

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD BY TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 9
NOVEMBER 2021**

PRESENT

County Councillor M R Harris (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, B Baynham, P Davies, A W Davies, H Hulme,
I McIntosh and R Powell

In attendance: County Councillors J Morris and P Roberts

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from the Executive Director Economy and Environment, the Executive Director, People and Organisational Development and the Strategic Lead for Education.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

County Councillor Rosemarie Harris declared an interest in the item on Llanbedr Church in Wales school as a governor of a school that could potentially receive pupils from Llanbedr Church in Wales School.

3. LLANBEDR CHURCH IN WALES SCHOOL

County Councillor Rosemarie Harris left the meeting during consideration of this item having declared an interest. The Deputy Leader, County Councillor Aled Davies, took the chair for this item.

Cabinet considered the results of the consultation to close Llanbedr Church in Wales School from the 31st August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools.

113 respondents had completed the consultation response form and in addition, 62 written responses were received from respondents by e-mail or post. The written responses also included an online and paper petition to 'Save Our School Llanbedr CIW is under threat of closure and we need your help!', which received 2,119 signatures. The issues raised in the written responses to the consultation and those raised in the consultation meetings were listed in the Consultation Report along with the Council's response to those issues.

County Councillor Pete Roberts presented the observations of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee as set out in the appendix to the report circulated to Cabinet. The main issues were on the availability of Church in Wales places, financial implications, the new curriculum and Welsh Medium education. The Committee had felt on balance that there were more arguments in favour of retaining the school despite a number of arguments to support the proposed closure. The Deputy Leader noted that there were no recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee.

County Councillor John Morris spoke as the local member. He expressed disappointment that a video from the school was not being shared with the Cabinet and was advised that this was on the grounds of data protection. He was also disappointed that the Cabinet had not visited the school. He argued that there should be an area review for the Crickhowell cluster rather than a piecemeal approach. He contended that the cost per pupil would fall as the number of pupils increased in 54 in January and that recently developed new schools under the transformation policy were showing a higher cost per pupil than Llanbedr. He did not accept that school could not deliver the new curriculum as it was leading the cluster on its implementation. He said that there were no grounds for closure on education standards. Finally, he raised the issue of the distance pupils would have to travel to the nearest faith schools.

Officers accepted that the closest Church in Wales school at Llangattock did not have capacity to take all of the pupils. If parents wished pupils to continue a faith based education, the Council would use its discretionary powers under the Travel Wales measure to provide free transport to other Church in Wales schools. On pupil numbers, it was noted that the projected figures quoted by Councillor Morris included children in pre-school which, to be consistent with the approach taken in previous cases, were not counted in the total.

On the point made about delivering the new curriculum, officers advised that they were not saying that it could not be delivered in a small school but that it would add considerably to the workload in a two or three teacher school. All schools would be supported to deliver the curriculum.

In response to comments on the possibility of making Llanbedr CiW School a Welsh Language or dual stream school, the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Welsh Language advised that the Council's strategy was set out in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and the ambition in that plan extended beyond the 50 places that this school could provide.

Based on the findings of the consultation, and further assessment of the options in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code in terms of the Presumption Against Closure of Rural Schools, the advice of officers was that the Council should proceed with the proposal to close Llanbedr C. in W. School by publishing a Statutory Notice for the reasons set out in the report.

RESOLVED

- 1. To receive the Consultation Report in respect of closing Llanbedr C. in W. School.**
- 2. To approve the publication of a statutory notice to close Llanbedr C. in W. School from the 31st August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools.**

County Councillor Rosemarie Harris returned to the meeting and resumed the chair.

Cabinet noted the delegated decisions taken by Portfolio Holders.

5.	EXEMPT ITEMS
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The next item was being deferred and therefore there was no reason to pass the motion to exclude the public.

6.	APPROVAL OF A PAYMENT TO HEART OF WALES PROPERTY SERVICES TO MEET THE COUNCIL'S OBLIGATIONS
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This item was deferred.

County Councillor M R Harris (Chair)