

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

PRESENT

County Councillor K F Tampin (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, G R Banks, G J Bowker, J H Brunt, L V Corfield, K W Curry, M J B Davies, D E Davies, L R E Davies, E R Davies, S Davies, A W Davies, M J Dorrance, V E Evans, W J Evans, D O Evans, L Fitzpatrick, J Gibson-Watt, P Harris, M R Harris, S M Hayes, G Hopkins, E A Jones, D C Jones, M J Jones, E M Jones, Eldrydd M Jones, G M Jones, D R Jones, W T Jones, F H Jump, P E Lewis, H Lewis, MC Mackenzie, S McNicholas, 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 S Silk, W B Thomas, A 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	CC78- 2016
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors PJ Ashton, D Bailey, R G Brown, S C Davies, R I George, A Holloway, J R Jones, D Mayor, G Morgan, K M Roberts-Jones, J G Shearer, D A Thomas, D G Thomas, R G Thomas, T Turner and S L Williams

2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	CC79- 2016
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County Councillor MJB Davies declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Gwernyfed High School.
 County Councillor GW Ratcliffe declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Gwernyfed High School.
 County Councillor WJT Powell declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Llandrindod High School and Crossgates CP School.
 County Councillor MJB Davies declared a personal non pecuniary interest as his partner was an LEA appointed governor of Brecon High School.
 County Councillor JH Brunt declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Llanbister CP School and a governor of Neath Port Talbot College.
 County Councillor GSI Williams declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Llandrindod High School.
 County Councillor WD Powell declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Gwernyfed High School.
 County Councillor GG Hopkins declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Gwernyfed High School.
 County Councillor ET Morgan declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Brecon High School.
 County Councillor EA York declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Builth Wells High School.
 County Councillor TJ Van-Rees declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Builth Wells High School.

County Councillor M Mackenzie declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Llandrindod High School.

County Councillor DW Meredith declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Brecon High School.

County Councillor KF Tampin declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Llandrindod High School.

The Chief Executive declared a personal interest as the parent of a pupil attending Llandrindod High School and left the meeting whilst this matter was being discussed.

3.	CONSULTATION PROPOSALS AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS ON PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL PROPOSALS TO CABINET ON 27TH SEPTEMBER 2016	CC80- 2016
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Members were reminded of the purpose of the meeting as agreed by Council on 13th July that:

Full Council meets to discuss recommendations relating to Primary and Secondary School proposals that are affected by the Council's Transformation Policy and Schools Reorganisation Policy 2015, to inform the Cabinet of Council's views prior to any decision being taken by Cabinet.

Members of the Cabinet would listen to the points raised by members but would not participate in the debate other than to respond to questions put to them. If a vote was taken they would not take part as they did not wish to be seen as having predetermined any of the recommendations before they were considered by Cabinet on 27th September.

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.

Brecon High School and Gwernyfed High School

The Portfolio Holder for Education advised that following consultation he was proposing to change the recommendation to Cabinet to recommend the following:

1. To abandon elements a,b, and d of the Proposal and to bring a new report back to Cabinet with draft recommendations for Brecon and Gwernyfed High Schools, in accordance with the Schools Reorganisation Policy 2015, by no later than February 2017;
2. To reconsult immediately on element c) of the Proposal i.e. the closure of the Welsh stream at Brecon from September 2017.
3. To immediately submit a revised outline business case to Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Programme for capital investment on both campuses. This will include a new build 11-18 campus in Brecon and improvements to the Gwernyfed campus.

County Councillor Melanie Davies welcomed the revised recommendations and added that she would like to see the Welsh stream retained in Brecon.

County Councillor Matthew Dorrance congratulated the staff, governors and pupils of the schools on the exam results achieved despite the uncertainty hanging over the schools. He asked about the proposals for Welsh medium education and was advised that consultation on Welsh medium education in Brecon couldn't begin until the Cabinet came to a decision on Builth Wells High School and Llandrindod High School as the consultation would have to include a named school where provision would transfer to. It was also confirmed that capacities could be changed between the submission of the outline business case and that the final business case and that the consultation would not impact on the business case.

County Councillor James Gibson-Watt thanked the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Education for their willingness to listen to the views of members. He felt that earlier consultation with schools, governors and communities would have identified flaws in the proposals such as the move to a tertiary system for sixth form education. He felt it was incumbent on the Council to keep Welsh medium education in Brecon High School. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that there would be consultation with stakeholders at an early stage.

County Councillor Alexander congratulated the schools on their exam results and noted that they were producing high quality results in facilitating subjects.

County Councillor Liam Fitzpatrick said the consultation proposals had created unnecessary distress and had led to some pupils moving schools. He asked for and received confirmation that there was no predetermination over the provision of Welsh medium education.

County Councillor Aled Davies asked if Welsh Government would accept the proposal as being sufficiently transformational and was advised that there was a high degree of confidence that the proposals would deliver a new build in Brecon and the refurbishment of Gwernyfed.

County Councillor Ratcliffe thanked the Portfolio Holder for Education and the Leader for changing the recommendations. He asked for the timetable for consultation to be made available and for details of the courses on offer. The Head of Schools advised that not all A Level courses were offered at every school but that every pupil had access to them through the collaborative north Powys and south Powys curriculum. He would arrange for details to be circulated to members.

County Councillor William Powell also thanked the Leader and Portfolio Holder but said that the process had damaged the reputation of the Council. He asked that lessons be learned from what had happened. He asked whether it would be appropriate or legal for proposals to be brought in February 2017 just before the Council went into purdah. The Solicitor to the Council confirmed that the Council would be legally able to proceed in February 2017.

County Councillor David Meredith whilst welcoming the recommendations said that he would continue to fight for the retention of Welsh medium education at Brecon High School. The retention of the sixth form had been warmly welcomed by the community. He noted that 74% of pupils had achieved the level 2 plus standard in GCSE results, a 9% increase on the previous year, and congratulated the Headteacher, staff and pupils on the excellent results

achieved. He hoped that this would lead to Estyn taking the school out of special measures.

County Councillor John Morris argued that there had been a fundamental flaw in the piecemeal approach taken to secondary school provision in the county. The Cabinet now needed to show how the new proposals would raise standards.

County Councillor Gary Price asked if there would be an additional capital allocation and the Strategic Director Resources confirmed that the capital programme would be adjusted. Councillor Price said that whilst he was happy for investment in the schools, it shouldn't be at the expense of other schools and that additional funding would have to be found.

County Councillor David Jones noted the reasons why the original proposals had been made and asked what had changed. The Portfolio Holder for Education said that he had taken account of the strength of feeling from the public during the consultation.

County Councillor Timothy Van-Rees urged the Council to get on with the building of a new school in Brecon.

County Councillor Fitzpatrick asked the Portfolio Holder for Education if he would take the opportunity of sorting out secondary school provision in north Powys. The Portfolio Holder advised that this was not possible at the moment given the amount of work required and resources needed.

County Councillor David Price asked if the proposals would stem the flow of young people out of county to access secondary education and the Portfolio Holder said that he was hopeful that the provision of modern buildings would help in this regard.

Council adjourned at 12.45 and reconvened at 13.30.

PRESENT

County Councillor K F Tampin (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, G R Banks, G J Bowker, J H Brunt, L V Corfield, K W Curry, M J B Davies, D E Davies, L R E Davies, E R Davies, S Davies, A W Davies, M J Dorrance, V E Evans, W J Evans, D O Evans, L Fitzpatrick, J Gibson-Watt, P Harris, M R Harris, S M Hayes, G Hopkins, E A Jones, D C Jones, M J Jones, E M Jones, Eldrydd M Jones, G M Jones, D R Jones, W T Jones, F H Jump, P E Lewis, H Lewis, MC Mackenzie, S McNicholas, 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 S Silk, W B Thomas, A G Thomas, T J Van-Rees, G P Vaughan, D H Williams, J M Williams, G I S Williams and E A York

Llanbister CP School

The Portfolio Holder for Education advised that following consultation he was proposing to abandon his recommendation to Cabinet that Llanbister CP School close and would instead come back to Cabinet with draft recommendations by

November 2016. In doing so he had taken into account a projected significant rise in pupil numbers and the significant travel time for some pupils.

County Councillor John Brunt spoke as the local member to welcome the new recommendation and to pay tribute to the governors, staff and parents. He urged Council to support the recommendation.

County Councillor Gary Price asked why Opinion Research Services had not produced a consultation analysis. He was advised that they had been engaged to produce consultation analyses on the high schools as it had been anticipated that this would be where the greatest number of comments were received. He asked which school Llanbister would amalgamate or federate with and was advised that no decision had been taken yet.

County Councillor Aled Davies asked about the timescale as it was important that uncertainty was ended. He was advised that a paper would be brought to Cabinet in November 2016 but that consultation on any proposals would not start until January 2017 at the earliest.

County Councillor Gibson-Watt asked if the new proposals would come back to full Council before Cabinet and the Portfolio Holder confirmed that they would after consultation and that the status quo was amongst the options that would be considered. The Solicitor to the Council advised that the intention was not to come back to Council at every stage but before a final decision was taken.

Llanfihangel Rhydithon CP School

The Portfolio Holder for Education advised that following consultation he was not proposing to change his recommendation to Cabinet that the school be closed with effect from 31st December 2016 with Crossgates CP School named as the receiving school.

County Councillor Hywel Lewis speaking as the local member noted the comments from Estyn on how impressed they had been by the improvements made at the school. He pointed to the willingness shown by the school to work with other schools, sharing a head with Llanelwedd Church in Wales School and he argued that this model of co-operation should be encouraged. He also advised that the school had approached the diocese with a view to becoming a Church in Wales school.

County Councillor Gary Price asked if the Portfolio Holder had seen an email from the Chair of Governors and the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he had and that it would be considered along with all the other representations received. Councillor Price asked about single year group classes and was advised that Crossgates CP School did not have single year group classes. He also asked whether mobile classrooms were used at Crossgates and was advised that they were not currently used but that no guarantees could be given whether they would be in the future. The Portfolio Holder agreed that it was good to share resources. Councillor Price asked how the closure of the school would contribute to the Council's motto of strong communities in the green heart of Wales. The Portfolio Holder noted that other communities had survived the closure of their schools. He argued that having three or four year groups in the same class was not a good learning environment.

County Councillor Gwilym Williams advised that there were currently 16 children in the playgroup and asked if the projected pupil numbers were wrong and therefore the recommendation should be changed. Officers advised that pupil numbers were projected to be 33 in January 2017 and 34 in January 2021. Councillor Williams disputed this saying that there would be 37 pupils by December. Officers said that their figures were based on the number of places that had been applied for.

County Councillor Gibson-Watt called on the Cabinet to defer a decision to wait for the Rural Schools Policy being developed by Welsh Government.

County Councillor Alexander challenged the notion that small schools were poor schools. She argued that good leadership and partnership was what was needed and that in rural areas there were never going to be large numbers of pupils.

County Councillor Graham Jones asked about the plans for the provision for places for three year olds and was advised that the schools service was confident that there would be enough capacity.

County Councillor David Evans objected to the proposed closure of both Llanfihangel Rhydithon CP School and Nantmel CP School arguing that the primary schools policy had never been placed before Council so didn't have the support of Council.

County Councillor William Powell asked if the Council had been in touch with Welsh Government over their rural schools policy and was advised that whilst officers had been in discussions with Welsh Government officials there had been no information on the policy.

County Councillor Aled Davies asked how many hours provision would be made for 3 year olds and was advised that currently 10 hours were being provided and that the council was proposing increasing this to 12½ hours. The 30 hours early years pre-school provision being talked about by the government was specifically for families where both parents worked. Councillor Davies said that it was important that this provision was close to where children lived and that local primary schools helped provide the service. Officers advised that there was a mixture of provision with some in schools and some independent of schools. Officers confirmed that an exercise mapping provision was close to completion and would be shared with the Portfolio Holder.

County Councillor Huw Williams noted that when proposals to close 11 primary schools in the Ystradgynlais area and replace them with 4 new schools there had not been this level of debate in Council. At the time he had opposed the closures but now thought the new area schools were very successful.

County Councillor Hywel Lewis advised that there were currently 33 pupils at the school with another 4 due to join in January. The nursery was currently full with a waiting list of 4. He noted that many new houses were planned for Crossgates with young couples settling in the area. He noted that the average cost per pupil was £4,410 and that with the additional pupils this would come down to £3,694 which was in line with the Council average.

Councillor Lewis moved that Llanfihangel Rhydithon CP School be allowed to federate with Llanfihangel Church in Wales School or a similar school. County Councillor Garry Banks seconded the proposal.

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 27 votes to 1 with 5 abstentions.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that Llanfihangel Rhydithon CP School be allowed to federate with Llanelwedd Church in Wales School or a similar school.

4.	EXEMPT ITEMS	CC81- 2016
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Council considered the advice of the Chief Executive and the Solicitor to the Council and

RESOLVED to exclude the public for the following items of business on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information under category 1 of The Local Authorities (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007).

County Councillor David Meredith left the meeting.

5.	COMPULSORY REDUNDANCY	CC82- 2016
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Council considered the redundancy package for the Director of Change and Governance consequent upon the Cabinet's decision to remove the post from the Council's organisation structure and make the post holder redundant.

County Councillor Aled Davies left the meeting.

The details of the package were put to the vote and passed by 32 votes to 3 with 1 abstention.

RESOLVED to approve the redundancy package.

County Councillor K F Tampin (Chair)