

## Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee

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Meeting Venue  
**Council Chamber - County Hall**

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Meeting Date  
**Wednesday, 22 January 2020**

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Meeting Time  
**2.30 pm**

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For further information please contact  
**Elizabeth Patterson**

elizabeth.patterson@powys.gov.uk



County Hall  
Llandrindod Wells  
Powys  
LD1 5LG

Issue Date: 16<sup>th</sup>  
January 2020

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The use of Welsh by participants is welcomed. If you wish to use Welsh please inform us by noon, two working days before the meeting

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### AGENDA

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>
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To receive apologies for absence.

<b>2.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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To receive declarations of interest from Members.

<b>3.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP</b>
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To receive disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member has been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

(NB: Members are reminded that under Section 78 Members having been given a prohibited party whip cannot vote on a matter before the Committee.)

<b>4.</b>	<b>STRATEGIC REVIEW OF SCHOOLS</b>
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To consider the Transforming Education in Powys - Case for Change and Vision for Powys Schools.

(Pages 3 - 82)

<b>5.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>
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To authorise the Chair to sign the minutes of the following meeting(s) as a correct record:

- 7<sup>th</sup> October 2019
- 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019
- 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019
- 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019

(Pages 83 - 122)

<b>6.</b>	<b>CHAIR'S BRIEFING</b>
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To receive a verbal update from the Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee.

<b>7.</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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The following meetings are planned:

Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee

30<sup>th</sup> January 2020 - Budget Proposals Schools Service

2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 - Verified Standards, attendance and exclusions (to include numbers of repeat exclusions and how excludee returns or moves are managed)

National Categorisation

ERW – annual attendance by ERW Managing Director

6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 - Pre-decision scrutiny Strategic Review of Schools Business Case

Briefing

7<sup>th</sup> February 2020 – ALN and Specialist Centres

9<sup>th</sup> March 2020 – Strategic Review of Schools – Stage 2 engagement exercise and emerging business case

## **Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee**

**22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020**

### **Scrutiny briefing on:**

- **Transforming Education in Powys**

The last time scrutiny looked at this subject was ahead of the decision on Post-16 education which was considered at Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2019. Scrutiny had undertaken pre-Cabinet scrutiny of these proposals and the scrutiny observations on that paper were attached to the Cabinet agenda of that date.

Since then Scrutiny Members have had the following briefing sessions on Transforming Education:

- 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019 – briefing on primary school data
- 27<sup>th</sup> September 2019 – briefing on secondary school data
- 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019 – briefing on school transformation – engagement to date and emerging guiding principles

Scrutiny Members (including Co-opted Members) have also had the opportunity to attend all Councillor Member briefings on Transforming Education which were held on the following dates:

- 21<sup>st</sup> October 2019 – briefing on Transforming Education
- 20<sup>th</sup> December 2019 – briefing on Transforming Education
- 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020 – briefing on Transforming Education

These briefings have updated Members on progress of the Transforming Education process as it proceeds.

At Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2020 the papers which will be under discussion at scrutiny on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020 will be considered. The Chair has indicated he will attend Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2020 and will be able to update Committee on the outcome of that meeting.

This scrutiny session is an opportunity to examine the Case for Change and Vision for Powys Schools prior to the consultation exercise being undertaken. Scrutiny can provide any comments or raise issues regarding the Case for Change and Vision to the Portfolio Holder and Senior Officers prior to the engagement commencing.

During the engagement process scrutiny will have an opportunity to consider and respond to the questions which will feed into the revised vision and guiding principles prior to its consideration by Cabinet in April 2020.

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.**

**CABINET EXECUTIVE  
21<sup>st</sup> January 2020**

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Phyl Davies  
Portfolio Holder for Education and Property

**REPORT TITLE:** Strategic Review of Schools

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**REPORT FOR:** Decision

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**1. Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on developments relating to the Council's Strategic Review of Schools, and to seek approval to carry out wider engagement in order to inform the next steps.

1.2 The report is supported by the following appendices:

**Appendix A** – School Conference Report

**Appendix B** – Summary of Engagement Exercise

**Appendix C** – Case for Change Report

**Appendix D** – Transforming Education in Powys – A Vision for Powys Schools

**2. Background**

2.1 On the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2019, the Council's Cabinet considered a report relating to Post-16 provision in Powys. This report presented the findings of the Stage 1 review of sixth form provision in Powys which had been carried out, and recommended developing a detailed business case considering the cost-benefit implication and impact of structural change to sixth form provision in Powys. The intention was that this business case would be considered by Cabinet in January 2020.

2.2 At around the same time, Estyn's report on its recent inspection of Powys Education Services was published. The report outlined significant concerns regarding the Council's progress on school reorganisation, and includes a recommendation to 'Ensure that the organisation of provision for non-maintained, post-16, Welsh-medium education and secondary education meets the needs of children and young people of Powys.'

2.3 In order to meet the critical challenges facing education in Powys, as outlined in the recent Estyn inspection, the Council has recognised the

need to review education provision in the county more broadly than just post-16, and has been engaging with a range of key stakeholders in order to shape a vision for education in Powys for the future.

2.4 The engagement carried out to date has consisted of the following:

**21<sup>st</sup> October 2019** – Members seminar

**24<sup>th</sup> October 2019** – Schools Conference, which was attended by Headteachers and School Governors from schools across Powys

**11<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019** – Engagement with school governors as part of the governor briefings arranged in North, Mid and South Powys

**19<sup>th</sup> November 2019 – 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019** – Engagement with school staff in each cluster area

**3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019** – Schools Service Staff

**13<sup>th</sup> December 2019** – Town and Community Councils

2.4 All engagement events used the same format:

- A data presentation, giving an overview of the current Powys schools infrastructure. The data presented is available online at: <https://sway.office.com/8aTHND8fR5JPYfik?ref=email>
- Group discussions to complete a SPIN<sup>1</sup> exercise in order to identify the problems facing the Powys schools infrastructure and what we need to do to address this.

2.5 Feedback from all sessions was collated, and the findings are summarised in **Appendix A and Appendix B.**

2.6 Based on the feedback received during the engagement events, a Case for Change Report has been prepared, which outlines the key challenges facing education in Powys. This is attached as **Appendix C.**

2.7 In addition, a further draft document has been prepared which outlines an emerging vision for education in Powys. This is attached as **Appendix D.**

2.8 The intention is that the document attached in Appendix D is the subject of Stage 2 of the engagement exercise during the Spring Term, following which an updated document and implementation plan will be considered by Cabinet. The questions included in the document will be amended according to audience for use during the engagement exercise.

### 3. **Advice**

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<sup>1</sup> SPIN:

What's the current Situation?

What's the Problem we want to fix?

What's the Implication if we don't do anything?

What do we Need to do?

- 3.1 It is advised that Cabinet approve proceeding with Stage 2 of the engagement exercise as outlined in 2.8 above.

#### **4. Resource Implications**

##### *Finance*

- 4.1 The Finance team will continue to support this work as it moves forward, in order to understand the financial implications of any proposals brought forward following the outcome of the engagement exercise.

The work will be carried out by existing officers from within the Council's base budget and management of change funding, there are no additional financial implications at this stage.

##### *HR*

- 4.2 The Schools HR team will continue to work with Headteachers, Staff, Governors, Trade Unions and other officers of Powys County Council to ensure that any changes that are required will be made in line with Council policy and with Schools' adopted policies and procedures. The team are also happy to provide advice and guidance on HR considerations during the development of any plans relating to this report.

##### *Section 151 Officer*

- 4.3 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes section 4.1 above.

#### **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 Legal: "The recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view."
- 5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report."

#### **6. Comment from local member(s)**

- 6.1 N/A

#### **7. Integrated Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 An Impact Assessment is not required at this stage. Impact assessments will be carried out as this work proceeds.

#### **8. Recommendation**

8.1 The recommendations are as follows:

<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>Reason for Recommendation:</b>
i) To receive Appendices A, B, C and D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To understand the issues raised during Stage 1 of the Engagement exercise</li> <li>- To understand the challenges facing education in Powys</li> <li>- To understand the emerging vision for education in Powys</li> </ul>
ii) To approve carrying out Stage 2 Engagement on the 'Transforming Education in Powys' document (Appendix D)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To provide an opportunity for stakeholders to inform the development of the vision for education in Powys.</li> </ul>
iii) To approve officers engaging in discussions with neighbouring authorities and key partners as part of the development of a new vision for education in Powys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To ensure that opportunities for learners are maximised</li> </ul>
iv) Following the engagement exercise, to approve that officers bring forward to Cabinet in April 2020: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A revised vision and guiding principles that will underpin future transformation for schools in Powys; and</li> <li>- An implementation plan to begin the journey to realise that vision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To ensure that the vision for education in Powys takes account of stakeholder feedback</li> <li>- To ensure sufficient pace to transform education in Powys, in accordance with Estyn's recommendation.</li> </ul>
Interim Chief Education Officer: Lynette Lovell Chief Executive and Senior Responsible Officer: Caroline Turner Head of Transformation and Communication/Programme Lead: Emma Palmer	



## Gweledigaeth Ysgolion **Powys** Schools Vision

Report on the

# **Powys Schools Conference**

24th October 2019



# Introduction

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The Powys Schools Conference was held on Thursday 24th October 2019 at the Pavilion in Llandrindod Wells. 66 Headteachers and Governors from across Powys attended. The event was facilitated by officers from Powys County Council's Schools Service and Corporate Transformation Team.

The purpose of the conference was to share information with Headteachers and Governors about the Powys schools infrastructure, and to ask for their thoughts and aspirations to contribute to the development of a new vision for education in Powys.

A mixture of Headteachers and Governors attended the conference, and they represented a range of schools including primary and secondary schools of all sizes, Welsh-medium providers and special schools.



# Format of the day



The conference was opened by Dr Caroline Turner, Chief Executive, Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer and Cllr Phyl Davies, Portfolio Holder for Education and Property.

For the remainder of the day, attendees took part in group discussions in order to develop a collective vision for Powys schools using the SPIN model.

## What is the SPIN model?

The model is built around the following 4 questions:

1. What's the current **SITUATION**?
2. What's the **PROBLEM** we want to fix?
3. What's the **IMPLICATION** if we don't do anything?
4. What do we **NEED** to do?

Sessions were held which focussed on each of these questions. The feedback received is summarised on the following pages.



# What is the Situation?

To give an overview of the current situation in Powys, Emma Palmer (Head of Transformation and Communications) presented data relating to the Powys schools infrastructure.

The data is available via the following link:

<https://sway.office.com/8aTHND8fR5JPYfik>



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A summary of the main points is provided below:

## Primary Schools

- 9099 pupils in Powys primary schools
- 80 primary providers
- 110 average pupils per school
- £3.9k average cost per pupil
- 67 permanent headteachers
- 35 schools rated building condition C/D
- 9.7% average percentage of pupils receiving free school meals
- 77 schools not in an Estyn support category

## Secondary Schools

- 7244 pupils in Powys primary schools
- 11 secondary providers
- 659 average pupils per school
- £4.8k average cost per pupil
- 8 permanent headteachers
- 10 schools rated building condition C/D
- 8.0% average percentage of pupils receiving free school meals
- 0.47% predicted reduction in pupils by 2025

## Post-16

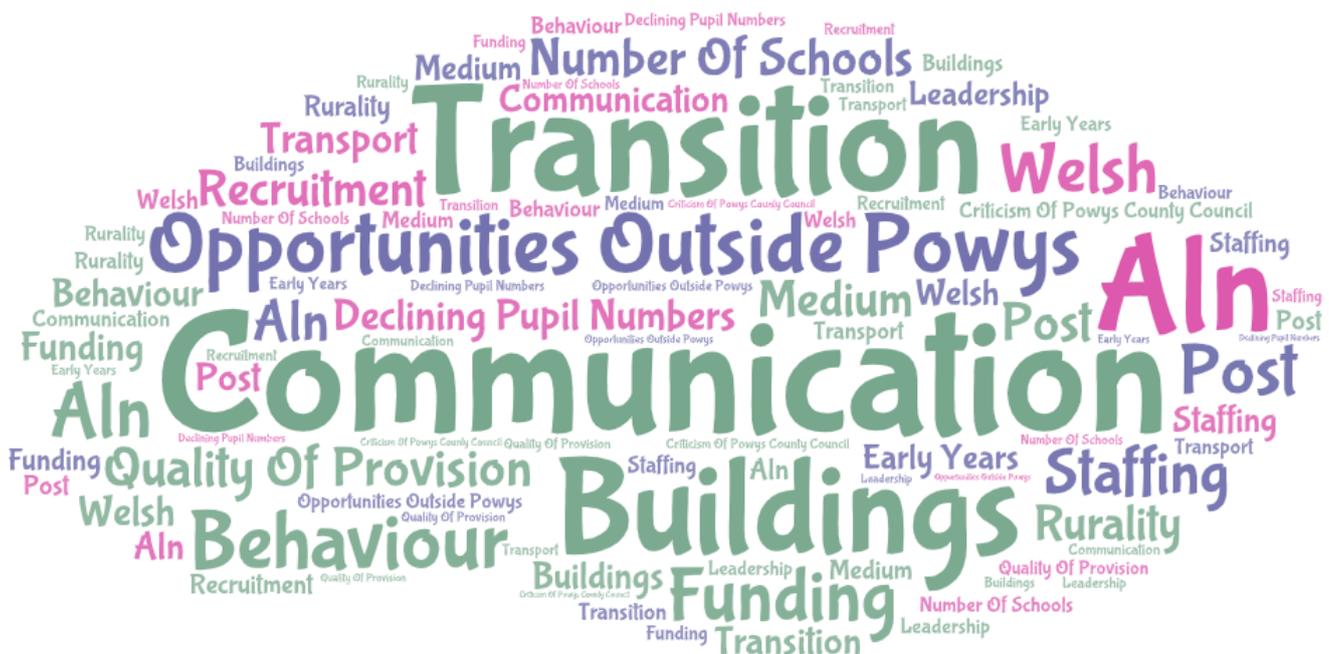
- 1012 pupils in Sixth Form
- 11 Sixth Form providers
- 85 average pupils per sixth form
- 21 average subjects provided

# What is the Problem?

Having received information about the current situation regarding the Powys schools infrastructure, attendees moved on to discuss the problems facing education in Powys in groups.

The feedback from each group was collated, and the word cloud below provides an overview of the main points raised:

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More detailed information about the points raised is provided in the following pages.

The problems noted by attendees have been grouped into themes, and are set out below, in no particular order.

## Communication

- Issues with communication between schools and the local authority and between schools
- 'Us and them' feeling with members and officers
- There has been poor communication in the past and a lack of collaboration
- Change is difficult – some people want things to stay the same
- Need to change mindsets
- Are school contributions listened to and utilised?
- Not selling the opportunities in Powys
- Need to explain to parents the benefits of small schools being amalgamated

## Opportunities outside Powys

- We are losing pupils to neighbouring areas
- The loss of high performing pupils is resulting in a skills gap
- Where schools are located on the border, there is an opportunity for children to go to alternative provision outside Powys. This has an impact on pupil numbers.
- Can't force parents to stay in Wales
- Schools and further education establishments outside Powys subsidise transport
- There are more opportunities over the border

## Buildings

- Poor school estates that are very costly to maintain
- Technology and infrastructure needs review

## Transition

- Transition between primary and secondary is not effective
- Year 6/7 students slip through the net
- Not doing enough to support transition

## Quality of provision

- Quality of education and teaching is variable in each school
- Concern about capacity to embed the new curriculum
- Lack of equity for all children in Powys



## Funding

- Money is so tight
- Budgets
- Financial black holes
- The funding formula is not fair
- The distribution of funding is not right
- The range in per pupil funding across Powys schools is unfair
- Cross border funding variances
- Have to lose staff due to the funding formula
- Financial system doesn't follow the child
- Funding for ALN
- Money to support COLA/LAC arrives too late

## ALN

- Specialist provision needs increasing
- SEN/ALN in Post-16
- SEN particularly behaviour provision at KS1 and KS2
- Support for pupils with complex needs
- Reduction in LIST support
- Managed moves - passes on the problems
- Increase in emotional and behavioural issues

## Declining pupil numbers

- Declining population
- Pupil numbers are continuing to fall
- Spare capacity in schools is increasing
- Children are not going to their closest schools

## Number of schools

- There are too many schools in Powys - primary and secondary
- There are lots of small schools
- The current model and number of schools is not sustainable
- There are too many schools, therefore there are too many surplus spaces
- Schools are not sustainable
- The benefits of scale / range / opportunity due to the number of schools

## Behaviour

- Need more behaviour support across the local authority
- Violent behaviour is impacting on teaching staff and other learners
- Behaviour - undiagnosed pupils

## Staffing / Recruitment

- Recruitment and retention across the authority
- Cannot recruit teachers
- Issues with staff recruitment, retention and sickness
- Reputational issues cause difficulties with attracting staff
- Recruitment of Welsh-medium staff is a challenge
- Difficult to attract quality supply, in Welsh and English
- More static workforce, limits opportunities
- There are less specialist teachers
- Recruitment / retention of educational psychologists
- Concerns about staff health and wellbeing
- Low morale of school staff

## Criticism of Powys County Council

- The politicians haven't made the difficult decisions needed
- Decisions have been made based on misleading information
- The Council's approach to schools organisation in the past hasn't helped (e.g. be sensitive, show benefits)
- Not selling the benefits of change
- Not approaching schools in an area as a collective (joint discussion/decision)
- Poor change management (need to change hearts and minds)
- Poor leadership within the authority
- Lack of transparency
- Lack of Vision
- Vision doesn't turn into reality
- Lack of joined up thinking across services

## Welsh-medium

- Welsh medium education is a postcode lottery
- Lack of Welsh-medium provision
- No lifelong pathway through the medium of Welsh
- Lack of understanding of what a Welsh-medium school / Welsh-medium education is and the benefits of being bilingual
- Dual stream provision is expensive - in some cases, language streams are provided for small number of pupils
- In some dual stream schools, subjects are taught in both languages together, which reduces teaching time
- Providing 2 language streams limits the ability to offer full provision in either language
- The Council's transport policy enables people to avoid Welsh-medium education
- There are less children in Welsh-medium education in Powys than the proportion of the population that speak Welsh in Powys
- Welsh-medium pupils are lost when transferring from primary to secondary
- Welsh language resources are an issue

## Rurality / Transport

- Concern about increase in transport costs if provision is centralised
- Transport system and costs
- Powys' rurality

## Post-16

- Declining number of post-16 learners
- Concern about retention rates at Post 16
- Lack of college style provision in Powys
- Don't have the right post-16 offer in Powys
- Lack of knowledge about other pathways e.g. apprenticeships, need to think outside re: the offer
- Lack of vocational provision
- Post-16 is a drain on lower down in secondary schools
- Parental concerns about quality of teaching in 6th forms

## Early Years

- Children don't start education until they are 5 which has an impact on schools
- The change in the age of admission means that pupils start learning later
- Impact of change in early years funding

## Leadership

- Lack of support for headteachers
- Leadership is not sustainable (full time teaching heads)
- More static workforce, limits development opportunities
- The quality of governing bodies varies across the county
- More static workforce, limits development opportunities





# What do we Need to do?

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In the final session, attendees were asked to consider what should be done to address the challenges identified in the earlier sessions.

A wide range of suggestions were made. These have been split into the following categories:

- 1) General suggestions to improve the education provision in Powys in the shorter term**
- 2) More radical suggestions which would alter the schools infrastructure in the longer-term**
- 3) Factors which need to be taken into consideration when making changes to the schools infrastructure**
- 4) Other comments**

The issues raised in each of these categories are outlined on the following pages.



# 1) General suggestions to improve education provision in Powys

## Provide better opportunities for pupils

- We need to aspire for the best for our pupils
- Quality teaching and learning in all schools to allow learners to reach their full potential and to prepare for lifelong learning
- All learners need to have same opportunities regardless of background
- Appropriate number of teachers in school, workable class sizes
- Schools built around the four core purposes
- Curriculum must be meaningful
- Need an attractive offer – need to focus on improving the offer
- Need equity for all pupils in Powys – well supported transition Yr 6, 7, 8 focus
- Improve KS3 provision and transition
- Improve secondary school provision so that pupils leave Powys for post 16
- Post 14 – need breadth of choice, vocational and academic
- Need a broad balanced offer of vocational and academic for all learners
- Have to have a rich offer at KS4. If the offer isn't right at that level, pupils won't come back for post 16
- Need to provide the same opportunities as those available in other areas (London, Cardiff etc)
- Skills appropriate to learner/sector area
- The 14-16/19 offer varies – want a rich curriculum to offer for all learners

## Improved Communication

- Need to engage with stakeholders, parents
- Hold catchment brainstorming sessions
- Need to be transparent – data (plain facts) needs to be in the public domain
- Need to communicate with the community. They are part of the process, need to bring them with us
- Need wider community understanding of the risk of doing nothing
- Need to use the right language to communicate change
- Share positive final outcomes from Gwernyfed / Ystrad
- Tell the story of the journey: Primary – High School – Post 16
- Need optimism, need to be solutions focused
- More sharing of good practice across the LA
- Challenge for all by all – schools / stakeholders to challenge the LA
- We are Waitrose but not selling ourselves as Waitrose
- Provide feedback to attendees about today
- Hold a follow up event in 8 weeks

## Digital

- Digital solutions for learners to be taught online (e.g. Open University)
- Effective use of digital learning
- Digital skills – remote learning
- Digital opportunities in the sixth form – E-sgol
- Need to embed and further develop
- E-sgol for minority subjects
- Online provision possible for 6th form to supplement provision – have to teach learners and teachers how to use it

## Early Years provision

- Reverse the change in the age of admission to primary schools
- Include nursery children back into primary schools
- Widen the early years offer
- Nursery provision for all to ensure readiness for school

## Funding

- Budget Formula
- Money – availability of
- Need more resources
- Need to reallocate resources – need to make the best use of what's available
- Need to fund to enable schools to balance budgets and meet the needs of pupils
- Funding has to follow the child
- Need to consider income generation
- Need to think of schools as businesses, wages vs income
- Need the financial capacity to back change

## Welsh-medium

- Need to ensure that every child has the option of bilingual provision across the authority
- Tutorials for improving and learning welsh language skills
- Equity in Welsh language provision
- Need to encourage people who want to learn welsh
- Need to improve latecomers provision – pupils should have the right to be able to access Welsh-medium provision at any age
- Welsh training for teachers to develop their skills

## Buildings

- Need to improve buildings so that they are suitable for the new curriculum
- Need a fit for purpose environment

## Staffing

- Ensure that Powys is a place where teachers want to come and work.
- Invest in teachers and leaders at all levels to meet all needs
- Need to upskill staff
- Upskilling staff – need to consider what works elsewhere.
- Self-sufficiency and succession, planning/train our own
- Upskill everybody
- Teachers working cross phase – links to HE

## Leadership

- Support school staff to move into SMT/HT – support to enable DHT's to become effective HT
- Development of leadership and management – criteria for effective HT/SMT
- Primary schools need non-teaching heads
- Parents want a head teacher at their child's school 5 days a week – not 2 days at one school and 3 days at another
- Need to ensure that governors and headteachers time is used efficiently
- Support with recruitment of governors when needed
- Ask pupils to be involved with letter to businesses to recruit governors
- Governing bodies that are accountable and fully informed so are able to make effective decisions

## Links with business

- Link with business groups so that skill sets can be developed
- Bring industry into school
- Give all schools the option of work experience on a weekly basis
- Sponsorship of schools by local businesses if allowed

## More community focus

- Need more community focus – enterprise projects to use buildings outside of school hours
- Open to adult education to re-train through collaboration with other providers
- Hub of the community – evening lessons and enrichment activities
- Community focus that must feed into a bigger plan
- Schools to be seen as a community asset
- Community spaces – multi-agency – collaboration
- Support for communities that may lose a school
- Community hub

## SEN / ALN provision

- Re-build support for schools to effectively provide for SEN/ALN pupils
- Need to improve Welsh-medium SEN provision – need appropriate WM provision, equality of opportunity
- Potential to locate a unit within a Welsh-medium provision. Need more specialist provision through the medium of Welsh e.g. Educational Psychologists
- Need a Seren type provision for vulnerable learners

## Behaviour support

- Need high quality behaviour support – clear systems/signposting/success criteria – need to create a flow chart/graduated response
- Pupil focus – need to work with PRU instead of paper process
- Need early intervention to support behaviour, not just at crisis point.
- No permanent exclusions
- Need appropriate behaviour provision

## More cluster working

- Cluster approaches to finance, governance, curriculum
- Shared resources e.g. business manager
- Reference to business manager in the Llandrindod cluster – when funding ran out it couldn't continue
- Cluster management model, but has to be dependent on the size of the cluster
- Improved cluster working – could create a bigger offer
- More cluster working – sharing resources across schools – SENCO/ALNCO/Business Managers

## More collaboration

- Need to discourage competition, encourage collaboration
- Collaboration between schools and governing bodies
- Multi-disciplinary approach – joining up budgets
- Learning hubs for teachers and governors across larger clusters (beyond own school)
- More connected – more cluster/support/ leadership

## Travel

- Need to understand transport costs
- No bussing of children between schools for a lesson
- Pupils would prefer to travel once and be on one site all day for all lessons
- Reduce out of catchment travel – need to ensure that the local school offers the best provision

## 2) More radical suggestions which would change the Powys schools infrastructure in the longer term

Whilst the majority of feedback focussed on more general, shorter term solutions to improve the education provision in Powys, the feedback received also included some more radical suggestions to change the schools infrastructure in the longer term.

These following ideas were suggested:

- **Reduction in the number of primary schools**
- **Reduction in the number of secondary schools**
- **Establish more all-through schools**
- **Cluster/catchment based models**
- **Establishment of designated Welsh-medium secondary provision**
- **Rationalisation of Sixth Form provision**
- **Establishment of 14-19 Centres / 4-14 schools**



### **3) Factors to be taken into consideration when making changes to the schools infrastructure**

Some of the feedback received suggested factors which would need to be taken into consideration when making significant changes to the schools infrastructure.

These are outlined below:

- Where there are surplus places, need to consider how far children would need to travel
- Need to consider the rural nature of Powys - city solutions won't work
- Need to consider the impact on each school/cluster
- Need to consider financial impact of changes / restructures
- Need to be aware of the Powys geography
- Need provision where the people are
- Need to look at sustainability – cluster, locality, funding, based on need
- Need to consider local situation - different models will suit different areas
- Need to be locality by locality
- One size will not fit all across Powys - need to go and gather local intelligence before decisions are made

## 4) Other comments

In addition to the feedback outlined above, some other general comments were received. These are listed below:

### Need a Vision

- We need to think differently
- We need an agreed and transparent vision
- Need a vision that celebrates the best of Powys
- Vision must be developed and shared with all stakeholders
- Need a long term plan – need to get things right not quick fixes

### Political

- Political decisions need to be made
- Cabinet need to do something radical or there is a risk that Estyn will be in
- Need to take politics out of education
- Need to ensure that politicians share the same vision
- All councillors need to take responsibility
- Need decisions and leadership from the Council
- Decisions need to be made on small primary schools
- Need to make the correct decisions on provision and get agreement

### Other

- Education is deemed good in primary schools (according to Estyn), so do we need to change them?
- Need to move away from where you walk to your school in your local village.
- Smaller schools are not viable - not good for pupils or staff
- Need action quickly, otherwise the rest of Wales will move further ahead and Powys' reputation will suffer
- Want quick progress on this
- Need a clear timescale

# Next Steps

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The feedback received during the Schools Conference, along with feedback received from other key stakeholders, including county councillors, staff from the Council's Schools Service, school staff, governors, learners and town and community councils, will contribute to the development of a Case for Change report. This report will set out the main challenges facing the Council's education provision, and will consider some high level options for the schools infrastructure going forward.

The Case for Change report is due to be considered by the Council's Cabinet in January 2020. Should the report be approved, further engagement with a range of stakeholders is expected to take place in the Spring Term on a new vision for education in Powys.

A 10 Year Implementation Plan will then be prepared, which will include further consideration of the feedback received through engagement. It is expected that this Implementation Plan will outline the steps to be taken and indicative timescales, will be considered by the Cabinet in April 2020.

Information about the work will be shared on the Council's website:  
<http://www.powys.gov.uk/transformingeducation>



[www.powys.gov.uk](http://www.powys.gov.uk)



Gweledigaeth Ysgolion  
**Powys**  
Schools Vision

# Transforming Education in Powys

Engagement Report  
January 2020



# Introduction and Background

In September 2019, Estyn published a report outlining the findings of its inspection of Powys Education Services. The report outlined significant concerns regarding the Councils progress on school reorganisation and included a recommendation to "ensure that the organisation of provision for non-maintained, post-16, welsh-medium education and secondary education meets the needs of the children and young people of Powys".

Since then, the Council has been engaging with a range of key stakeholders in order to shape a vision for education in Powys for the future.

A Schools Conference was held on the 24th October, which Headteachers and Governors were invited to attend. Feedback from this session is contained within the Schools Conference Report.

In addition to this, engagement sessions were held with a range of stakeholders during the autumn term 2019. These included the following:

- Governors, via governor briefing sessions in North, Mid and South Powys between the 11th and 18th November 2019
- School Staff, via catchment engagement sessions held at high schools between the 19th November and 10th December 2019
- Schools Service Staff on the 3rd December 2019
- Powys County Council Councillors, via a members seminar on the 21st October 2019
- Town and Community Councils on the 13th December 2019

All of the above sessions used the same format:

- A data presentation, giving an overview of the current Powys schools infrastructure. The data presented is available online at <https://sway.office.com/8aTHND8fR5JPYfik>
- Group discussions to complete a SPIN exercise in order to identify the problems facing the Powys schools infrastructure and what we need to do to address this.

The feedback received at all of these events is summarised in this report. The issues raised are listed in no particular order.

## What is the SPIN model?

The model is built around the following 4 questions:

1. What's the current SITUATION?
2. What's the PROBLEM we want to fix?
3. What's the IMPLICATION if we don't do anything?
4. What do we NEED to do?

# What is the Problem?

## Powys County Councillors

The following is a summary of the problems facing education in Powys as identified by County Councillors at the Members Seminar held on 21st October 2019.

### Funding

- Inadequate finance for the current model of schools
- £3000 difference per pupil in across Powys schools
- Money per pupil not equitable
- Welsh Government can't justify giving extra money when they see the data - too many small and rural schools
- Need to change the funding formula - costs 10% of education budget to transport pupils to school

### Declining pupil numbers

- Declining population
- Pupil numbers are continuing to fall
- Sparsely populated county
- Not enough pupils in some schools to form sports teams and other opportunities

### Number of schools

- Too many schools for the population of Powys

### Powys County Council

- Bias - members feel that if a school closes in their ward it is a reflection on them
- Lack of vision

### Welsh-medium

- Need to redefine bilingual education and achieve it
- No or limited growth in Welsh-medium
- Need to increase the number of Welsh speakers by 2050

### Opportunities for pupils

- Limited progression opportunities for all students
- Inequality of provision
- Quality in the whole system is not there
- Subject choices at Post-16 vary too much across the county
- Key Stage 4 option choices are being squeezed
- Pupils should be the number one priority

# What is the Problem?

## School Governors

The following is a summary of the problems facing education in Powys as identified by School Governors at the governor briefing sessions held in Welshpool on the 11th November 2019, Llandrindod Wells on the 13th November 2019 and Brecon on the 18th November 2019.

### Buildings

- Huge backlog in maintenance of school infrastructure - a need for new buildings
- Failing buildings, not fit for purpose

### Funding

- Unfairness in terms of how budgets are formulated for individual schools
- Inequality in per pupil funding
- General lack of money

### Opportunities outside of Powys

- Movement out of cluster, including out of country/at post 11 as well as post 16

### Criticism of Powys County Council

- Long term planning needed
- Feel unsupported in our day to day running of the school. Non-educational issues take priority over learning, affecting outcomes for all
- Problem with the Council's historic approach
- Lack of decision making

### Leadership

- Quality of leadership/ HT's
- Lack of specialist teaching advice

### Declining pupil numbers

- Reduction in pupil numbers - need to promote Powys as a place to raise your children
- Powys has an ageing population - young people leave and don't come back
- Too much and growing spare capacity in schools
- Lack of equity of in choice of subject at GCSE and A-Level

### Other

- Many standards are set and based on the expectations of urban areas, we are a rural county.
- Too many schools

# What is the Problem?

## Schools Service Staff

The following is a summary of the problems facing education in Powys as identified by Schools Service Staff at a staff meeting held on the 3rd December 2019.

### Funding

- Inequality in funding across schools and between small and large schools
- Too many schools - enough money but spread too thinly

### Declining pupil numbers

- Leakage to other local authorities
- Declining pupil numbers

### Number of schools

- Too many small schools
- Small schools are draining resources

### Leadership

- Lack of accountability
- Need more committed governors
- Difficult to attract headteachers to Powys
- Need to improve middle leadership

### Post-16

- Not enough choice for learners
- Lack of collaboration between schools and FE
- Post-16 provision is too small
- Sixth Formers leaving Powys to go elsewhere

### Welsh-medium

- Lack of Welsh-medium provision
- Dual stream schools do not work
- Concern about lack of Welsh-medium in special schools
- No Welsh speaking Speech and Language specialist

### Opportunities for Learners

- Availability of subjects for pupils
- Need to ensure equity for all pupils

### Buildings

- School buildings are in poor condition
- State of buildings are not appropriate for the new curriculum

# What is the Problem?

## School Staff

The following is a summary of the problems facing education in Powys as identified by School Staff at the 10 engagement sessions held at Powys high schools between the 19th November and the 10th December 2019. Although there were differences in the issues raised at each session, this is an overview of the main issues raised across all sessions.

### Buildings

- Buildings in poor condition
- Lack of maintenance
- Ageing buildings
- Property Plus runs out of money
- Energy costs

### Opportunities outside of Powys

- We're near the border, we see schools across the border that are getting much more funding.
- Too many children moving out of catchments

### Welsh-medium

- Welsh medium education not available to pupils in all parts of Powys
- Lack of Welsh immersion provision
- Location of Welsh medium provision

### Declining pupil numbers

- Too many surplus places
- Pupils do not attend their nearest school

### Early Years

- New intake are not school ready due to changes in admission age

### Funding

- Lack of funding – the current distribution penalises large schools, favours small schools
- Inequality in per pupil funding
- Additional costs to rural primary schools e.g. transport for trips/swimming
- Lack of ability to plan strategically due to lack of secure budgets
- Cost of funding small schools
- Large senior leadership teams absorb too much money
- Long term issue of poor financial management and lack of challenge around this
- High transport costs

### Number of schools

- Too many small schools

### ICT

- Lack of ICT support from Powys
- ICT is out of date
- Connectivity is an issue

### Opportunities for Pupils

- High schools not offering an appropriate range of subjects
- Pupils having to travel from school to school

# What is the Problem?

## School Staff (Continued)

### Criticism of PCC

- PCC not effective at supporting schools
- Lack of support for schools with shared heads
- Other re-organisations of secondary schools have led to outcomes being worse for pupils
- Lack of vision
- Constant turnover of staff in the Schools Service

### Staffing/Recruitment

- Impact on staff well-being as a result of lack of funding, resources, poor condition of buildings – has a knock on effect on retention of staff and standards
- TLR and leadership workload ratios staff to TLR holder
- Posts are less attractive where staff have to travel across sites
- Staff working outside of their specialism impacts on standards
- Greater demands on teachers and staff in small schools same amount of responsibilities but less staff to share it.
- No movement within Powys for jobs
- Lack of classroom support due to funding issues
- Decline in permanent leadership

### Post-16

- Sixth Form provision is a concern - reduced funding leads to a reduced curriculum. This leads to fewer students and funding.
- 6th Forms in Powys are unsustainable
- Post 16 students have very limited choices
- Sixth Formers are leaving Powys
- All schools want a sixth form but it is not working
- Inequality of subject offer between schools
- Not enough vocational choice
- Need a wider range of opportunities including vocational, work experience, apprenticeships - closer relationships with industry
- Welsh Baccalaureate is a blocker

### ALN & Behaviour

- Lack of support from County on ALN
- Lack of behaviour support
- Difficulties in securing ALN support for pupils
- Removal of LIST team is a bad decision
- Are the right pupils in special schools?
- Lack of Educational Psychologists
- Specialist support (CAHMS, nurture support & early years intervention)

### Other

- Dual-sited arrangement isn't effective
- Too many layers of administration - why do we need ERW and PCC
- Inability to deliver the new curriculum

# What is the Problem?

## Town and Community Councils

The following is a summary of the problems facing education in Powys as identified by representatives of Town and Community Councils at a session held on the 13th December 2019.

### Small schools

- Small schools are unsustainable and do not offer social benefits

### Rurality/Transport

- Carbon footprint of transport is high
- Rurality a problem - old buildings etc

### Quality of provision

- Quality of education in a rurality dispersed environment

### Post-16

- Sixth Forms are small and unviable



# What do we Need to do?

## Powys County Councillors

The following is a summary of general suggestions in terms of what needs to be done to improve education in Powys made by Powys County Councillors at the Members Seminar held on 21st October 2019. Alongside these, some structural changes were suggested and are outlined on Page 15.

### Provide better opportunities for pupils

- Need to cater better for learners who would prefer a vocational pathway rather than academic
- Need to look at what professions we need in Powys. Placement and subject choice should then support this
- Need to work with training providers to come into Powys and enable students to access these courses
- Need to embrace apprenticeships and work based learning and work with our partners such as NPTC

### Improved Communication

- Positive communication required to enable members and parents to see the benefits of changes

### Digital

- Move to a more digital environment
- Embrace technology within our schools

### Welsh-medium

- Need to embrace Welsh-medium education and the Welsh Language to ensure we can increase and promote opportunities to use it within our schools

### Funding

- Need more resources
- Need to reallocate resources – need to make the best use of what's available
- Need to fund approximately to enable schools to balance budgets and meet the needs of pupils

### Travel

- Need to understand transport costs
- Transport isn't an issue if we want to access high quality education

### More cluster working & collaboration

- Cluster approaches to finance, governance, curriculum
- Shared resources e.g. business manager
- A joint headteacher to work over 2 or 3 schools
- Need to work together

# What do we Need to do?

## School Governors

The following is a summary of general suggestions in terms of what needs to be done to improve education in Powys made by School Governors at the governor briefing sessions held in Welshpool on the 11th November 2019, Llandrindod Wells on the 13th November 2019 and Brecon on the 18th November 2019. Alongside these, some structural changes were suggested and these are outlined on Page 15.

### Early Years

- Bring back nursery provision into primary schools

### Improved Communication

- Better sharing of experiences and celebrating success
- Improve relationships between the LA, schools, parents and pupils
- Keep sharing information with all stakeholders
- Strengthen the role of governors in cluster meetings

### Staffing

- Support teachers

### Buildings

- Use capital funding to improve buildings

### Funding

- Review the funding formula

### More cluster working & collaboration

- Provide more resources for cluster working
- Improve communication throughout the cluster
- More collaboration between schools
- Share good practice

### Other

- Look at examples of good practice in other European countries

# What do we Need to do?

## Schools Service Staff

The following is a summary of general suggestions in terms of what needs to be done to improve education in Powys made by Schools Service Staff at their staff meeting held on the 3rd December 2019. Alongside these, some structural changes were suggested. These are outlined on Page 15.

### ALN

- In county ALN/Behavioural residential provision required

### Improved Communication

- Ensure politicians are aware of the implications of not doing anything
- Listen to communities, staff and pupils
- Communicate with communities to get them onboard
- Effective stakeholder engagement
- Improved communication with other service areas
- Ensure that schools communicate effectively with their own communities
- Improve links with other local authorities in England and Wales

### Leadership

- Face the reality and maintain stable leadership at all levels
- Improve leadership skills for middle and senior leaders

### Learners

- Offer a viable curriculum to give choices to learners at GCSE and Post-16
- Ensure opportunities linked to the new curriculum
- More Able and Talented programme across all schools at all levels
- Ensure equality of education from 3+ to Post-16 across Powys

### Early Years

- Remove 3+ funding from small settings of less than 8 children

### Buildings

- Improve building condition
- Fit for purpose buildings with high quality digital learning environments

### Funding

- Review and adapt the funding formula

### Staffing

- Upskill staff
- Better career progression for Powys staff

### Post-16

- Higher Education links to support sixth form education
- Vocational opportunities for learners
- Do we need Welsh Bacc at Post-16?
- Collaborate with FE providers

### Welsh-medium

- Increase Welsh-medium provision and quality
- Commit to one language - no dual stream settings
- Work closely with other Welsh language organisations
- Dedicated resource to deliver the WESP

# What do we Need to do?

## School Staff

The following is a summary of general suggestions in terms of what needs to be done to improve education in Powys made by School Staff at the 10 engagement sessions held at high schools between the 19th November and 10th December 2019. Although there were differences at each session, this is an overview of all main issues raised across all sessions. Alongside these some structural changes were suggested. These are outlined on Page 15.

### Early Years

- Bring back nursery provision into primary schools as removing this has led to a decline in standards
- Welsh immersion in the nursery sector

### Buildings

- Improve quality of school buildings
- Use capital funding to improve buildings
- More energy efficient buildings

### ALN & Behaviour

- Improve support from outside agencies e.g. Ed Psych, Social Services, Speech & Language
- More ALN/behaviour support to keep pupils in catchment
- Stronger ALN panel to say no to unsuitable learners
- Reinstate ALN support services e.g. LIST team
- Behaviour specialists required for high schools

### ICT

- New computers for the 21st Century
- Improve technology
- Ensure appropriate support for ICT
- More investment in digital infrastructure
- Virtual classrooms

### Improved Communication

- Educate parents about what is going on and how they can help
- Need to sow the seed about the alternative being better
- Need to inform politicians about why change is needed
- Focus on the need to improve for learners
- Include more teachers in future engagement exercises
- More communication to reduce insecurity and promote positive relationship

### More cluster working & collaboration

- Provide more resources for cluster working
- Improve communication throughout the cluster
- More collaboration between schools
- Share good practice
- Links with local businesses & industry

### Learners

- Maintain standards & wellbeing and ensure the child is at the centre of all thinking
- More attractive ways to retain pupils in Powys
- Ensure learners have a fantastic, world-class education in Powys

# What do we Need to do?

## School Staff (Continued)

### Decision making

- More transparency with decisions affecting staff, children and families

### Staffing

- Support teachers
- Avoid teacher burnout
- Have a national/regional supply agency
- Overstaff to manage stress of change
- Retain good quality staff who want to stay
- Improved leadership development
- Non-teaching headteachers in all schools
- Complete audit of all teachers to gain knowledge of skills and subjects
- Stronger performance management

### Enhance the role of the school

- Encourage wrap around facilities
- Provide breakfast clubs/after school clubs

### Funding

- Review the funding formula
- Make funding fair
- Fairer investment
- Equal distribution of funding
- Projections for funding needed over longer time frame
- Funding should follow pupils
- Savings from school reorganisation need to stay within education

### Other

- Be bold!
- Focus on health and well-being

## What do we Need to do?

### Town and Community Councils

The following is a summary of general suggestions in terms of what needs to be done to improve education in Powys made by representatives of Town and Community Councils at a session held on 13th December 2019. Alongside these, some structural changes were suggested. These are outlined on Page 15.

#### Improved Communication

- Better engagement with heads

#### Provide better opportunities for pupils

- Improved career advice on offer for pupils
- More sporting opportunities

#### Need a vision

- Schools to provide much more than just education
- Create a community education county with links to lifelong learning

## What do we Need to do?

In addition to the general suggestions made about what we need to do in order to address the problems identified, suggestions were made at all engagement sessions regarding structural changes which could happen to change the Powys schools infrastructure in the longer term.

The following is a summary of the types of suggestions made across all engagement events:

### Reduction in the number of primary schools

- Close small schools so under capacity (not a popular opinion, but needed)
- Need to move away from idea of every village having a school

### Reduction in the number of secondary schools

- Have to close some small secondary schools - no way to make a big difference unless we are prepared to do this
- Fewer secondary schools

### Rationalisation of Sixth Form provision

- Sixth Form Colleges - 1 in the North, 1 in the Mid and 1 in the South
- Sixth Form Hubs
- Some Sixth Forms may need to close but not necessarily whole secondaries

### Establishment of 14-19 Centres/4-14 Schools

- Look at alternative models such as 4-14 and 14-19 schools
- Explore links for a 14-19 or 6th Form Academy

### Cluster/catchment based models

- Federations and amalgamations where required
- Need to create different models for different areas – all-through schools, but there is also a hub model with schools feeding into it
- Specialist teachers travelling around the cluster
- Sharing resources at cluster level e.g. finance

### Designated Welsh-medium provision

- Close dual stream schools and establish dedicated Welsh medium education
- Commit to one language - no dual stream settings and schools
- Review how we categorise Welsh medium education in Powys



Gweledigaeth Ysgolion  
**Powys**  
Schools Vision

# Transforming Education in Powys

Case for Change  
January 2020

# Introduction and Background

During the summer of 2019, Powys County Council's Education Services were inspected by Estyn. The inspection identified concerns regarding school organisation work that had taken place in Powys, noting that 'Despite making modest progress in reorganising primary schools over time, the authority has been unable to deliver on a few key proposals in recent years, particularly following consultation to reorganise secondary schools in south Powys.'<sup>[1]</sup>

Estyn identified that the Council's Education Services were causing significant concern and provided recommendations for improvement. One of these was to 'Ensure that the organisation of provision for non-maintained, post-16, Welsh-medium education and secondary education meets the needs of the children and young people of Powys.'

In response the Council has embarked on a strategic review of school provision in the county, focussed on the needs of learners, developing a vision for the Powys schools' infrastructure, to ensure that the education provision in Powys provides the best possible opportunities for future Powys learners.

This work has included an extensive engagement exercise which took place between October and December 2019. Key stakeholders, including county councillors, headteachers, governors, school staff, staff working in the council's schools service and town and community councils, had the opportunity to contribute to developing the initial case for change through face to face engagement sessions.

This greater focus on engagement will continue throughout this review, with numerous opportunities for these stakeholders and others to contribute to the transformation work.

# The Powys Schools Infrastructure

## The Powys Challenge

Powys is a large, rural authority. Covering a quarter of the landmass of Wales, it contains only 4.2% of the population[2], making it the most sparsely populated county in Wales.

Delivering services across such a large, sparsely populated area is challenging and expensive. This is particularly true for education.

Whilst there has been some school reorganisation activity over recent years, this has mainly focussed on rationalisation of primary provision and establishment of alternative governance arrangements in the secondary sector, through the establishment of all-through or multi-sited provision.

Over the last ten years, the authority has carried out catchment or area reviews in Ystradgynlais, Gwernyfed, John Beddoes, Machynlleth, Llanidloes and Welshpool town. In most areas, this led to a reduction in the number of schools with significant capital investment in improving the schools' estate. However, reorganisation on a similar scale has not taken place across the remainder of Powys. The county's schools' infrastructure remains similar to that in place 20 years ago, for secondary it is largely unchanged for the last 45 years.

## Data Exercise

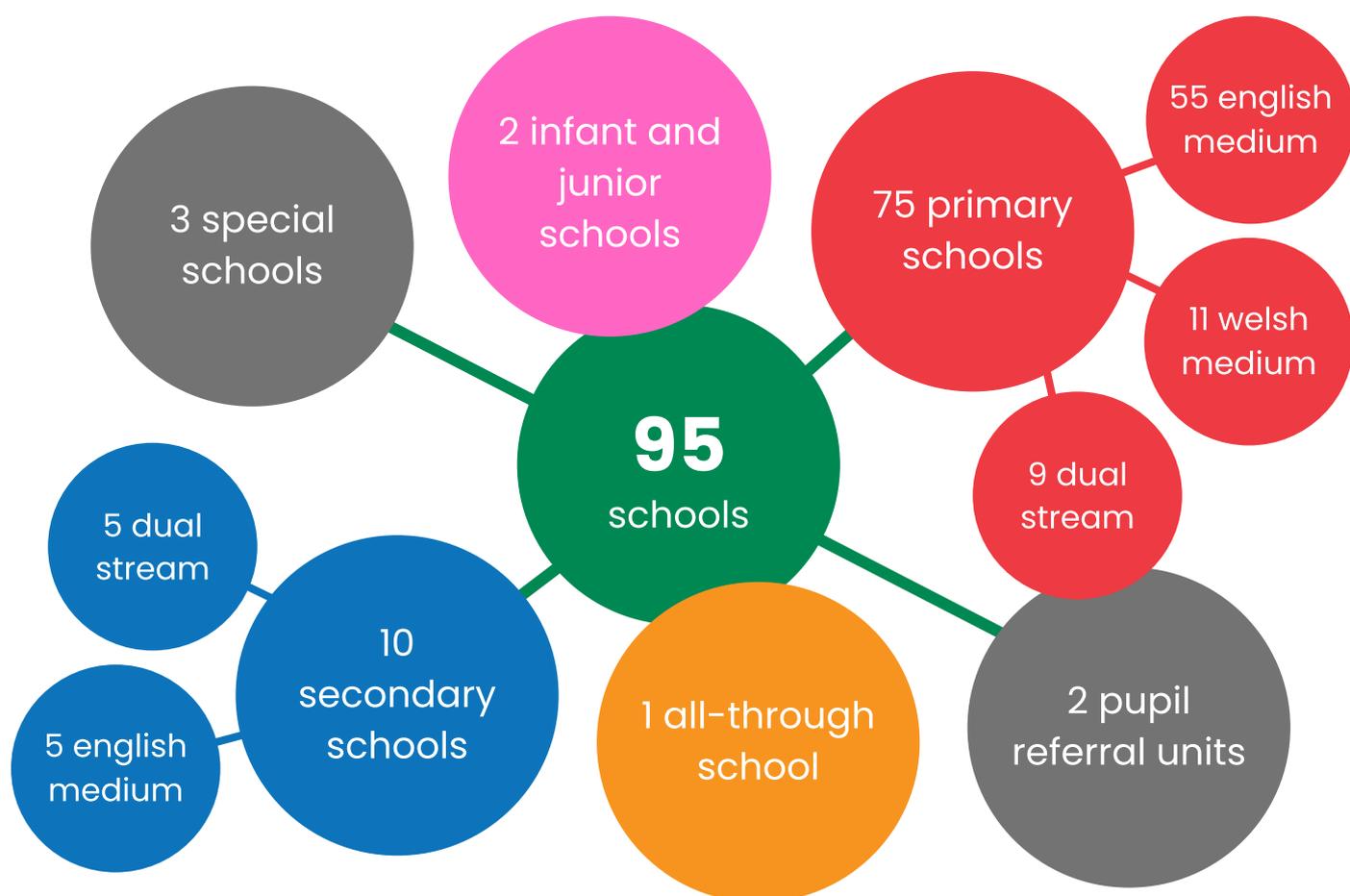
During the Summer of 2019, the Council carried out a wide-ranging school data collation exercise, that could easily be shared with key stakeholders in order to improve understanding of the current situation with Powys schools. The data includes information on current and projected pupil numbers, surplus places, budget share per pupil, quality of provision, building condition and information about pupil travel patterns.

During the autumn term 2019, the data was presented to a number of stakeholders, including Councillors, the Council's Management Team, Headteachers, Governors, Schools Service staff and staff at our schools. It has also been made available online allowing stakeholders and others direct access. This is the link to the data:

<https://sway.office.com/8aTHND8fR5JPYfik>

# The Powys Schools Infrastructure

Based on January 2019 PLASC figures, Powys County Council delivered education to 16,619 pupils during the 2018-19 academic year, via a network of 95 schools as outlined below:



Schools are either Welsh-medium, English-medium or provide education in both languages via a dual stream system. This means that in Welsh-medium schools, the language of teaching is mainly Welsh and results in pupils become fluent in both Welsh and English, becoming fully bilingual. In English-medium schools, the language of teaching is English, with Welsh taught as a second language. Pupils are fluent in English, and may have some understanding of Welsh, but are not bilingual.

In dual-stream schools, pupils are taught in different streams. The language of teaching in the Welsh stream is Welsh and pupils become fully bilingual, and the language of teaching in the English stream is English with Welsh as a second language – these pupils mostly leave school fluent in English with some understanding of Welsh.

All secondary, all-through, infant and junior schools are categorised as community schools, however, there are variations in terms of the categories of the 75 primary schools – 56 of these are categorised as community primary schools, 15 are categorised as voluntary controlled Church in Wales primary schools, six as voluntary aided Church in Wales primary schools, one voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school and one Foundation school.

There are significant variations within schools, the most obvious being pupil numbers. Based on PLASC 2019 figures, primary schools ranged in size from 22 pupils to 327 pupils, secondary schools range from 303 pupils to 1031 pupils.

The significant size range also means that there is a significant difference in the cost of educating each pupil in our schools – in the primary sector, the cost per pupil in Powys schools in 2019 ranged from £3,123 to £7,877, and in the secondary sector, the cost per pupil ranged from £3,801 to £6,419.

The current schools' infrastructure causes a number of challenges, both to the schools themselves and to the Council. It means that there are significant differences in the provision and experiences available to pupils in different schools.

## Current Challenges

Following the data engagement exercise stakeholders were asked to identify the key challenges / problems facing the Powys education system.

A wide range of challenges were identified by stakeholder groups which are set out in detailed reports available separately. However, there were a number of points which regularly featured in the feedback provided. These are outlined below:

### High proportion of small schools

Although there has been a reduction in the number of small schools in Powys over recent years, there continues to be a large proportion of schools which meet the Welsh Government definition of a small school (fewer than 91 pupils).

Based on PLASC 2019 figures, there are currently 33 small primary schools in Powys – this is approximately 40% of the primary provision in the county. 21 schools have fewer than 50 pupils and for those the budget share per pupil is higher than the Powys average for primary schools.

## Decreasing pupil numbers

Pupil numbers have decreased over recent years and are expected to continue to decrease over the next few years.

Pupil numbers in the primary sector in Powys are expected to decrease by approximately 4% by 2025. Pupil numbers in the secondary sector are expected to decrease slightly by 2025 and to decrease further in the future following the expected decrease in primary pupil numbers.

## High number of surplus places

Whilst the Council has been working to reduce the level of surplus places in its schools over recent years, a significant level of surplus places remains.

Based on PLASC 2019 figures, there is currently 18% surplus capacity in Powys primary schools, and 26% surplus capacity in Powys secondary schools.

With pupil numbers across Powys projected to decrease overall over the coming years, it is anticipated that the proportion of surplus places across the county will continue to increase.

## Building condition

Whilst the Council has invested in its schools' estate through the 21st Century Schools Programme and the Asset Management Plan, building conditions remain an issue across Powys, with associated maintenance costs.

The Welsh Government categorises school buildings on a scale of A to D, with A being new schools and D being schools that need significant investment and are in a poor state of repair. The recently opened Brecon High School is categorised as a condition A school and Ysgol Maesydderwen which received significant investment a few years ago is categorised as condition B. The rest of the secondary school estate is categorised as C/D, without significant capital investment, the repair and maintenance cost of maintaining this estate will only increase.

## Financial pressures

The Council is currently facing significant financial pressures in general. This is affecting all service areas, including the schools sector, with increasing numbers of schools facing deficit budget positions. There are significant variations in the budget share per pupil across Powys schools, ranging from £3,127 to £7,877 in the primary sector, and from £3,801 to £6,419 in the secondary sector.

A review of the Council's funding formula for schools was carried out in 2018, and a new formula was subsequently introduced in 2019. The funding formula was needed to ensure that all schools could function and provide an appropriate curriculum for their learners. Whilst small schools appear to have benefitted from the new funding formula, larger schools are funded below levels in similar authorities.

The overall funding the Council spends on education is in line with the proportion of funding spent by other authorities. However, the current schools' infrastructure means that the overall funding envelope is having to be spread too thinly. This is evidenced in schools by a curriculum that provides limited choices for learners and limited support for learners who require additional support.

## Inequality in access to Welsh-medium education

Welsh-medium education is delivered through a network of schools across Powys.

In the primary sector, this includes a mixture of Welsh-medium schools and dual stream schools.

In the secondary sector, Welsh-medium provision is delivered via Welsh-medium streams in a number of schools across the county.

The size and proportion of the secondary streams varies significantly across the county, and the range of subjects available through the medium of Welsh also varies significantly. The curriculum offer is increasingly limited for Welsh-medium learners, and there is significant concern amongst the profession regarding the commitment of the authority to learners who study in Welsh.

In contrast to most other areas of Wales, the majority of Powys learners are unable to access a designated Welsh-medium secondary school, apart from learners in the Ystradgynlais who can access full Welsh-medium secondary provision at Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur, located in Neath Port Talbot.

In 2017 the Welsh Government launched an ambitious strategy to create a million Welsh speakers by the year 2050[3]. This Strategy acknowledges that increasing the number of pupils accessing Welsh-medium education will be key in order to meet this aspiration. In contrast with other areas of Wales, the number of pupils accessing Welsh-medium education in Powys has stagnated over recent years. This suggests that the Welsh-medium provision in Powys is failing to meet the Welsh Government's aim to increase the number of pupils accessing Welsh-medium education.

Estyn identified on page 11 of its report on Education Services in Powys in June 2019 that: 'the authority's record on stimulating the growth of Welsh-medium education is weak. As a result, the proportion of pupils receiving their education through the medium of Welsh has stagnated over recent years.'

It is recognised that significant changes are needed to the Welsh-medium offer in Powys in order to reverse the trend of the last few years and ensure that all Powys learners can access comprehensive Welsh-medium provision throughout their educational careers.

## Limited post-14 and post-16 offer

In September 2019, the Council's Cabinet considered a report on post-16 provision which outlined a number of challenges facing the sector, including decreasing learner numbers, financial challenges and sustainability of the curriculum offer, including Welsh-medium provision.

One of the biggest challenges facing the Council in terms of post-16 provision is the increasing number of pupils accessing provision outside Powys – during 2018/19, it is estimated that approximately 450 Powys learners were accessing post-16 provision outside Powys. This is having a significant impact on the provision that can be offered in Powys, due to the loss of funding faced by the Council as a result of losing these learners.

Engagement with schools throughout November and December 2019 has highlighted that the concerns previously raised regarding the poor choice for learners at 16 is now being echoed for learners at 14.

## Historical lack of political decision making

Although there have been some developments in terms of the schools' infrastructure in Powys over recent years, these have mainly involved changes to primary provision and establishing all-through / dual sited schools.

In 2016, the Council carried out consultation on significant changes to secondary provision in Mid and South Powys, which included proposals to rationalise secondary and Welsh-medium provision in the area. At the same time, the Council was also consulting on proposals to close a number of small schools in the Mid Powys area. Whilst a number of these proposals were implemented, several of the proposals were not approved by the Council's Cabinet.

The Council's failure to implement a number of high-profile proposals during this period has left a legacy in Powys, and there has been a reluctance to embark on large scale reorganisation of education provision since then. This is reflected in Estyn's report following its inspection of Education Services in Powys in June 2019, which states on page 11 that: 'Despite making modest progress in reorganising primary schools over time, the authority has been unable to deliver on a few key proposals in recent years, particularly following consultation to reorganise secondary schools in south Powys.'

Engagement with schools' staff during November and December 2019 has revealed a deep skepticism amongst the profession regarding the council's political commitment to schools and to the delivery of the improvements that are needed.

# What do we need to do?

Through the feedback received during the engagement it has become clear that significant changes are needed to the Powys schools' infrastructure to ensure that the provision offered enables learners to access provision to meet their potential.

Several themes have emerged in terms of possible ways in which the Council could develop its schools' infrastructure going forward. The themes are as follows:

- Invest in improving the school estate
- Rationalise the number of schools
- Ensure equity of funding in delegated budgets
- Develop a network of Welsh-medium provision
- Establish more all-through schools
- Develop more formal catchment models
- Develop a post-14/16 system that provides a range of opportunities for skills development and is sustainable, and attractive to learners.

It is possible that the way forward could be a combination of these models, depending on the geography and demography of Powys.

There is a need to agree a clear vision for education in Powys, including a clear understanding of the entitlement for learners at various stages of their education.

## References

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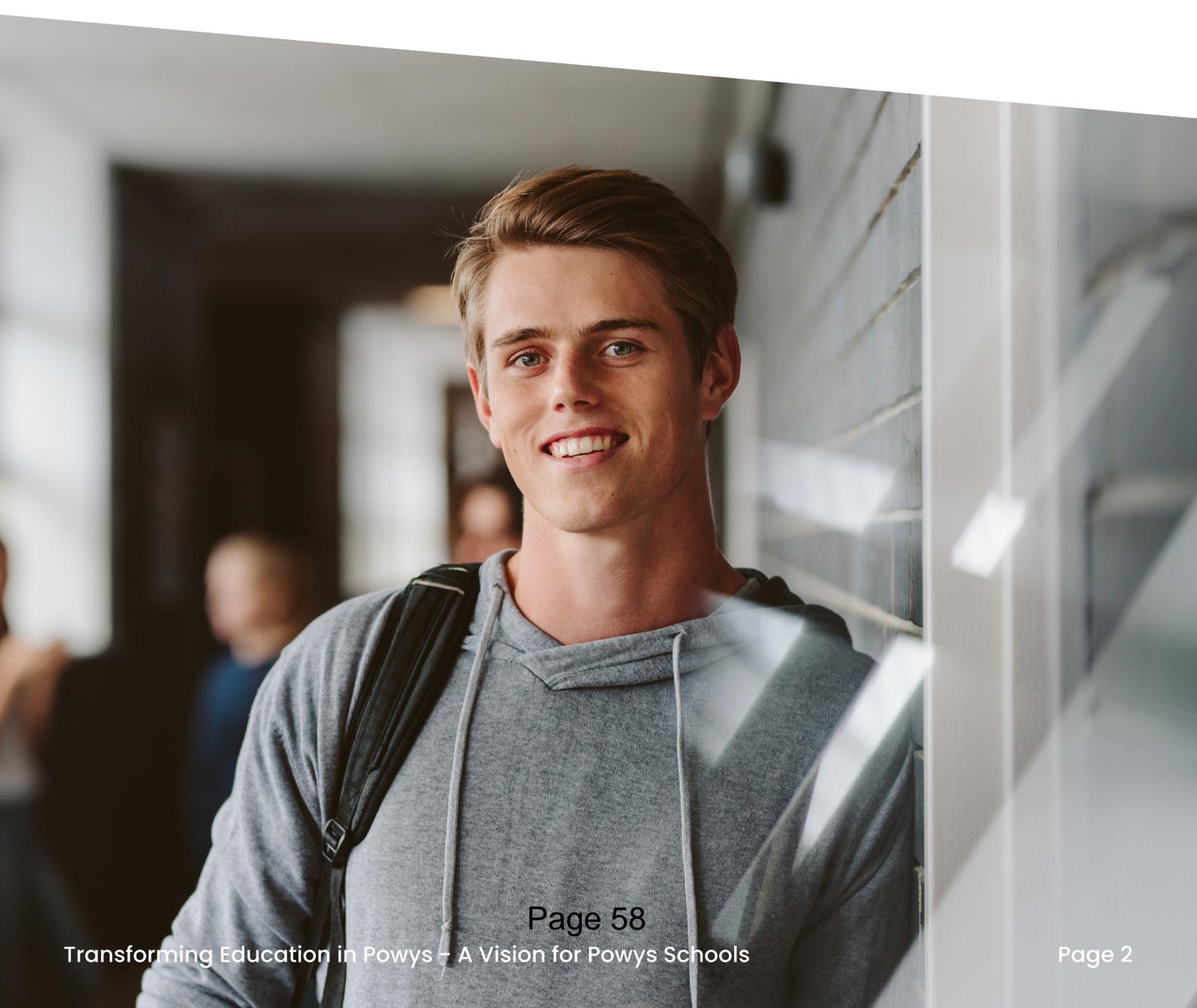
Gweledigaeth Ysgolion  
**Powys**  
Schools Vision

# Transforming Education in Powys

A Vision for Powys Schools

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# Foreword

Whilst most learners in Powys have been well served by their schools, we recognise that many challenges now need to be addressed. We need to ensure that in future, all our learners are educated in a way that will ensure they will be able to adapt and respond to the significant changes in society, economy, environment and technology.

The council wishes to set out on a programme of reform that can deliver a high performing education system for all learners in Powys – across the range of domains that are important – academic, cultural and sporting. In short, we need to strengthen our provision across the authority and plan an education service that can be a matter of pride to all who live in Powys.

Recent engagements with our key partners in schools across Powys suggest that we have much to do, and that we should be bold in our ambitions. Helpfully, our need to make changes comes at the same time as Wales as a whole is on the cusp of some of the most exciting developments in education for many generations. We must ensure that every school in Powys is geared to play its full part in that national education reform.

Powys is the largest county in terms of land mass but with a small and declining young population, we need to provide clever solutions to the challenges we are going to face.

## Cllr Phyl Davies

Portfolio Holder for  
Education & Property



We must have high ambitions for the future of our schools, agree on a shared vision and make firm commitments to action. As a backdrop to our thinking, we have the Welsh National Mission to realise a transformational new curriculum, for which we need to develop:

- a high-quality education profession
- inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards
- strong and inclusive leaders committed to excellence, equity and well-being
- robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system.

The new Curriculum for Wales, which by 2022 will be live in all our schools, defines four key purposes for education. Every school will work to ensure that all young people become:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

To achieve this, learning will be developed through a transformed curriculum, ensuring that all learners show progress in Expressive Arts, Health and Well-being, Humanities, Languages, Literacy and Communication, Mathematics and Numeracy and Science and Technology.

To face this change, we must work together and will need to take shared responsibility over an extended period. We need to ensure that our schools are fit for purpose and that headteachers and their staff are resourced and supported appropriately for the new world of education. As a council, we must ensure that all our plans focus on improving the learner experience, recognizing the well-being of our children and young people today and into the future. To do this, we want to engage partners in building a county-wide commitment to achieving the excellence in education and learning that Powys requires.

I urge you to read the document and provide responses that can help shape plans that we will then bring forward to develop our schools' community to serve our learners well into the 21st century.

Cllr Phyl Davies  
Portfolio Holder for Education and Property

# "Welsh medium education is a postcode lottery"

A quote from our recent engagement sessions with headteachers



# Education in Powys – the opportunity for change

Rurality brings its blessings and challenges for education. The beauty of our landscape and the warmth of community life are challenged by our ability to deliver the wide range of services in a way that can meet the needs of all our citizens.

We have now reached a point where we need to consider very seriously how we should shape our education system so that it can provide lifelong learning opportunities for all our young people and equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to fulfil their potential. In their inspection of the authority's education services in the summer of 2019, Estyn (the Welsh education inspectorate) expressed concern about the organisation of provision across Powys, and have challenged the authority to "ensure that the organisation of provision for non-maintained, post-16; Welsh-medium education and secondary education meets the needs of the children and young people of Powys."

There is no doubt that our schools are currently working hard to provide for their pupils. However, our building stock is ageing, our investment is spread across a very large number of schools, teachers often work in small groups to provide for their learners and we are finding it difficult at times to attract outstanding leaders for some of our schools.

Funding per pupil varies enormously. The lowest funded mainstream pupil in the county receiving only £3,127 whilst some mainstream schools receive £7,877 per pupil.

## "Schools are not offering an appropriate range of subjects"

A quote from our recent engagement sessions with schools

Between 2014 and 2019, Powys' population fell by around 0.71%, or 949 people\*. This decline is set to continue for the foreseeable future. This population decline will not be evenly distributed across all age groups and it is expected that the number of young people in the county will reduce by 14% over the next 20 years+. This will create additional pressures on an already stretched education system.

As is the case nationally, there is a significant gap in educational outcomes between pupils from low-income families and those from more affluent backgrounds in Powys. In 2018/19, 11.7% of school pupils aged 5-15 were eligible for free school meals. With a focus being placed on tackling inequality across Wales, concentrated effort is required to close the attainment gap between those eligible for free school meals and those who are not.

## Taking Stock

Now is a good time to take stock to ensure that we can face the challenges head-on and make sure that we develop a vision and a plan to inform how our schools should be re-configured for the future. It is time for us to set out to ensure that:

- Schools are organised in a way that ensures a breadth of choice for all learners, with a special focus on the choices available to learners post-14 and effective continuity into post-16 education and training.

\* Population projection 2014 to 2019, all ages - Powys Wellbeing Bank

+ Population projection for 2039, ages 0-15 - Powys Wellbeing Bank

- Schools are supported to be more collaborative to ensure that they collectively develop the curriculum to provide all pupils with the opportunities to acquire the necessary experiences, knowledge and skills in order to succeed
- Schools will be excellent, vibrant and sustainable places well into the future, able to embrace change and utilise a wide range of technologies to inspire learners.
- School buildings are inspiring learning environments that will encourage every pupil to achieve their potential across all areas of learning
- Standards are good or better in every school, with specialist teachers delivering to our learners.
- Leadership and management will be good or better in every school
- Every child can be assured a good school within reasonable travelling distance to home, including provision through the medium of Welsh,
- Every school can make efficient use of resources, providing for less variation in the costs of educating each pupil across schools.
- The buildings maintenance backlog can be resolved, and that every school can be safe, warm, weather-tight, environmentally sustainable and educationally suitable well into the future.
- The shape of our schools' system reflects our changing demographics and prepares appropriately for the future demand for places in each part of Powys.
- Our schools are suitably designed so that they can act as hubs for wider community activity across Powys

With Welsh Government providing significant investment opportunities to support the building of new schools and transformational refurbishments of others, we need to consider how we can best use this funding to deliver equity for all of our learners, wide curricular and other opportunities, technological excellence and much else.

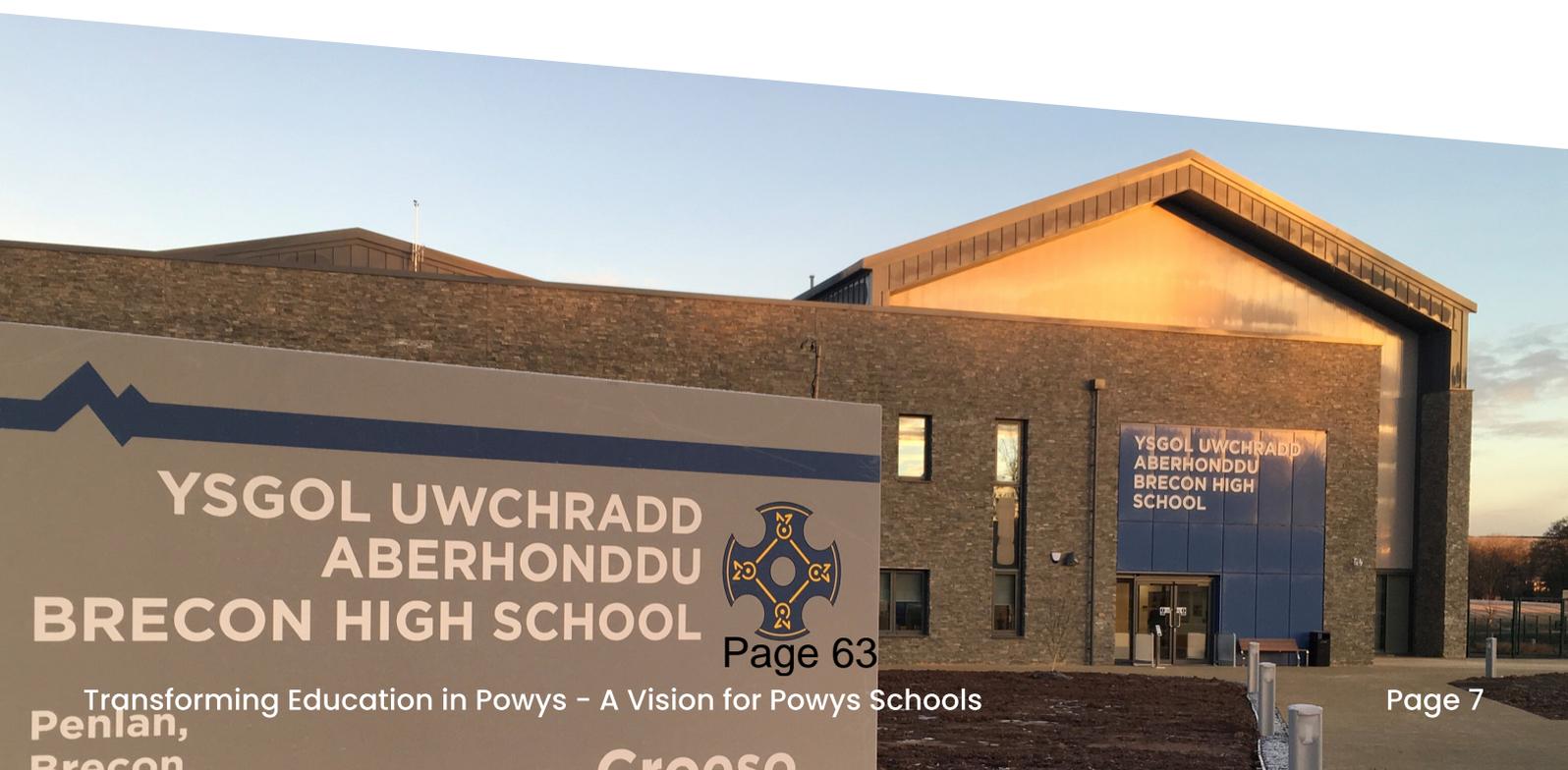
Powys should now set its course to become a flagship rural authority, where families can enjoy the benefits of living in cohesive communities in an attractive landscape, supported by outstanding schools. Powys should seek to affirm schools where excellence is expected, well-being is prioritised, diversity is recognised and valued, and where the Welsh language is nurtured and developed.

Currently there is much work going on in Wales where groups seek to “re-imagine” what the education system might look like in 2030. Our current patterns in Powys are largely based on mid-19th century models, when there was a larger rural population and workforce, and a far poorer transport infrastructure.

The new Curriculum for Wales is clear that the ‘re-imagining’ will call for much greater levels of innovation over the next ten years as we raise ambition and re-focus efforts upon providing all children and young people with access to the experiences, knowledge and skills that they need to succeed, whatever their individual ambitions may be.

**"We need more joined up, long term thinking to plan across provision"**

A quote from our recent engagement sessions with schools



**YSGOL UWCHRADD  
ABERHONDDU  
BRECON HIGH SCHOOL**



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# What are we proposing?

We propose that the council engages with parents, school leaders, governors, wider educators and partners, together with many children and young people, between January and February 2020. We will seek to gather their views on how we plan our education, to the mid-part of this century, using the questions in this engagement document. Those views will help Powys set out a vision and guiding principles for our future education system.

The Cabinet will then ask our council officers to identify, with clarity, what needs to be done to ensure that we can deliver long-term, sustainable plans to implement the vision, guided by the principles that will be agreed.

Proposing a clear vision:

**“All children and young people in Powys experience high quality education and develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that will enable them to become personally fulfilled, economically productive, socially responsible and globally-engaged citizens.”**

## Questions for engagement

QX) Would you agree with this as a high-level vision for education in Powys?  
Please offer any improvements

# Guiding principles for the future

As we consider improvements to our system, we should have guiding principles that should underpin our thinking. For those guiding principles, we propose that every child is educated in a Powys system characterized by:

- Excellent and inclusive schools that are encouraged to work together to develop high-quality teaching, learning and leadership
- A curriculum that is responsive to the need of learners, the community and the economy, and meets statutory requirements
- Welsh medium provision across all key phases of education, where growing numbers of learners can be confident that they will have access to provision in Welsh
- Schools that are financially stable and sustainable, where their leaders can concentrate on pupil and staff learning and well-being
- Curriculum choice from the age of 14 that offers a breadth and balance of specialist academic, vocational and work-based learning to meet the needs of all learners
- Appropriate provision for pupils with additional learning needs, as near to home as is practically possible, in a way that best combines the specialisms and facilities needed to provide effective support.
- A safe, digitally rich, learning environment that is fit for purpose
- School environments that provide attractive spaces for community activities, including sport, active citizenship and culture
- A local authority where staff in our schools are valued and are encouraged to work collaboratively with partners to develop the new curriculum
- An open and transparent process for change

## Questions for engagement

QX) Are these appropriate guiding principles for the local authority to adopt to underpin its thinking around the future of schooling?

QX) Should any of these principles be removed or adapted? In what way?

QX) Is there anything that you would wish to add or remove?

Once we have established guiding principles, we should look at how the outcome of future plans might look for learners at different points in their school careers. In order to do this, we will portray some of the key features which we believe could become entitlements for learners at different ages, with different needs, and ask you to add your views to these features.

# "Recruitment and retention of staff is an issue"

A quote from our recent engagement sessions with schools





## Staff in our schools

The abilities, knowledge, passion, commitment and enthusiasm of teachers and teaching assistants is crucial in determining the success of learners, along with the capacity of school leaders. Therefore, with an eye to the future we are aware that the local authority needs to develop strategies to attract and retain the most capable professionals. We also need to develop leadership pathways, in partnership with others, that can encourage our professionals to grow within our local authority.

Your responses to the following questions would help us identify what needs to be done to develop our systems in Powys, to better serve our learners and our professionals.

### Questions for engagement

QX) How should we face the challenges of ensuring that the curriculum in Powys offers all learners rigorous, inspiring, relevant, contextualised opportunities to become ambitious and capable learners, ethical informed citizens, enterprising and creative contributors and healthy and confident individuals? What could it mean for the configuration of schools and the inter-relationships between groups of teachers?

QX) How could we better support the opportunities for adults who wish to enter the education workforce – either as support staff, or who wish to train to be teachers?

QX) How could we build stronger partnerships with our universities to encourage accessible lifelong learning for our professionals? How can we build career progression for our teachers and support staff within Powys?

QX) Is the current configuration of schools the most effective means for ensuring that all of our teachers can have career-long development, dynamic working environments and access to transformational technology? What could be done to improve things?

QX) How could career-long leadership development be best facilitated across Powys?

QX) How could we make it more attractive for individuals to want to become school leaders or headteachers in Powys?

# What could education in Powys look like in the future?

If we can agree the guiding principles and a vision for our learners and teachers, we should be well on the way to delivering transformation by 2025. Schools need significant investment, including in ICT infrastructure to transform learning.

By 2025 we could have a variety of settings;

- a network of schools with high-quality facilities that will provide education across all phases of education, including
  - wrap-around provision including pre-school and after-school support;
  - high quality sports facilities which would be accessible to the local community;
  - wide-ranging community facilities and multi-agency services which would be available beyond the school day, including provision for adult learning;
  - specialist facilities for learners with additional learning needs
- For learners with Special Educational Needs, Powys should provide a range of provision, including mainstream classes (with support where required), specialist classes, satellites of special schools in our mainstream schools, special schools and a pupil referral unit. These should be supplemented by outreach support from special schools, specialist centres/satellites/PRU and advice and guidance from a small team of highly qualified central staff
- The provision of education for 14 -16 and 16 – 19 year olds which enables all learners to have the choice of a broad range of subjects, integrating vocational and academic learning, delivered in partnership with a range of providers. This provision could be delivered in schools or centres with specialist teachers and facilities.
- The provision of a full continuum of education through the medium of Welsh across all phases of education, with Welsh-medium provision for early years and primary pupils available in every catchment within the county and more accessible Welsh medium secondary provision that offers a wide range of subject choices.

- Clusters of primary and secondary schools working closely together to deliver the reformed curriculum for Wales or a smaller number of larger primary schools serving greater numbers of learners.
- Other configurations that might be helpfully suggested during engagement.

In partnership with Welsh Government, there are opportunities to invest heavily in our schools' estate. Now is the time to build a vision for the future and to move ahead with its implementation. It is nothing less than the young people of Powys deserve. We should build such a vision with all of our learners in mind – of all abilities and at all stages in their education – and across both language provisions.

The changes that we need to put in place across Powys must also provide a transformed working experience for staff in our schools. Modern buildings will help transform learning, but we need to be ambitious beyond buildings. Making the best of the opportunities presented by the new Curriculum for Wales requires that we create a system where Powys teachers can more easily work together across schools to help generate inspiring teaching and learning opportunities for all our pupils, whilst also helping to manage professional workloads. Collaborative schools can also help us generate a community of future leaders for Powys schools who can be nurtured through a range of programmes, led by our most inspiring teachers and headteachers. We also need our teachers and school leaders to be ably supported by effective learning support staff and business support staff – who also deserve and need development programmes across our schools. As things stand, much of our county's education funding is tied up in maintaining a large and ageing building stock, when it could be used instead on staffing and pupil learning resources. We need to re-imagine what is possible, at the same time as Wales as a whole is doing the same.

Developing a vision that has the learner at its heart, and one that can inspire and support our staff to deliver outstanding learning for our future pupils requires us to plan carefully, and we intend to start that planning by generating an agreed vision.

### Questions for engagement

QX) Are there any models that you would like the local authority to consider as it seeks to invest in the transformation of the schools' system in Powys?

# After engagement, what next?

The Cabinet will ask officers to prepare an Education Transformation Implementation Plan. We will specifically ask for a plan that can:

- Deliver a coherent vision that will emerge from this engagement activity.
- Bring forward plans that remain faithful to the guiding principles that will be agreed by Cabinet

Please find the time to examine the matters raised in this engagement process. We hope that the proposed vision and guiding principles can be improved through your engagement. We also hope that you might be able to suggest models for delivery – or comment on the ones outlined briefly above.

Now is the time to set out a greater ambition for future learning in Powys. We are not currently in the right place to support all of our learners and meet all of their needs. Working together, we can put things right.

Please give your candid views and we will seek to bring forward a coherent vision and practical proposals that can set out how the local authority can set its course for the coming years, mindful that decisions taken today will shape the lives of people in Powys well into the mid part of this century and beyond.

Thank you for your engagement.

## How to respond

Details on how to respond will be outlined here.

## Alys is aged 4 and is just about to start school in a future Powys, in 2025.

Alys will attend a well-led school that will fully meet the needs of each one of its different learners. Her parents will be given a choice of a Welsh medium/bilingual education or an English medium education for Alys, and in her case they will have decided that they want her to become bilingual at the earliest age possible.

At the school they will have facilities that are fit for purpose and you would expect them to be proud that they serve the children of the local community well. The sports facilities are very visible and are used by parents and the wider community in the evenings and at weekends, and the school hall is already familiar to Alys, because the local holiday club meets in the hall.

Alys and her parents will have a very helpful session about starting school and there will be active links with the nursery that she will have attended – including shared new curriculum training between the school and the staff of the nursery. Her reception class teacher will be a vibrant part of the wider local authority schools' family, working with teachers from other schools to develop resources to use with their learners. At the same time as Alys starts in school, she will be part of a group of over 20 new pupils of the same age, who the staff can develop as a group of learners – each with their unique ways.

Alys' parents will be pleased with the learning experiences that Alys will have at school and they should also be delighted with the variety of learning environments that the school has shown them. There will be a significant investment in the IT available for teachers and learners, and the school have also developed water play and a creative arts area as well as a very attractive outdoor learning zone that will be their Forest School. The school will have developed effective online links with parents so that they will be able to engage easily in the learning that goes on. Breakfast Club will form part of the wider offer, which will also include an after-school club facility, in partnership with the local nursery.



## Alys is aged 4 and is just about to start school in a future Powys, in 2025.



Miss Jones, the headteacher will only teach occasionally (which she will do mainly to release her staff to visit other schools to learn from and work with other professionals). Much of her time will be spent actively engaging with parents, including helping identify who from the local community will be able to support the school as they try to embed the new curriculum to be as localized as possible for the children.

The staff (teachers and support staff) based in the early years setting /reception class will all be well trained in the skills needed for developing high quality adult/child interactions and will look forward to building strong relationships with the new cohort, with Alys' social and emotional well-being a high priority. Whilst they will be working on building a positive sense of self, Alys will be encouraged to develop her social skills through a range of stimulating activities.

The curriculum, based on the six areas of learning, will be taught through active experiential learning in a language-rich environment. Alys will have access to outdoor learning opportunities and will engage in learning activities that will be well-planned, and well-resourced and organised to make links between the six Areas of Learning and Experience. A key part of her early experiences in school will be the development of her curiosity and independence to set her up for a successful career in school, and beyond.

### Questions for engagement

QX) Does the above present an attractive vision for Alys' education in Powys?

QX) Is there anything in Alys' anticipated experience that isn't currently available in all schools?

QX) What else do you think Alys should be entitled to from her education, that isn't mentioned above?

## Alun is 9 years old, attending a primary school in Powys, 2025

Alun is aged 9 and is attending a strong and inclusive school in his local area. He enjoys going to school, and his attendance this year has been 100% and he is making excellent progress. He is in a mixed class of learners, but they are all of a similar age to Alun – either his age, or at most a year older.

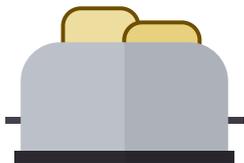
He is accessing the new curriculum for Wales 2022 and has progressed along a continuum of learning from age 3 for each of the areas of learning and experience. Alun's carers can see that the school's vision is clearly built on the Four Purposes, with the learner at the centre of everything the school does.

The school has a helpful digital platform which allows for confidential contact when needed between home and the school. During the regular parents' engagement opportunities, they have seen that the school plans progression in a flexible manner through the six areas of learning with the full range of literacy, numeracy and digital skills being used in order to meet the needs of individual learners. Alun is provided with many learning opportunities to develop, extend and apply a range skills across the curriculum, with learning taking place both within and outside the class. His classroom is well equipped, and his independent learning has been well developed.

Alun knows what it means to be a good learner and he confidently reflects those learned skills when he is working on his own and when working collaboratively.

Pupil Voice is well developed in his school and Alun has opportunities to debate issues and influence decision making. The pupils recently chose to refurbish a room that pupils can go to when feeling particularly anxious, instead of spending the money on a new sound system for the school hall. The school staff keep careful contact with his carers, who have noticed that his confidence is developing and that the school promotes his health and wellbeing at every opportunity. His carers are proud of his improving Welsh (including winning a Welsh learners' competition at the Urdd Eisteddfod). They hadn't expected Alun to enjoy Welsh, but he is wondering if he could join an immersion class so that when he will be eleven, he could access his secondary education in Welsh. That option wasn't open to his older siblings, but Alun is thinking about it.

## Alun is 9 years old, attending a primary school in Powys, 2025



Alun attends both the Breakfast Club and After School Club. It is at After School Club that he attends sports training sessions, choir and chess. During this year he has developed his resilience and empathy, and this has been most evident through team sports when he utilises the excellent sporting facilities of his new community school.

Alun's natural curiosity about science and technology has led to him ask questions in school about the world around him. His teacher has worked out opportunities to network with other teachers and pupils in other schools through the new IT learning platform in order to share good practice and provide learners like Alun with a variety of science experiences. His teacher is now actively engaged in current research through an online national teachers' network through which they share effective practice in teaching to maximize impact on learners. Despite the school being in a very rural setting, Alun's headteacher ensures that all teachers and teaching assistants in the school have regular professional development and active interaction with staff from other schools.



### Questions for engagement

QX) Does the above present an attractive vision for education in Powys?

QX) Is there anything in Alun's 2025 experience that you believe isn't currently available in all schools?

QX) Should Alun be entitled to anything else from his education that isn't mentioned above?

## Lynfa is 7 years old in a future Powys and will need additional support from her school

Lynfa is a very cheerful pupil, who has many friends, and has Cerebral Palsy. Her mobility is limited, so she uses a wheelchair.

She also has speech and language difficulties, although her overall ability is in line with that of her peers.

Lynfa attends a mainstream primary school and she is likely to require access to adult support, though she has rapidly learned to say when she does not want to be supported.

The school (with the local authority) has made sure that she is able to take part in all aspects of school life, including concerts, shows and trips. The building is designed to be easy to access for pupils (or staff) with mobility challenges. Her teachers have been trained to provide whole-class physical education activities that Lynfa is able to access and enjoy. She is always encouraged to be as independent as possible and specialist equipment has been provided to enable her to access the curriculum, including communication aids. All relevant staff have been trained to support her to use these aids. Over recent years, there has been a lot of shared working across schools to ensure that staff are confident in using the specialist teaching aids that are available, and on a Friday a colleague from one of the special schools is available to support teachers with adapting the curriculum or with using the equipment so that pupils like Lynfa are well supported in their local schools.

The schools and local authority work closely to ensure well-co-ordinated support from a range of professionals, including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists as well as specialist teachers and teaching assistants. Specialist programmes are provided for school staff to carry out on a daily basis.

Lynfa has medical needs which require a health care plan, in addition to an individual education plan. All planning is person-centred, taking into account her views, which are quite often very clearly expressed!



## Lynfa

In a few years, Lynfa will move on to secondary school and that transition will be carefully planned in good time, to ensure that any necessary adaptations are made to the secondary school site and to ensure that the teachers will know what to expect when Lynfa joins them. She isn't worried about moving on to the secondary school, because they host the pupils from many of the primary schools who require a lot of additional support (like Lynfa) and their friends on a termly basis, when they do "Super Days", to explore the learning technologies available and have a chance to work with the high school's Year 8 pupils.

## Griff is 15 years old and needs a significant amount of additional support



Griff is 15 years old and has Downs Syndrome and is able to communicate his needs and answer simple questions. He attends a local authority mainstream school that hosts what is often known as a 'satellite' of a nearby special school. This ensures that he receives the specialist provision that he needs whilst also being able to attend the same school as his siblings, and other children from the same community, rather than travelling long distances to one of the special schools.

Griff follows a curriculum that has been developed to meet his individual needs. This has a focus on basic literacy, numeracy and self-help skills. The school and his parent agree that it is crucial that he should be taught the skills he needs for future life, so that he can become a happy, confident and, where possible, independent young adult.

Griff needs to be taught to apply the literacy and numeracy skills he learns to real life situations, for example identifying signs and symbols, telling the time and using money. Although he will require adult support, he is always encouraged to be independent. He is taught self-help skills, such as getting dressed, going to the toilet and keeping himself clean. Griff especially loves school on Tuesday and Friday when he is taught to prepare basic meals. The secondary school has a specially designated area for those activities called "The Independent Living Quarters – Dysgu Byw". It looks like a family home, and has a kitchen, an iron, a programmable digi TV and a lot else.

## Griff is 15 years old and needs a significant amount of additional support

The school is particularly good at providing their pupils with meaningful work experience, and for this, Griff will be supported by Mike, an enthusiastic support worker in school. Mike works with pupils in mainstream and special schools, and is great at engaging local businesses to support young people with disabilities. They have set up a regular day for Griff in a local café, after he'd previously had an extended experience in the local garden centre. Griff is taught important work skills, such as dressing appropriately, arriving at work on time and being polite to customers. Wherever he goes, customers love interacting with Griff.

To help him to move into adult life, Griff will have a clear transition plan which will identify his likely destination. He has been given realistic advice by a careers' advisor, taking on board as far as possible his hopes and aspirations. Griff's parent is pleased that he is fully involved in decisions about his future and Mike will keep working with Griff for a few years after he leaves school.

If Griff chooses to go on to college, it is essential that his transition is planned carefully. The school and local authority will help Griff and his family to identify an appropriate course that will meet his needs and ability and enable him to make progress.

### Questions for engagement

QX) The local authority is keen to enact the national reforms to provide better and more joined up support through to education and health services for learners with Additional Learning Needs. If you currently have a child who needs greater support with their education, are you content with the support that they have received from the local authority and its providers?

QX) What do you think that Powys should do to improve provision for learners with additional needs over the coming years?

QX) Would you agree that an investment programme for Powys schools should include investment in supporting pupils with ALN to be better supported as close to home as possible?

## Alberto is 14 in Powys in 2025

Alberto is embarking, for the first time, on a curriculum where he has been able to make some important choices.

He has been given a choice of 6 subjects in each of his 3 option columns. In each of those columns he was able to choose from a range of GCSEs or a vocationally relevant subject. Alberto being a practical learner, has agreed with the school that some time in work-based learning would be most appropriate for him whilst he pursues other subjects in school.

He is pleased that the choices he has just made will help give him a continuum of education in Powys that can serve him well through to the age of 18, within a reasonable distance to home. Whatever route he chooses to take, he can be confident that he is on a well-supported progression. Because he has chosen some vocational options, he will have some involvement with the local college – because they have specialist equipment and staff who can support the school.

By the time Alberto reaches Year 10, he will be part of regional sports leagues for schools, and they also compete on a national basis against schools from the north and the south. His twin, Anna is not particularly interested in sports, but is glad that there are youth theatre and well-organised Urdd activities that draw out her creative talents.

When he feels the need, a full-time counsellor is based in the school who can advise on effective strategies for Alberto to help him through the most stressful times. Year 9 had been quite challenging for Alberto, and the student counsellor provided an important part of the support that he needed.

His teachers are subject specialists who all work as part of larger teams, including strong networking with other schools, and his classrooms are modern, with excellent technology to support his learning – both in school and at home. Alberto decided to pursue his subjects in Welsh, and that is now possible for him, unlike his older sister who was unable to follow most of her subjects in Welsh, only a few years earlier.



## Alberto is 14 in Powys in 2025

Alberto's teachers are part of wider learning networks, including a vibrant college which supports parts of his curriculum. He is busy because of his schoolwork, and because of other enrichment activities that he selects from the schools' and county offers.

### Questions for engagement

QX) Do you agree that the local authority should ensure that wide subject choice from 14 onwards should be an entitlement for all our learners?

QX) How could we develop wider range of 14 – 19 learning pathways?

QX) Should the local authority and schools set out to develop more high-quality vocational options for learners from the age of 14?

QX) Given the centrality of artistic and sporting activities to pupil wellbeing, how could we be better at providing those activities for our young people, at an age when many switch off from such activity?

QX) How can we best serve our most able learners across Powys?

QX) Choices at 14 and again at 16 are often limited in Powys schools – depending on the sizes of schools. It has been suggested that we could develop a small number of centres that focus heavily on the learning of pupils from the age of 14, providing wider options, academic and vocational study, hi-tech modern environments, specialist teaching and a defined clear progression through to university, lifelong learning or the world of work. Do you think that we should seek the support to invest in such facilities? If so, why, or if not, why not?

## It is 2025 and Gwenno is 17 and has just finished her year 12 in one of our secondary schools.

Gwenno was given a choice of 18 A level subjects along with a choice of 3 vocational areas in school and the Welsh Baccalaureate. Additionally, the local college was able to offer courses, but these were not taken up by Gwenno. In each of her A level subject classes, she has over a dozen other learners, and they have developed a very open culture of competitive collaboration, which she enjoys greatly. For her History class, they have a fortnightly symposium, where the 2 classes in her year group come together for a 'university-type' seminar. She certainly does feel that she is being pushed in each of her classes, and enjoys the challenge.

She is part of a sixth form of over 240 learners, and they also play an active part in their local community, through enterprise activities, creative arts projects and sports coaching for younger pupils at school. The sixth form has worked closely with the Urdd to establish coaching networks so that sixth formers can work with younger people through community theatre and sports. These are being accredited through a range of programmes that are overseen by the learning coach who works to the head of sixth form.

Over 20 learners in Gwenno's various A level classes are part of the SEREN Network for the most able learners in Wales, and the school regularly engages with colleagues from universities, who regularly video conference university lectures into the sixth form e-centre. The e-platform underpins much of Gwenno's learning – at school and at home, and she interacts with other able learners across Wales through a range of specialist learning networks. Her teachers also benefit from being part of Wales-wide and global teacher networks through the new platforms that have been put into their schools.

The development of specialist post-16 teaching is taken very seriously across the authority, and in partnership with college staff and sixth forms in other authorities, there is regular, planned professional learning for all staff.



## George is Gwenno's 17-year-old twin, and he has just finished his year 12 studies.



Things didn't work out well for George after his GCSEs and he feels that year 12 was largely a wasted year. However, through close collaboration between the school and the local college, he has secured a place to begin a new course of study but will also maintain his link with the school to complete the one A level that was going well for him. In fact, a growing number of learners in the school are utilising a range of courses in partnership with the college, and the reverse is also true.

Through the agreement between the local schools and the college, George will also be able to take advantage of the partnership with the rugby academy, funded by the regional franchise of the Welsh Rugby Union. He plays regularly for his county team, which has motivated him greatly to pursue a higher education course in PE and Sport Science. He has been given the opportunity to mix his school A level with a college course and playing rugby. It is now up to him to get the grades to move on to university to take things further.

### Questions for engagement

QX) The offer available for post-16 learners varies across the authority. Should there be a standard entitlement for our post-16 learners that guarantees them a minimum choice of academic and vocational subjects?

QX) Other than subject choice, what do you believe should be part of the learner entitlement for all our post-16 learners in schools?

QX) Would you agree that the authority should develop a wider diversity of provision, in both English and Welsh, by promoting more effective partnership working?

QX) At present, approximately 450 of our 16-19 year old learners travel daily beyond our boundaries for their sixth form education. Do you have any information that would help us understand why this is happening? What do we need to do to ensure that the young people of Powys can pursue their education (with confidence) through to the age of 18 or 19 within the authority?



## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL - COUNTY HALL ON MONDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2019

### PRESENT

County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)

County Councillors B Davies, D R Jones, K Laurie-Parry, L Roberts, R G Thomas,  
Mrs A Davies, Mrs S. Davies, Mrs M Evitts, G Robson, A W Davies and P Davies

In attendance:

County Councillor P Davies (Portfolio Holder for Education)

L Lovell (Interim Head of Education), E Towns (Senior Challenge Advisor), I  
Bhatti (Senior Manager, Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion) and E  
Patterson (Scrutiny Officer).

The Chair welcomed the new Portfolio Holder who had taken over the role since  
24<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor Roderick.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

### 3. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

No declarations of Party Whips were received.

### 4. MINUTES

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meetings held on the 7<sup>th</sup> July  
2019 and the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

### 5. SCHOOL STANDARDS REPORT 2019

The Senior Challenge Advisor presented the briefing on Provisional Learner  
Outcomes.

There have been changes in the performance measures for schools which are  
being used in Wales. For the second year there is no comparative data available  
across Wales for the Foundation Phase (FP), Key Stage 2 (KS2) and Key Stage  
3 (KS3). At Key Stage 4 (KS4) the measure is changing away from Level 2  
Inclusive (5 GCSEs including maths and English or Welsh) to the Capped 9  
scores.

Welsh Government have written out to all schools and local authorities explaining the intention of the changes which is to move emphasis away from a few narrow indicators to a wider range of indicators that capture the progress of all learners and the ambition for the new curriculum. In the interim subtle changes are being made year on year (for example the inclusion of English literature in the Capped 9 score). Welsh Government are clear that the focus should be on the progress of individual learners at each stage of their education.

The local authority is changing the way that data is collected and expect schools to engage with these changes.

Estyn in their recent inspection noted *‘Overall, many pupils in Powys schools make sound progress. However, in many secondary schools, pupils do not sustain the good progress they achieve in early years settings and primary schools.’* This was based on 2017/18 data as the information for 2018/19 was not available at the time of inspection.

The Senior Challenge Advisor confirmed the following definitions:

Many = 70 – 90%

Most = 90 – 97%

Nearly all = 97-100%

### Foundation Phase

This section reports on the progress of pupils from their baseline of when they entered school (for this cohort into a nursery class within the school). Pleasing progress has been made for most pupils with particular progress noted for Language, Literacy and Communication (Welsh) up from 37.1% achieving their expected outcome on entry to school (Outcome 2), to 87% achieving their expected outcome in Year 2 (Outcome 5). However, this cohort would include a number of children for whom Welsh is not their first language and these years are an opportunity for these pupils to make rapid progress.

The Portfolio Holder welcomed this progress but drew to the attention of scrutiny the need to follow the progress of pupils as they move up through the school system.

The Senior Challenge Advisor noted that there has been a small decrease in the FP indicator which is because the Outcomes were amended by Welsh Government in 2018, increasing the expectations of pupils at all outcomes.

There has been a decrease in the total numbers on roll of 94 pupils from 1,355 in 2017/18 to 1,261 in 2018/19 but a larger proportional drop in the numbers being assessed through the medium of Welsh (a decrease of 50 pupils from 299 in 2017/18 to 249 in 2018/19). The smaller cohort of pupils studying through the medium of Welsh means that the performance of each child has a larger impact on the overall figures.

*The Estyn report states that ‘the proportion of pupils receiving their education through the medium of Welsh has stagnated over recent years’. The figures quoted within the report (a reduction from 299 to 249 pupils or 1/6<sup>th</sup>) shows that the cohort of Welsh medium learners are not stagnating but actively declining.*

The Portfolio Holder acknowledged the position and advised that there was a desperate need to examine and adopt a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

*The figures presented are raw data. How can it be shown that the cohort have reached the expected level, exceeded it or fallen short of it?*

The Senior Challenge Advisor confirmed it was hoped that this would be available for the final report in the New Year by way of including the value added data.

The Senior Challenge Advisor drew attention to the inclusion of the % of pupils with SEN in Year 2 noting that only those pupils with learning needs were included, not those pupils with medical needs.

**Recommendation – that a breakdown of data to include outcomes for the following cohorts of pupils:**

- **SEN**
- **More Able and Talented**
- **Male/Female**
- **Small and Large Schools**

The Senior Challenge Advisor confirmed that this information would be included once the verified data was available and this would include other appropriate cohorts.

*What 'targeted support from Foundation Phase Practitioners' was provided?*

The Senior Challenge Advisor noted that targeted support had been provided for those schools which were identified in the Autumn Term Core Visits as needing it.

*There is a lack of detail in the next steps identified in the report.*

This detail will be included in the Post Inspection Action Plan which will be brought to scrutiny in October.

## Key Stage 2

The Senior Challenge Advisor noted that performance at KS2 was broadly in line with the outcomes that this cohort had achieved when they finished their Foundation Phase. There had been a small decline in their English and Maths performance.

The number of SEN pupils was corrected from that recorded in the report to 21.8% which is still a high number of pupils with SEN.

*The decline in performance is disappointing for this cohort.*

The Senior Challenge Advisor noted that 89% of pupils achieved the expected levels with over 20% of this cohort identified as having SEN. Those pupils with SEN would be receiving support to help them fulfil their potential.

*There has been an increase in the number of pupils with SEN in 2019 from the FP (17.6%) to KS2 (21.8%). Is this because they are different cohorts or is there change over time with pupils joining and leaving the SEN register?*

**Recommended that information be provided of the changes over time of the SEN population year by year.**

The Senior Challenge Advisor noted that there had been an increase in the number of pupils assessed through the medium of Welsh at the end of KS2 of 21 pupils.

Key Stage 3

The Senior Challenge Advisor noted that there had been strong progress for all pupils (apart from a small decrease in Maths and Welsh) which is a concern as these pupils are able to achieve in English and Science. The Schools Service are asking schools why a decline in performance in Maths and Welsh is taking place.

The Interim Head of Schools advised that Estyn were clear that progress was good at primary schools but pupils did not sustain the good progress they achieved in early years settings and primary schools.

**Recommended that the attainment of pupils at KS3 be compared between those who attended a small or large primary school.**

*Members noted that the progress of this cohort between KS2 and KS3 had declined by 1.3pp overall but this included improved attainment in English and Science but a worsening position in Maths and Welsh.*

The number of pupils in this cohort assessed through the medium of Welsh has declined by 80 between 2015/16 and 2018/19.

*Is the performance of pupils who change from Welsh Medium to English medium affected by their inability to continue in their original language of learning?*

**Recommended that this is considered when the verified data report is received.**

*Members and Parent Governors are all aware from Governor meetings how cohorts vary from year to year. A particular standard may reflect what would be expected from a cohort, or excellent achievement of a lower ability cohort or poor achievement of a higher ability cohort. How are a cohort assessed to ascertain what they should achieve?*

The Interim Head of Schools explained that for each year the Challenge Advisor will look at data to an individual pupil level taking into account the baseline from when they came into school, taking into account other data including national test data and Fischer Family Trust Scores (which use prior attainment and deprivation data). From this the strength of the cohort can be ascertained. Qualitative data is also considered so that targets for that cohort can be set. For example, if there are 4 pupils in a cohort and one has SEN the target would be 75%.

**Recommended that the verified data includes the % weight/pupil for each cohort.**

Key Stage 4

The Senior Challenge Advisor noted that the Capped 9 score had increased from 364 to 370 however, this was not comparing like with like as the subjects included in this score included English Literature, Welsh Literacy and Numeracy for the first time this year. The provisional increase is lower in Powys than it is across ERW.

*This is the first time that ERW have been referenced. Is it possible to use comparative information from ERW in the verified report?*

The Interim Head of Education advised Welsh Government are not providing aggregated data for comparison as part of their move to encourage improvement of all pupils. Welsh Government are encouraging the evaluation of performance of individual schools rather than generating aggregated data at local authority level.

The Senior Challenge Advisor noted there had been a decline in the performance of pupils achieving 5 A\*-A grades at GCSE. This equates to approximately 3 pupils which is neither acceptable to the schools service or Estyn. The actual figures for those pupils achieving higher level scores in KS2 and KS3 for this cohort were not included in the paper. However, in 2017 between 39% and 77% of KS2 pupils achieved Outcome 6+, in 2017 between 64% and 71% KS3 pupils achieved Levels 6 and above but in 2019 only 18.4% of pupils are achieving 5 A\*-A grades. The change to Capped 9 score may improve this position as there will be a focus on all pupils achieving their potential rather than a focus on C/D pupils achieving a C grade.

*Do Challenge Advisors track the progress of individual pupils?*

The change in emphasis for assessing the progress of individual pupils means the focus has changed to encourage all students to reach their potential. An A grade pupil achieving an A\* and an E grade pupil achieving a D will all help improve a schools Capped 9 score. The Challenge Advisor will be having different conversations with Head Teachers, Deputy Heads and Middle Leaders to help all members of staff undertake their role.

*Is pupil progress reported termly to parents?*

Schools are required to report to parents three times a year but it is up to schools how this is done.

**Recommended that the communication arrangements for pupils progress at each secondary school be included in the verified standards report.**

*Does the schools service have sufficient Challenge Advisor capacity to undertake the challenge required across the secondary sector?*

The Senior Challenge Advisor reported the local authority has 5 Challenge Advisors covering the primary sector and 1.5 Challenge Advisors covering the secondary sector.

The Interim Head of Schools quoted the Estyn report which noted that areas of the authority's work such as 'those relating to school organisation, financial management, school governance... affect school leadership, staffing structure, curriculum planning and staff morale, which in turn limit the impact of challenge advisers and other school improvement staff'.

It was acknowledged the problem was less to do with quality and more to do with capacity as their time was being used to support issues other than school improvement.

*With limited challenge adviser capacity together with limited staff to support transformation and finance what is the priority?*

The Interim Head of Schools noted the clear mandate from Estyn:

- Standards including for the more able
- Additional Learning Needs
- Leadership in the local authority and self evaluation
- Transformation
- Finance and deficit budgets

The Post Inspection Action Plan will detail how these will be addressed and these areas are considered to have equal weight.

*These areas have already been identified by this committee as problem areas. The capacity issue remains. Did the last round of cuts which focussed on the schools service in order to save the delegated budget cut too deeply is an issue which can be considered when the PIAP is brought to scrutiny.*

### Key Stage 5

The Senior Challenge Advisor noted at this level all Wales data was available and showed that Powys results are below all Wales levels at each stage (A-A\*, A\*-C and A\*-E).

*Why is A level performance in Powys lower than performance across Wales?*

This may be due to a number of factors including a lower number of pupils continuing their Post-16 education in Powys which has impacted on the number of subjects that can be offered. What is not known is whether those pupils that remain in Powys to study at Post-16 are doing as expected or better/worse than expected.

*Does the local authority know why the pupils are not staying on? A learner survey was undertaken which was acknowledged to be of limited value. Might the different expectations on students at college and school (with college students not expected to remain on campus when they do not have lectures) be one of the factors influencing student decisions?*

These factors may influence decisions but it will be important to ascertain the value added data for those pupils who do undertake Post 16 study in Powys.

*Why is the third next step is described as to 'promote post-16 education through rebranding as Powys Pathways' when the offer has not changed?*

This is the start of a process aimed to increase the curriculum offer with the aim to retain more able pupils.

*Will this make much difference?*

The service are confident that it can and whilst it will not bring all the pupils back it demonstrates a clear intention to compete with what is offered over the border which has not been the case previously..

*How many pupils have signed up to e-learning this year?*

The figures for this year can be provided. Last year 7 pupils sat AS levels taught by Tute-teach of which 1 has continued to A level.

From this year each High School offers one subject taught by E-ysgol which is available in all other schools across Powys. It will be necessary to evaluate it before Christmas however, it is known that schools which already had the technology in place by 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019 were more successful at introducing e-learning.

**Recommended that a briefing be provided on the offer and uptake of e-learning to be shared with Members on the Member briefing day.**

*It is not possible to compete with the offer available in Shrewsbury and Hereford and the offer here should be something that is not available across the border which can be provided through bilingual provision.*

Cllr B Davies left the meeting

### Exclusions

The Senior Manager ALN and Inclusion noted that the Estyn report considered exclusions at secondary schools were too high when compared with other local authorities although the inspection had considered the figures from 2017/18 which were 10 and this had reduced to 5 in 2018/19 although the service still consider this to be too high.

Each of the permanent exclusions related to one-off incidences which the schools could not predict.

In 2018/19 there were 434 fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less (down from 460 in 2017/18 but up from 290 in 2016/17) which related to 273 pupils meaning some pupils were excluded more than once. It will be necessary to ascertain what additional or different support needs to be in place to reduce the incidence of fixed term exclusions.

*Are pupils being moved to a different school to avoid a pupil being recorded as having had a permanent exclusion?*

This is avoided as a permanent exclusion would result in the provision of support from other agencies that a student may need. Managed moves may have been used a few years ago to avoid permanent exclusions but this is no longer done.

*Are pupils who have had a fixed term exclusion subject to a managed move to avoid a permanent exclusion?*

This should not be happening. If problems are escalating additional support needs to be provided.

**Recommended that records are checked to ascertain if any managed moves have taken place after a pupil has been subject to a fixed terms exclusion, and if so how many incidences of this have occurred.**

*With regard to the 29 fixed term exclusions reported how many pupils does this relate to and what is the length of time for which they are excluded.*

**This information will be provided in the verified report.**

*Where do those pupils who have been permanent excluded go?*

These pupils would move to other schools or the PRU.

*If a pupil is excluded for more than 5 days who decides on the length of exclusion?*

The Welsh Government have guidance on exclusions including the length of exclusions. A pupil may not be excluded for more than 15 days/term (45 days/year) which do not have to be consecutive.

Examples of the length of exclusions include those for assault or violence which range from 0.5 days to 23 days with an average of 2.5 days, and for bullying which range from 0.5 days to 5 days with an average of 1.6 days.

The Head teacher decides on exclusions and may choose to contact the local authority for advice and guidance. Head teacher generally inform the local authority if there has been an investigation.

**Recommended that scrutiny be provided with the minimum/maximum figures for each category of exclusion.**

*Is the department reactive if Head teachers do not always contact the service regarding exclusions?*

It is the responsibility of Head teachers to decide on exclusions and the local authority cannot influence their decision.

*How is consistency in decision making across Powys ensured?*

Head teachers are required to follow Welsh Government guidance on this matter although there is scope for variation within this and it is the responsibility of the Head teacher to implement this.

The Senior Manager ALN and Inclusion noted that there was no comparative data available from Welsh Government on exclusions. It is intended to put in place an ability to intervene earlier to prevent issues escalating.

*Is there a progression from short term fixed term exclusions to longer term or a permanent exclusion? Are pupils that were excluded in previous years continuing to be excluded as they move up through the school?*

This information could be ascertained by looking at those pupils subject to multiple exclusions.

**Recommended that the incidence of repeat exclusions within year and as pupils move up school be included in the verified data report.**

*How closely does the Schools Service work with the Children's Services Team?*

The Schools Service works with Children's Services in respect of child protection and if a pupil was at risk of exclusion a Pupil Inclusion Panel would be convened and this would include asking Children's Services if they were involved with the pupil. Youth Engagement are also involved as they can help identify a pathway for pupils.

*Should Children's Services be involved at an earlier stage than when a pupil is at risk of exclusion?*

Schools do have a series of interventions available such as the KiVa anti-bullying programme to support a pupil who returns to school or the restorative justice programme. A fixed term exclusions in itself is not what a pupil learns from.

The Interim Head of Schools noted that all schools have anti-bullying policies but Estyn were concerned that the local authority did not record incidences of bullying. This will be included in the PIAP.

*Estyn note that fixed term exclusions are too high but 34% are down to assault. Are schools taking appropriate steps to tackle poor behaviour?*

The Senior Manager ALN and Inclusion advised that this needed to be looked at case by case but it was also necessary to see if a pattern was developing where it would be necessary to provide extra support to a school.

*There have been over 160 fixed term exclusions for violence against a learner or member of staff with the attacker now back in the school. What support is provided to the victims of assault, are staff taking sick leave, are assaulted pupils missing school?*

The Senior Manager ALN and Inclusion advised this is the responsibility of the headteacher and it is hoped the headteacher would support the victim.

The Interim Head of Schools confirmed that if a member of staff or pupil had been assaulted the Head teacher is required to inform the local authority that a violent incident has taken place which is logged and reported to the Senior Leadership Team. There is an onus on the Head teacher to report this and where a pattern is identified then a visit would be made.

*Can assurance be provided that incidences are tracked to ascertain if the same perpetrators are identified, in particular for incidences of assault, then action is taken?*

The Interim Head of Schools confirmed that all exclusions are reported and there is an additional layer in respect of assault in that these are specifically reported to Senior Leadership Team.

*Are staff and pupils subject to assault entitled to counselling?*

This would be the responsibility of the individual school. There is no county wide protocol.

*How many incidences resulting in exclusions were reported to the police?*

**This information can be provided with the verified results.**

*Have any incidences that have resulted in fixed term exclusions for the perpetrator resulted in a victim moving school or becoming Home School Educated?*

**This information can be provided with the verified results.**

*When a pupil is excluded how is this reported in school attendance figures?*

It is recorded as an absence.

*The Estyn report notes that the LIST team is valued. How many pupils are supported by this team?*

Changes are being made to the support provided whereby the work previously undertaken by the LIST team will, from January 2020 be undertaken from the PRU.

**A report on the PRU is requested to a future meeting.**

Attendance

The attendance data is unverified and the data will be cleansed before it is reported with the verified results.

Provisional data shows primary attendance at 94.2% a fall from 94.6% in 2018 when Powys had the second highest attendance rates. Despite this there are a significant number of schools in the lower two quartiles of attendance compared to schools of a similar background.

*Is this due to the number of small schools in Powys? Is it a statistical problem rather than attendance problem?*

It is not necessarily those schools that are smallest that have the poorest attendance however, in small schools where each pupil has a larger effect on attendance figures then poor attendance by a small number of pupils can change the quartile the school is in.

At Secondary school there is provisional reduction from 2018 (94.5%) to 94% in 2019.

*It is disappointing that this data remains provisional when it is effectively 'finished' in July 2019. Scrutiny request that improvements are made in production of verified data for attendance in the future.*

*There is a high percentage of secondary schools in the lowest quartile for attendance. Are there any themes behind this?*

The breakdown shows illness at 3.6% and term time holidays at 1.2%. The change in law regarding term time holidays has had a major impact.

*Are so many secondary schools in the lowest quartile because Powys is a rural county where pupils from the farming community do not attend school at certain times during the agricultural year, for example shearing?*

A yearly pattern is not apparent.

*One of the attendance support developments is for a Challenge Advisor to accompany the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) on Autumn Core Visits for all quartile four secondary schools. Do the Challenge Advisors have capacity for this?*

It is intended that the EWO will be in school for part of the day that the Challenge Advisor is already there to make the best use of time.

The Interim Head of Schools advised there was a capacity issue for Challenge Advisors exacerbated by her interim appointment. However, arrangements had been made to increase capacity for more school to school work. Six Head teachers from 'green' categorised schools have been appointed to carry out a number of core visits at primary school level. There is a need to look at capacity of challenge advisors in the secondary sector. Assurance was given that it is the intention that going forward challenge advisors will be able to focus on learning and standards and the other issues raised by Estyn are for other colleagues and business partners to address.

The Vice-Chair presented a summary of the last ERW Scrutiny Chairs session. She confirmed that Neath Port Talbot were continuing to work with ERW through their notice to withdraw period and had not made a final decision on their future participation.

The Interim Head of Schools noted that whilst ERW had gone through a challenging period the authority had continued to work well with ERW.

<b>7.</b>	<b>CHAIR'S BRIEFING</b>
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The Chair advised that he had intended to meet with the Senior Manager ALN and Inclusion to discuss the ALN Transformation work programme but that this had been postponed.

<b>8.</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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The work programme as outlined in the agenda was noted.

**County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)**

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# Public Document Pack

Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee Wednesday, 30 October 2019

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL - COUNTY HALL ON WEDNESDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2019

### PRESENT

County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)

County Councillors B Davies, S C Davies, D R Jones, K Laurie-Parry, E Roderick,  
L Roberts, R G Thomas, Mrs A Davies, Mrs S. Davies, Mrs M Evitts, G Robson,  
P Davies and A W Davies  
Church Representative M Evitts

#### In attendance:

County Councillor P Davies (Portfolio Holder for Education)

County Councillor A Davies (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transport)

C Turner (Chief Executive), L Lovell (Interim Head of Education), G Rees  
(Service Improvement Officer), C Rees (Education Advisor), S Quibell (Strategic  
Programme Manager, ALN) and E Patterson (Scrutiny Officer)

T Bate (Lead Estyn Inspector), K Newby-Jones (Estyn Link Inspector)

<b>1. APOLOGIES</b>
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There were no apologies for absence.

#### In attendance:

County Councillor P Davies (Portfolio Holder for Education)

County Councillor A Davies (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transport)

C Turner (Chief Executive), L Lovell (Interim Head of Education), G Rees  
(Education Consultant), C Rees (Education Advisor), S Quibell (Strategic  
Programme Manager, ALN) and E Patterson (Scrutiny Officer)

T Bate (Lead Estyn Inspector), K Newby-Jones (Estyn Link Inspector)

<b>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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No declarations of interest were received.

<b>3. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP</b>
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No declarations of party whip were received.

<b>4. ESTYN INSPECTION OF POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL</b>
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The Chair introduced the meeting advising that Scrutiny Members would be focussing on each of the Inspection recommendations in pairs and that this focus would continue through the production and agreement of the Post Inspection

Action Plan and on into the monitoring phase. It is intended to examine the document produced and undertake a gap analysis to be assured that all the recommendations made by Estyn are being acknowledged and addressed.

The Portfolio Holder for Education introduced the Estyn report outlining his view of the severity of the report and how alarming the concerns highlighted within the report were. He listed a series of issues and acknowledged the weak leadership both corporately and from Members. He noted the lack of transparency and loss of trust between the Cabinet and Scrutiny. He recognised that there were too many schools in Powys and too much was being spent on buildings and leadership which was ultimately had the potential to affect the viability of the Authority.

The Portfolio Holder went on to say that a Conference had been held with the Primary and Secondary Heads who had asked the service to make political decisions.

He confirmed that he fully accepted the recommendations from Estyn and that decisions had to be made in 2020 for implementation by 2021.

The Chair explained that there had been a misunderstanding over the last week regarding what documents were expected to be provided to this meeting. The production of the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) was not as complete as had been expected but that it was understood that there was a desire to get the information correct. The acknowledgement that there are too many schools was refreshing along with the acknowledgement that if nothing is done the Authority will be bankrupt.

The Chief Executive assured the Committee and Estyn that the Authority fully accepted the findings of the report. The Authority moved quickly to appoint an Interim Leadership Team comprising of Ms Lovell (Interim Head of Schools) an internal appointment, G Rees (Service Improvement Officer), C Rees (Education Advisor) and D Lewis (Education Advisor). The team are working on the PIAP which is 90% complete but scrutiny comments are welcomed on the high-level actions and if any thing is not clear or appears to have been missed. A full version will be shared with Cabinet, Scrutiny and the Improvement and Assurance Board before the meeting with Estyn at the end of November. Work on this started in July and there are significant improvements needed which cannot be completed overnight. The PIAP will detail short term and longer-term actions. It can be expected that this journey will take two years as it will have to be done properly to leave a legacy for learners who are at the heart of considerations along with the wider community.

The Interim Head of Schools confirmed that the service fully accepted the recommendations the gravity of which are clear.

The Service Improvement Officer advised that he had been appointed with two colleagues to work directly on this. There is a passion to address this quickly and correctly. There is no reason why Powys cannot have a first-class education system.

Recommendation 1: Improve the standards in secondary schools, and especially the performance of more able learners

*It is surprising the Portfolio Holder finds the Inspection report alarming. There is nothing new in this inspection that has not been found in previous inspections. It will be necessary to undertake a comprehensive marketing campaign as schools and communities have heard all this before. It is surprising the PIAP is 90% complete and yet it has not been made available for scrutiny to comment on before it is submitted to Estyn. With most of the Scrutiny Members sitting on Governing Bodies Members are familiar with Post Inspection Action Plans and had expected to undertake detailed scrutiny of the document prior to submission. In relation to the Portfolio Holder report the following gaps are noted:*

**Outcomes – areas for improvement**

- *Almost half of secondary schools have been in the bottom 25% when compared to similar schools over the last two years **with regard to attendance rates.***
- *The rate of permanent exclusions in secondary schools is high **the total number of fixed term exclusions remains too high.***
- ***There is no strategic approach for developing pupils mental and emotional health across the Authority.***

*Budgets have been cut which is resulting in cuts to the Learning Inclusion and Support Team (LIST). School staff are required to attend multi-agency meetings which are cancelled at short notice resulting in time lost for school staff.*

*The report states that pupils do not feel listened to and neither do parents which is why the marketing campaign needs to be good. There will be some people unhappy with the decisions that need to be made but it is the role of the Authority to make these difficult decisions.*

*There are good things happening in schools, but this is not across the board. It will be necessary to look at the standards of teaching particularly in secondary schools. A robust programme of monitoring performance is needed, and the use of unsuitable cover needs to cease.*

The Portfolio Holder accepted that the Authority had been here before but actually it was still here. Improvements for more able and talented pupils are identified as a priority along with improving attendance, particularly in secondary schools. Attendance rates raise the question of why pupils do not want to be in school. With experience of being a local Authority governor he recognised the importance of support services in tackling behaviour and reducing exclusions.

The cuts implemented last year did not help but he understood they were offered up by the Schools Service. The importance of talking to parents is accepted. The schools service has spoken with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors and now need to go out and visit the 13 catchments between now and Christmas.

The PIAP is 80 pages long and is at a different level from a school PIAP. The service needs to get this document to you for scrutiny.

There are difficulties in getting enough specialist teachers in all the schools in Powys because teachers are needed in too many schools teaching too few pupils. The appetite of Governing Bodies to address poor performance and the level of HR support needs to improve. There are people not pulling their weight

along with many good members of staff and it would not be the intention that morale would be affected.

This is not a matter of insufficient money; it is about the education offer. There is 25% surplus capacity and too much money is spent running the estate.

The Interim Head of Education noted that the removal of the LIST is a key point. The local Authority needs to be assured that the right support is available going forward. Cuts that affect schools cannot be supported.

It is accepted that parents feel they are not being listened to.

There is some good work being undertaken in schools regarding pupil mental health. As Interim Head I now attend partnership meetings such as Startwell and it will be necessary to work effectively with the Powys Teaching Health Board and Children's Service. This is acknowledged as an area for improvement.

There are some areas with robust monitoring of teaching and learning but there are some schools, particularly secondary schools where the provision is not suitable for learners. The calibre of teaching and learning is affected by the extent of the school estate. Over the last few years there have been problems in the secondary sector which is linked to the modernisation of the school estate.

There is a new curriculum in 2022 and one of the main areas identified within the PIAP is improving pedagogy at Key Stages 3 and 4.

*It has been inferred that the recent cuts have gone too deep. It will be necessary to review the impact of the cuts over the last 2 years.*

*Scrutiny recently received a report on unverified results. A number of recommendations have come out of that session together with a series of recommendations from when scrutiny considered the Post-16 report. Scrutiny look forward to receiving a response to these recommendations.*

*School Governors need training to be able to undertake their role, but they are volunteers and it is becoming difficult to attract School Governors.*

*Children have gone through their whole education in Powys whilst there have been the problems identified in the report. There has been inconsistency across the Authority and within schools and whilst some children have not been affected, some have, and some have achieved despite rather than because of what has been available.*

The Portfolio Holder agreed with comments regarding Governors and noted that there are too many schools and/or sites. A reduction in the number of schools/sites will mean fewer School Governors will be needed.

It was noted that pupils will vote with their feet and go where they feel the best offer is. If the best offer for students is over the border, then they should be supported. Powys pupils should be able to access the best offer available.

The Interim Head of Education noted that the local Authority needed to agree what pupils were entitled to from the Foundation Phase through to Post 16 provision.

Recommendation 2: Improve the evaluation, planning and co-ordination of provision for learners with special educational needs and other pupils who may require extra support.

*This area is identified as an area for improvement, but the service vision is not articulated, and this vision needs to be shared with stakeholders. There are changes coming forward under the ALN Act which means all schools will have to be inclusive schools. Schools will need to be confident they have equitable access to support services.*

*In relation to the Portfolio Holder report the following gaps are noted:*

LAQ4

- **Access to specialist placements is overly complex**
- **Review of specialist resource centres – consultation with Headteachers is inconsistent leading to a lack of clarity around the reorganisation of the specialist resource centres**
- **Limited ongoing monitoring and evaluation of quality of outreach support**

*Teachers share the Authority's passion for ALN development, but the problem is funding and how for example if an invigilator is needed the ALN support will be called on.*

*It is surprising that 'Ensure that schools and other stakeholders have a clear understanding of the services that are available to support pupils with SEN/ALN and other pupils who may require support and that process for accessing these services are clear and robust' (Recommendation 2b) is needed. This should be happening already and access to these services should be equitable.*

*In relation to the Portfolio Holder report the following gaps are noted:*

- **Introduce local Authority monitoring of bullying incidents**
- **Simplify access to placements**

The Portfolio Holder noted the comments regarding Recommendation 2b and confirmed that access should be equitable.

The funding of ALN is also impacted by the number of schools the budget is having to be spread across.

*Detailed information on the disparity of the cost of educating pupils has only recently become available.*

The Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that there would always be a variation in the cost per pupil.

The Education Advisor noted all the comments as helpful and that they were being addressed in the PIAP.

There is some confusion regarding the language used. Currently the terminology is SEN, but the new Code refers to ALN. Many bodies have started using the term ALN before the Code has been enacted. SEN/ALN refers to pupils with a disability or learning need, for example autism or dyslexia. There are also other groups of pupils who may require additional support (around 12 groups, including for example pregnant schoolgirls, young carers etc).

*Do more able and talented pupils fall within this category?*

The Education Advisor confirmed support for schools in relation to more able and talented pupils is received from the Challenge Advisor team.

The Authority has an ALN Transformation programme with eight workstreams which was set up to make the changes required by the new legislation. Implementation of the new legislation has been delayed by a year and therefore it will be necessary to include work on this area in the PIAP to ensure the recommendations are addressed in a timely manner. It will be necessary to map what is on offer from the central team and outreach from the three specialist schools as the service do not currently know what is on offer and are not monitoring what is taking place. This mapping will enable gaps to be identified. The loss of the LIST means that it is not possible to provide some support. It may be that this support is replaced by guidance. It will be necessary to improve the availability and use of data to support the identification of gaps and what support is required. It will be necessary to address the recommendation in relation to bullying. Welsh Government guidance is awaited – this may provide a definition of bullying which will be used in reporting incidents of bullying.

*It has been acknowledged that the service does not know what is being provided in terms of outreach and that there is some provision which will no longer be provided. How can the Authority be assured that the cuts that have been required from the central service are safe?*

The Education Advisor confirmed that the service did not currently know what outreach services were being provided. Money is going into provide outreach, but it is not known how effective this service is.

***The Chair advised that assurance regarding the impact of cuts to central services would be sought outside of this meeting.***

The Education Advisor confirmed that the decisions made last year on cuts to central services were not fully understood and the Portfolio Holder has asked for this to be looked at again. It will be necessary for Members to be assured that the money that is being spent on this service is being used effectively. The Interim Head of Education has been asked to ensure that any financial decisions are made from a position of understanding.

*The impact of cuts to central services has been of concern to scrutiny and it is reassuring that future financial decisions are made from a position of understanding.*

*It is of concern that more able and talented pupils come under a different umbrella to ALN pupils. More able and talented pupils who are bored can be as disruptive as pupils with ALN.*

The needs of these pupils will be addressed but it is confirmed this falls under different arrangements to those pupils with ALN.

Recommendation 3: Improve the consistency and impact of senior leaders in improving the quality of education services and continue to strengthen the rigour, scrutiny and challenge about performance of the Authority's services.

*This is an all-encompassing recommendation which sets out what in scrutiny was known to be the position but was not accepted to be the case. Estyn are owed a debt of gratitude for codifying the position. The detail will be available in the PIAP but scrutiny are looking to the new Portfolio Holder and the Officers brought in to address the recommendations.*

The Chief Executive advised that six weeks after starting with the Authority the notice of inspection had been received from Estyn. When researching the Authority whilst applying for the role the data was showing that pupils weren't being stretched. She had challenged the self-evaluation which was rewritten before submission to Estyn and although she still did not think it was correct she did not have the knowledge to challenge it further and did not think the service had the information needed. The Inspection Report was a real shock but there is now an opportunity to make changes. During the inspection I met with the Chief Inspector each day and the constant issue that came through was that the inspectors needed more data and evaluation of the data. How did the Authority know what the impact of intervention was? As a new Chief Executive, I was shocked this information was not available in Education Services as it was in place for both Children's and Adults Services. It seemed that the focus on social care had resulted in a loss of focus in education. It is accepted that scrutiny need more detail than that provided in the high-level update provided to committee.

The Service Improvement Officer advised that the Authority had invested in leadership training and had expressed corporate values however, the local education service appeared to have largely excluded itself from this training. A professional approach to performance management is required along with benchmarking with other Local Authorities.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed his approach is if something was not good enough this will be acknowledged and shared with scrutiny.

*There has been scrutiny concern regarding the standard of reports presented on various occasions so the improved access to data is welcomed. The lack of leadership training in the education service is concerning. As is the suggestion the service will take 2 years to improve. This is the fifth adverse inspection report and during this period not all pupils have received the standard of education that the Authority aspires to. There are interim leadership arrangements in place but what assurances can be given that any permanent appointee will not wish to make changes to the plans currently being drawn up? There is a lack of detail regarding timeframes in the document provided.*

The Chief Executive confirmed that the PIAP would include considerably more detail including dates and staff with responsibility for the actions. This would be shared with scrutiny in a briefing session followed by a public session before Christmas. It will be necessary to discuss the PIAP with Estyn before it is circulated publicly but it will be shared with scrutiny ahead of that.

The Authority is advertising for a Chief Education Officer and is looking for a person to join the Authority on the improvement journey and not start it again. The current Interim Head of Education had had six line managers in eighteen months. The Chief Executive confirmed her commitment to Powys and if the calibre of applicants is not good enough, she would recommend that alternative

options are considered. The broad outline of two years to improve includes a variety of timescales with some items being completed more quickly and some longer term. This is a once in a generation opportunity to improve prospects for learners and it must be sustainable. Many Members have been here for a long time and tried to make changes but have failed. The Inspection report highlights that there are significant concerns, and this does impact on children however the report acknowledges 'that pupils generally make sound progress over their time in statutory education'. There are some strengths, particularly in the primary sector and these need to be made sustainable. There is one additional item required in the PIAP which is to ensure that those primary schools that are removed from follow-up sustain their progress. I want to reassure Members that there are areas of strength and good practice although this is inconsistent. The Inspection findings are fully accepted.

*It is disappointing that the sentence quoted has been used in isolation.*

The Portfolio Holder noted that his introduction had focussed on the areas for improvement but it was important to acknowledge that the workforce do a good job and there are pupils that get good grades despite rather than because of what is provided.

*The Chair had emailed the Leader a fortnight before seeking clarity on the Portfolio Holder responsibilities since the recent changes regarding Education and the Welsh Language. Could the Cabinet Members provide clarity in this respect?*

The Portfolio Holder for Education confirmed that he had responsibility for the whole of the Education Portfolio except transport.

In relation to the Portfolio Holder report the following gaps are noted:

- ...in our schools **and develop the contribution of pupil's views to the strategic direction of education issues of the local authority**
- **Develop appropriate levels of challenge to schools**
- **Develop robust self-evaluation processes**
- **Implement appropriate performance management arrangements**
- **Ensure appropriate arrangements for monitoring recruitment of volunteers**

Recommendation 4: Ensure that the organisation of the provision for non-maintained, post 16, Welsh medium education and secondary education meets the needs of the children and young people of Powys

*The document presented by the Portfolio Holder notes in the areas for improvement on Local Authority Question 6 'Officers do not have a clear enough understanding of whether there are sufficient early years places, within a reasonable distance of children's homes and in the language of their choice'. If the local Authority intends to contribute to the Welsh Governments intent that there will be 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050 it will need to aim to provide bilingual education. The offer to parents of education through the language of choice can deprive the pupil of the ability to speak two languages.*

The Service Improvement Officer confirmed that there is no reference to the language of choice in the PIAP and that the reference quoted has been taken from the Estyn report. It will be necessary to develop the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and ensure that this is implemented. New guidelines are being published in January 2020 for WESPs which will cover a 10 year period and the PIAP will be amended if necessary in light of the new guidelines and the definitions used within the guidelines will be used within the PIAP.

*The assurances that it will be necessary to implement the new WESP are welcomed but the previous two WESPs did not come to fruition. The WESP should not be a standalone policy. It is essential that it is integrated into every education policy. At present there are 90 primary schools. It will be necessary for three to become Welsh Medium each year to hit the Welsh Government target. In recent years Welsh language in Powys has not just stood still but has actually declined.*

The Portfolio Holder agreed that the WESP had to be integral to the whole improvement process.

The Service Improvement Officer noted that the second WESP had not been implemented and there was little point in looking to update that document, it was necessary to start from the current position in light of new legislation and set the direction for the next 10 years. It appears bilingual education will be central to the new curriculum and this will need pace to achieve.

*This is welcomed but to what extent can the PIAP influence improvements in Welsh Language early years provision? When the transport policy was considered it had failed to prevent school transport being provided from bilingual school catchments to English medium catchments which does not help in meeting the Welsh Government targets. Could the funding formula be used to incentivise schools to move along the language spectrum?*

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transport confirmed it will be necessary to look at the school transport policy within the next six months and that this will be made available for pre-Cabinet scrutiny.

*School transport is integral to school organisation and it will be essential that these are considered in parallel.*

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transport confirmed that the school transport policy would stick to principles and therefore would not have a detrimental impact on school organisation.

*Will there be the opportunity for learners joining schools part way through their school career to access Welsh language immersion centres?*

The Service Improvement Officer expected the new guidelines would contain information regarding immersion and that this will be considered when producing the new WESP.

*In respect of Post-16 education it is not possible for Powys schools to compete with the offer in England. Students are prepared to travel therefore Powys*

*schools need to find a unique selling point which should be Welsh Medium or bilingual Post 16 education.*

The Service Improvement Officer noted that the Headteachers Conference recently had drawn attention to the lack of opportunities for progression at 14-19 was undoing some of the good work undertaken at primary level.

**Recommended that:**

- ***Welsh medium provision in the two catchments which do not have any Early Years Welsh medium provision is considered.***

*It has been accepted that the Authority has more schools than is sustainable. Do Central Services have the capacity to undertake this transformation? There are a number of school buildings in poor condition and a programme for improving these schools. Is consideration given to the impact of school modernisation on the school estate? As the Inspection Report includes recommendations for improvements for all age groups will transformation take place concurrently to ensure that necessary changes for one group or area are not prevented from taking place due to previous changes approved? What is the view on cross-border movements, are they encouraged, discouraged and will they be accounted for in the data available for school modernisation? Will purdah for Westminster elections have an impact on the work programme Schools service are following?*

The Portfolio Holder for Education confirmed that the view on cross-border movements is that if pupils are educated out of county, they are still Powys residents. It will be necessary to define what learners are entitled to at the ages of 4, 7, 11, 14 and 16. There are schools where it will be very challenging to deliver the new curriculum, schools that do not have sufficient pupils to have sports teams or a choir. Consideration needs to be given to the appropriateness of being educated in a school that was attended by parent, grandparents and even great grandparents. The provision of adult learning in the community also needs to be considered.

The Service Improvement Officer advised that it was necessary to use resources corporately (for stakeholder engagements for example). The necessary resources will need to be provided to support transformation. All the recommendations are linked. For example, supporting 97 schools is a challenge for all support services provided. It is intended that school organisation is approached from the perspective of having a vision of what the estate will look like rather than on an ad hoc basis. It has been said that Powys cannot compete with England. Powys has to compete with England, and this needs clever movement and inspirational leadership across the whole Authority. It will be necessary to get to the position where the number of learners enables an offer that can compete with providers out of county. At the Headteachers and Governors conference there was an appetite to get on with transformation and for a Vision that might drive this.

*Scrutiny has had sight of the Schools Major Improvement programme and would not wish to see investment in schools which will be affected by schools' organisation.*

The Portfolio Holder noted this view but confirmed that current learners should not be taught in poor conditions.

*Member buy-in for school transformation is essential. A Member training session was recently held but only approximately half of Members attended. Members will agree that changes are needed until a change is proposed in their ward.*

The Portfolio Holders both agreed this Inspection together with the new curriculum offered a period for exciting change.

*Is it possible to link with other providers such as Universities to run courses in Powys?*

The Service Improvement Officer advised that to engage with partners it is necessary to be on the front foot and at the moment every secondary school is trying to survive. If the vision for education includes lifelong learning there will be opportunities for Universities to engage.

*As a scrutiny member who had attended the Schools Conference it was confirmed as enthusiastic and it was now down to the Members to deliver the necessary decisions.*

In relation to the Portfolio Holder report the following gap was noted:

- **Ensure school buildings in poor condition are improved having regard to the proposals outlined in the school organisation policy**

Recommendation 5: Continue to improve the financial management in schools and take appropriate action to address schools with significant deficit budget.

*The use of intervention remains a thorny issue as the relationship between the school, Finance Service and Schools Service can be affected by intervention. The level of resource to support schools has already been highlighted. It must be acknowledged that some schools are managing their budgets well. All schools have Local Education Authority LEA Governors but not all LEA Governors are Councillors. LEA Governors, who are not Councillors, have received no specific training on their role and therefore are not given any direction from the Local Authority.*

*There are schools with large deficit budgets. The revised funding formula provides funding to run an in year balanced budget. There is no opportunity to pay back deficits without taking money meant for pupils.*

The Portfolio Holder for Education confirmed there were a number of schools with Improvement Notices and in at least one case the actions of the LEA Governor had helped a school make the right decision. Much progress has been made in schools in a deficit position. It is the responsibility of the Section 151 Officer in conjunction with the School's Service to serve an Improvement Notice. The Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that the first step was for schools to produce an in year balanced budget. Trying to implement changes to staffing structures is a struggle and is resource intensive. Each month the outturn is

reported to Cabinet and this has shown a sharp decline in reserves. The overall budget for schools is sufficient but it is spread across too many schools and this has implications on the ability of central services to support the current number of schools.

The Portfolio Holder for Education acknowledged the need to specifically train LEA Governors and to provide some training sessions such as Investigation or Complaints training as bespoke sessions when needed by a school.

The Service Improvement Officer confirmed that current learners could not be expected to suffer as a result of decisions made some years ago. The Formula Funding review consultation will propose changes to payback periods which scrutiny will have sight of. Other changes include addressing in-years changes in school roll where pupils move to a different Powys school which will signal that resources are for pupils. Live benchmarking of data will be maintained. At present the Funding Formula has been designed to ensure that schools of all sizes can exist, and it must be ensured that the Formula does not become an anachronistic relic. It will also be necessary to improve the quality of financial management in schools by professionalising the role and introducing cluster Bursars.

*The proposals relating to pupils that move school will be welcomed by the receiving school but has the impact on the school that has lost the pupil been considered? The cluster Bursar is a fantastic idea that has been successfully trialled however, when the trial ended the three small schools refused to buy into the scheme and it has ceased.*

The Service Improvement Officer noted that this was information that needed to be communicated and that when things worked this needed to be celebrated.

In relation to the Portfolio Holder report the following gap was noted:

- **Agree and implement appropriate arrangements for use of intervention powers**

The Chair concluded that this was not a regular report. Scrutiny would look to be involved in every part of the process. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the involvement of scrutiny was welcomed, and he was looking for support when Community engagement takes place.

The Interim Head of Education thanked Estyn for the report and hoped that scrutiny was assured addressing the recommendations was being taken seriously. Three things came out of the Headteachers Conference; this needs to be addressed at pace, it will be necessary to engage with the community and that this needs to be taken forward together.

The Chief Executive expressed appreciation for the challenge and looked forward to receiving comments from scrutiny.

The Portfolio Holder noted that scrutiny would find responses to issues raised previously by scrutiny in the PIAP. He confirmed that scrutiny comments were valued and would be taken on board.

The Chair accepted the need not to divert resources from current issues and that scrutiny would be looking for the response to previous questions within the PIAP and whilst there would be flexibility a response to recommendations was sought. The Lead Estyn Inspector thanked Members for the opportunity to observe the meeting with frank and open discussion that had been helpful. Estyn would return at the end of November to facilitate an Improvement Conference which was the beginning of the process of follow up. This will look at the initial plans and will include three representatives from the Inspectorate, Members, the Chief Executive and Senior Leaders. From this meeting it is likely that a few suggestions are made. This will be followed by a Progress Conference where the same group will start to consider progress against recommendations (and will be limited to this in their remit). The outcome of the Progress Conference will be either to recommend a further Progress Conference or, if progress has been made, a final Monitoring Visit.

<b>5.</b>	<b>CHAIR'S BRIEFING</b>
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No Chair's briefing was given.

<b>6.</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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The work programme as outlined in the agenda was confirmed subject to the additional of a session on the Post Inspection Action Plan.

**County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)**

# Public Document Pack

Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee Monday, 18 November 2019

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL - COUNTY HALL ON MONDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2019

### PRESENT

County Councillor P Roberts (Chair)  
County Councillors B Davies, S Davies, D R Jones, K Laurie-Parry, L Roberts  
and G Thomas  
Parent Governor Representative S Davies  
Church Representative M Evitts

### In attendance:

County Councillors A Davies (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transport) and P  
Davies (Portfolio Holder for Education and Property)

L Lovell (Interim Head of Education), J Thomas (Head of Finance), N Owen  
(Finance Manager) and E Patterson (Scrutiny Officer)

<b>1. APOLOGIES</b>
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor E Roderick and  
Parent Governor A Davies and G Robson.

<b>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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No declarations of interest were received.

<b>3. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP</b>
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No declarations of Party Whip have been received.

<b>4. SCHOOLS SERVICE FINANCE</b>
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The Interim Head of Education introduced the report outlining it was an update  
on the position that had last been reported to scrutiny in June 2019.

*It is noted that the Officers and Portfolio Holder before scrutiny today had not been in  
their current roles when the budget was set earlier in the year. There has been a view  
from Welsh Government and Powys County Council Cabinet that the schools  
delegated budget must be protected at all costs. The Estyn*

*report is critical of the cuts made to central services and that there is no  
monitoring of initiatives and yet the service are still projecting a £0.5million  
deficit.*

The Interim Head of Education acknowledge that Estyn had found the cuts that  
had been made, for example to the Learning, Inclusion and Support Team  
(LIST), of concern. The service are undertaking a further ALN review including

benchmarking to recognise gaps and identifying what is being provided and how effective this provision is. It is necessary to ascertain that the correct efficiencies are being made. It will be a challenge to find £0.5 million to meet the overspend alongside delivering the improvement outlined in the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP). The Estyn Inspection was unusually critical of the Central Schools Service with only one of the five recommendations relating to schools.

The Schools Service briefing report is based on information available to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 and forecasts the outturn at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 thereby detailing the half year position.

The £11k overspend in Schools Central is a result of overlap in the senior management arrangements.

The £39k overspend in school improvement is made up of 3 main areas

- £70k overspend in the early years budget in relation to an efficiency that was put forward by the Service, this will be reviewed now September intake is known in the settings and a review of the funding requirements for the remaining financial year to identify if there are further savings that can be made to mitigate this overspend
- £17k overspend in relation to staffing and a shortfall on efficiency that was put forward due to timing of a staffing restructure
- Approx £51k underspend in relation to slippage on staffing budgets, as a result of seconded staff and vacancies.

*What impact did not backfilling seconded staff have on the service?*

The seconded staff are part of the Athrawn Bro team. The service provided by schools has continued with school specific work shared between the remaining team members. There has been a loss of strategic capacity but that has been offset by the work undertaken by these staff in their ERW capacity.

*Has there been a detrimental effect on the end user or the team?*

Schools are still receiving a service and there has been no detrimental effect on the team who have seen it as an opportunity to develop leadership skills.

*The report notes a £205k overspend in Schools Operational costs with £122k assigned to inflation in contracts (£50k in 18/19 and £70k in 19/20). Why is this showing as an overspend. Are the contracts wrongly priced at the beginning?*

Budget arrangements in 2018/19 and 2019/20 have required that inflationary pressures were to be found within the service. The service have been working with the finance team to identify how this saving can be found and how this can be better addressed within the Integrated Business Plan going forward.

The inflation in contracts relates to the Freedom Leisure contract.

*Why does this relate to two years of inflationary pressures. It appears that these issues are not being addressed.*

**The Portfolio Holder for Finance agreed to find out why this had not been addressed in 2018/19 and provide this information after the meeting.**

*Why is there an overspend on a rates bill which is understood to be cost neutral to a school?*

This relates to the rates bill for a new school the sum of which had been underestimated with the difference needing to be met centrally this year. Rates bills for new builds are estimated and can change when the property is valued on completion with potential for both an under or an over estimate. This is not a recurring overspend as in future years the school will receive and spend its exact rateable value.

The Portfolio Holder observed that the report as presented was lacking in information regarding the overall position of the schools' budget.

The Head of Finance noted that as the responsibility for budget scrutiny was moving from Audit Committee to the Scrutiny Committees it was intended to examine the information provided to Members to assist them in this task. A series of training events had been arranged for Members to assist them carry out this role. It is intended in future years that rather than expecting services to manage inflationary pressures within their budget these will be identified separately, and it will be clear where these will be funded from.

*This paper outlines the information to 30<sup>th</sup> September. It is now mid-November, has the position improved?*

The Scrutiny Officer advised that it had been intended to consider this paper on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 but this was deferred to allow consideration of the Estyn Inspection Report.

The forecast overspend at 31<sup>st</sup> October had improved from a £506k overspend to a £270k overspend. This improvement is as a result of a review of the savings targets in the area of ALN and specifically a reduction in the forecast spend on out of county placements and an increase in income from other authorities. The cost of placements remains volatile.

*Is this improvement down to good fortune or good management?*

The Portfolio Holder noted that the improvements were due to the team actively addressing the issues.

A further area of improvement since the June report is the reduction of the Schools Central overspend from £64k to £11k as a result of being able to identify savings within budget lines that could be used to fund the additional contribution that was not anticipated for the EIG match funding.

*What does the overspend of £15k on emergency works relate to?*

The Interim Head of Education noted that emergency works were assessed by the Portfolio Holder and Head of Education before any spend was agreed.

*Schools are still reporting problems with the Heart of Wales Property Service and are querying the value for money of this service.*

The Portfolio Holder advised that a five year agreement had been agreed by the last Council which was implemented in 2017. The service is run jointly between the council and Keir and should be able to demonstrate value for money.

**Recommended that Co-ordinating Committee be asked to ensure that value for money is considered when HoWPS next attend the Economy, Regeneration, Communities and Governance Scrutiny Committee.**

The Pupil Inclusion service has reduced the projected overspend from £162k in June to £58k in September. One of the main reasons for the reduction is that Inclusion Officers have not been appointed. However, gaps in provision have been identified for example with speech and language and autism support. Estyn identified that whilst expenditure on ALN is being incurred the impact of this provision is not known. An ALN review is ongoing to identify gaps, benchmark and put in place plans for improvement.

**Recommended that future reports should identify specific areas where efficiencies cannot be met to allow scrutiny to go back to the Impact Assessments to ascertain if these had been highlighted.**

*What is the Band 1 pupil funding which is currently projecting a £45k overspend?*  
Pupils with ALN are placed into Bandings at Panel which equates to an amount of money a school will receive to support a pupil. Schools can put in requests to Panel for top-up funding.

**Banding information to be provided.**

*Will the Education Service have to appoint more staff to cover the gaps identified in ALN provision?*

The review of ALN will identify the skills that staff in the 23 Specialist Units across the county have. It may be that teachers or support staff in the Specialist Units are able to provide this support as Outreach. The outcome of this review will identify if a skills gap still exists. The review will also examine how pupils access and exit a unit and the potential for cluster working given not every school has a unit.

*Are Specialist Units destinations in themselves?*

There is a revolving door policy with many pupils accessing mainstream education as well as education within the Unit. Many pupils leave a Unit in primary school and access mainstream provision in high school.

**Recommended that the ALN review of Specialist Units be made available for scrutiny.**

*Are parents able to choose to access mainstream early years provision rather than sending their child to a setting with a unit?*

Parents are able to choose where to send their children.

The Youth Service is still overspent by £16k due to a combination of factors including staff and travel and other general overspends on supplies and services.

The Portfolio Holder advised that management of the Youth Service was moving to Education but that Portfolio Holder responsibility remained with Leisure Services.

The Head of Finance advised that an unachieved efficiency of £120k for school closures was part of the overall undelivered savings of £5million that the Senior Leadership Team were reviewing as part of the budget setting process for next year. It was confirmed this was not a cumulative figure.

The Schools Service and Finance Service have worked closely on the schools delegated budget issuing 11 Warning Notices to schools with deficit budgets at the end of the summer term. Since then there have been a considerable number of meetings with these schools. The service has met with Governing Bodies to discuss the options available and what happens if the actions identified in the Warning Notices are not met. All the schools are working with the service and further meetings are planned in December. As a result of the work undertaken with the schools service, the finance service and the schools an improvement in the financial position is being recorded.

The budgeted use of reserves and forecast was updated as follows:

<b>School Sector</b>	<b>Opening Balance</b>	<b>Cabinet Budgeted Contribution/ (Use)</b>	<b>Budgeted contribution (use) of reserves as at 30/10/19</b>	<b>Forecast over/ underspend as at 31/8/19</b>	<b>Closing Balance 31/3/20</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Primary	2,582	(1,330)	(1,085)	146	1,643
Special	(123)	(165)	(67)	25	(165)
Secondary	(2,381)	(1,673)	(1,738)	544	(3,575)
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>(3,168)</b>	<b>(2,890)</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>(2,097)</b>

The Interim Head of Schools confirmed the authority had been on the cusp of using the powers outlined in the Warning Notices but all schools were now working with the service to a greater or lesser degree. Some issues remain with some schools and some Governing Bodies but the Schools Service have attended meetings and outlined the steps needed to avoid removal of delegation. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that LEA Governors had been key in moving this forward.

Warning Notices will stay in place until the plans introduced to reduce deficits are implemented and having the desired effect. However, it is clear that major change is needed in Powys schools to satisfy Estyn.

The Estyn report recognises that the Funding Formula is now more transparent however, there are still some schools that are struggling, some because of the change in formula and some because of budget management issues. The service are arranging training for School Governors in financial management. In year pupil changes are causing difficulty which is being considered under the Funding Formula Review.

*To what degree can the reorganisation of school's impact on school budgets?*

Work on reorganisation has reached the options modelling stage which when complete will highlight the impact on the changes on school budgets.

*Are schools increasingly relying on reserves?*

The Portfolio Holder for Finance confirmed this was the case. Last year the schools delegated budget had £78k of reserves with surpluses in primary

schools cancelling deficits in secondary schools. This is getting worse year on year and is of great concern.

*What will be the impact on the Council of increasing school deficit reserves?*

The Head of Finance confirmed that schools finance is ringfenced and there schools with deficit budgets are required to pay the deficits back unless the school is closed. This year will be the first time that school deficit budgets exceed school surplus budgets.

*The funding formula is limited to paying for the education of pupils in school. How can schools be realistically expected to pay back deficit budgets? If the authority is responsible deficits when a school closes what is the risk of acquiring responsibility for a series of deficit budgets as school reorganisation moves forward?*

School reorganisation will affect all schools and there is guidance around managing budgets for schools in the last year before closure to protect against the risk of poor financial management. This has been invoked in respect of two schools that are closing next year in relation to staffing appointments and general spend which must be authorised by the Authority.

*Is it possible to use capital monies to fund this gap in education funding?*

The Portfolio Holder for Finance confirmed that it was not possible to use capital funding for revenue expenditure.

The Portfolio Holder for Education confirmed that the authority was speaking to Welsh Government about the costs of providing services in a rural authority.

The Interim Head of Schools concluded that the service were aware of the scale of challenge faced in delivery of the PIAP whilst ensuring that the service is provided within budget and that agreed efficiencies are made. The service is monitored by the Improvement and Assurance Board and scrutiny to ensure that this happens.

<b>5. CHAIR'S BRIEFING</b>
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The Chair advised that he was meeting regularly with the Interim Head of Education and the Work Programme is updated in light of these meetings.

A Member expressed a view that it was unfortunate that this meeting had been called to discuss a single item. The Chair confirmed it had been intended to look at this paper at an earlier meeting but it had been necessary to move items around on the work programme to accommodate consideration of the Inspection Report.

<b>6. WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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The Work Programme as outlined on the agenda was noted subject to the deferral of the meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019 looking at the WESP.

# Public Document Pack

Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee Friday, 29 November 2019

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL - COUNTY HALL ON FRIDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 2019

### PRESENT

County Councillor P Roberts (Chair)

County Councillors B Davies, S Davies, D R Jones, K Laurie-Parry and L Roberts

Parent Governor Representative S Davies

Church Representative M Evitts

In attendance:

County Councillors A Davies (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transport)

Independent Member J Brautigam (Chair of Finance Panel) and County Councillor D Thomas (Finance Panel Representative)

G Taylor (Chair of Formula Review Group)

L Lovell (Interim Head of Education), G Rees (Education Consultant), J Thomas (Head of Finance), N Owen (Finance Manager) and E Patterson (Scrutiny Officer)

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor G Thomas and Parent Governor Representatives: A Davies and G Robson.  
County Councillor P Davies (Portfolio Holder for Education and Property)

<b>2.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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No declarations of interest were received.

<b>3.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP</b>
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No declarations of Party Whips were received.

<b>4.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>
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Clarity was sought regarding the omission of a question relating to the Learning and Inclusion Team. This would be checked by the Scrutiny Officer and the minutes would be brought to a future meeting of Learning and Skills Scrutiny meeting for approval.

<b>5.</b>	<b>AMENDMENTS TO THE SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA AND SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS</b>
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The draft Amendments to the Schools Funding Formula and Scheme for Financing Schools (copy filed with signed minutes) was presented.

The Finance Manager outlined that a redesign of the Funding Formula had taken place during 2018 which was implemented in April 2019 with a transition period in 2019/20 and full implementation from April 2020. It had been recommended that a review was undertaken of the impact of the new formula which took place at the end of the summer term and beginning of the autumn term 2019. This review, together with benchmarking had highlighted that a shift in funding had taken place from secondary to primary. It also showed the level of funding schools would have received had they been subject to the formula applied in two other authorities. The review identified a range of pressures and options of which were considered by the Formula Review Group and some were taken forward for consultation in October/November 2019.

*The review has identified that a shift in funding has occurred from secondary to primary but other than a proposal to fund TLRs there seem to be no other proposals to rebalance the distribution of funds?*

The funding formula in Powys distributes funding on a needs based formula. For example a school of 130 pupils will need x teachers. The needs of small schools in Powys are taking a disproportionate amount of the funding available but these small schools are only receiving what they need to function. It will be necessary to review the number of schools in Powys but it is essential to keep a transparent Funding Formula up to date to distribute funding to schools during this transition period. The new funding formula has produced a transparent base which has been acknowledged by regulators and changes will need to be clearly made in parallel with schools transformation.

*If the £1.4 million is not provided during the budget setting process the secondary schools will continue to struggle whilst priority is given to primary schools.*

It is hoped that when the settlement is received this funding will be built into the agreed budget. The needs of all schools primary, secondary, small or large can then be met.

The Chair of the FRG advised that this should not be described in terms of who does better out of the formula but in terms of the changes between the old and new formula. The FRG have identified the problems outlined in respect of small schools but this will need to be addressed under the Schools Transformation Programme. If £1.4 million is made available to Secondary Schools these schools will be provided with the additional funding required to meet the costs of the TLR payments they are contractually required to pay.

*There does not appear to be equality in the funding of schools with pupils attending small schools receiving £6-7k per pupil funding compared to a far lower level available to pupils attending larger schools.*

Schools are funded to provide a teacher for a class size of 10 or 30 so each pupil has equality of provision in that they are all in a funded class in school. The increased costs of funding small schools are paying for surplus places and an

inefficient model of delivery. The Schools Transformation Programme will address this.

*The funding changes mean schools are receiving funding for support staff at a lower level than they have appointed these staff. Job Evaluation would mean these staff should not be paid less than their posts have been assessed at.*

Job evaluated posts will have to be paid at the level they have been evaluated at. Schools will need to review their staffing structure to ensure that appointments are made at the correct level.

*The funding formula does not provide dedicated resources to support trochi (immersion for pupils new to studying through the medium of Welsh). Without this dedicated resource there will be no increase in the number of Welsh speakers in Powys.*

The schools service team are currently out meeting with all secondary schools in the county as part of school transformation and this includes consideration of Welsh medium education. The Government are due to announce shortly a new framework for Welsh Language in Wales. It will be necessary to carefully consider the funding formula in relation to this new framework.

*Did the FRG consider the impact of the changes to the funding formula on the Welsh language?*

The Chair of the FRG confirmed that the impact of the changes on the Welsh language had been considered. It does not appear that Welsh Medium or Dual Stream schools are worse off than English Medium Schools. The additional costs of providing Welsh Language materials was also discussed but no proposals were made in this respect.

**Recommended that the interaction between the WESP and the Funding Formula are considered as a priority in the next school funding cycle as scrutiny are concerned that the impact of the changes of the funding formula on Welsh medium education are unknown.**

*What will be the impact on the overall Council budget of the proposal to fund TLRs (£1.5 million), on top of funding the teachers pay and pensions award, the impact of Post 16 funding (not clear) together with the undelivered savings the Council have to cover this year?*

The planned budget for next year includes a number of service pressures and cost reductions. Cabinet are developing the budget and are waiting for the 16<sup>th</sup> December when Welsh Government announce the provisional settlement.

*Is funding for the £1.4 million TLR cost dependent on receiving £4.3 million to fund the teachers pay and pensions award?*

No.

*Why has benchmarking been left to the review of the Funding Formula changes to complete. Should this have been done when the initial changes to the funding formula were considered?*

This should have been done when the original review took place however, information for benchmarking between schools within the authority had not been available and is now been gathered after which it will be possible to benchmark against other authorities.

The Chair of the FRG advised that school budgets are a risk to the authority as they are expected to rise over the next few years however, it is also important to look at the effect of funding levels on individual schools. It is understood that all Council departments are being asked to reduce spending by 2% and if this happens, the TLR and teacher pay awards are unfunded then schools will be facing huge problems.

The Head of Finance agreed this would be the case but must not be allowed to happen. At present the proposals are trying to create a stable position whilst schools transformation takes place.

*Section 3.1 of the report outlines how schools were assessed for funding using two other local authorities formula but the findings only relate to internal matters, not the findings though applying other formula.*

This exercise found that the smallest schools are doing marginally better but the bigger the schools the larger the gap.

*Does the Powys funding formula create a structural imbalance compared to other authorities?*

To extent this is the case. Whilst there have been some changes structurally across Powys under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme other authorities are far further ahead with this programme and therefore Powys has a far higher number of small schools compared to other local authorities.

*Therefore Powys has a structural imbalance in the schools estate as well as the funding formula.*

Powys is funding small schools which would not exist in other areas. It is necessary to ascertain what the authority can afford to maintain.

*Are line by line reviews of budgets taking place in the education service?*

It is essential to know what outcomes are being achieved by the money that has been spent.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance joined the meeting 3pm

*Scrutiny have previously asked which schools would benefit from the changes in the formula. Whilst it accepted that none of the Officers attending today were in post when this was considered last year scrutiny have yet to receive an answer.*

The funding formula was modelled on various sizes of schools which resulted in a proposal to implement a two year transition period to smooth the impact on schools. The FRG was not given this information to ensure that their

recommendations were based on principles and were not skewed by a wish to protect their local schools.

In addition the better/worse off schools fall into bands as funding is based on class sizes with for example 149 pupils resulting in 5 classes and 154 pupils resulting in 6 classes which demonstrates the stepped nature of the budget. The original funding formula did not account for pupil movements which have been an issue in some schools but changes are proposed in this paper to address this.

*What would happen if a school were to lose pupils in year which would put them into a band above or below the band they were assessed to be in for the year?*

There is a contingency fund held centrally that can be applied for in such cases. At present this is approximately £150k.

*Scrutiny were previously told that the Funding Formula Review would identify how much funding was needed for schools. Why is it now proposed to increase this by £1.4 million which equates to 3% on Council tax?*

The Head of Finance advised that this is a pressure that has been submitted by the service.

*Schools are contractually bound to pay TLRs therefore it is necessary to fund these either through from Welsh Government funding or from Council tax.*

The Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that last year schools delegated budgets received an additional £1 million which was not earmarked for any specific spending.

*Can capital receipts be used to support the transformed schools?*

Capital receipts are being used to support transformation by funding severance costs. The available capital receipts have been fully committed from the previous three years and the next three years. Capital receipts can also be used to support the school's transformation programme but cannot be used to support school's revenue spend.

*Do schools still order fuel, utilities and consumables separately?*

Schools are encouraged to use central council contracts and Business Managers can help schools find the best prices for these items.

*If pupils have to attend out of county sixth form provision because Powys schools do not offer the course a pupil wishes to study does Powys pay for their transport to the out of county provider and if so how much is this costing?*

This information would be provided after the meeting.

*The report refers to an Impact Assessment which was not attached. This needs to be provided prior to consideration at Cabinet and it is disappointing it was not available before this scrutiny session.*

This has been signed off very recently and can be provided to scrutiny.

### Post 16 Funding

*Is any funding provided for pastoral care, careers advice and UCAS support from Post 16 funding?*

This work is part of the teaching and learning funding from this grant but it might be concluded that this is supported by pre-16 pastoral care funding.

*Scrutiny have highlighted cross-subsidisation on a number of occasions but the extent to which this occurs has not been quantified.*

The Post 16 grant from Welsh Government is based on a number of factors including the number of learners, deprivation levels, sparsity and Welsh medium provision. At present there are approximately 500 learners accessing post 16 education out of county which equates to a loss of grant funding to the authority of approximately £2 million.

*The Post 16 funding formula is detrimental to the provision of Welsh medium courses as part of the funding is calculated on the basis of previous courses and entries to examinations. As previous courses and entries to examinations through the medium of Welsh are decreasing this will only add to the cycle of decline which is contrary to the Welsh Governments aim to increase the number of Welsh speakers.*

The Chair of the FRG noted that this equally applied to English medium and dual stream schools.

The Education Consultant observed that Members need to ascertain what education offer they would wish to provide and then the Funding Formula can be designed to support this. At present the funding formula is supporting the legacy of too many too small schools.

*Point 2 of the principles notes the new formula allocation contains 'a fixed allocation for the local authority to spend on marketing of Post 16 providers and courses'. How much is being retained centrally for this purpose?*

**To be provided after the meeting.**

### Scheme for Financing Schools

The Finance Manager outlined the main changes apart from changes to job titles and statutory guidance as amending the time available to pay back a deficit. This will give the authority more flexibility in dealing with schools with deficits and ensure that the education of current pupils is not harmed. A risk register has also been added.

The Chair of the FRG outlined there had been a difference of opinion regarding the timescales for those schools who are subject to a Warning Notice. The FRG are of the opinion that all schools should be treated equally whereas Officers suggested that a little flexibility may be appropriate in certain circumstances and would help build relationships which Estyn had noted were fragile.

The Finance Manager confirmed that timelines for schools under a Warning Notice would be considered at a future meeting of the FRG together with Good Practice Guidance.

**Recommended that the timelines for schools under a Warning Notice would be made available for scrutiny in due course.**

The Education Consultant noted that budget problems are cause of stress to Senior Leaders in Schools and it is necessary to work with schools where possible to resolve the problems. The particular problem faced by Powys is that structural change is needed to make the budget go round.

*The numbers on roll are dated 2016. Will these be updated?*

Yes.

*The Chair of Finance Panel observed that the per pupil funding in Powys was approximately £800 more than the Welsh average and was the highest in Wales but the delegation rate was the lowest in Wales due to both transport costs and a high spend on SEN. Powys spend the most on home to school transport and a third more than the nearest authority (Ceredigion).*

<b>6.</b>	<b>CHAIR'S BRIEFING</b>
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The Chair advised that particular problems had been experienced by the Pairs of Members undertaking scrutiny by skype of the PIAP particularly when using Committee Room B. IT are aware of this problem but in the meantime he has requested Member training on Microsoft Teams which should be a more stable platform to use.

<b>7.</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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No changes had been made to the work programme recorded in the agenda.

**County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)**

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