

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS ON MONDAY, 16 MAY 2016

PRESENT

County Councillor K F Tampin (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, D Bailey, R G Brown, J H Brunt, K W Curry, M J B Davies, S C Davies, D E Davies, L R E Davies, E R Davies, A W Davies, M J Dorrance, V E Evans, W J Evans, D O Evans, L Fitzpatrick, R I George, J Gibson-Watt, M R Harris, S M Hayes, A Holloway, G Hopkins, E A Jones, D C Jones, E M Jones, D R Jones, J R Jones, F H Jump, H Lewis, MC Mackenzie, P J Medlicott, DW Meredith, R H Mills, ET Morgan, JG Morris, W J T Powell, WD Powell, GD Price, D R Price, P C Pritchard, G W Ratcliffe, K M Roberts-Jones, J G Shearer, K S Silk, D A Thomas, W B Thomas, A G Thomas, D G Thomas, T J Van-Rees, G P Vaughan, D H Williams, J M Williams, G I S Williams and E A York

1.	APOLOGIES	CC61- 2016
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors PJ Ashton, GJ Bowker, LV Corfield, S Davies, WT Jones, DJ Mayor, S McNicholas, G Morgan, RG Thomas and SL Williams.

2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	CC62- 2016
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County Councillor JH Brunt declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a member of the corporation board of Neath Port Talbot College.

3.	SECONDARY SCHOOL REORGANISATION IN MID AND SOUTH POWYS	CC63- 2016
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The Monitoring Officer advised Council that legal advice previously received that only the Cabinet could take decisions concerning school reorganisation under Section 53 of the Executive Arrangements was incorrect. The Monitoring Officer was asked who would take decisions on school reorganisation and he advised that under the terms of the current Constitution the decision would be taken by the Cabinet. County Councillors Gareth Ratcliffe and Gary Price gave notice that they would be submitting motions for consideration at the next meeting of Council.

The Chief Executive and Head of Schools set out the strategic context, case for change and proposals for secondary school modernisation in Mid and South Powys. They explained that inconsistent standards, falling pupil numbers and reducing budgets meant that the current arrangements were not sustainable in the long term.

The Portfolio Holder for Education and officers answered questions from members. Members asked whether the Cabinet had considered alternative proposals to those that were being consulted on. It was confirmed that a series of options had been considered and appraised by the School Organisation Review Panel who had then made recommendations to the Cabinet.

The Leader and Cabinet members confirmed that they were amenable to considering other proposals that might come forward in the consultation and it was confirmed that there would be still time to consult on alternative proposals and access Welsh Government 21st Century Schools funding.

A Member asked whether any schools other than Llanfyllin High school had confirmed that they had used delegated budgets to transfer pupils from outside their catchment and was advised that one other school had. Officers provided details of projected school numbers. Officers confirmed that details of proposed housing developments would be incorporated into the report when it came back to Cabinet.

Members asked for clarification on whether the figure of 150 pupils for a viable sixth form was set by the Council or Welsh Government. Officers advised that this figure was partly based on funding and partly based on the number of subjects the Welsh Government wished to see provided. The Head of Schools agreed to let Councillors have details of the evidence base for this.

A Member asked why the proposal for Brecon had changed from the original proposal for a bilingual 11-16 school with a dedicated 6th Form and was advised that Welsh Government did not support this option as it was not transformational.

A number of Members questioned the proposal that 6th form education in Brecon and Gwernyfed be delivered by Neath Port Talbot College (NPTC). Members were advised that NPTC were committed to delivering 20 academic subjects and 5 vocational subjects on the Brecon campus. Members asked about the standards achieved by NPTC and were advised that they were comparable to Powys averages across the secondary sector.

The Portfolio Holder for Education was asked about the payment for attendance at focus groups and he advised that no payments had been made.

Members asked about impact assessments and it was confirmed that equality impact assessments, integrated impact assessments and community impact assessments would be included when the results of the consultation were reported. Officers took on board suggestions made that neighbouring authorities that had been through similar reorganisations could be asked to provide community impact assessments.

A Member questioned the A level results achieved by NPTC and it was confirmed that results were lower than those achieved by Gwernyfed High School. It was also stressed that levels of deprivation should be taken into context. It was also confirmed that the Council would have no responsibility for governance or standards for post 16 education if a tertiary model under NPTC was established.

In response to a question on why Welsh medium education was not being offered in Brecon, it was explained that in 2011 all secondary schools had been challenged to achieve Category 2B status and improve the Welsh medium offer. This had not been successful so a centralised model of Welsh medium education was now being proposed. It was also confirmed that models for all through schools in Brecon and Gwernyfed had been considered but were not judged by the SORP to meet all of the requirements necessary to be sufficiently transformational.

A Member spoke of the need amalgamate schools where appropriate to create a critical mass of pupils so 6th form education could be delivered. A number of Members spoke of the need to get on and end the uncertainty for parents and pupils.

In answer to a question on staffing costs, the Head of Schools explained that 80-82% of school budgets were spent on staffing, both teaching and non- teaching. He agreed to provide details of leadership costs in secondary schools.

County Councillor K F Tampin (Chair)