times**

Pg 4 – Have your say on schools

Powys County Council (PCC) has published further information on additional learning needs (ALN) provision in the county's primary schools...

[Pro-active news release]

- **6/3/14 Cambrian News**

Front Page – Threat to two special needs units (continues on page three)

Special education support units at primary schools in Machynlleth and Llanidloes will close, if a Powys County Council plan to save almost £500,000 a year goes ahead...

[Pro-active news release]

- **12/3/14 Brecon and Radnor Express Online**

Powys learning needs consultation deadline looms

A consultation on closing specialist units at Powys primary schools closes this week...

[Pro-active news release]

- **13/3/14 Brecon and Radnor Express**

Pg 2 – ALN deadline

A consultation on closing specialist units at Powys primary schools closed this week...

[Pro-active news release]

- **14/3/14 County Times**

Pg 2 – Consultation

A consultation on closing specialists units at Powys primary schools closes this week...

[Pro-active news release]

Another nine media articles appeared on the matter. The council was not given the opportunity to provide a comment on the articles below.

- **6/2/14 Brecon and Radnor Express**

Front Page – Fears over school units

Parents of children who require dedicated support in school have hit out at plans to close specialist units within primary schools in Powys...

[Article refers to Powys County Council]

- **7/2/14 County Times**

Pg 2 – Fury at threat facing special needs units
Concerns have been raised over council plans to shut units for children with additional learning needs...
[Article refers to Powys County Council]

- **10/2/14 County Times Online**

Fury at threat facing special needs units
Concerns have been raised over council plans to shut units for children with additional learning needs...
[Article refers to Powys County Council]

- **10/2/14 News North Wales Online**

Fury at threat facing special needs units
Concerns have been raised over council plans to shut units for children with additional learning needs...
[Article refers to Powys County Council]

- **13/2/14 Brecon and Radnor Express**

Pg 2 – Schools campaigner to meet AMs
A campaigner fighting plans to close specialist learning needs units in Powys is due to meet with Assembly Members...
[Article refers to Powys County Council]

- **14/2/14 County Times**

Front Page – Special needs units are a lifeline
Children with special needs will be denied “an absolute lifeline” if council plans to close specialist units are approved, say parents...
[Article refers to Powys County Council]

- **14/2/14 Mid Wales Journal**

Front Page – Concern at bid to axe learning needs units
Concerns have been raised over council plans to shut units for children with additional learning needs in Powys...
[Article refers to Powys County Council]

- **22/2/14 Western Mail**

Pg 19 – Protest to save primary units
Parents are staging a mass lobby of Powys County Council headquarters to protest against plans to shut specialist units at schools in the county...
[Article refers to Powys County Council]

- **5/3/14 Cambrian News Online**

Threat to two special needs units

Special education support units at primary schools in Machynlleth and Llanidloes will close, if a Powys County Council plan to save almost £500,000 a year goes ahead...

[Article refers to Powys County Council]

There were 21 media articles in total on the subject.

An article on the consultation also featured in print and online in the February edition of the council's staff and member magazine, cyswllt:connect.

Online and social media

Date	Subject
3/2/14	Consultation launched via www.powys.gov.uk/haveyoursay . The consultation had its own page at http://www.powys.gov.uk/index.php?id=16906&L=0 and this is still accessible. The page now explains that the consultation has closed.
3/2/14 – 17/3/14	Consultation featured on carousel on front page of www.powys.gov.uk .
3/2/14	Facebook post re consultation
3/2/14	Twitter post re consultation
25/2/14	Twitter post re ALN Budget decision
26/2/14	Twitter post re consultation
26/2/14	Facebook post re consultation
26/2/14	Twitter post re additional info published online
26/2/14	Facebook post re further information published
3/3/14	Twitter post re young person's guide directing people to consultation page
12/3/14	Reminder of closing date via Twitter

Meetings

Meetings with all school councils (where there is a unit) took place within the consultation period and were led by the local headteacher or member of staff alongside a member of the Schools Service. A pre-prepared list of questions was used to try and ensure consistency. Pupils with ALN were amongst the school council members.

The Chief Executive, Cabinet Member responsible and Interim Head of Schools also met with the campaign group HOOSUP (Hands Off our Special Units Powys) in Llandrindod Wells.

Responses from stakeholders

The Schools Service received approximately 750 responses to the consultation from stakeholders.

Appendix 1

Copies of news releases issued:



News Release

PR 5943

For Immediate Release

13 February 2014

Views sought on ALN education proposals

People in Powys are being asked for their views on proposals to change to the way education is delivered for primary age children who have Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Powys County Council is proposing to bring in a new way of supporting these particular children in September. The plans centre on providing their education in their local schools rather than in specialist centres. To support this, funding would be redirected to teams of area based Advisory Teachers and Teaching Assistants.

Pre-school assessments would be carried out locally rather than at specialist centres, again supported by the area teams.

Parents of pupils in Powys have been written to (via their schools) with details of the proposals. Meetings with pupils are also to take place.

Full details of these proposals are available online via www.powys.gov.uk/haveyoursay. The council is asking for comments by 5pm on March 17th, 2014

ENDS

The changes are subject to cabinet approval.

For further information please contact:

Am fanylion pellach cysylltwch â:

John Evans,

Rheolwr Cyfathrebu

Communications Manager

Ffôn/Tel: 01597 826377

Ebost/Email: john.m.evans@powys.gov.uk



News Release

PR 5947

For Immediate Release

19 February 2014

Further ALN information published

Further information on Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision in primary schools in Powys has been published by the county council.

The information is available via Powys County Council's website (www.powys.gov.uk/haveyoursay) and letters offering paper versions of the document have been sent to parents of children in all primary schools in the county.

The extra data, published as the council consults on its proposals for delivering support for children with ALN in a different way, gives full details of the schools which host pre-school and primary specialist units.

People who would like to comment on the proposals can do so via the webpage, or write to Mrs Stephens, PA to Interim head of Schools Service, Powys County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LD1 5LG. Alternatively, they can email education@powys.gov.uk. All responses need to be with the Schools Service by 5pm on March 17, 2014.

ENDS

For further information please contact:

Am fanylion pellach cysylltwch â:

John Evans,

Rheolwr Cyfathrebu

Communications Manager

Ffôn/Tel: 01597 826377

Ebost/Email: john.m.evans@powys.gov.uk