

# Public Document Pack

## Cabinet

---

Meeting Venue  
**By Teams**

---

Meeting date  
**Tuesday, 23 November 2021**

---

Meeting time  
**10.30 am**

---

For further information please contact  
**Stephen Boyd**  
01597 826374  
steve.boyd@powys.gov.uk



County Hall  
Llandrindod Wells  
Powys  
LD1 5LG

17/11/2021

---

Mae croeso i chi siarad yn Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg yn y cyfarfod.  
Rhowch wybod pa iaith rydych am ei defnyddio erbyn hanner dydd, ddau ddiwrnod gwaith cyn y cyfarfod.  
You are welcome to speak Welsh or English in the meeting.  
Please inform us of which language you wish to use by noon, two working days before the meeting.

---

### AGENDA

1.	<b>APOLOGIES</b>
----	------------------

To receive apologies for absence.

2.	<b>MINUTES</b>
----	----------------

To authorise the Chair to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021 as correct records.

(Pages 5 - 12)

3.	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
----	---------------------------------

To receive any declarations of interest from Members relating to items to be considered on the agenda.

4.	<b>CASTLE CAEREINION CHURCH IN WALES SCHOOL</b>
----	---

To consider a report by County Councillor Phyl Davies, Portfolio Holder for Education and Property.

(Pages 13 - 148)

<b>5.</b>	<b>CHURCHSTOKE CP SCHOOL</b>
-----------	------------------------------

To consider a report by County Councillor Phyl Davies, Portfolio Holder for Education and Property.

(Pages 149 - 636)

<b>6.</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 2</b>
-----------	---

To consider a report by County Councillor Beverley Baynham, Portfolio for Corporate Governance and Regulatory Services.

This is the link to the Sway report

<https://sway.office.com/OEgNYQcGh8KolEmq>

<b>7.</b>	<b>QUARTER 2 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER</b>
-----------	--

To consider a report by County Councillor Aled Davies, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transportation.

(Pages 637 - 678)

<b>8.</b>	<b>CHILDREN'S SERVICES BUDGET PRESSURES</b>
-----------	---

To consider a report by County Councillor Rachel Powell, Portfolio Holder for Education and Property.

(Pages 679 - 690)

<b>9.</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT</b>
-----------	--

To receive and consider the Director of Social Services Annual Report for 2020/21.

(Pages 691 - 738)

<b>10.</b>	<b>COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2022-2023</b>
------------	---------------------------------------

To consider a report by County Councillor Aled Davies, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transportation.

(Pages 739 - 746)

<b>11.</b>	<b>TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER 2 REPORT</b>
------------	---

To consider a report by County Councillor Aled Davies, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transportation.

(Pages 747 - 766)

<b>12.</b>	<b>MID WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE (CJC)</b>
------------	--

To consider a report by the Leader, County Councillor Rosemarie Harris.

(Pages 767 - 774)

<b>13.</b>	<b>DELEGATED DECISIONS</b>
------------	----------------------------

To note the delegated decisions taken by Portfolio Holders since the last meeting.  
(Pages 775 - 776)

<b>14.</b>	<b>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME</b>
------------	-------------------------------

To consider the Cabinet forward work programme.  
(Pages 777 - 778)

This page is intentionally left blank

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD BY TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 2  
NOVEMBER 2021**

**PRESENT**

County Councillor M R Harris (Chair)

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

In attendance: County Councillor J Morris

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>
-----------	------------------

Apologies were received from County Councillor Myfanwy Alexander and the Executive Director, People and Organisational Development.

<b>2.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>
-----------	----------------

The Leader was authorised to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021 as correct records.

<b>3.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
-----------	---------------------------------

There were no declarations of interest reported.

<b>4.</b>	<b>LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>
-----------	-------------------------------

The Leader thanked Cabinet members and portfolio holders who had worked to help ensure that the county had received £22 million in levelling up funds. £16 million was going towards the development of the Montgomery Canal, and funds were also being made available for projects in Llandrindod Wells and Brecknockshire. She thanked Fay Jones MP and Craig Williams MP for their support.

<b>5.</b>	<b>ACCOMMODATION IN POWYS FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS</b>
-----------	--

Cabinet was asked to give approval for the Council to support and cooperate with the Home Office and its contracted agent, Clearsprings Ready Homes (CRH), in the provision of accommodation across Powys for households and people seeking asylum in the United Kingdom.

The initial requirement was for six privately owned family-sized homes to be secured in Powys for asylum seekers. These properties would be sourced and managed, on behalf of the Home Office, by CRH. There would be minimal financial impact for the Council with involvement limited to initial consultation regarding suitability of properties, and then an ongoing liaison role with CRH to ensure the smoothing running of the project. This could be accommodated within

current staffing resources and service budgets, with the Resettlement Project officer being assigned the lead role of liaising with the Home Office, CRH and the Welsh Strategic Migration Partnership to ensure the smoothing running of the project. Cabinet had received a presentation from the Welsh Strategic Partnership before the meeting.

Cabinet noted that there had been many offers of support from communities. CRH would be responsible for consulting communities, but Council officers would work closely with them.

**RESOLVED to support and cooperate with the Home Office, and its service provider (Clearsprings Ready Homes) in the provision of accommodation in Powys for asylum seekers.**

<b>6.</b>	<b>FINANCIAL FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2022 (AS AT 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021)</b>
-----------	--

Cabinet considered the revenue budget outturn forecast report for the period ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Cabinet noted that a small overspend was projected and also noted that just under £3 million savings were unlikely to be achieved. The Head of Finance cautioned that the support received from Welsh Government would not be recurring, and services must be consider the ongoing impact of the pandemic and factor this into service budgets. It was also important that services addressed overspends in their budgets to avoid putting pressure on the Council's revenue reserves.

County Councillor John Morris presented the observations of the Finance Panel. In response to concerns raised by the Panel about a projected substantial overspend in Children's Services, the Portfolio Holder for Young People and Culture set out the pressures the service was under. She explained that the investment made in the service and the model adopted to help keep families together were now proving to be very beneficial. She would welcome the opportunity to come to the Finance Panel to explain this.

**RESOLVED**

- 1. That Cabinet note the current budget position and the projected full year forecast to the end of March 2022.**
- 2. That the grants set out in section 7 of the report are noted.**
- 3. That Heads of Service take action now to recover the projected overspends.**
- 4. That where additional in year financial pressure cannot be accommodated within existing budget, a detailed report is requested to give clear explanation of projected overspend before action is taken by Cabinet to address the projected deficit.**

<b>7.</b>	<b>CAPITAL FORECAST AS AT 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021</b>
-----------	---

Cabinet considered an update on the financial position of the Council's capital programme for 2021/22 as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

The revised programme at the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 stood at £106.75 million following the successful award of additional grants and the reprofiling of budgets between financial years. Actual spend amounted to £25.48 million, representing 24% of the total budget. Cabinet noted that significant cost pressures were materialising due to the increasing costs of materials. This together with the limited numbers of contractors tendering for schemes and the rurality of Powys was impacting on the cost of schemes.

51% of the Capital Programme was funded through borrowing, the interest cost for this was charged to the revenue account. The revenue expenditure to cover the borrowing for past and present capital schemes was estimated at £18.16 million which meant that 4.4% of the net revenue budget was supporting the past and present capital spend. It was essential that the investment in the capital programme was affordable over the short, medium, and longer term and demonstrate tangible benefits linked to the council's priorities.

The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) advised that the re-profiling of schemes was essential to enable more accurate project expenditure, the consequential need to borrow and the impact on the revenue budget.

County Councillor John Morris advised that the Governance and Audit Committee would be looking at the affordability of the capital programme.

**RESOLVED**

1. **That the contents of the report are noted.**
2. **That Cabinet approves the virement of £0.17 million from the South Powys Bulking Site Project to the North Powys Bulking Site in order to comply with recently updated environmental permit conditions, additional fire management measures, additional costs due to ongoing COVID-19 measures and increased material and plant costs.**

<b>8. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME</b>
----------------------------------

Cabinet noted the forward work programme.

**County Councillor M R Harris (Chair)**

This page is intentionally left blank

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT 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

<b>1. APOLOGIES</b>
---------------------

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.

<b>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
------------------------------------

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.

<b>3. LLANBEDR CHURCH IN WALES SCHOOL</b>
---

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.

<b>5.</b>	<b>EXEMPT ITEMS</b>
-----------	---------------------

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

<b>6.</b>	<b>APPROVAL OF A PAYMENT TO HEART OF WALES PROPERTY SERVICES TO MEET THE COUNCIL'S OBLIGATIONS</b>
-----------	--

This item was deferred.

**County Councillor M R Harris (Chair)**

This page is intentionally left blank

## CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE  
23 November 2021

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

**REPORT TITLE:** Castle Caereinion C. in W. School

---

**REPORT FOR:** Decision

---

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021, the Council published a Statutory Notice proposing to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet members of the outcome of the statutory objection period and objections received.
- 1.3 The report includes a recommendation to proceed with implementation of the proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022.
- 1.4 The report is supported by the following appendices:
- **Appendix A** – Statutory Notice
  - **Appendix B** – Objection Report
  - **Appendix C** – Updated Impact Assessments

**2. Background**

**Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys**

- 2.1 On the 14th April 2020, a new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys was approved by the Leader via a delegated decision.
- 2.2 The Strategy was developed following extensive engagement with a range of stakeholders during two separate periods between October 2019 and March 2020. The Strategy sets out a new vision education in Powys, as follows:

*‘All children and young people in Powys will experience a high quality, inspiring education to help develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that will enable them to become healthy, personally fulfilled,*

*economically productive, socially responsible and globally engaged citizens of 21st century Wales.'*

2.3 The new strategy also sets out a number of guiding principles which will underpin the transformation of education in Powys. These are as follows:

- *A world class rural education system that has learner entitlement at its core*
- *Schools that are fully inclusive, with a culture of deep collaboration in order to improve learner outcomes and experience*
- *A broad choice and high quality of provision for 14 – 19 year old learners, that includes both academic and vocational provision, meeting the needs of all learners, communities and the Powys economy*
- *Welsh-medium provision that is accessible and provides a full curriculum in Welsh from Meithrin to age 19 and beyond*
- *Provision for learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN)/Additional Learning Needs (ALN) that is accessible as near to home as is practicably possible, with the appropriate specialist teaching, support and facilities that enables every learner to meet their potential*
- *A digitally-rich schools sector that enables all learners and staff to enhance their teaching and learning experience*
- *Community-focused schools that are the central point for multi-agency services to support children, young people, families and the community*
- *Early years provision that is designed to meet the needs of all children, mindful of their particular circumstances, language requirements or any special or additional learning needs*
- *Financially and environmentally sustainable schools*
- *The highest priority is given to staff wellbeing and professional development*

2.4 The new strategy sets out a number of Strategic Aims and Objectives, to shape the Council's work to transform the Powys education system over the coming years. One of the Strategic Aims of the Strategy is to '*improve learner entitlement and experience.*' Within this aim, the Strategy sets out a Strategic Objective to '*rationalise primary provision.*'

2.5 On the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021, the Council's Cabinet considered an options appraisal paper in respect of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, and agreed to carry out consultation on the following:

- To close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools

## **The Consultation Period**

- 2.7 Consultation on the proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code (2018) from the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2021 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021.
- 2.8 A Consultation Report listing the issues raised during the consultation and the Council's response to them was published. This was considered by Cabinet on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021.
- 2.9 At the meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021, Cabinet agreed to proceed with the publication of a Statutory Notice in order to proceed with the process to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools.

## **Statutory Notice**

- 2.10 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021, the Council published a Statutory Notice proposing the following:
- 'i. To discontinue Castle Caereinion Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled School, Castle Caereinion, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 9AL.'*
- It is proposed to implement the proposal on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022.'*
- 2.11 The Statutory Notice was published on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021 for a period of 28 days, in accordance with the guidance within the School Organisation Code (2018). A copy of the Statutory Notice is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.12 The objection period ended on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

## **Objections**

- 2.13 21 objections were received during the statutory objection period.
- 2.14 The objections received included a petition against the proposal which received 102 signatures.
- 2.15 Objections were received from the following:
- Castle Caereinion Community Council
  - Diocese of St Asaph
  - Castle Caereinion Recreation Association
  - Parents and members of the community

- 2.16 The objections received are included in the Objection Report (Appendix B), along with the Council's response to the issues raised in the Objections.
- 2.17 As outlined in the Objection Report, the main issues raised in the Objections are as follows:
1. Concern about the impact on the community
    - General concern about the impact on the community
    - Concern about the impact on the community centre
    - Concern about the impact on the local church
    - Reference to housing developments in the village
  2. Concern about the impact on pupils
    - General concern about the impact on pupils
    - Concern that pupils would struggle in larger schools
  3. Comments about transport
    - Concern about the impact of additional travel time
    - Comments about the cost of transport
    - Concern about the environmental impact of transport
    - Concern that reliance on transport would impact on pupils' ability to access after school activities
    - Queries about the transport that would be provided
  4. Concern about access to Church in Wales provision
  5. Positive comments about Castle Caereinion C. in W. School
  6. Positive comments about small / rural schools
  7. Concern that additional pupils would put pressure on other schools
  8. Comments about the process
    - Concern about the process taking place during the Covid pandemic
    - Suggestion that the correct process has not been followed
  9. Suggestion that Federation with Welshpool C. in W. School should be looked at again

### 3 Advice

- 3.1 Having considered the objections received, it is recommended that the Council proceeds with implementation of the proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, as outlined in the Statutory Notice (Appendix A).
- 3.2 The reasons for this are as follows:
- To address the issue of low pupil numbers
  - To reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
  - To realise a financial saving to the Council
  - To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum
  - To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities
  - To enable pupils to attend schools with better quality accommodation
  - The proposal meets all the Critical Success Factors

### 4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 The amount of funding provided to schools is driven by the funding formula. Any change to the formula funding provided will impact on the Council's revenue budget. Based on the current formula, it is estimated that implementation of the proposal would deliver annual revenue savings to the Council of around **£58,100**
- 4.2 The overall figure comprises a potential saving on Schools' delegated funding of over £90,400 calculated by re-running the school funding formula for all the schools potentially affected should Castle Caereinion C. in W. School close. This takes into account any changes in funding needed to accommodate additional pupils at these schools, based on pupils attending their nearest alternative Powys school. However, the Council recognises that parents may choose any school for their children.
- 4.3 The savings from the delegated school funding is offset by estimated additional transport costs of £32,300, based on providing home to school transport for 16 pupils at £170 per school day (190 school days per annum).
- 4.4 The Statutory Notice published in respect of this proposal states that in addition to transport being provided in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, *'the Council will provide transport for Church in Wales provision for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School who wish to transfer to Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School'*. As the Council does not currently know which schools pupils would choose to transfer to, it is not

possible to calculate the exact cost of this. However the following is an estimate of the range of costs which could be required, depending on how many pupils require transport:

- **Minimal costs** – all pupils can be accommodated within existing transport provision for secondary, albeit some routes may need to be extended - £10-£20 per school day - £1,900 - £3,800 per annum
- **Need to increase size of bus** – £50 per day - £9,500 per annum
- **Additional Taxi required** – approx.. £60 - £75 per day - £11,400 - £14,250 per annum
- **New bus required** – £170 - £230 per day - £32,300 - £43,700

4.4 The school had a cumulative surplus balance of £51,788 as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. The budget approved by the Governing Body for the current year shows this decreasing to £32,786 by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

4.5 The Scheme for Financing Schools also states the following in section 3.7.2:

‘In order to ensure effective stewardship of the resources available to schools, the Authority may impose additional restrictions on a school scheduled to close, including but not limited to:

- Restriction of expenditure to agreed plans
- Removal of powers of virement’

4.6 It is therefore proposed that:

- Spend at the school is restricted to that included in its approved budget plan and no virement of funds between budget headings is permitted unless approved by the Authority;
- Any staffing changes are subject to approval by the Authority;
- Any contracts awarded for the supply of goods or services are subject to approval by the Authority.

This will ensure that expenditure is limited to that which is absolutely necessary to protect Council resources.

4.7 Implementation of the proposal would require involvement from a number of service areas, including staff from the Schools Service, HR and Finance.

4.8 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer): “I note the resource implications set out above and support the proposals set out in section 4.6. limiting expenditure to that approved in the school’s approved budget.

## **5. Legal implications**

5.1 Legal: the recommendations can be accepted 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 No comments received.

## **7. Integrated Impact Assessment**

7.1 An initial impact assessment was considered by Cabinet on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

7.2 In addition, a range of draft impact assessments were produced as part of the consultation documentation. These included an Integrated Impact Assessment, an Equalities Impact Assessment, and a Community Impact Assessment.

7.3 The draft impact assessments were updated to reflect issues raised during the consultation period and the updated impact assessments were considered by Cabinet on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021 when considering whether or not to proceed with the publication of a statutory notice.

7.4 These have been further updated following the objection period, and the updated version is attached as Appendix C.

## **8. Recommendation**

- To receive the Objection Report in respect of closing Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.
- To approve the proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools.

Contact Officer: Marianne Evans

Tel: 01597 826155

Email: marianne.evans@powys.gov.uk

Head of Service: Emma Palmer – Head of Transformation & Communications  
Lynette Lovell – Interim Chief Education Officer

Corporate Director: Dr Caroline Turner

CABINET REPORT TEMPLATE VERSION X

This page is intentionally left blank

## POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

### SCHOOL STANDARDS AND ORGANISATION (WALES) ACT 2013

#### NOTICE OF PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE CASTLE CAEREINION CHURCH IN WALES SCHOOL

Notice is hereby given in accordance with section 43 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (“the Act”) and the School Organisation Code 011/2018 (“the Code”), that Powys County Council of County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LD1 5LG (“the Council”), having consulted such persons as required, proposes the following: -

- i. To discontinue Castle Caereinion Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled School, Castle Caereinion, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 9AL.

It is proposed to implement the proposal on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022.

The school is currently maintained by Powys County Council, and the school building is owned by the Diocese of St Asaph, Diocesan Office, High Street, St Asaph, LL17 0RD.

Powys County Council undertook a period of consultation before deciding to publish this proposal. A consultation report containing a summary of the issues raised by consultees, the proposer’s responses and the views of Estyn is available on the Council’s website:

<https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/10560/Castle-Caereinion-Church-in-Wales-School>

#### Admissions

From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022, pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled School will be able to express a preference for an alternative school. The Council will comply with any such expressed preference subject to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, Section 86(3).

In future, any new pupils living in the area currently served by Castle Caereinion Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled School will be able to apply for a place in any school in accordance with the Council’s Admissions Policy.

#### Details of nearest alternative schools

The nearest alternative schools for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Schools would be as follows:

	School Type	Language Category
<b>Berriew C.P. School</b>	Community Primary	English Medium
<b>Welshpool C. in W. School</b>	Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled	English Medium
<b>Guilsfield C.P. School</b>	Community Primary	English Medium
<b>Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School<sup>1</sup></b>	Community Primary	Dual Stream

<sup>1</sup> From 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022 Llanfair Caereinion Community Primary School will be discontinued and a new dual stream community school for pupils aged 4-18 years of age will operate on the current sites of Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School.

## **Details of any other measures proposed to be taken to increase number of school places at the nearest alternative schools**

The expectation is that the number of pupils transferring to each of the nearest alternative schools would be small, and therefore the impact on these schools would not be significant. Therefore, no measures are proposed to be taken to increase the number of school places available on consequence of the proposed discontinuance of Castle Caereinion Church in Wales school.

## **Home-to-School Transport Arrangements**

Transport arrangements will be in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy.

The Council will provide transport for Church in Wales provision for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School who wish to transfer to Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School. This will be provided on a case by case basis using the Council's discretionary powers under Section 6 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008.

## **Implementation**

The proposal will be implemented by Powys County Council.

## **Proposal to close a rural school**

The proposal to discontinue Castle Caereinion Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled School is considered the most appropriate response to the reasons for formulating the proposal, and are as follows:

- To address the issue of low pupil numbers
- To reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- To realise a financial saving to the Council
- To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum
- To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities
- To enable pupils to attend schools with better quality accommodation
- The proposal meets all of the Critical Success Factors

## **How to Object to this Notice**

Within a period of 28 days after the publication of this proposal, that is to say by 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021, any person may object to the proposal.

Objections should be sent to Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer, Powys County Council, Powys County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LD1 5LG, or by e-mail to [school.organisation@powys.gov.uk](mailto:school.organisation@powys.gov.uk)

Powys County Council will publish a summary of any such objections made within the objection period (and not withdrawn in writing), together with the Council's observations thereon, within the period set out in the Code.

**Lynette Lovell,  
Interim Chief Education Officer  
For Powys County Council**

Dated this day 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021

## **Explanatory Note:**

(This explanatory note does not form part of the Notice but is offered by way of explanation).

- The Council's intention is to close Castle Caereinion Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled School on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022.
- From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022, pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled School will be able to express a preference for an alternative school. The Council will comply with any such expressed preference subject to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, Section 86(3). In future, any new pupils living in the area currently served by Castle Caereinion Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled School will be able to apply for a place in any school in accordance with the Council's Admissions Policy.
- The rationale for this proposal was set out in a Consultation Document which was issued in April 2021. The Council subsequently published a Consultation Report which summarises the issues raised during the consultation period and provides the Council's response to these issues. The Consultation Report is available on the Council's website:  
<https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/10560/Castle-Caereinion-Church-in-Wales-School>
- Transport arrangements would be made for pupils in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy.

This page is intentionally left blank



**Proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in  
W. School**  
Objection Report



# Proposal to close Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School

## Objection Report

### Contents

1. BACKGROUND .....	3
2. SUMMARY OF OBJECTIONS RECEIVED.....	3
3. OBJECTIONS RECEIVED .....	5

If you require a copy of the document in a different format, please contact the Transforming Education Team on 01597 826618, or e-mail [school.organisation@powys.gov.uk](mailto:school.organisation@powys.gov.uk).

# Consultation on the closure of Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School

## Objection Report

### 1. BACKGROUND

Powys County Council consulted on proposals to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. The consultation took place from the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2021 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021. The Council published a consultation report outlining the findings of the consultation exercise.

On 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021, the Council's Cabinet agreed to proceed with the proposal, and a Statutory Notice was published from the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021 to the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

The proposal was as follows:

- i) *To discontinue Castle Caereinion Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled School, Castle Caereinion, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 9AL*

*It is proposed to implement the proposal on 31st August 2022.*

### 2. SUMMARY OF OBJECTIONS RECEIVED

21 objections were received during the statutory objection period.

Objections were received from the following:

- Castle Caereinion Community Council
- Diocese of St Asaph
- Castle Caereinion Recreation Association
- Parents and members of the community

The objections received included a petition against the proposal which received 102 signatures.

The objections received are outlined on the following pages, along with the Council's response.

The main issues raised in the objections are as follows:

#### 1. Concern about the impact on the community

- General concern about the impact on the community

- Concern about the impact on the community centre
- Concern about the impact on the local church
- Reference to housing developments in the village

**2. Concern about the impact on pupils**

- General concern about the impact on pupils
- Concern that pupils would struggle in larger schools

**3. Comments about transport**

- Concern about the impact of additional travel time
- Comments about the cost of transport
- Concern about the environmental impact of transport
- Concern that reliance on transport would impact on pupils' ability to access after school activities
- Queries about the transport that would be provided

**4. Concern about access to Church in Wales provision**

**5. Positive comments about Castle Caereinion C. in W. School**

**6. Positive comments about small / rural schools**

**7. Concern that additional pupils would put pressure on other schools**

**8. Comments about the process**

- Concern about the process taking place during the Covid pandemic
- Suggestion that the correct process has not been followed

**9. Suggestion that Federation with Welshpool C. in W. School should be looked at again**

The objections received are provided in Section 3 of this report, along with the Council's response to the points raised in each objection.

### 3. OBJECTIONS RECEIVED

The objections received are outlined below, along with the local authority's response to the issues raised. Any references to personal information have been removed.

#### Objection 1

Issue	Points raised	Council response
1.1	I wish to object to the closure of the above school. Closure will be a nail in the coffin for Castle as a community.	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.</p> <p>The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. It notes the extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion school building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>
1.2	The education of the pupils attending the school will be affected in a detrimental way if they are forced to move to another school.	The Council accepts that any school reorganisation proposal creates a period of uncertainty for the pupils involved. Should the school close, the schools that pupils would transfer to would provide support to pupils to aid their transition, ensuring a successful transition to their new school to ensure that all pupils can achieve their potential.

		<p>As stated in the Consultation Document in reference to alternative schools:-</p> <p><i>The Council's view is that all of these schools would provide education for pupils which is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on standards and progress overall.</i></p>
--	--	---

**Objection 2**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
2.1	<p>I wish to object to the closure of Castle Caereinion School.</p> <p>How to take the heart out of a community: Close the local school</p>	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.</p> <p>The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. It notes the extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion school building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>

2.2	How to encourage secular education as opposed to education with a Christian focus: Close the church school	Should the Council proceed with the proposal, parents would be able to choose which alternative school they would prefer their child to attend and could choose for their child to attend alternative Church in Wales provision should that be their choice. Alternative Church in Wales provision is available 5.3 miles away from Castle Caereinion C. in W. School at Welshpool C. in W. School. There are sufficient places available to accommodate all pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.
2.3	How to give children an even longer day: close the school and transport them elsewhere	<p>It is acknowledged that implementation of the proposal would lead to additional travel for pupils for whom Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is currently their closest school.</p> <p>There are a number of alternative primary schools within 10 miles of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, and should the school close, it is not considered that the length and nature of journeys for pupils to alternative provision would be excessive.</p>
2.4	How increase the cost of education: provide transport to other schools	Should the school close, free home-to-school transport would be provided to the nearest alternative school, in accordance with the Home to School Transport Policy. The estimated cost of this transport is £32,300 per annum. However, even after taking into account these additional transport costs, it is estimated that the implementation of the proposal would deliver annual revenue savings to the Council of around £58,100.
2.5	How to give into educational fads: listen to the so-called experts, many of whom have never taught in these so-	The Council's Transforming Education Strategy has been formulated following discussions with a number of stakeholders, including teachers and Powys education

	called small schools	challenge advisers, many of which have experience of teaching in small schools.
2.6	Are these schools inadequate? No they provide social skills and pastoral support that is unattainable in larger schools	All schools, regardless of size, would be able to provide social skills and pastoral support. There is no evidence that larger schools cannot provide social and pastoral skills.
2.7	Are specialist teachers required for various subjects: highly doubtful, a good all rounded teacher can introduce numerous subjects into one lesson.	The alternative schools would be larger schools, and in many cases, larger schools are able to offer wider range of activities, as there are larger groups of pupils who would be able to take part in activities such as sports teams, choirs etc, as well as a larger team of staff to offer such activities.
2.8	How to lose the co-operation of parents as friends of the school, as possible members of the governing body and close it down, for their anger at its closure will probably prevent their future co-operation with the other school.	<p>The Council acknowledges that any school reorganisation proposal leads to a period of uncertainty for those affected, including parents.</p> <p>There would be opportunities for parents to become involved with the alternative schools, and in time, the Council would hope that the parents would take these opportunities, which could include expressing interest in positions on the school's governing body.</p>
2.9	And is it true that if parents wish to opt for a church school for their child's education, they must pay the transport costs themselves? If so this is deplorable and discrimination.	<p>As indicated in the Statutory Notice published in respect of this proposal:</p> <p><i>'Transport arrangements will be in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy.</i></p> <p><i>The Council will provide transport for Church in Wales provision for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School who wish to transfer to Welshpool</i></p>

		<i>Church in Wales Primary School. This will be provided on a case by case basis using the Council's discretionary powers under Section 6 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008.'</i>
--	--	--

### **Objection 3**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
3.1	I am writing to express my concerns regarding the consequences of the planned closure of Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School, which I can see negatively effecting the community in numerous ways.	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.</p> <p>The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. It notes the extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion school building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>
3.2	Closing this local school will force parents and students to attend one of the surrounding schools, causing all parties involved to wake up earlier. Doing this to students when it's already proven <sup>[1]</sup> they require significantly more rest than adults and perform better at school and in terms of mental health and grades when afforded such rest seems inconsiderate of their needs. Not to mention parents now	<p>It is acknowledged that implementation of the proposal would lead to additional travel for pupils for whom Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is currently their closest school.</p> <p>There are a number of alternative primary schools within 10 miles of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, and should the school close, it is not considered that the length and nature</p>

	<p>being required to find extra hours in their day to provide transport to these schools outside the community, when many are already struggling with having to work long, exhausting hours.</p>	<p>of journeys for pupils to alternative provision would be excessive.</p> <p>Should the Council proceed with the proposal, transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the home to school transport policy. Therefore, it is not expected that most parents will not need to transport their children to any alternative school themselves.</p>
3.3	<p>While the closure of one school may save some money, the additional strain the extra students will put on the schools they're forced to attend instead – which are already staffed by overworked, underpaid teachers and teaching assistants – will further reduce the quality of education these teachers are able to provide.</p>	<p>The Council does not agree that implementation of the proposal would have a negative impact on the quality of provision at alternative schools. The Council's view is that all of the alternative schools pupils might transfer to would provide education for pupils which is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, and as outlined in the Consultation Document published in respect of this proposal: <i>'The total number of pupils at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is currently small, therefore it is not anticipated that this would have a significant impact on pupils attending other nearby primary schools.'</i></p>
3.4	<p>The environmental cost of this is concerning too, especially given Wales's reputation for having excellent green policy, as the increased drive will inevitably increase pollution rates. Additionally, further distance to travel discourages students from walking, cycling or similar low-emission transport in favour of cars. While school buses may slightly counteract this, no statement appears to have been made regarding these services.</p>	<p>The Council recognises the possible environmental impact of the proposal. As indicated in the impact assessment document:</p> <p><i>'Implementation of the proposal would require additional travel for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School for whom this is their closest school. This would have a negative environmental impact as more home to</i></p>

		<p><i>school transport would need to be provided to transport pupils to their nearest alternative school.'</i></p> <p>The assessment also states that:</p> <p><i>'The number of pupils requiring additional transport would be relatively small, and it is possible that they could be accommodated on transport which is already operating.'</i></p> <p>It is accepted that there are some pupils who can currently walk or cycle to Castle Caereinion C.in W. School, who will not be able to do so to their alternative school.</p>
3.5	While small classes are being used as a reason for the closure, smaller classes are significantly more beneficial for the mental health and learning of students. They're able to receive personal tutelage that many students with poor mental health or learning difficulties require.	All schools, regardless of size, would be able to provide for the needs of their pupils, including those with mental health issues or learning difficulties. Smaller class sizes would not necessarily mean that pupils receive a more individual education as there are a number of year groups and a wider age range of pupils in the class.
3.6	Closing Primary Schools to invest in secondary schools seems backwards as many social developmental skills are developed at a Primary School age <sup>[3]</sup> .	The Council's Education Transformation Strategy is not about closing primary schools in order to invest in secondary schools, but rather to improve learner entitlement and experience and to ensure that education provision is distributed equitably throughout Powys. In order to do this, it is necessary to continually review the educational provision in the County.
3.7	The knock-on effects of this will create both higher stress levels in students, teachers and parents, increase pollution and overall, negatively impact the quality of life	The Council accepts that any school reorganisation proposal creates a period of uncertainty for the pupils

	<p>for the community. I do hope you reconsider this closure and think over the impact this will have.</p> <p>[1] <a href="https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/134/3/e921">https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/134/3/e921</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-40443474">https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-40443474</a> (Video linked by Kirsty Williams regarding alternative measures)</p> <p>[3] <a href="https://www.virtuallabschool.org/school-age/cognitive/lesson-2">https://www.virtuallabschool.org/school-age/cognitive/lesson-2</a></p>	<p>involved, and that this is exacerbated this year due to the Covid pandemic.</p> <p>However, the Council would expect that pupils are fully supported by their teachers and other staff at the school during any periods of uncertainty to minimise the impact on their wellbeing.</p> <p>Should the school close, the receiving school or any other school pupils would transfer to would provide support to pupils to aid their transition, ensuring a successful transition to their new school to ensure that all pupils can achieve their potential.</p>
--	---	---

#### **Objection 4**

Issue	Points raised	Council response
4.1	<p>How can the Transformation Team, during a pandemic, disadvantage parents, children and the wider community. They have given no regard to anything that has been said during the consultation period. The points made by the Team apart from numbers, are so wrong.</p>	<p>The Council has been developing its Strategy for Transforming Education since Estyn's inspection of Powys Education Services in 2019. It is acknowledged that it would have been preferable for the consultation process to have taken place at a time when there wasn't a global pandemic, the consultation has been carried out in line with Welsh Government requirements.</p> <p>It is untrue that no regard has been given to anything said during the consultation period – a consultation report was prepared which outlined the issues raised during the</p>

		<p>consultation period and provided the Council's response to these issues. This was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>
4.2	<p>The new Curriculum is already being offered and it doesn't need a class of 30 pupils to achieve this.</p>	<p>As stated in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-30, the Council faces a challenge due to the high proportion of small schools in the county and the lack of equity amongst schools. Castle Caereinion C. in W. School teaches children in two classes of mixed aged groups. With such low pupil numbers the teacher-pupil ratio is notably different to many other schools in the area, and due to the Council's funding formula, the school the funding per pupil is higher than the Council's average. This does not provide equity across the education system – teachers in larger schools are required to provide the same education as smaller schools for less funding per pupil. Powys' Strategy is intended to improve equity across the education system and to ensure an improvement for every pupil's learning entitlement and experience.</p> <p>The Council's primary specialists have been exploring how the authority can best support schools to deliver the new curriculum for 2022. These education professionals are of the view that this will be significantly more challenging, and will place significantly greater demands on teachers in very small two-class schools. This does not mean that it would be impossible to deliver the new curriculum in these schools but it is clear that the skills required by teachers will need to be very wide ranging to support the full and effective fulfilment of the curriculum's high ambitions.</p>

		<p>The new Curriculum for Wales is locally influenced and often pupil-led. All schools will design the detail of their own curriculum to suit their learners based on the four purposes and the six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE). Learners' views about their experiences and about what, how and where they learn should be taken seriously when a curriculum is being designed. The school's curriculum needs to be co-constructed, encouraging learners, parents, carers and the local community to understand and contribute to its development. It should also draw on a wider range of experts and stakeholders who can contribute to learning.</p> <p>The curriculum needs to be innovative and creative. Teachers, with pupils, will select the content, with no prescription on how areas should be taught, but with guidance provided nationally on a wide range of widely recognised pedagogical principles. Additionally, planning and designing the curriculum in schools is a teacher responsibility, not one for support staff.</p> <p>Teachers in two class schools would need to plan for a mixed age range for all Areas of Learning and Experience. In some cases this could involve preparing for and delivering for up to four different year groups for all six AoLEs. To ensure equity for learners, leaders and teachers across Wales, there needs to be a shared understanding of learner progression, including expectations around what progression may look like and the pace at which learners progress. This shared understanding is being developed</p>
--	--	---

through professional learning and dialogue, as an ongoing process both within and across schools. Practitioners can share and learn from each other's understanding of progression and adapt their teaching in the light of what is learned. This will be particularly challenging in a very small school with only two teachers, for example. If a member of staff is linking up with practitioners from other schools for all 6 AoLEs and across a wide age range they would need to be away from their class for a far greater amount of time than a teacher teaching a single year group or two year groups in a class, and who also leads on behalf of the whole school on a single AoLE such as Humanities.

High levels of flexibility and organisation are needed in lesson planning to ensure that teaching caters for both age groups and all abilities within the class. This additional workload is a risk that the education profession needs to manage together, given the limited numbers of teachers to carry the additional roles and responsibilities in a very small school. Two-class schools not only have fewer qualified teachers in school to design the curriculum, but generally the limited numbers of staff will in all probability between them have a narrower range of disciplinary-specific expertise for the learners in that school than would probably be the case in a large school. In a larger school, each member of staff can lead on a specified area where they may have an appropriate background and in which they can continue to gain growing levels of expertise. Effective learning and teaching requires disciplinary-specific expertise which will become increasingly relevant in developing a curriculum as learners progress. Although the

		<p>guidance promotes inter-disciplinary approaches, it also recognises the importance that disciplinary-specific expertise plays in such approaches.</p> <p>A significant responsibility for the Council, and others, over the coming years will be to ensure that every learner in Powys benefits from the step change that is anticipated through the changing curriculum. The Council will work with all the schools in our care, of whatever size, and will provide significant support, whilst also encouraging collaboration. However, it would be inappropriate if officers of the authority did not stress the additional demands on staff in very small schools, whilst doing all we can to facilitate the lightening of the load.</p> <p>Additionally, it is only fair that professional primary experts within the Council comment on the balance of potential risks and benefits to a child when being taught by the same person over 3 or 4 years of their primary education.</p>
4.3	<p>The building may be old but is fit for purpose and is fully equipped for any children with extra physical needs. The computer suite has been in place for many years and all children have access to this also have access to tablets and there are Interactive white boards in both class rooms. There is also a well attended breakfast club. The garden and play areas are large and equipped for outdoor learning, and Forest school is offered every week. Pre Covid the school had good links with other schools.</p>	<p>The Council notes these comments about the facilities available at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. Issues with the building is only one of the reasons for the proposal.</p> <p>Whilst the school building was assessed to be in good condition by the Welsh Government's condition survey carried out in 2009, the Council recently commissioned an updated condition survey of the school building. This was carried out in the autumn term 2020. The survey assessed</p>

		the condition of all three blocks at the school as condition C.
4.4	The school has always had good links with parents the church and wider community, many of those links are continuing virtually.	Comment noted.
4.5	I really don't understand how larger class numbers and increasing carbon footprint are a good idea.	<p>There are a significant number of surplus places at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School and the average cost per pupil at the school is higher than the Powys average, which does not provide value for money to the Council.</p> <p>Should the Council proceed with the proposal, pupils would transfer to larger schools, and it is likely that they would attend larger classes. However all schools, regardless of size, would be able to provide for the needs of their pupils. Smaller class sizes would not necessarily mean that pupils receive a more individual education, as there are a number of year groups and a wider age range of pupils in the class.</p> <p>Whilst the Council notes the concerns regarding the environmental impact of the proposal, any increase in carbon footprint is likely to be minimal. It should also be noted that school buildings themselves have a carbon footprint as well as transportation.</p>
4.6	With regard to the wider community closing the school makes the village less viable for young parents choosing to live here so further depleting the area	The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.

		The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. It notes the extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion school building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.
4.7	I would also like to thank the past and present teachers and staff on how well they have handled the pandemic from ensuring that all children had equipment for online learning and on their return to in school teaching, keeping them safe happy and secure, with no covid cases.	Comment noted.

### **Objection 5**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
5.1	<p>I wish to lodge an objection about the intention to close Castle Caereinion Church in Wales Primary School.</p> <p>The education authority has not provided any sound rationale for the closure of this vibrant village school.</p>	<p>The current proposal is being taken forward in order to implement the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys, which was developed following engagement with a range of stakeholders.</p> <p>The proposal is intended to address the challenges identified in respect of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School which are outlined in the Consultation Document:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Low pupils numbers</li> <li>ii) High budget per pupil</li> <li>iii) Issues with the building</li> <li>iv) Combined age classes</li> <li>v) Leadership</li> </ul> <p>Following consideration of a number of options, the Council's preferred option is to close Castle Caereinion CiW School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools. The reasons for this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To address the issue of low pupil numbers</li> <li>- To reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools</li> <li>- To realise a financial saving to the Council</li> <li>- To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum</li> <li>- To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities</li> <li>- To enable pupils to attend schools with better quality accommodation</li> <li>- The proposal meets all of the Critical Success Factors</li> </ul>
5.2	I consider that the closure of the school will be unethical action on the part of the Council.	<p>The Council has carried out a full consultation in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code.</p> <p>A consultation report was prepared which outlines the issues raised in the consultation responses received and</p>

		provides the Council's response to these issues. This was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.
--	--	---

### Objection 6

Issue	Points raised	Council response
6.1	From what I've observed over the last few years, you have worked hard to underhandedly boil dry all the honest opposition to the closure of our school using all the county council's powers and hyper educated theories. So here's a last attempt to appeal for sense.	<p>The Council does not agree with this statement. The Council has carried out consultation on the proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code.</p> <p>A consultation report was prepared which outlined the issues raised in the consultation responses received and provided the Council's response to these issues, this was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed.</p>
6.2	<p>Small schools are good.</p> <p>Behind the uncertainty and stresses of controlling the pandemic the council have announced a plan to close many of our smaller village schools.</p> <p>There are reasons why these village schools are good and better than sending children away to larger schools.</p> <p>The dedication of the staff and small class numbers provides a key each child's needs with individuals</p>	<p>The Council agrees that there are good examples of schools of all sizes. All schools, regardless of size, would be able to provide for the needs of their pupils. Smaller class sizes would not necessarily mean that pupils receive a more individual education as there are a number of year groups and a wider age range of pupils in the class.</p> <p>As stated in the Consultation Document in reference to the alternative schools pupils might transfer to:</p>

	supported one to one. Children are better able to help one another.	<i>'The Council's view is that all of these schools would provide education for pupils which is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on standards and progress overall.'</i>
6.3	Lots of safe outdoor learning space. Hands on gardening, nature study and outdoor activities. Two big sports fields, a playground, a garden, fenced pond and wild area. Safe local nature walks.	The Council notes these comments about the facilities available at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.
6.4	<p>Teaching independence and to value your own community, also keeps villages together and growing. Encourages children to return as an adult. Gives young life at the centre of the community. Creates a web of connections with local people.</p> <p>A statement of where we place our values. Local friendships for life give a foundation that honours and respects the village. Less distance for children to travel. Sends a message Yes you can succeed on the local scale. A microcosm of the world. It can work from tiny beginnings.</p> <p>It is a poor plan that proposes throwing away good working schools, hollowing out valuable communities in an already sparsely populated countryside. Since the lockdowns the benefits of rural life have been evident and becoming even more valued. Supporting and encouraging rural life is now being recognised as a key component to lower our carbon</p>	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.</p> <p>The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. It notes the extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion school building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>

	<p>footprint. It's time to value our rural life and build upon it at this time of hopeful regeneration from the pandemic. Please don't destroy these essential parts of our communities.</p>	
6.5	<p>Few would disagree that children have suffered badly as a result of the pandemic. But Powys County Council is saying surprisingly little about how its 'ambitious' educational policy might help to address this.</p>	<p>The Council acknowledges that children have suffered badly as a result of the pandemic.</p> <p>The Council's Transforming Education Strategy was formulated before the Covid pandemic, and is a long term strategy, the aim of which is to improve learner entitlement and experience across Powys.</p> <p>Whilst the Transforming Education Strategy does not directly deal with the effects of the Covid pandemic, having equitable and resilient educational provision in Powys will help mitigate the implications of the pandemic on pupils.</p>
6.6	<p>The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act was passed by the Welsh Government in 2015. Its aim is to encourage politicians and other public bodies from taking a narrow, short-term approach, thinking only of saving money or the next election.</p>	<p>The Council's Transforming Education Strategy, is a long term strategy over a period of 10 years, which aims to improve learner and entitlement experience in Powys. It is not therefore a short term strategy, solely aimed at saving money before the next Council elections in 2022.</p> <p>The proposal's impact on the Welsh Government's well-being goals, as outlined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, is considered in the impact assessments.</p>
6.7	<p>The first three primary schools targeted for closure are in Castle Caereinion, Churchstoke and Llansilin. They head a long list of rural schools in Powys deemed too small and therefore uneconomic and/or inefficient.</p>	<p>The Council is currently taking forward a number of proposals in order to implement its Strategy for Transforming Education. Whilst some of these impact on</p>

		rural schools, other proposals affect schools located in more urban locations.
6.8	<p>Will young families move into the new houses if there is no local school for their children? Is the village destined to become an isolated retirement community? Will enough younger people live there to support them? Education policy should be strengthening communities for the future, not decimating them.</p> <p>If the council thinks about this when it studies its balance sheet, it might realise how much rural schools deliver in sheer value for money. With support and a stable future, they would be able to offer even more. Would the Future Generations Commissioner agree, I wonder? Might she consider that a review would be in order?</p>	<p>The Council note these comments regarding the role of rural / village schools within their communities.</p> <p>The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. It notes the extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion school building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p> <p>The impact assessment also considers the proposal's impact on the Welsh Government's well-being goals, as outlined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.</p>

### **Objection 7**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
7.1	I wish to object to the proposal to close Castle Caereinion School. The school is integral part of our village. In the past the school has invited residents in the village to attend their school fetes and other activities. This allows the children to meet us and for us to meet them. It makes	The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.

	<p>for a community that takes an interest in each other and works together as a whole. If the children have to attend schools outside the village then this won't happen. They have also attended our Church and are familiar with it through belonging to their church school.</p>	<p>The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. It notes the extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion school building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>
7.2	<p>The current numbers of pupils in school are not as high as we would like but with planning for further houses this should increase.</p>	<p>The Council notes these comments about housing developments in the village. Comments about housing developments in Castle Caereinion were received during the consultation period – these were listed in section 6.3 of the Consultation Report produced in respect of this proposal.</p> <p>As indicated in the Consultation Report, <i>'Information received from the Council's housing department suggests there are approximately 40 housing developments already completed, underway or planned in the area. Some of these are affordable housing'</i></p> <p>and</p> <p><i>'The Council uses a pupil-yield ratio of .45 children per new house built. This is an estimate and does not necessarily lead to an increase in pupil numbers.'</i></p>

7.3	<p>If the children attend school outside the village then parents will have to have to travel to collect them if they do after school clubs and activities, whereas currently parents from the village can walk to collect them.</p>	<p>The Council acknowledges that implementation of the proposal could impact on the ability of pupils for whom Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is currently the closest school to access after school activities, due to reliance on home-to-school transport.</p> <p>As indicated in the Impact Assessment carried out in respect of this proposal <i>'it is acknowledged that there could be an impact on some pupils' ability to access after school activities, and could impact on the ability of parents to take part in school events, meetings etc.'</i></p> <p>The majority of schools in Powys rely on some level of home-to-school transport for their pupils, and schools are usually able to work with families to provide an appropriate level of extra-curricular activities for pupils, including clubs within the school day, shared transport with other parents etc.</p>
7.4	<p>Parents who do not choose the C.I.W school in Welshpool will also have to transport their children to school daily. We are teaching our children to preserve the planet and travelling in cars etc is not going to help this.</p>	<p>As indicated in the Statutory Notice published in respect of this proposal:</p> <p><i>'Transport arrangements will be in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy.'</i></p> <p><i>The Council will provide transport for Church in Wales provision for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School who wish to transfer to Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School. This will be provided on a case by case basis using the Council's discretionary</i></p>

		<i>powers under Section 6 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008.'</i>  Transport would be provided to all pupils to their closest school.
7.5	I trust all objections will be read carefully and are taken into consideration whilst making a decision. Our children are our future and need to feel they belong to a community that cares.	All objections received are included in this Objection Report, along with the Council's response to the points raised. The Objection Report will be considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with implementation of the proposal.
7.6	From a presentation I attended on zoom given by the former head teacher the school are doing well and the children appear very happy.	The Council notes these positive comments regarding the current provision at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.

### **Objection 8**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
8.1	<p>The Diocese of St Asaph wish to register their strong objection to the closure of this school.</p> <p>As you are aware we set out our concerns about the proposals in our response to the consultation. Those concerns remain and in particular, I would like to highlight the following:-</p> <p>Castle Caereinion is located in a rural setting and serves a close knit community. We are aware that there are new</p>	<p>The Council notes these comments about housing developments in the village.</p> <p>Comments about housing developments in Castle Caereinion were received during the consultation period – these were listed in section 6.3 of the Consultation Report produced in respect of this proposal.</p> <p>As indicated in the Consultation Report, <i>'Information received from the Council's housing department suggests</i></p>

	builds planned and it is likely that pupil numbers will increase at Castle Caereinion as a result of these housing developments. This will then improve the budget per pupil position, a concern raised by the Local Authority.	<p><i>there are approximately 40 housing developments already completed, underway or planned in the area. Some of these are affordable housing'</i></p> <p>and</p> <p><i>'The Council uses a pupil-yield ratio of .45 children per new house built. This is an estimate and does not necessarily lead to an increase in pupil numbers.'</i></p>
8.2	As a Church in Wales school, the school is actively involved with the local church for key services such as Harvest, Easter, Christingle etc., where the children take a leading role in delivering the service. The Church is also involved in RE lessons and other related activities. This close relationship and involvement with the local church will be denied to many pupils if the school were to close.	<p>The Council notes these comments regarding the links between Castle Caereinion C. in W. School and the local church, and the potential impact on pupils' involvement with the church should they transfer to alternative provision.</p> <p>Alternative Church in Wales places are available in the area at Welshpool C. in W. School. Should the Council proceed with the proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, pupils could apply for a place at this school, which would ensure continued access to Church in Wales provision.</p>
8.3	The supposed issues with the school building were identified as a weakness in the consultation options. However, whilst the school building is not a modern building, its ability to meet the needs of the new curriculum are not a concern for us.	<p>Comment noted. Issues with the building is only one of the reasons for the proposal.</p> <p>Whilst the school building was assessed to be in good condition by the Welsh Government's condition survey carried out in 2009, the Council recently commissioned an updated condition survey of the school building. This was carried out in the autumn term 2020. The survey assessed</p>

		the condition of all three blocks at the school as condition C.
8.4	In addition, the school has developed specialised provision which is very successful in meeting the needs of ALN pupils who thrive in a small school environment.	<p>The Council notes this positive comment about Castle Caereinion C. in W. School's ability to meet the needs of ALN pupils. However, all schools, regardless of size, would be able to provide for the needs of their pupils.</p> <p>The Powys SEN/ALN strategy, agreed by Cabinet in November 2021, is committed to improving the provision for all pupils with SEN/ALN. This includes pupils who can be educated in mainstream classes as well as pupils who require specialist provision. Pupils with ALN at all schools, regardless of size, would have the appropriate support to meet their needs.</p> <p>Should the school close, the Council would ensure that the requirements for pupils with additional needs were met at whichever school they may choose to attend.</p>
8.5	One of our continuing concerns as a Diocese, is that there is no reference to a <b>designated</b> alternative Church in Wales school. This would be Welshpool Church in Wales Primary, and as such, parents should have the option to choose this school without having to meet the costs of that transport. It has been noted that the Statutory Notice states that transport will be provided on a case-by-case consideration. This means that parents have no certainty when choosing an alternative Church in Wales School.	<p>Should the Council proceed with implementation of the proposal, parents would be able to express a preference for a school of their choice for their children, and this choice will be accommodated where possible.</p> <p>Any pupils wishing to continue to access Church in Wales provision could express a preference for Welshpool C. in W. School. There are sufficient places available at this school for all current pupils at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, therefore there is no reason to believe that any</p>

		<p>pupils wishing to transfer to Welshpool C. in W. School could not be accommodated.</p> <p>As indicated in the Statutory Notice published in respect of this proposal:</p> <p><i>‘Transport arrangements will be in accordance with the Council’s Home-to-School Transport Policy.</i></p> <p><i>The Council will provide transport for Church in Wales provision for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School who wish to transfer to Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School. This will be provided on a case by case basis using the Council’s discretionary powers under Section 6 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008.’</i></p> <p>This clearly indicates that the Council will provide transport for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School who wish to continue to access Church in Wales provision at Welshpool C. in W. School.</p>
8.6	Parents may be forced to opt for Berriew as their next nearest school on the basis that they will be able to secure free school transport, however, this is a county primary and not a CiW school. This removes parental choice for a Church in Wales school place on economic grounds.	As above – the Council has clearly indicated in the Statutory Notice published in respect of this proposal that transport will be provided for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School who wish to access Church in Wales provision at Welshpool C. in W. School.

8.7	<p>Another ongoing concern relates to the impact on children of having to travel further to school. Children at Castle Caereinion currently enjoy a breadth of activities and can actively participate because the majority live within or very near to Castle Caereinion. Whichever school they choose, they will need to be transported to and from school necessitating a longer school day.</p> <p>Furthermore, if they wish to engage in after school activities, this will be determined on the basis of whether their parents are able to collect them from school given the distances they will live from their nearest school. This assumes that parents' working hours, ownership of a car and financial position, makes that possible. It is likely then, that for some children, they will not be able to enjoy the same opportunities as their peers.</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that implementation of the proposal would lead to additional travel for pupils for whom Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is currently their closest school.</p> <p>There are a number of alternative primary schools within 10 miles of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, and should the school close, it is not considered that the length and nature of journeys for pupils to alternative provision would be excessive.</p> <p>The Council acknowledges that implementation of the proposal could impact on the ability of pupils for whom Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is currently the closest school to access after school activities, due to reliance on home-to-school transport.</p> <p>As indicated in the Impact Assessment carried out in respect of this proposal <i>'it is acknowledged that there could be an impact on some pupils' ability to access after school activities, and could impact on the ability of parents to take part in school events, meetings etc.'</i></p> <p>The majority of schools in Powys rely on some level of home-to-school transport for their pupils, and schools are usually able to work with families to provide an appropriate level of extra-curricular activities for pupils, including clubs within the school day, shared transport with other parents etc.</p>
8.8	It is our view that there is a strong case to retain this school given its location, the community it serves (which	There are a number of alternative schools located within 10 miles of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School which pupils

	<p>is growing), and the greater distances children will need to travel to a new school. The alternatives will have a detrimental impact on children's well-being and ability to participate in extra curricular activities with their peers.</p>	<p>could access should the Council proceed with the proposal to close the school. Should the school close, it is not considered that the length and nature of journeys for pupils to alternative provision would be excessive.</p> <p>Powys is a large, rural county, and many pupils and parents across the county rely on home to school transport to access both primary and secondary provision, with some required to travel distances which are significantly greater than the distance from Castle Caereinion C. in W. School to the nearest alternative schools.</p>
8.9	<p>The closure of the school will decimate the heart of the community and could deter future families from moving to the area.</p>	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.</p> <p>The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>
8.10	<p>As a minimum, we would expect parents to be offered places at Welshpool Church in Wales school as a <b>designated</b> alternative school with the assurance of free transport. If this was not offered, then the Diocese would be of the opinion that the Council have not met the provisions of the School Organisation Code 2018 which state that where school provision is being reduced or removed, alternative school provision of the same nature</p>	<p>See response to 8.5.</p> <p>The Council is adhering to the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code which states the following:</p> <p><i>'with reference to the nature of the schools subject to proposals, whether the alternative school-based provision is</i></p>

	<p>(language category or, if relevant, religious character), wherever possible, should remain available and accessible to pupils in the local area. If free transport is not provided, then the nearest Church in Wales School cannot be considered as accessible to pupils.</p> <p>We strongly urge the Council to reconsider its position in relation to this school and allow it time to grow and develop.</p>	<p><i>sufficient to meet existing and projected demand for schools of the same:</i></p> <p><i>a. language category as set out in “Defining schools according to Welsh medium provision” Welsh Assembly Government Information document No: 023/2007 or any successor documents; and</i></p> <p><i>b. (if relevant) designated religious character.</i></p> <p><i>Proposals <b>should</b> ensure that the balance of school provision reflects the balance of demand. This means that where school provision is being reduced or removed, alternative school provision of the same nature (language category or, if relevant, religious character), wherever possible, should remain available and accessible to pupils in the local area. However in some areas it may not be compatible with the cost effective provision of education to continue to maintain access to schools of the same nature.’</i></p>
--	---	--

### Objection 9

Issue	Points raised	Council response
9.1	<p>I object to the closure for the following reasons:</p> <p>The school forms a key part of the community which enables children in the village and surrounding area to develop a well rooted connection with the community. It plays a critical role in encouraging positive citizenship, participation and a sense of place – all vital aspects of rural life.</p>	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.</p> <p>The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. It notes the extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion school building, and extensive links</p>

		between the school and the local community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.
9.2	I contest the validity of the consultation on which this notice is drawn. The pre-cursor to this statutory notice was instigated during the pandemic at a time where the stakeholders were unable to meet in order to plan and co-ordinate a cohesive response to the proposal.	The Council has been developing its Strategy for Transforming Education since Estyn's inspection of Powys Education Services in 2019. It is acknowledged that it would have been preferable for the consultation process to have taken place at a time when there wasn't a global pandemic, however the consultation has been carried out in line with Welsh Government requirements.
9.3	The effects of the pandemic on children's education are yet to be fully understood by parents, schools, the education dept. and government – closing the school at this time is highly premature and irreversible. There is no provision any of the preparation documents to cover this unprecedented circumstance.	<p>The Council accepts that any school reorganisation proposal creates a period of uncertainty for the pupils involved, and that this has been exacerbated this year due to Covid pandemic.</p> <p>Should the school close, the schools pupils would transfer to would provide support to pupils to aid their transition, ensuring a successful transition to their new school to ensure that all pupils can achieve their potential.</p> <p>The Council is monitoring the impact of Covid on all pupils, and should the Council proceed with implementation of this proposal, the Council and the school to which the pupils transfer would continue to monitor the impact of Covid on the pupils following their move to an alternative school.</p>

9.4	<p>The details on transport provisions differ in the consultation report and the statutory notice. The transport policy is vague, moveable and lacking in clarity for the parents of the children affected.</p>	<p>The commitment in respect of the provision of home to school transport is as per the Statutory Notice. It is correct that the commitment in the Statutory Notice is different to the commitment in the consultation document, this is because the Council reviewed it's position having considered the responses received during the consultation period.</p> <p>As indicated in the Statutory Notice published in respect of this proposal:</p> <p><i>'Transport arrangements will be in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy.</i></p> <p><i>The Council will provide transport for Church in Wales provision for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School who wish to transfer to Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School. This will be provided on a case by case basis using the Council's discretionary powers under Section 6 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008.'</i></p>
9.5	<p>The further assessment document required under the School Code and used for the consultation did not 'add up' and based on negative/positive comments in the various categories actually showed that closing the school was one of the least favourable options out of the nine.</p>	<p>The School Organisation Code requires proposers to assess the original options and any reasonable alternative options against the likely impact on quality and standards of education, the community and on travel. As explained in the Code:</p> <p><i>'The purpose of this further assessment is to take account of any further information that has come forward in the consultation or otherwise.'</i></p>

		<p>The Code goes on to state that:</p> <p><i>‘The proposer is required to confirm whether it considers the implementation of the proposal, (wholly or partly) to be the most appropriate response to the reasons it identified for the proposal, and give reasons for its conclusion.’</i></p> <p>This is not based on the ratio between negative and positive comments in the assessment.</p> <p>In this case, the Council’s conclusion was as follows:</p> <p><i>‘It is confirmed that implementation of the proposal is the most appropriate response to the reasons identified for the proposal.’</i></p> <p>The Council goes on to state that:</p> <p><i>‘Having considered the issues raised in the consultation report, having carried out a further assessment of the proposal and alternative options on the likely impact on quality and standards in education, the likely impact on the community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements, and having considered any further reasonable alternatives suggested during the consultation period, the Council’s view is that the current proposal continues to be the most appropriate response to these reasons, to ensure improved management of the Powys schools estate, and to ensure that the best possible educational opportunities can be provided to pupils living in Castle Caereinion and across Powys in the future.’</i></p>
--	--	--

9.6	Powys County Council had clearly decided that they were going to close the school before taking any of the consultation comments into consideration. This is evidenced by the council initially issuing their report with their conclusion to close, despite the preceding information being incomplete/incorrect/highlighted for queries and errors.	<p>The Council had not ‘clearly decided that they were going to close the school before taking any of the consultation comments into consideration.’</p> <p>A consultation report was prepared which outlines the issues raised in the consultation responses received and provides the Council’s response to these issues. This included comments about the consultation document which were received during the consultation period. The consultation report was considered by the Council’s Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>
-----	---	--

### **Objection 10**

Issue	Points raised	Council response
10.1	<p>In response to the statutory notice proposal to close Castle Caereinion CIW primary school, I write on behalf of the Trustees of the Castle Caereinion Recreation Association to object to this notice and contest the validity of the consultation on which this notice is drawn.</p> <p>The pre-cursor to this statutory notice was instigated during the pandemic at a time when the stakeholders were unable to meet in order to plan and co-ordinate a cohesive response to the proposal.</p>	<p>The Council has been developing its Strategy for Transforming Education since Estyn’s inspection of Powys Education Services in 2019. Whilst acknowledging that it would have been preferable for the consultation process to have taken place at a time when there wasn’t a global pandemic, the consultation has been carried out in line with Welsh Government requirements.</p>
10.2	<p>PCC set out in its 2018-2023 vision for Powys to be established as an innovation base for learning, research and skills and it is with great disappointment that mid-</p>	<p>The Council’s Strategy for Transforming Education was developed following engagement with a range of stakeholders. The number of schools in Powys was clearly</p>

	<p>term with the vision PCC defined an objective to rationalize primary provision. The vision clearly sets out a priority to work in partnership with schools, colleges, universities and businesses to improve career opportunities and commitment and greater focus on working in partnership with schools and the communities they serve.</p>	<p>identified as a concern during this engagement exercise, and the Strategy includes an objective to 'rationalise primary provision' in order to address this concern and ensure equity across the Powys schools estate. However, this is only one of a number of objectives within the Strategy.</p> <p>The Strategy aligns with Vision 2025. Learning and skills is one of the four objectives of Vision 2025, with the Council setting out it's intention to 'strengthen learning and skills'. The Strategy for Transforming aims to improve the provision for learners across Powys.</p>
10.3	<p>Castle Caereinion is a rural community and is built on its agricultural foundations with over 50 farms and small holdings currently operational in the ward. Agriculture has a particularly high focus on well-being due to its solitary environment and this is of paramount importance within the community of Castle Caereinion which has the school and Community Centre at its heart.</p>	<p>The Council recognises that Castle Caereinion is located in a rural area with many agricultural holdings, and recognises the school's importance within the community.</p>
10.4	<p>The school is the primary income generator for the Recreation Committee and without the school's support would leave a significant gap in income which will be very difficult to bridge with other income sources in relation to the required outgoings. Additionally, if PCC were to re-assess the relief offered to community centres this could force closure without the school's financial support.</p>	<p>A number of comments were received during the consultation period which expressed concern about the potential impact on the community centre. The Council acknowledges that the school is an important financial contributor to the Community Centre, and notes the comments regarding the relief offered by PCC to community centres.</p>

		Should the Council proceed with this proposal, the management committee of the Centre would need to consider how best to utilise the Centre, so that it remains viable.
10.5	<p>Without the recreation center, well-being in the community would most likely decline and drain the resources available with health across PCC. This is counter to the 2018-2023 vision where PCC sets out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing effective learning interventions will support schools to improve and produce well-qualified individuals</li> <li>• Committed to modernizing our schools to provide sustainable, low-carbon buildings with high quality educational environment</li> <li>• Support improvement of good quality, targeted education which will allow individuals to make more informed healthy life choices</li> <li>• Committed to ensuring our learners have equitable access to education provision regardless of their background or where they live</li> <li>• Council will work to ensure the co-location of council services and other services on school sites, in particular as part of new build projects so they are central to community life.</li> </ul>	<p>As above.</p> <p>The Council notes the concerns about the potential impact on community well-being.</p> <p>The Council does not agree that the current proposal is counter to these points which are set out in Vision 2025. The proposal's impact on Vision 2025, including health and care, is considered in the Impact Assessment document.</p>
10.6	In response to the consultation document there are a number of points which have been reported incorrectly and lead us to question the validity of the consultation	The updated condition survey did not include the community centre.

	<p>when out of date and/or incorrect information has been presented. Specifically, these relate to:</p> <p>Point 4.iii). The consultation document does not make it clear what the updated survey condition refers to or the three blocks and whether this includes the community centre where the hall is owned by the community to which the school contributes to annual fees.</p>	
10.7	<p>Appendix A – Impact of community hall is not mentioned in appendix A.</p>	<p>Appendix A of the consultation document provides key data in respect of the schools affected by the proposal. It would not be appropriate for the proposal's possible impact on the community hall to be mentioned in this section.</p> <p>Many comments expressing concern about the proposal's impact on the community hall were received during the consultation period. These are listed in the consultation report in section 6.2. This concern is also reflected in the impact assessments.</p>
10.8	<p>Appendix A 12.3 states that no other trusts or charitable interests are affected by the closure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As the community hall is under a village hall trust this should be taken into account in Appendix A 12.3 – in the current document it says that no trusts are affected as the community centre is a trust this should be listed in the impact assessment</li> </ul>	<p>The reference here to '12.3' relates to the Options Appraisal document considered by the Council's Cabinet on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021.</p> <p>The question to be responded to in the Options Appraisal document is: <i>'Whether the school / schools involved are subject to any trust or charitable interests which might be affected by the proposals, for example in relation to the use or disposal of land.'</i></p>

		<p>The Council's response here is: <i>'The school is not subject to any trust or charitable interests which might be affected by the proposals.'</i></p> <p>This was also addressed on page 27 of the Consultation Document:</p> <p><i>'Is the school / schools involved subject to any trust or charitable interests which might be affected by the proposals, for example in relation to the use or disposal of land?</i></p> <p><i>Castle Caereinion C.W. School is not subject to any trust or charitable interest which might be affected in relation to the use or disposal of the land.'</i></p> <p>The objection relates to the community hall being under a village hall trust, however the question in the Options Appraisal document and the Consultation Document relates specifically to the school and not the Community Centre. Castle Caereinion C.W. School is not subject to any trust or charitable interest which might be affected in relation to the use or disposal of the land.</p>
10.9	<p>Appendix B – SWOT analysis does not consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a socio-economic impact to the community not implications to community center with the primary revenue stream being removed</li> </ul>	<p>These comments regarding the SWOT analysis are noted. SWOT analyses were included in the Options Appraisal document considered by Cabinet on the 9<sup>th</sup> February, and in the Consultation Document published in respect of this proposal. A number of comments about the SWOT</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunities to leverage technology and on-line learning capabilities that have been implemented during the covid-19 pandemic</li> <li>• does not stipulate that PCC under the transport for school policy will only provide transport to one elected school in the area. It would appear that transport provision now differs between the consultation report and the statutory notice. The transport policy is vague, moveable and lacking in clarity for the parents of the children affected.</li> <li>• does not consider creating learning specialties in specific schools to provide learning areas of excellence for pupils to participate with. This does not necessarily mean all learning is limited to one location to create a center of excellence.</li> <li>• incorrectly states community hall using refuse provision at school</li> <li>• does not consider the financial viability of the hall should the school close and impact on community</li> <li>• there is acknowledgement of the impact of the community and the potential loss of community facilities - but there is no specific mention here of the community hall</li> <li>• assessment of SWOT analysis is subjective and not supported by qualitative data to make a balanced assessment</li> </ul>	<p>assessments were received during the consultation period, these are listed in section 15.1.3 of the Consultation Report along with the Council's response. The factors listed here are referenced in the Consultation Report.</p>
10.10	<p>Appendix C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No mention of the community hall</li> </ul>	<p>Whilst there is no reference to the impact on the Community Hall in Appendix C of the Consultation Document, a number of comments were received during the consultation period which expressed concern about the</p>

		<p>potential impact on the community centre. These comments are listed and responded to in the consultation report, and are reflected in the impact assessment document.</p> <p>In accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code, a further assessment of the proposal and alternative options was included in the Consultation Report, when Appendix C of the Consultation Document was reviewed. The revised assessments do refer to the potential impact on the community hall.</p>
10.11	<p>Appendix D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certain inaccuracies which have been rectified by PCC including safeguarding where there was an issue of open access to the school to which the Diocese of St Asaph have clearly stated there is separate access to the community hall and that the school has sole use of it during the day.</li> </ul>	<p>It is accepted that there is separate access to the community hall and that the school has sole use of it during the day.</p>
10.12	<p>It is the assessment of the Recreation Committee that PCC have not completed a thorough analysis leading to the release of the consultation document and without conducting a detailed impact assessment on potential implications to fund the community hall the consultation process should rescind the proposal and continue status quo. Without a formal impact assessment, the school closure could lead to the closure of the community hall which would bring significant bearing on the community and well-being on members of the agriculture community</p>	<p>The Council has carried out a number of impact assessments as part of this process, including an integrated impact assessment, an equalities impact assessment and a community impact assessment, which was carried out with input from the school. These have been updated as the process has moved forward to reflect comments received during the process.</p> <p>A number of comments were received during the consultation period which expressed concern about the potential impact on the community centre. The Council</p>

	<p>which has the highest suicide rates as a profession in the UK.</p>	<p>acknowledges that the school is an important financial contributor to the Community Centre. Should the Council proceed with this proposal, the management committee of the Centre would need to consider how best to utilise the Centre, so that it remains viable.</p>
--	---	--

**Objection 11**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
11.1	<p>If this school closes and those little children have to get up early in a morning to get on a school bus then be thrust into a class room with 30-40 other pupils, possibly not being with their friends and others in class, they don't know their teacher and are afraid to put up their hand to ask if they are no sure of the work they are supposed to be doing, they will be shy or embarrassed. Those children will get left behind, and then those report will say "could have tried harder". But whereas if they are in their village school they will have their friends around them and a teacher they know, she will be walking around them and sitting beside them and giving them hands on learning.</p>	<p>Many pupils in Powys travel to their school by bus, without detriment. There are a number of alternative primary schools within 10 miles of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, and should the school close, it is not considered that the length and nature of journeys for pupils to alternative provision would be excessive.</p> <p>Should the Council proceed with the proposal, pupils would transfer to larger schools, and it is likely that they would attend larger classes. However all schools, regardless of size, would be able to provide for the needs of their pupils. Smaller class sizes would not necessarily mean that pupils receive a more individual education, as there are a number of year groups and a wider age range of pupils in the class.</p> <p>The Council acknowledges that any school reorganisation proposal leads to a period of uncertainty for those affected by the proposal. Should the school close, the schools pupils would transfer to would provide support to pupils to aid their</p>

		transition, ensuring a successful transition to their new school to ensure that all pupils can achieve their potential.
11.2	They have the church nearby which they go to learn about Christian life, the church needs them, and those young people need the church, it is so important for our young people today.	The Council notes the links between Castle Caereinion C. in W. School and the nearby church.
11.3	Please I beg of you all to think about what you are doing to these young children. Before you close this school, is it pence at pupils	The current proposal is being taken forward in order to implement the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys, which aims to improve learner entitlement and experience across Powys.

### **Objection 12**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
12.1	<p>I am writing a letter of objection to Powys Country Council to express my disapproval of the plans to close Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School.</p> <p>I am appalled to learn of the reasons on which the closure is based.</p>	<p>The current proposal is being taken forward in order to implement the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys, which was developed following engagement with a range of stakeholders.</p> <p>The proposal is intended to address the challenges identified in respect of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School which are outlined in the Consultation Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Low pupils numbers</li> <li>ii) High budget per pupil</li> <li>iii) Issues with the building</li> <li>iv) Combined age classes</li> <li>v) Leadership</li> </ul>

		<p>Following consideration of a number of options, the Council's preferred option is to close Castle Caereinion CiW School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools. The reasons for this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- To address the issue of low pupil numbers</li><li>- To reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools</li><li>- To realise a financial saving to the Council</li><li>- To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum</li><li>- To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities</li><li>- To enable pupils to attend schools with better quality accommodation</li><li>- The proposal meets all of the Critical Success Factors</li></ul> <p>The Council has carried out a full consultation in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code.</p> <p>A consultation report was prepared which outlines the issues raised in the consultation responses received and provides the Council's response to these issues. This was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>
--	--	--

12.2	<p>The primary school is the heart of the both the village and the community, it is fundamental that it is kept open during a time of enormous planned expansion within Castle Caereinion.</p>	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.</p> <p>The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. It notes the extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion school building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>
12.3	<p>There are plans for over forty new homes to be built which consist of family homes that will undoubtedly cause the number of pupils to increase. The appeal of a thriving and safe primary school will be lost should the decision for its closure go ahead.</p>	<p>Comments about housing developments in Castle Caereinion were received during the consultation period – these were listed in section 6.3 of the Consultation Report produced in respect of this proposal.</p> <p>As indicated in the Consultation Report, <i>'Information received from the Council's housing department suggests there are approximately 40 housing developments already completed, underway or planned in the area. Some of these are affordable housing'</i></p> <p>and</p> <p><i>'The Council uses a pupil-yield ratio of .45 children per new house built. This is an estimate and does not necessarily</i></p>

		<i>lead to an increase in pupil numbers.</i> The school would continue to be a small school of two classes.
12.4	As we have recently lost our local shop, the importance of keeping our school open has been brought to attention more than ever. To transport children to a different village or town is to take them away from their home and their local community. Myself and my family attended Llanfair Caereinion High School and found that we did not feel fully part of their neighbourhood despite attending school there for five years. The feeling of unfamiliarity is exacerbated among children and does not seem to have been fully considered.	See response to 12.2.
12.5	Powys is the biggest county in the entire country and yet rural schools, not just Castle Caereinion, are planned to close on a large scale at the detriment of the children and families which inhabit the communities which make up the heart of rural Wales.	<p>The Council notes these comments about rural schools and recognises the role of rural schools in their communities. The current proposal in respect of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is being taken forward in order to implement the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys, which was developed following engagement with a range of stakeholders.</p> <p>The number of schools in Powys was clearly identified as a concern during this engagement exercise, and the Strategy includes an objective to 'rationalise primary provision' in order to address this concern and ensure equity across the Powys schools estate. However, this is only one of a number of objectives within the Strategy.</p> <p>The Council is currently taking forward a number of proposals in order to implement its Strategy for Transforming Education. Whilst some of these impact on</p>

		<p>rural schools, other proposals affect schools located in more urban locations.</p> <p>A significant number of Powys schools are identified as rural schools, including a number of the alternative schools pupils are likely to attend should there no longer be a school at Castle Caereinion, and almost all schools serve at least some pupils who live in rural areas.</p>
12.6	<p>The importance of small rural schools cannot be understated, the personal relationships and understanding between peers and teachers is vital for their development at an early age and beyond. The skills acquired through our time at Castle Caereinion C in W School have shaped our entire lives and allowed us to maintain the sense of community which is currently under threat. The bond which is formed at that school is invaluable and lasts a lifetime, to lose our school after it has been open for over 130 years would be heart-breaking.</p>	<p>The Council is pleased to note the positive comments regarding Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. However, all schools, regardless of size, would be able to provide for the needs of their pupils.</p>
12.7	<p>The environmental impacts of transporting children as young as four appear to have been ignored also. At a time where the subject of the environment is unavoidable, why would such young children be required to take public transport to a school in a different community when there is one within the village?</p>	<p>The Council recognises the possible environmental impact of the proposal. As indicated in the impact assessment document:</p> <p><i>'Implementation of the proposal would require additional travel for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School for whom this is their closest school. This would have a negative environmental impact as more home to school transport would need to be provided to transport pupils to their nearest alternative school.'</i></p>

		<p>The assessment also states that:</p> <p><i>'The number of pupils requiring additional transport would be relatively small, and it is possible that they could be accommodated on transport which is already operating.'</i></p> <p>It is accepted that there are some pupils who can currently walk or cycle to Castle Caereinion C.in W. School, who will not be able to do so to their alternative school.</p> <p>Whilst the Council notes the concerns regarding the environmental impact of the proposal, any increase in carbon footprint is likely to be minimal. It should also be noted that school buildings themselves have a carbon footprint as well as transportation.</p>
12.8	<p>The cost of buses to villages and towns several miles away from their own seems illogical when there is a fully functioning and very successful school in the heart of the village.</p>	<p>The Council acknowledges that implementation of the proposal would result in additional travel for pupils for whom Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is currently the closest school.</p> <p>Should the school close, free home-to-school transport would be provided to the nearest alternative school, in accordance with the Home to School Transport Policy. The estimated cost of this transport is £32,300 per annum. However, even after taking into account these additional transport costs, it is estimated that the implementation of the proposal would deliver annual revenue savings to the Council of around £58,100.</p>

12.9	During the Covid-19 pandemic the children have been displaced enough without a normal routine and unable to play on the playground which is on their doorstep. What are the perceived best interests of the children if not the factors I have raised.	Comment noted. The Council fully acknowledges the disruption caused to children by the Covid-19 pandemic.
------	--	---

### **Objection 13**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
13.1	The school is an integral part of the village, community and church. The youngsters who attend are seen and heard during the day and know and are known within our community. It cannot be a good thing to educate pupils as young as our school's pupils so far from their community with the resulting alienation from their community.	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.</p> <p>The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. It notes the extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion school building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>
13.2	School and church here in Castle have always been inextricably linked with regular Christian input from local Clergy as well as the pupils joining in with the church for specific festivals and events throughout the year, to say nothing of the annual Leavers Service and presentation of books to those going to high school. Should the school	The Council notes these comments regarding the links between Castle Caereinion C. in W. School and the local church.

	<p>close then these local children will miss out on an essential and fundamental part of their upbringing, regardless of whether they or their families are regular church attenders. The Christian input is essential to ensuring they grow to be citizens that we can all be proud of, but pupils who are forced to move to non-church schools will be thrust into the maelstrom of learning where Christian beliefs are left to the back burner at best.</p>	
13.3	<p>Pupils moved to another Church school will miss out on the community life and become strangers in their own community. Messy Church, a national movement for involving youngsters in church life, has been a regular part of the offering from members of the church to our local pupils, normally occurring immediately after close of school for the day, something which will cease should the school closure proceed. This timing always ensured that the youngsters were all together and within a minute of the church. Parents have supported these get-togethers as part of a valuable school/church/community liaison exercise. Schooling our pupils in other locations will ensure that there will be no possibility of these young people ever getting together in their church for a light hearted learning event. General church services can be all that will be on offer to them most of the time!</p>	As above.
13.4	<p>I really believe that now is NOT the time to consider closure given the additional housing shortly to be constructed.</p>	<p>Comments about housing developments in Castle Caereinion were received during the consultation period – these were listed in section 6.3 of the Consultation Report produced in respect of this proposal.</p>

		<p>As indicated in the Consultation Report, <i>'Information received from the Council's housing department suggests there are approximately 40 housing developments already completed, underway or planned in the area. Some of these are affordable housing'</i></p> <p>and</p> <p><i>'The Council uses a pupil-yield ratio of .45 children per new house built. This is an estimate and does not necessarily lead to an increase in pupil numbers.'</i> The school would continue to be a small two class school.</p>
13.5	The need to mitigate carbon emissions on road journeys and avoidance of officially provided school transport costs.	<p>The Council recognises the possible environmental impact of the proposal. As indicated in the impact assessment document:</p> <p><i>'Implementation of the proposal would require additional travel for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School for whom this is their closest school. This would have a negative environmental impact as more home to school transport would need to be provided to transport pupils to their nearest alternative school.'</i></p> <p>The assessment also states that:</p> <p><i>'The number of pupils requiring additional transport would be relatively small, and it is possible that they could be accommodated on transport which is already operating.'</i></p>

		<p>It is accepted that there are some pupils who can currently walk or cycle to Castle Caereinion C.in W. School, who will not be able to do so to their alternative school.</p> <p>Whilst the Council notes the concerns regarding the environmental impact of the proposal, any increase in carbon footprint is likely to be minimal. It should also be noted that school buildings themselves have a carbon footprint as well as transportation.</p>
13.6	If nothing else can be done please consider linking Castle school with the Welshpool C in W school and keeping our youngsters educated in their own community. It is a good school and nothing good will come out of its closure.	Federating and/or merging Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School have both been considered as part of the consultation process. These options have been discounted as they do not address the challenges identified in respect of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.

#### **Objection 14**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
14.1	<p>I write to strongly object to the proposed closure of Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School.</p> <p>I cannot stress how important it is to have a school in our community. This school IS our community and to take away our school is to unjust, unfair and highly detrimental to our children's future. Lifelong friendships are made in this school and pupils are given a real understanding of community life, our community, not someone else's!</p>	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.</p> <p>The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. It notes the extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion school building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the</p>

		consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.
14.2	Should we really have to travel an absolute minimum of 6 miles a day to take our children to school when we have one on our doorstep? Is that fair on pupils? Is that fair on the parents? Is that fair on the communities we will have to drive through 4 times a day?	<p>It is acknowledged that implementation of the proposal would lead to additional travel for pupils for whom Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is currently their closest school.</p> <p>There are a number of alternative primary schools within 10 miles of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, and should the school close, it is not considered that the length and nature of journeys for pupils to alternative provision would be excessive.</p> <p>Powys is a large, rural county, and many pupils and parents across the county rely on home to school transport to access both primary and secondary provision, with some required to travel distances which are significantly greater than the distance from Castle Caereinion C. in W. School to the nearest alternative schools.</p>
14.3	The village itself currently has planning permission for 28 new houses, with 6 currently under construction. Where will these children go to school?	<p>Comments about housing developments in Castle Caereinion were received during the consultation period – these were listed in section 6.3 of the Consultation Report produced in respect of this proposal.</p> <p>Should the Council proceed with the proposal, pupils living in these houses would be able to apply for a place at one of the alternative schools in the area, and these applications would be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Admissions Policy.</p>

14.4	I would be pushed to find a child who has not excelled in Castle Caereinion School, certainly not in my lifetime, with many going on to higher education and university. My old school friends are now teachers, college lecturers and local business owners. My daughters friends, all Castle Caereinion pupils are now starting on their own career paths, all of which began in our small community school.	Comment noted. The quality of provision at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is not one of the reasons why the Council is proposing to close the school.
14.5	I know you will just quickly read this objection and file it away somewhere as the decision has already been made, but 'hand on heart' how can this be the right thing for our community? The day our school closes will be a very sad day indeed.	All objections received are included in this Objection Report, along with the Council's response to the points raised. The Objection Report will be considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with implementation of the proposal.

### **Objection 15**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
15.1	<p>I am writing to you today to object the proposed notice to close Castle Caereinion CIW primary school.</p> <p>I ask that the federation of Welshpool CIW primary school is looked again. I believe this would be in the best of interest for our community and of the children attending the school and would also remain open for future generations of younger families would move to Castle Caereinion.</p>	<p>The option of federating Castle Caereinion C. in W. School was considered as part of the consultation process, and was reassessed in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code following completion of the Consultation Report.</p> <p>This option was not taken forward as federation would not address the challenges identified in respect of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</p>

15.2	I remember from the last proposal to close Castle Caereinion CIW primary school, it was given a 5 year notice to turn things around and increase numbers this has only been 3 years!	There has been no proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School within the last 5 years.
15.3	<p>Transport is still a massive uncertainty that the local authorities have not been sincere about from the consultation period which has changed several times since and again changed at issuing statutory notice, but still leaves parents an uncertainty if free transport is available.</p> <p>Providing transport on a case by case basis is completely unacceptable, and should therefore be looked at again and re-written and transport is provided free to all children to whichever school the wish to go to for there education.</p>	<p>The commitment in respect of the provision of home to school transport is as per the Statutory Notice. It is correct that the commitment in the Statutory Notice is different to the commitment in the consultation document, this is because the Council reviewed its position having considered the responses received during the consultation period.</p> <p>As indicated in the Statutory Notice published in respect of this proposal:</p> <p><i>'Transport arrangements will be in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy.</i></p> <p><i>The Council will provide transport for Church in Wales provision for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School who wish to transfer to Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School. This will be provided on a case by case basis using the Council's discretionary powers under Section 6 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008.'</i></p> <p>It is not correct that transport would be provided on a case by case basis – transport would be provided in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy to a pupil's closest school, however the Council has</p>

		<p>acknowledged the need for additional consideration in order to ensure continued access to Church in Wales provision. As indicated in the Statutory Notice, the reference to providing transport on a case by case basis would only apply to pupils wishing to transfer to Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School.</p>
15.4	<p>You are proposing to close our school, for no reason but to provide financial gain to support building new school(s) in Welshpool, were the monies could of supported all rural schools and Castle Caereinion could and was on the way to meet the new curriculum with ease.</p> <p>I hope you consider my points, and the school remains open.</p>	<p>A revenue saving to the Council is only one of a number of reasons for the proposal.</p> <p>The current proposal is being taken forward in order to implement the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys, which was developed following engagement with a range of stakeholders.</p> <p>The proposal is intended to address the challenges identified in respect of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School which are outlined in the Consultation Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Low pupils numbers</li> <li>ii) High budget per pupil</li> <li>iii) Issues with the building</li> <li>iv) Combined age classes</li> <li>v) Leadership</li> </ul> <p>Following consideration of a number of options, the Council's preferred option is to close Castle Caereinion CiW School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools. The reasons for this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To address the issue of low pupil numbers</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools</li> <li>- To realise a financial saving to the Council</li> <li>- To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum</li> <li>- To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities</li> <li>- To enable pupils to attend schools with better quality accommodation</li> <li>- The proposal meets all of the Critical Success Factors</li> </ul>
--	--	---

### **Objection 16**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
16.1	<p>Further to the decision made by Powys County Council's Cabinet in July 2021, and subsequent publication of the Statutory Notice proposing to close Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School, we are writing to inform you Castle Caereinion Community Council wish to formally object to the closure and the reasons for our objection are as follows:</p> <p><b>Transport</b></p> <p>Throughout the consultation period PCC have consistently stated that transport would only be provided to the nearest school – Berriew, and gives no option for Welshpool CIW, Llanfair or Guilsfield:</p>	<p>The commitment in respect of the provision of home to school transport is as per the Statutory Notice.</p> <p>It is correct that the commitment in the Statutory Notice is different to the commitment in the consultation document / consultation report, this is because the Council reviewed it's position having considered the responses received during the consultation period.</p> <p>As indicated in the Statutory Notice published in respect of this proposal:</p>

<p><i>However, the Council’s Home-to-School Transport Policy provides transport to a pupil’s nearest or catchment school and does not provide transport to denominational schools specifically. If a parent chose a school that is not their nearest school, then they would be responsible for ensuring their child(ren) are transported to that school. It is recognised that if a parent didn’t drive, or have access to a car, then they would have to make alternative arrangements which could include private taxi/shared transport with other parents. The Council recognises that this may potentially have an economic impact on the parent and will therefore use its discretionary powers under the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008.</i></p> <p><i>PCC have changed this within the statutory notice: The nearest alternative schools for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Schools would be as follows: Berriew C.P. School Community Primary English Medium; Welshpool C. in W. School Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled English Medium; Guilsfield C.P. School Community Primary English Medium; Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School1 Community Primary Dual Stream 1 From 31st August 2022 Llanfair Caereinion Community Primary School will be discontinued and a new dual stream community school for pupils aged 4-18 years of age will operate on the current sites of Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School. Details of any other measures proposed to be taken to increase the number of school places at the nearest alternative schools The expectation is that the number of pupils transferring to</i></p>	<p><i>‘Transport arrangements will be in accordance with the Council’s Home-to-School Transport Policy.</i></p> <p><i>The Council will provide transport for Church in Wales provision for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School who wish to transfer to Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School. This will be provided on a case by case basis using the Council’s discretionary powers under Section 6 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008.’</i></p> <p>The Council does not agree that this statement causes ambiguity and uncertainty. Transport will be provided in accordance with the Council’s Home-to-School Transport Policy, which provides transport to a pupil’s ‘nearest suitable school or catchment school’. The Statutory Notice also includes a statement stating that the Council will provide transport for Church in Wales provision for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales Primary School who wish to transfer to Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School.</p> <p>The Council does not agree that this is unfair and discriminatory – to the contrary it provides an additional choice to pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</p>
--	--

	<p><i>each of the nearest alternative schools would be small, and therefore the impact on these schools would not be significant. Therefore, no measures are proposed to be taken to increase the number of school places available on consequence of the proposed discontinuance of Castle Caereinion Church in Wales school. Home-to-School Transport Arrangements Transport arrangements will be in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy. The Council will provide transport for Church in Wales provision for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School who wish to transfer to Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School. This will be provided on a case-by-case basis using the Council's discretionary powers under Section 6 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008.</i></p> <p>We have concerns with this statement. There is increased ambiguity and uncertainty when cases are determined on a 'case-by-case' basis. At such a stressful and difficult time, families need clarity. Within our community, we have families who are under increased financial pressure and will be forced to make their decision based on their financial situation instead of what may suit their child's needs. This is unfair and discriminatory.</p>	
16.2	<p><b>Further consideration to a Federation School is required</b></p> <p>PCC looked at this in the consultation period (page 203 option 2 7.1) and appear to have reached the conclusion this is not the right solution for Castle CIW school. We do not believe this has been given sufficient consideration.</p>	<p>As required by the School Organisation Code, the Council carried out a further assessment of the proposal and alternatives in the consultation report, and revised assessments of the likely impact of each option on quality and standards, the community and different travelling</p>

	<p>Within the consultation report the following points were stated:</p> <p><b>Likely impact on quality and standards</b>  <i>The impact on quality and standards would be minimal. Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would continue to operate as a standalone school; however, the school would be federated with Welshpool C. in W. school, meaning that one joint governing body would be responsible for both schools. There would also be the potential for shared leadership across the two schools. Establishment of the federation could lead to opportunities to share staff / resources across the federation, <b>which would have a positive impact on quality and standards.</b></i></p> <p><b>Likely impact on the community</b>  <i>The impact on the community would be minimal – provision would continue to be available in Castle Caereinion. However, one joint governing body would be responsible for both schools, therefore there could be a perceived reduction in community involvement in management of the school, depending on the makeup of the federated governing body.</i></p> <p><b>Likely impact of different travelling arrangements</b>  <i>There would be no impact on travel arrangements – pupils would continue to attend Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</i></p>	<p>arrangements are provided in section 7.1 of the consultation report.</p> <p>Having carried out this further assessment, the Council's view, as explain in section 7.3 is as follows:</p> <p><i>'It is confirmed that implementation of the proposal is the most appropriate response to the reasons identified for the proposal.'</i></p> <p>The Council goes on to state that:</p> <p><i>'Having considered the issues raised in the consultation report, having carried out a further assessment of the proposal and alternative options on the likely impact on quality and standards in education, the likely impact on the community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements, and having considered any further reasonable alternatives suggested during the consultation period, the Council's view is that the current proposal continues to be the most appropriate response to these reasons, to ensure improved management of the Powys schools estate, and to ensure that the best possible educational opportunities can be provided to pupils living in Castle Caereinion and across Powys in the future.'</i></p>
16.3	<b>Community Impact Assessment</b>	An initial community impact assessment was prepared for consideration by Cabinet on the 9 <sup>th</sup> February 2021. This

	<p>Our school and community centre are at the heart of our village and is important for the health and wellbeing of everyone. The community council have not been involved in the preparation of a community impact assessment, nor have we had sight of the community impact assessment that you state was prepared... <i>A Community Impact Assessment has been prepared as part of the proposal which considers the impact of the possible closure of the school on the community.</i></p>	<p>draft community impact assessment was prepared with input received from the school and was published with the Cabinet papers therefore was available to anyone who wished to view it.</p> <p>Further to this, a draft impact assessment document was published with the consultation documentation. This included the draft community impact assessment, as well as an integrated impact assessment which also considers impact on the community. This document was available to all stakeholders as part of the consultation documentation, and was referenced within the consultation document itself.</p> <p>A number of comments relating to the proposal's potential impact on the community were received during the consultation period. These are listed in the consultation report prepared in respect of this proposal, as well as the Council's response to the issues raised. The impact assessment document was subsequently updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and the updated impact assessment document, as well as the full consultation report which outlined the comments about the impact on the community which were received during the consultation period, were considered by Cabinet in July 2021. This has ensured that the school community have had the opportunity to input into the community impact assessment, including the community council..</p>
16.4	<p><b>Announcing a proposed closure during a lockdown</b> The timing of the consultation of the proposed closure is poorly judged. To undertake the consultation part way through a lockdown is an inappropriate way of engaging a</p>	<p>The Council has been developing its Strategy for Transforming Education since Estyn's inspection of Powys Education Services in 2019. It is acknowledged that it would have been preferable for the consultation process to have</p>

	<p>community. Our local discussions have taken place virtually as we have not been permitted to have community gatherings or meetings. Not all residents have access to online facilities or are not confident in using them, therefore a number of residents have been excluded from participating in the consultation process due to lack of technology. Powys County Council's decision to choose to launch the consultation during a lockdown has led to an unfair bias towards closure.</p>	<p>taken place at a time when there wasn't a global pandemic, the consultation has been carried out in line with Welsh Government requirements.</p> <p>The Council does not agree that there has been an 'unfair bias towards closure'. A consultation report was prepared which outlined the issues raised during the consultation period and provided the Council's response to these issues. This was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>
16.5	<p><b>The school's reputation for supporting pupils</b>          Castle Caereinion School is a wonderful village school in a beautiful rural setting which supports local families and children in the community. The school enjoys a peaceful setting with stimulating outdoor learning areas including a pond and forest area to develop interests in nature and the environment. As a small school it provides a nurturing environment particularly for children with SEN, for which the school is particularly strong in supporting. The school provides an essential local educational service within a rural setting, supporting local families.</p>	<p>The Council notes these positive comments regarding Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</p>
16.6	<p><b>Impact on the health and wellbeing of school children</b>          Like all children across Wales, our pupils have had an extraordinary year in terms of the impact of the pandemic on their education, routine, mental health, wellbeing and social interaction. Powys County Council should be doing everything it can to provide stability and reassurance to learners and should not be providing further uncertainty and increased anxiety with a proposed closure at this</p>	<p>The Council accepts that any school reorganisation proposal creates a period of uncertainty for the pupils involved, and that this is exacerbated this year due to the Covid pandemic.</p> <p>However, the Council would expect that pupils are fully supported by their teachers and other staff at the school</p>

	<p>time. The subsequent upheaval of having to move schools for children will cause stress and anxiety and affect our children's health and wellbeing and provide 12 months of worry and uncertainty.</p>	<p>during any periods of uncertainty to minimise the impact on their wellbeing.</p> <p>Should the school close, the receiving school or any other school pupils would transfer to would provide support to pupils to aid their transition, ensuring a successful transition to their new school to ensure that all pupils can achieve their potential.</p>
--	--	--

### **Objection 17**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
17.1	<p>I write to submit my formal objection to the closure of the above school. The local authority has failed meaningfully to address the concerns of the village expressed in the course of the consultation as to:</p> <p>The impact of closure on plans for supporting schoolchildren from the village and surrounding area who have suffered as a result of the Covid pandemic, and indeed publicise any such plans. Closure should not take place until any such plans have been comprehensively developed and the resources of the school taken into account in that context;</p>	<p>The Council accepts that any school reorganisation proposal creates a period of uncertainty for the pupils involved, and that this is exacerbated this year due to the Covid pandemic.</p> <p>However, the Council would expect that pupils are fully supported by their teachers and other staff at the school during any periods of uncertainty to minimise the impact on their wellbeing.</p> <p>Should the school close, the receiving school or any other school pupils would transfer to would provide support to pupils to aid their transition, ensuring a successful transition to their new school to ensure that all pupils can achieve their potential.</p>

17.2	The impact of closure on the local community, with a view to development of the community and maintenance of a balanced and diverse population, in particular, but not exclusively, in terms of age;	The Council notes these comments about the possibility of a change in the demographics of people living in Castle Caereinion, were the school to be closed.
17.3	The impact of closure on the local church and community centre;	<p>The Council acknowledges that closure of the school could impact on the church and community centre.</p> <p>These concerns were raised in the consultation period, and were reflected in the consultation report which was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>
17.4	The impact of closure on the built environment, given that the school buildings are the property of the Powys Estate and only available for educational purposes.	<p>The Council notes this concern about the impact of closure of the school on the built environment.</p> <p>The Castle Caereinion C. in W. School building is owned by the Diocese of St Asaph. Should the Council proceed with the proposal to close the school, the Diocese would need to determine the building's future use.</p>
17.5	<p>The local authority has further failed to take account of the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 in its deliberations as to closure.</p> <p>I therefore respectfully submit that closure should be deferred to enable the local authority properly to address these matters, and make public its specific deliberations and conclusions, and that the Future Generations Commissioner should be given the opportunity to comment and offer support as appropriate.</p>	<p>The Council disagrees that it has failed to take account of the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 whilst consulting on this proposal.</p> <p>The proposal's impact on the Welsh Government's well-being goals, as outlined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, is considered in the impact assessments.</p>

--	--	--

### **Objection 18**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
18.1	<p>I attended Castle Caereinion myself when I was younger, and can firmly say for a fact I would never have coped in a bigger school.</p> <p>It is a smaller school and therefore was able to give me the one-to-one and the chance to grow as an individual that I needed, something the bigger schools struggle with.</p> <p>The one-to-one children are able to receive is exactly what they need. The staff at the school understand them, and through the connection they have with them, they are improving all the time.</p> <p>I feel that Castle was to shut and pupils had to go to a bigger school, they would struggle, and they wouldn't be able to meet their needs. They wouldn't have the freedom to grow as an individual that they do at the moment.</p>	<p>The Council notes these comments about the small size of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, and the concerns about pupils attending a larger school.</p> <p>All schools, regardless of size, would be able to provide for the needs of their pupils. Smaller class sizes do not necessarily mean that pupils receive a more individual education as there are a number of year groups and a wider age range of pupils in the class.</p> <p>The most important influence on a pupils' education is the quality of teaching. In a small school, a teacher may have to teach pupils over four year groups. It will be a significant challenge to plan and deliver the new curriculum for all four year groups.</p>
18.2	<p>Another reason I don't think the school should close is because there are lots of houses being built, with potential families moving into the area.</p>	<p>Comments about housing developments in Castle Caereinion were received during the consultation period – these were listed in section 6.3 of the Consultation Report produced in respect of this proposal.</p> <p>As indicated in the Consultation Report, <i>'Information received from the Council's housing department suggests</i></p>

		<p><i>there are approximately 40 housing developments already completed, underway or planned in the area. Some of these are affordable housing'</i></p> <p>and</p> <p><i>'The Council uses a pupil-yield ratio of .45 children per new house built. This is an estimate and does not necessarily lead to an increase in pupil numbers.'</i> The school would continue to be a small</p>
18.3	<p>If the school closes, so will the community centre, so they'd be nothing for them to do and no school within walking distance. The community centre is where all the groups and activities are held. We have already lost the shop if they go too, then we will only have the pub which isn't open all the time, and the park left. Not really very inviting for people who want to move here.</p>	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.</p> <p>The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. It notes the extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion school building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p> <p>A number of comments were received during the consultation period which expressed concern about the potential impact on the community centre. The Council acknowledges that the school is an important financial contributor to the Community Centre. Should the Council</p>

		proceed with this proposal, the management committee of the Centre would need to consider how best to utilise the Centre, so that it remains viable.
18.4	There is also the fact that everyone currently who goes to Castle is able to get there using their own transport because it's not too far. Closure of our school would mean there's going to be a lot of parents who won't be able to take their child or children to school anymore and are going to need transport provided.	Transport will be provided to all pupils in accordance to the Council's Home-to-School, which means that transport will be offered to all pupils to their nearest school, if that school is more than 2 miles away from their home.
18.5	We were lied to and told at one of our first meetings that it's not about money. Then we were told it's not sustainable, which means it is about the money. We did suggest the community doing some fundraising and other things. But we were told that wouldn't help.	<p>A revenue saving to the Council is only one of a number of reasons for the proposal.</p> <p>The current proposal is being taken forward in order to implement the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys, which was developed following engagement with a range of stakeholders.</p> <p>The proposal is intended to address the challenges identified in respect of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School which are outlined in the Consultation Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Low pupils numbers</li> <li>ii) High budget per pupil</li> <li>iii) Issues with the building</li> <li>iv) Combined age classes</li> <li>v) Leadership</li> </ul> <p>Following consideration of a number of options, the Council's preferred option is to close Castle Caereinion CiW</p>

		<p>School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools. The reasons for this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To address the issue of low pupil numbers</li> <li>- To reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools</li> <li>- To realise a financial saving to the Council</li> <li>- To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum</li> <li>- To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities</li> <li>- To enable pupils to attend schools with better quality accommodation</li> <li>- The proposal meets all of the Critical Success Factors</li> </ul>
--	--	---

### **Objection 19**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
19.1	<p>I moved here from a town with bigger schools. The smaller classroom meant the teachers had more time with the children, and they thrived. Children with A.S.D. have been able to attend mainstream school at Castle instead of attending a special school, going on to Llanfair and leaving with qualifications. This would not have been possible if it hadn't been for the support and dedication of Castle school.</p>	<p>The Council is pleased to note the positive comments about Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. However, all schools, regardless of size, would be able to provide for the needs of their pupils.</p> <p>The Powys SEN/ALN strategy, agreed by Cabinet in November 2021, is committed to improving the provision for all pupils with SEN/ALN. This includes pupils who can be educated in mainstream classes as well as pupils who</p>

		<p>require specialist provision. Pupils with ALN at all schools, regardless of size, would have the appropriate support to meet their needs.</p> <p>Should the school close, the Council would ensure that the requirements for pupils with additional needs were met at whichever school they may choose to attend.</p>
19.2	<p>My understanding is that the school was assessed when there was no permanent headmaster/headmistress.</p>	<p>Whilst the Council's review of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School commenced before there was a permanent headteacher at the school, a permanent headteacher was in place by the time the consultation was carried out, and this was reflected in the Consultation Document published in respect of this proposal:</p> <p><i>'Following a long period of instability during which leadership arrangements for the school were by other schools in the local area, the school now has its own standalone headteacher...'</i></p> <p>The permanent headteacher has now moved to a different position, therefore the leadership arrangements at the school are now temporary again.</p>
19.3	<p>During the period when the last headmistress was at the school, there were massive improvements all around.</p> <p>Pupils' learning difficulties were overlooked in a bigger school because the teachers have more children in the</p>	<p>The Council is pleased to note the positive comments regarding Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, and improvements made by the last headteacher.</p> <p>See response to 20.1.</p>

	class they don't have the time to dedicate to all the children.	
19.4	We were told at a recent meeting that the closure had nothing to do with money, but it was all about the bigger schools been able to supply the children with what they need. I can vouch that Castle school can provide everything the child needs.	<p>The Council notes the positive comments about Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</p> <p>The current proposal is being taken forward in order to implement the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys, which was developed following engagement with a range of stakeholders.</p> <p>The proposal is intended to address the challenges identified in respect of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School which are outlined in the Consultation Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Low pupils numbers</li> <li>ii) High budget per pupil</li> <li>iii) Issues with the building</li> <li>iv) Combined age classes</li> <li>v) Leadership</li> </ul> <p>Following consideration of a number of options, the Council's preferred option is to close Castle Caereinion CiW School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools. The reasons for this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To address the issue of low pupil numbers</li> <li>- To reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools</li> <li>- To realise a financial saving to the Council</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum</li> <li>- To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities</li> <li>- To enable pupils to attend schools with better quality accommodation</li> <li>- The proposal meets all of the Critical Success Factors</li> </ul>
19.5	Children do not have to wait as they do in larger schools to work on computers. They have everything at the school for the children, but more <u>importantly</u> , the staff have the time for the children's individually to help bring out the best in that child.	<p>The Council notes these comments about the ICT provision at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</p> <p>There has been significant investment in digital equipment in all schools over the last two years as part of the Welsh Government Education Technology Programme. Most Powys primary schools now have a better ratio of devices than one device per pair of children.</p>
19.6	Should you close Castle school, then children will need transport provided to go to another school and will miss out on the opportunity of after school clubs. These activities are of great importance to the children.	<p>The Council acknowledges that implementation of the proposal could impact on the ability of pupils for whom Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is currently the closest school to access after school activities, due to reliance on home-to-school transport.</p> <p>As indicated in the Impact Assessment carried out in respect of this proposal <i>'it is acknowledged that there could be an impact on some pupils' ability to access after school activities, and could impact on the ability of parents to take part in school events, meetings etc.'</i></p>

		<p>The majority of schools in Powys rely on some level of home-to-school transport for their pupils, and schools are usually able to work with families to provide an appropriate level of extra-curricular activities for pupils, including clubs within the school day, shared transport with other parents etc.</p>
19.7	<p>We in the village will lose the community centre which has housed a variety of functions over the years. New houses are being built, and the village will have no amenities except a pub to offer them.</p>	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.</p> <p>The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. It notes the extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion school building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p> <p>A number of comments were received during the consultation period which expressed concern about the potential impact on the community centre. The Council acknowledges that the school is an important financial contributor to the Community Centre. Should the Council proceed with this proposal, the management committee of the Centre would need to consider how best to utilise the Centre, so that it remains viable.</p>

19.8	I and others feel we have been lied to over the closure, and I would like to appeal the decision. This decision was made during a period when the country was going through a crisis.	<p>The Council has not lied to the public as part of this proposal.</p> <p>The Council has been developing its Strategy for Transforming Education since Estyn's inspection of Powys Education Services in 2019. Whilst acknowledging that it would have been preferable for the consultation process to have taken place at a time when there wasn't a global pandemic, the consultation has been carried out in line with Welsh Government requirements.</p> <p>A consultation report was prepared which outlines the issues raised in the consultation responses received and provides the Council's response to these issues. This was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p> <p>All objections received are included in this Objection Report, along with the Council's response to the points raised. The Objection Report will be considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with implementation of the proposal.</p>
19.9	There wasn't a headmaster/headmistress in place solely for the school in charge. I feel personally that this was an unfair assumption of the school's potential.	See response to 19.2.
19.10	I am aware someone has made this decision and would ask that they rethink it. I would ask that they think of the pupils whose lives will be significantly affected, and the	No final decision has yet been made to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.

	<p>village. These youngsters are our country's future. We owe it to them to provide the best for them. Smaller groups of children being taught allows for a connection between child and teacher you won't find in bigger schools, allowing them to reach full potential. I look forward to your honest reply.</p>	<p>All objections received following the publication of the Statutory Notice are included in this Objection Report, along with the Council's response to the points raised. The Objection Report will be considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with implementation of the proposal.</p>
--	--	--

### **Objection 20**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Points raised</b>	<b>Council response</b>
20.1	<p>I am writing to object to the closure of Castle Caereinion School.</p> <p>This school is listed in Appendix F of the Schools Organisation Code (School Ref 6663022) as a rural school. I object to the closure as the Schools Organisation Code (S1.8) specifically states that there is a procedural presumption against the closure of rural schools. I do not believe that Powys County Council have made this presumption or tried to uphold it. I do not believe that at the start of this process, there was a strong case for closure and that it has been shown that all viable alternatives, including federation, have been explored fully.</p>	<p>It is correct that Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is identified as a rural school in Appendix F of the School Organisation Code.</p> <p>As stated in the School Organisation Code 2018:</p> <p><i>'The second edition of the Code makes special arrangements in regard to rural schools establishing a procedural presumption against their closure. This requires proposers to follow a more detailed set of procedures and requirements in formulating a rural school closure proposal and in consulting on and reaching a decision as to whether to implement a rural school closure proposal. This does not mean that a rural school will never close but the case for closure must be strong and all viable alternatives to closure must have been conscientiously considered by the proposer, including federation.'</i></p>

		<p>The Council has followed these requirements in formulating this proposal. A number of options have been considered and are outlined within the consultation document, this included federation with Welshpool C. in W. School.</p>
20.2	<p>I object to the Closure on the grounds that a full consultation has not been held with local people. I object because the additional direction for County Councils from Welsh Government on how consultation should be conducted under Covid has not been followed.</p>	<p>The Council has been developing its Strategy for Transforming Education since Estyn's inspection of Powys Education Services in 2019. Whilst acknowledging that it would have been preferable for the consultation process to have taken place at a time when there wasn't a global pandemic, the consultation has been carried out in line with Welsh Government requirements, including further guidance given by the Welsh Government as to consulting during the Covid pandemic.</p> <p>Consultation has taken place in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code. As explained in the Consultation Report, 93 written responses were received to the consultation exercise, and a petition was received which was signed by 676 people.</p> <p>The Welsh Government has not provided 'additional direction for County Councils...on how consultation should be conducted under Covid.' The Welsh Government published 'non-statutory guidance' to assist proposers to undertake consultations whilst restrictions are in place. The Council took account of this guidance in respect of consultations carried out during the Covid pandemic.</p>

20.3	I object because the specific further steps which are required to be followed for the closure of a rural school have not been followed.	Please see response 21.1.
20.4	I object because Powys County Council have not taken into account the planning permissions outstanding in Castle Caereinion for the development of further properties and thus additional pupils have been taken in to account.	<p>Comments about housing developments in Castle Caereinion were received during the consultation period – these were listed in section 6.3 of the Consultation Report produced in respect of this proposal.</p> <p>As indicated in the Consultation Report, <i>‘Information received from the Council’s housing department suggests there are approximately 40 housing developments already completed, underway or planned in the area. Some of these are affordable housing’</i></p> <p>and</p> <p><i>‘The Council uses a pupil-yield ratio of .45 children per new house built. This is an estimate and does not necessarily lead to an increase in pupil numbers.’</i></p>
20.5	I object because Powys County Council can be shown to have not completed consultation in line with the Schools Organisation Code and associated documents and that all avenues to avoid the closure of the listed rural school have not been followed.	<p>The consultation has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code.</p> <p>Please see response 21.1 and 21.2.</p>

### **Objection 21 – Petition**

A copy of a petition objecting to the proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School was received. The petition had 102 signatures, and also included 12 written comments. The written comments received are provided below, along with the Council's response.

Issue	Points raised	Council response
21.1	A school closure in this area will be catastrophic for the community and the building trade. Powys has committed to 600+ homes being built in Mid/North Powys and facilities must be provided to get young families to buy into this area and boost our economy. PCC are not looking at the bigger picture. Parents move to areas where they can walk their children to school and save the environment.	The Council does not agree that the closure of Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School will have an effect on housing demand or the building trade in Mid and North Powys.
21.2	It's a terrible shame to close our wonderful village school	Comment noted.
21.3	I want to see this lovely school stay open. My children all went to this school and am hoping that my grandchildren can go to this lovely small village school.	Comment noted.
21.4	Yet we have more and more children without a place in school madness to close yet another kids have already missed out on so much education yet it is there human right to get one so they may have a brand new school ready to replace it?	All children in Powys are entitled to a school place. Castle Caereinion C. in W. School has a number of surplus places and pupil numbers are not expected to rise substantially in the foreseeable future.
21.5	The school is a long established and central part of our community. We need to encourage young families to live in the village and not allow PCC to irrevocably change the landscape of village and rural community life	Comment noted.

21.6	<p>Village life is so important. Young children find school a daunting prospect. So to have to go on a strange bus on your first days will be even worse. Village school education is by far the best.</p>	<p>The Council acknowledges that any school reorganisation proposal leads to a period of uncertainty for those affected by the proposal. Should the school close, the schools pupils would transfer to would provide support to pupils to aid their transition, ensuring a successful transition to their new school to ensure that all pupils can achieve their potential. All schools would be able to provide for the needs of their pupils, whether they are located in a village location or in a more urban location.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that implementation of the proposal would lead to additional travel for pupils for whom Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is currently their closest school. There are a number of alternative primary schools within 10 miles of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, and should the school close, it is not considered that the length and nature of journeys for pupils to alternative provision would be excessive.</p> <p>Powys is a large, rural county, and many pupils and parents across the county rely on home to school transport to access both primary and secondary provision, with some required to travel distances which are significantly greater than the distance from Castle Caereinion C. in W. School to the nearest alternative schools.</p>
21.7	<p>Along with hall, heart of village and village is growing. Local schools full now, so difficult for parents with transport to other schools further.</p>	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the possible impact on the community.</p> <p>It is not true that the local schools are full now – there are sufficient places to accommodate all pupils currently</p>

		<p>attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School at other schools in the local area.</p> <p>Transport will be provided to pupils in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy.</p>
21.8	All children should be able to attend a school in their village.	Comment noted.
21.9	Village schools are the heart of a community. The village should stay open! Have the governors considered entering into a federation with Llanfair or Berriew?	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.</p> <p>The draft Community Impact Assessment included with the consultation documentation has identified the potential impact of the proposed closure of the school on the community. It notes the extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion school building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. This was updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period, and an updated version was considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p> <p>It is not possible to federate a Church in Wales school with a Community Primary, therefore the Council has not considered federating Castle Caereinion C. in W. School with Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School or Berriew C.P. School. However, the Council has considered federation with Welshpool C. in W. School, and merging with Berriew C.P. School.</p>

21.10	Closing village schools kills Welsh villages and encourages young families to leave creating the conditions for second homes, holiday let's and high house prices	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact on the community.</p> <p>Comments suggesting that implementation of the proposal would mean that people would no longer want to live in Castle Caereinion were received during the consultation period, and were included in the Consultation Report considered by the Council's Cabinet when determining whether or not to proceed with the proposal.</p>
21.11	I went to this primary school and it would be a shame to see it go.	Comment noted.
21.12	There are unjustifiable reasons for this school closure! The sums do not add up at all. Three generations of my family, including our two children, have attended this lovely little school. My husband and his siblings have also attended. To see it gone forever would be such a shame for our village. We have already lost our shop last year, this would be yet another blow. Such awful timing too during a Pandemic! Re-think your decision PCC - consider the devastating consequences for the village of Castle Caereinion.	<p>The Council notes these comments.</p> <p>The reasons for proposing the closure of Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School were outlined in the Consultation Document published in respect of this proposal.</p> <p>The Council has been developing its Strategy for Transforming Education since Estyn's inspection of Powys Education Services in 2019. Whilst acknowledging that it would have been preferable for the consultation process to have taken place at a time when there wasn't a global pandemic, the consultation has been carried out in line with Welsh Government requirements.</p>

This page is intentionally left blank



## **Proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School**

### **Final Impact Assessments**

**October 2021**

#### **Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
1 Introduction	2
2 Integrated Impact Assessment	3
3 Equality Impact Assessment	24
4 Community Impact Assessment	31

## Proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School

### Final Impact Assessments

#### 1. Introduction

Powys County Council had consulted on proposals to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. The proposal is as follows:

- To close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools.

In line with the Council's policy, an Integrated Impact Assessment has been carried out which incorporates the Welsh Language, Equalities, Well-being of Future Generations Act, Sustainable Development Principles, Communication and Engagement, Safeguarding, Corporate Parenting, Community Cohesion and Risk Management.

In addition, the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2018) requires local authorities to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment and Community Impact Assessment in relation to all school reorganisation proposals. For proposals which affect teaching through the medium of Welsh, local authorities are also required to carry out a Welsh Language Impact Assessment.

**The impact assessments were provided in draft form during the consultation process and have been updated following the consultation, and again following the objection period.** The Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out based on the latest PLASC information available. The Community Impact Assessment has been carried out with input from Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.

## 2. Integrated Impact Assessment

The Impact Assessment (IA) below incorporates Welsh Language, Equalities, Well-being of Future Generations Act, Sustainable Development Principles, Communication and Engagement, Safeguarding, Corporate Parenting, Community Cohesion and Risk Management, supporting effective decision making and ensuring compliance with respective legislation.

<b>Service Area</b>	Schools Service	<b>Head of Service</b>	Emma Palmer/Lynette Lovell	<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Cllr Phyl Davies
---------------------	-----------------	------------------------	----------------------------	-------------------------	------------------

<b>Proposal</b>
To close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School from the 31st August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools

<b>Outline Summary / Description of Proposal</b>
The Council carried out consultation and subsequently published a statutory notice on the following proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools</li> </ul>

1. Version Control (services should consider the impact assessment early in the development process and continually evaluate)

Version	Author	Date
1	Strategic Programme Manager – Schools Transformation	January 2021
2	Senior Manager Schools Transformation	January 2021
3	Service Manager Schools Transformation	June 2021
4	Programme Officer – Schools Transformation	October 2021

2. Profile of savings delivery (if applicable)

2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	TOTAL
£	£	£33,891.67	£24,208.33	£	£58,100

### 3. Consultation requirements

Consultation Requirement	Consultation deadline/or justification for no consultation
Public consultation required	Consultation in accordance with the School Organisation Code was carried out from the 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2021 to the 2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2021.

### 4. Impact on Other Service Areas

Does the proposal have potential to impact on another service area? (Have you considered the implications on Health & Safety and Corporate Parenting?) PLEASE ENSURE YOU INFORM / ENGAGE ANY AFFECTED SERVICE AREAS AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY	
Adult Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children's Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Commissioning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Digital Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Highways, Transportation and Recycling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Housing and Community Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Legal and Democratic Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Property, Planning and Public Protection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Transformation and Communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Workforce and OD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Data Protection Impact Assessment**

Will the proposal involve processing the personal details of individuals? Yes ✓ No

Is Powys County Council the data controller? Yes ✓ No

If you have answered yes to either of the above you will be required to complete, as a minimum, the screening questions on the data protection impact assessment.

For further advice please contact the Data Compliance Team.

4a Geographical Locations

**What geographical area(s) will be impacted by the proposal? (Chose all those applicable)**

- Powys
- North
- Mid
- South
- Brecon
- Builth and Llanwrtyd
- Crickhowell
- Hay and Talgarth
- Knighton and Presteigne
- Llandrindod and Rhayader
- Llanfair Caereinion
- Llanfyllin
- Llanidloes

Machynlleth	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newtown	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welshpool and Montgomery	✓
Ystradgynlais	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. How does your proposal impact on Vision 2025?

<b>Council's Well-being Objective</b>	<b>How does the proposal impact on this Well-being Objective?</b>	<b><u>IMPACT</u></b> Please select from drop down box below	<b>What will be done to better contribute to a more positive impact or to mitigate any negative impacts?</b>	<b><u>IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION</u></b> Please select from drop down box below
<b>The Economy</b> <b>We will develop a vibrant economy</b>	Implementation of the proposal would have an impact on employment opportunities in Castle Caereinion as there would no longer be a school in the village. It is also possible that there would be an impact on local businesses in Castle Caereinion and the surrounding area should there be less people in the area.	Poor		Poor
<b>Health and Care</b> <b>We will lead the way in providing effective, integrated health and care in a rural environment</b>	No impact	Neutral		
<b>Learning and skills</b> <b>We will strengthen learning and skills</b>	The proposal would result in closure of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, with pupils transferring to their nearest alternative schools. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative	Good		

	<p>school would be Berriew C.P. School. However it is possible that pupils may also choose to attend Welshpool C. in W. School as the nearest Church in Wales school, or Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School or Guilsfield C.P. School as other nearby schools.</p> <p>The Council's view is that all of these schools would provide education for pupils which is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on standards and progress overall. The overall aim of the proposal is to improve learning opportunities for pupils. Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, Berriew C.P. School and Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School were categorised as Amber in the latest school categorisations carried out in 2019, whilst Welshpool C. in W. School was categorised as Yellow. Guilsfield C.P. School was classified as a Green school.</p> <p>The alternative schools which pupils may attend are larger schools, and it is anticipated that they would provide additional opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>Welshpool C. in W. School moved to a new build in January 2021, which has further improved the educational experience provided to learners, ensuring that the school can provide education which fully meets the requirements of the new curriculum in 21<sup>st</sup> century facilities. Any current pupils at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School</p>			
--	---	--	--	--

	transferring to Welshpool C. in W. School would also benefit from these improved facilities.			
<p><b>Residents and Communities</b></p> <p><b>We will support our residents and communities</b></p>	<p>There would be a significant impact on the community of Castle Caereinion as there would be no provision in Castle Caereinion. Many comments received emphasise the importance of the school within the local community and the benefits of being part of a close community for the development of pupils. It is also recognised that there are strong links between the school, being a C. in W. school and the local church, and how this contributes to pupils' development, and that this would be lost should the school close.</p> <p>In particular, there could be an impact on the financial viability of the community centre and closure of the school could mean that people would not want to live in Castle Caereinion in the future, and could lead to a reduction in community activity in the village. In addition, the village has already suffered a loss of community facilities, and there is concern that closure of the school could lead to closure of other facilities in the village.</p> <p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</p> <p>Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement</p>	Very Poor	<p>As a Church in Wales School, the Castle Caereinion School building is owned by the Diocese, therefore the Diocese would need to determine the building's future use, and therefore whether or not facilities would remain in Castle Caereinion.</p> <p>Most of the alternative schools that pupils may transfer to, should Castle Caereinion C. in W. school close, are located in rural areas. These schools would already be experienced in providing a range of extra-curricular activities for pupils including those who access home-to-school transport.</p>	Very Poor

	<p>for parents in order to access school activities / events.</p> <p>Comments received suggest closure of the school could mean that families and others aren't attracted to live in the Castle Caereinion area any more, reducing community interaction.</p> <p>A separate community impact assessment has been carried out which includes input from the school. This has been updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period and objections received following publication of the Statutory Notice.</p>			
--	---	--	--	--

<b>Source of Outline Evidence to support judgements</b>
Consultation responses, consultation report, objections, objection report

6. How does your proposal impact on the Welsh Government's well-being goals?

<b>Well-being Goal</b>	<b>How does proposal contribute to this goal?</b>	<b><u>IMPACT</u></b> Please select from drop down box below	<b>What will be done to better contribute to a more positive impact or to mitigate any negative impacts?</b>	<b><u>IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION</u></b> Please select from drop down box below
<p><b>A prosperous Wales:</b></p> <p>An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately</p>	No impact	Neutral		

<p>(including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.</p>				
<p><b>A resilient Wales:</b></p> <p>A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).</p>	<p>Implementation of the proposal would require additional travel for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School for whom this is their closest school. This would have a negative environmental impact as more home to school transport would need to be provided to transport pupils to their nearest alternative school.</p> <p>It is also recognised that there may be additional transport required for secondary aged pupils to Welshpool High School if pupils transferred to alternative schools in the Welshpool cluster area.</p>	Neutral	<p>It is expected that the number of pupils requiring additional transport would be relatively small, and it is possible that they could be accommodated on transport which is already operating.</p>	
<p><b>A healthier Wales:</b></p> <p>A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.</p> <p><b>Public Health (Wales) Act, 2017:</b></p> <p>Part 6 of the Act requires for public bodies to undertake a health impact assessment to assess the likely effect of a proposed action or decision on the physical or mental health of the people of Wales.</p>	<p>Implementation of the proposal would result in closure of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, with pupils transferring to alternative schools. It is acknowledged that this could have a negative impact on the mental well-being of pupils, staff and other stakeholders associated with the school during the transition period, however the long term aim is to provide improved learning opportunities for all learners.</p> <p>Any school reorganisation proposal creates a period of uncertainty for the pupils involved, and that this is exacerbated this year due to the Covid pandemic.</p>	Poor	<p>Support will be provided to pupils during the transition period to enable them to transfer effectively to their new schools.</p> <p>Process to be concluded as quickly as possible to minimise the period of uncertainty for pupils, staff and other stakeholders.</p> <p>The Council would expect that pupils are fully supported by their teachers and other staff at the school during any periods of uncertainty to minimise the impact on their wellbeing.</p> <p>Should the school close, the receiving school or any other school pupils would transfer to would provide support to pupils to aid their transition, ensuring a</p>	Neutral

	<p>Information received during the consultation period and in the objections received expresses concern about the potential impact of closing the school on the Community Centre, and concern around the future viability of the Centre. The Centre plays an important role to support the wellbeing of members of the community as a number of events and activities take place at the Centre.</p>		<p>successful transition to their new school to ensure that all pupils can achieve their potential.</p> <p>Should the school close, the management committee of the Community Centre would need to consider how best to utilise the Centre so that it remains viable.</p>	
<p><b>A Wales of cohesive communities:</b></p> <p>Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected Communities.</p>	<p>There would be a significant impact on the community of Castle Caereinion as there would be no provision in Castle Caereinion. Many comments received emphasise the importance of the school within the local community and the benefits of being part of a close community on the development of pupils. It is also recognised that there are strong links between the school, being a C. in W. school and the local church, and how this contributes to pupils' development, and that this would be lost should the school close.</p> <p>In particular, there could be an impact on the financial viability of the community centre and closure of the school could mean that people would not want to live in Castle Caereinion in the future, and could lead to a reduction in community activity in the village. In addition, the village has already suffered a loss of community facilities, and there is concern that closure of the school could lead to closure of other facilities in the village.</p>	Very Poor	<p>As a Church in Wales School, the Castle Caereinion School building is owned by the Diocese, therefore the Diocese would need to determine the building's future use, and therefore whether or not facilities would remain in Castle Caereinion.</p>	Very Poor

	<p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</p> <p>Comments received suggest closure of the school could mean that families and others aren't attracted to live in the Castle Caereinion area any more, reducing community interaction.</p> <p>Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities / events.</p>			
<p><b>A globally responsible Wales:</b> A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.</p> <p><b>Human Rights - is about being proactive (see guidance)</b></p> <p><b>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:</b> The Convention gives rights to everyone under the age of 18, which include the right to be treated fairly and to be protected from discrimination; that organisations act for the best interest of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and the right to be heard.</p>	<p>The aim of implementing the proposal is to provide the best possible opportunities to learners, enabling them to reach their full potential.</p> <p>The Council has carried out consultation on the proposal, which included consultation with all pupils affected by the proposal, ensuring that all affected by the plans had the opportunity to give their views.</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		

**A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language:** A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.

<b>Well-being Goal</b>	<b>How does proposal contribute to this goal?</b>	<b><u>IMPACT</u></b> Please select from drop down box below	<b>What will be done to better contribute to a more positive impact or to mitigate any negative impacts?</b>	<b><u>IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION</u></b> Please select from drop down box below
<i>Opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and treating the Welsh language no less favourable than the English language</i>	<p>Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is an English-medium school, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the proposal would impact on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, or on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.</p> <p>During the consultation period, comments were received which expressed concern that pupils transferring to primary schools in the Welshpool cluster would then transfer to Welshpool High School, which is an English-medium secondary school, instead of Caereinion High School, which is a dual stream secondary school, and that this would mean that they had less opportunities to use the language and less exposure to the language.</p>	Neutral	All schools of all language categories are expected to provide opportunities for pupils to use Welsh.	
<i>Opportunities to promote the Welsh language</i>	Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is an English-medium school, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the proposal would impact on opportunities to promote the Welsh language.	Neutral	All schools of all language categories are expected to provide opportunities for pupils to use Welsh.	

	<p>During the consultation period, comments were received which expressed concern that pupils transferring to primary schools in the Welshpool cluster would then transfer to Welshpool High School, which is an English-medium secondary school, instead of Caereinion High School, which is a dual stream secondary school, and that this would mean that they had less opportunities to use the language and less exposure to the language.</p>			
<p><i>People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation.</i></p>	<p>Implementation of the proposal would lead to the closure of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, with pupils transferring to their nearest alternative schools.</p> <p>It is likely that pupils would transfer to larger schools, and it is anticipated that being part of a larger school would result in additional opportunities for pupils to take part in sport, art and other extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>However, during the consultation period, comments were received about the extent of activities available at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School and that the size of the school meant that all pupils had an opportunity to take part, which may not be the case in larger schools. Concerns were also raised that it would be more difficult for pupils to access after-school activities if they were reliant on home to school transport.</p>	Neutral	<p>All schools, regardless of size, are expected to provide extra-curricular opportunities for pupils, including sport, art and recreation.</p> <p>Most of the alternative schools that pupils may transfer to, should Castle Caereinion C. in W. school close, are located in rural areas. These schools would already be experienced in providing a range of extra-curricular activities for pupils including those who access home-to-school transport.</p>	Neutral

**A more equal Wales:** A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).

*Incorporating requirements under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and the Social Economic duty (2020).*

<b>Well-being Goal</b>	<b>How does proposal contribute to this goal?</b>	<b><u>IMPACT</u></b> Please select from drop down box below	<b>What will be done to better contribute to a more positive impact or to mitigate any negative impacts?</b>	<b><u>IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION</u></b> Please select from drop down box below
<i>Age</i>	The proposal would impact on primary aged pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all affected pupils.	Neutral		
<i>Disability</i>	<p>The proposal would impact on any pupils with disabilities currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all affected pupils, including any pupils with disabilities.</p> <p>Comments received during the consultation refer to the fact that Castle Caereinion C. in W. School has received significant investment to make disability adaptations to the school.</p>	Neutral	Should the school close, the Council would ensure that the requirements for pupils with additional needs are met at whichever school they may choose to attend.	Neutral
<i>Gender reassignment</i>	No impact			
<i>Marriage or civil partnership</i>	No impact			
<i>Race</i>	The proposal would impact on all primary aged pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, including pupils belonging to protected characteristic groups due to their race. The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all affected pupils.	Neutral		

<b>Religion or belief</b>	<p>The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, regardless of their religion or belief.</p> <p>Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is a church school. Should the school close, alternative church provision is available at Welshpool C. in W. School for pupils wishing to continue to access denominational provision, however the Council's home to school transport policy does not provide transport to denominational provision, therefore pupils would not ordinarily receive transport to the school unless it was their closest school.</p> <p>However, comments received during the consultation suggest that this has a negative impact on the ability of pupils/parents to access alternative denominational provision, and that this could particularly impact any parents on low incomes or without access to their own transport who wish for their children to continue to access church provision.</p>	Poor	<p>The Council has an appeals process for transport applications. If transport is refused, parents could appeal the decision.</p> <p>Following comments received during the consultation period, the Statutory Notice published in respect of this proposal stated that:</p> <p><i>'Transport arrangements will be in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy.</i></p> <p><i>The Council will provide transport for Church in Wales provision for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School who wish to transfer to Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School. This will be provided on a case by case basis using the Council's discretionary powers under Section 6 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008.'</i></p> <p>This will ensure that pupils currently accessing Church in Wales provision at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School will be able to continue to attend Church in Wales provision at Welshpool C. in W. School.</p>	Neutral
<b>Sex</b>	The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.	Neutral		
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, regardless of their sexual orientation.	Neutral		
<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b>	No impact	Neutral		

<p><i>Socio-economic duty</i></p>	<p>The aim of the proposal is to provide improved educational opportunities for all pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, including any eligible for Free School Meals, however based on PLASC 2020 information, no pupils at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School were eligible for Free School Meals. Based on PLASC 2021 information, 8% of pupils were eligible for Free School Meals. This is lower than the Powys average.</p> <p>Should the proposal be implemented, there would be no school in Castle Caereinion. This would mean that pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would need to travel to their nearest alternative provision. Whilst home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils, it is possible that this would impact on pupils' ability to access extra-curricular / after school activities, and that this impact would be greater in respect of pupils from lower income households or pupils from homes that do not have their own transport. There would also be an impact on the parents of these pupils in terms of accessing school activities.</p>	<p>Poor</p>	<p>Most of the alternative schools that pupils may transfer to, should Castle Caereinion C. in W. school close, are located in rural areas. These schools would already be experienced in providing a range of extra-curricular activities for pupils including those who access home-to-school transport.</p>	
-----------------------------------	--	-------------	--	--

**Source of Outline Evidence to support judgements**

Consultation responses, consultation report, objections, objection report

7. How does your proposal impact on the council's other key guiding principles?

**Sustainable Development Principle (5 ways of working)**

Principle	How does the proposal impact on this principle?	<u>IMPACT</u> Please select from drop down box below	What will be done to better contribute to a more positive impact or to mitigate any negative impacts?	<u>IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION</u> Please select from drop down box below
<b>Long Term:</b> <i>Looking to the long term so that we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.</i>	Pupil numbers at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School are low and are not expected to increase significantly over the coming years. The aim of the proposal to close the school is to ensure the best possible opportunities for learners in the area now and in the future, and to ensure better strategic management of the Powys schools estate.	Good		
<b>Collaboration:</b> <i>Working with others in a collaborative way to find shared sustainable solutions.</i>	Consultation has been carried out, which has enabled all interested parties to give their views. This included an opportunity to suggest any alternative options for the school. There has also been a 28 day objection period, during which stakeholders could let us know if they don't agree with the proposal.	Neutral		
<b>Involvement (including Communication and Engagement):</b> <i>Involving a diversity of the population in the decisions that affect them including:</i>  <b>Unpaid Carers:</b>	Full consultation has been carried out in accordance with the School Organisation Code in order to achieve this. All interested parties have had an opportunity to give their views. The findings of this exercise will be reported to Cabinet and will be taken into consideration when determining how to proceed. There has also been a 28 day objection period, during which stakeholders could let us know if they don't agree with the proposal.	Good		

<i>Ensuring that unpaid carers views are sought and taken into account</i>	All stakeholders have had the opportunity to give their views as part of this process, this would include any unpaid carers in the area.			
<p><b>Prevention:</b> <i>Understanding the root causes of issues to prevent them from occurring including:</i></p> <p><b>Safeguarding:</b> <i>Preventing and responding to abuse and neglect of children, young people and adults with health and social care needs who can't protect themselves.</i></p>	<p>The aim of the proposal to close the school is to ensure the best possible opportunities for learners in the area now and in the future, and to ensure better strategic management of the Powys schools estate.</p> <p>Ensuring appropriate safeguarding arrangements is a key aspect of any school organisation proposal. The intention is that the proposal would maintain or improve the safeguarding arrangements for all pupils. There has also been a 28 day objection period, during which stakeholders could let us know if they don't agree with the proposal.</p>	Good		
<p><b>Integration:</b> <i>Taking an integrated approach so that public bodies look at all the well-being goals in deciding on their well-being objectives.</i></p>	No impact	Neutral		
<p><b>Powys County Council Workforce:</b></p> <p>What Impact will this change have on the Workforce?</p>	<p>Implementation of the proposal would impact on all current staff at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School as there would no longer be a school in Castle Caereinion, therefore staff would be subject to a Management of Change process.</p> <p>Full consultation has been carried out in accordance with the School Organisation Code. This process was supported by relevant LA teams</p>	Neutral		

	(e.g. HR). This included consultation with staff, which ensured that they had an opportunity to give their views. There has also been a 28 day objection period, during which stakeholders could let us know if they don't agree with the proposal.			
<b>Payroll:</b> How will this impact salary, any overtime/enhanced payments etc? Does this affect any particular group of employees? E.g. Male/Female dominated workforce. Does this proposal comply with the Councils Single Status Terms and Conditions?	Implementation of the preferred way forward could impact on salary arrangements for current staff at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.  All staff at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School are female.	Neutral		
<b>Welsh Language impact on staff</b>	Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is an English-medium school, therefore it is not anticipated that there would be a Welsh language impact on staff.	Neutral		
<b>Apprenticeships:</b>  Has consideration been given to whether this change impacts negatively, or positively on Apprenticeships within the service?	No impact	Neutral		

### Source of Outline Evidence to support judgements

Consultation responses, consultation report, objections, objection report

8. What is the impact of this proposal on our communities?

Communities	How does the proposal impact on residents and community?	<u>IMPACT</u> See impact definitions in guidance document	What will be done to better contribute to a more positive impact or to mitigate any negative impacts?	<u>IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION</u> See impact definitions in guidance document	Source of Outline Evidence to support judgement
Castle Caereinion	<p>There would be a significant impact on the community of Castle Caereinion as there would be no provision in Castle Caereinion. Many comments received emphasise the importance of the school within the local community and the benefits of being part of a close community on the development of pupils. It is also recognised that there are strong links between the school, being a C. in W. school and the local church, and how this contributes to pupils' development, and that this would be lost should the school close.</p> <p>In particular, there could be an impact on the financial viability of the community centre and closure of the school could mean that people would not want to live in Castle Caereinion in the future, and could lead to a reduction in community activity in the village. In addition, the village has already suffered a loss of community facilities, and there is concern that closure of the school could lead to closure of other facilities in the village.</p>	Major	As a Church in Wales School, the Castle Caereinion School building is owned by the Diocese, therefore the Diocese would need to determine the building's future use, and therefore whether or not facilities would remain in Castle Caereinion.	Major	

	<p>Comments received suggest closure of the school could mean that families and others aren't attracted to live in the Castle Caereinion area any more, reducing community interaction.</p> <p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</p> <p>Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities / events, which is likely to have a greater impact on low income families and/or families who do not have access to their own transport.</p> <p>A separate community impact assessment has been carried out. This has been updated to reflect comments received during the consultation period and objections received following publication of the Statutory Notice.</p>				
--	---	--	--	--	--

9. What are the risks to service delivery or the council following implementation of this proposal?

Risk Identified	Inherent Risk Rating	Mitigation	Residual Risk Rating
-----------------	----------------------	------------	----------------------

	Impact X Likelihood (See Risk Matrix in guidance document)		Impact X Likelihood (See Risk Matrix in guidance document)
Period of uncertainty for Castle Caereinion C. in W. School if a statutory process is carried out and implemented which might have a negative effect on standards at the school	Medium	The Council to provide advice and support to the school and governing body to ensure that standards and performance do not deteriorate during the transition period	Medium
Uncertainty for staff during any transition period might result in some staff leaving	Medium	Engagement with staff to take place throughout the process and staff to be kept informed of developments	Medium
Negative impact on pupils' wellbeing which has already been affected due to the pandemic.	High	It is expected that pupils are supported through any periods of change by teachers and other staff at the school.	Medium

10. Overall Summary and Judgement of this Impact Assessment?

This impact assessment has been updated following the consultation exercise and following the objection period.

The aim of the proposal is to improve the educational provision for learners. However, whilst this impact assessment has identified some positive aspects, in particular relating to learning and skills and ensuring the best strategic management of the Powys school estate, the assessment has also identified some negative aspects. These primarily relate to the impact on the community of Castle Caereinion due to loss of educational provision from the village, potential impact on the viability of the Community Centre, loss of close links with the local Church, and the associated additional travel requirements for pupils and impact on families. The wellbeing of pupils, staff and families has also been raised as a key concern, particularly as the consultation process has been carried out during a pandemic.

11. Is there additional evidence to support the Impact Assessment (IA)?

**What additional evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?**

Consultation responses, consultation report, objections, objection report

12. On-going monitoring arrangements?

**What arrangements will be put in place to monitor the impact over time?**

The Transforming Education Programme Board will continue to monitor impact over time.
<b>Please state when this Impact Assessment will be reviewed.</b>
This impact assessment has been reviewed at each stage of the process

13. Sign Off

Position	Name	Signature	Date
<b>Impact Assessment Lead:</b>	Sarah Astley		
<b>Head of Service:</b>	Lynette Lovell		
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Cllr Phyl Davies		

14. Governance

<b>Decision to be made by</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date required</b>	23 November 2021
-------------------------------	---------	----------------------	------------------

### 3. Equality Impact Assessment

## Powys County Council

### Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)



<b>Proposal</b>	To close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School from the 31st August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools
<b>Service Area</b>	Schools Service
<b>Date of Assessment</b>	Initial Assessment January 2021 Updated Assessment April 2021 Updated Assessment June 2021 Updated Assessment October 2021
<b>Lead Person undertaking the assessment</b>	SA
<b>Relevant Head of Service who has agreed this assessment</b>	LL

The Equality Act 2010, requires that public sector organisations in the exercise of their functions, pay due regard to the following 'general duty':

- (a) Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;**
- (b) Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;**
- (c) Fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.**

*The protected characteristics include: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, sex and sexual orientation. This assessment also includes a consideration of impact upon people and communities whose language of choice is Welsh.*

The specific regulations for Wales [Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011] require public sector bodies to monitor relevant policy and practises and then assess and report on the impact based upon an analysis of relevant data and evidence.

#### 1. AIM or PURPOSE

**Briefly describe the aim or purpose of the change proposal being assessed.**

Powys County Council has consulted and subsequently published a statutory notice on a proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. The proposal is as follows:

- To close Castle Caereinion C. in W. Primary School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools

**2. OBJECTIVES****Please state the current business objectives of the change proposal.**

The Council is proposing to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School for the following reasons:

- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers at Castle Caereinion C. in W. Primary School
- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- Revenue saving to the Council
- Pupils would attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum
- Pupils would attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities
- Meets all of the Critical Success Factors

**3. BENEFITS and OUTCOMES****i) What are the intended benefits or outcomes from the change proposal?**

The benefits of the proposal are:

- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers at Castle Caereinion C. in W. Primary School
- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- Revenue saving to the Council
- Pupils would attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum

- Pupils would attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities

#### 4. CORPORATE RELEVANCE

##### How does this change proposal relate to Vision 2025?

Learning and Skills is one of the four priorities outlined in Corporate Improvement Plan 2020-25: Vision 2025. Within this priority, the Plan includes a commitment to 'Improve our schools' infrastructure'.

#### 5. DATA USED

##### 5.1. What data has been used to conduct this assessment?

Tick/shade boxes as appropriate.

Profiling of service users, providing a breakdown of who uses the service by the protected characteristics.	<b>X</b>
Service user satisfaction rates, broken down by the protected characteristics.	
Qualitative data (analysed against the protected characteristics) which provides evidence about current services users experience accessing the service.	
Qualitative data gathered from those that are not currently using the service.	
Complaints monitoring against the protected characteristics.	
Wider research reports and findings.	
Relevant service based Equality Impact Assessment.	

##### 5.2. Are there any gaps in the data?

No

#### 6. DATA ANALYSIS

<p><b>6.1 Quantitative</b>  <b>Summarise the key quantitative data analysis results, providing key headline statistics.</b>  Include data that relates to existing provision and also data relating to proposal. E.g. statistics generated from a consultation questionnaire.</p> <p><b>Key questions:</b></p> <p>i) Are certain groups currently underrepresented in service user figures? Will a change affect this?</p> <p>ii) How do satisfaction levels compare across the protected characteristic groups? How will a change affect this?</p>	<p><u>PLASC 2021</u></p> <p>Based on the information provided in the school's PLASC return in 2021, the following pupils belong to the protected characteristic groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Free school meals: 8.0% of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals.</li> <li>- ALN: 32.0% of pupils have special educational needs. Of these, 16.0% of pupils are on School Action, 16.0% of pupils are on School Action Plus and 0.0% of pupils have statements.</li> <li>- Disabilities: 32.0% of pupils have additional learning needs.</li> <li>- English as an Additional Language: 0.0% of pupils are identified as EAL pupils.</li> <li>- Ethnicity: The ethnic group of 100.0% of pupils in the school is White British. 0.0% of pupils belong to ethnic groups other than White British.</li> <li>- Looked after Children: 0% of pupils are looked after.</li> </ul> <p>This information shows that a proportion of pupils that belong to the protected characteristic groups will be affected by this proposal. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 8.0% of pupils at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School are eligible for Free School Meals. This is lower than the Powys average for primary schools (13.5%)</li> <li>- 32.0% of pupils at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School have additional learning needs. This is higher than the Powys average for primary schools (19.2%)</li> <li>- 0.0% of pupils are identified as EAL pupils and belong to ethnic groups other than White British.</li> </ul> <p>The proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would impact on all pupils currently attending the school, including those pupils belonging to protected characteristic groups.</p>
<p><b>6.2 Qualitative</b>  <b>Summarise the key qualitative data analysis, providing key themes or patterns.</b></p>	<p>Full consultation has been carried out on the proposal relating to Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, which will include consultation with pupils at the affected schools. This will provide</p>

<p>Include data that relates to existing provision and also data relating to proposal. E.g. protected characteristics focus group on the proposal.</p> <p><b>Key questions:</b></p> <p>i) Do certain groups have a different service user experience? How will a change affect this?</p> <p>ii) Have any areas for improvement been communicated by particular groups? Will a change have an impact upon these views?</p> <p>iii) What are the reasons behind some groups not using the service? How will a change affect this position?</p> <p>iv) What has consultation on your proposals revealed about impact on the protected characteristics?</p>	<p>qualitative data in respect of the proposal, and any additional impact on pupils that belong to protected characteristic groups.</p> <p>Further detail has been added to this EqIA following the conclusion of the consultation and objection period together with consideration of the responses received.</p>
---	--

## 7. EqIA RESULT

Based on an analysis of the available qualitative and quantitative data, please tick/shade the appropriate box opposite to provide the EqIA assessment result.

<p><b>The proposal does not present any adverse impact on equality.</b> [Proceed to question 10]</p>	<p>X</p>
<p><b>The proposal presents some adverse impact on equality.</b> [Proceed to question 8]</p>	
<p><b>The proposal presents significant impact on equality</b> [Proceed to question 8]</p>	

## 8. AREAS for IMPROVEMENT

<p><b>Please provide detail of weak or sensitive areas of the proposal identified by the assessment.</b></p> <p>i) Which protected characteristic groups are particularly affected?</p> <p>ii) Will people on low incomes be affected?</p> <p>iii) Will Welsh speakers be affected?</p>	<p>i) The proposal will impact on pupils with additional learning needs, pupils that belong to ethnic groups other than White British and EAL pupils. The proportion of pupils with ALN at the school is higher than the Powys average.</p> <p>ii) 8.0% of pupils attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School are eligible for Free School Meals. This is lower than the Powys average.</p> <p>iii) Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is an English medium school - therefore the proposal will not directly affect Welsh speakers.</p>
---	---

## 9. EQUALITY IMPROVEMENT

<p><b>9.1 Having identified problematic aspects to the proposal, how will this now be addressed?</b></p> <p><i>i.e. Are you able to involve (in some capacity) people from protected characteristic groups, Welsh Speakers, people on low incomes, to assist you in this process?</i></p> <p>i) Can the impact be mitigated, and how will this be done?</p> <p>ii) Does the proposal require modification to reduce or remove this impact?</p> <p>iii) Should the proposal be considered for removal, owing to the degree of impact it is likely to have?</p>	<p>Should the proposal be implemented, Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would close, and pupils would transfer to their nearest alternative schools.</p> <p>This would have a significant impact on pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, including any pupils belonging to the protected characteristic groups that attend that school, as some additional travel would be required in order to attend their nearest alternative school.</p> <p>Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal would impact on pupils belonging to the protected characteristic groups that attend the school, there is no reason to believe that the nearest alternative schools would be unable to meet the needs of pupils belonging to the protected characteristic groups that would be affected, including pupils with Additional Learning Needs, pupils belonging to Ethnic Groups other than White British, pupils eligible for Free School Meals and Looked After Children. It is recognised that Castle Caereinion has received significant investment for disability adaptations, however, the Council would ensure that all schools would be able to meet the needs of learners with disabilities.</p>
---	---

### 9.2 Will the management of the impact as outlined in 9.1, be included in the Service Improvement Plan?

<p><b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Date added.....</p> <p>Reference.....</p>	<p><b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If no, please explain why not:</p> <p><b>Need was not identified at time of writing Service Strategy</b></p>
---	---

#### 4. Community Impact Assessment – Castle Caereinion C. in W. School

##### i) Information on the proportion of pupils from the catchment area that attend the school

The closest provider for pupils attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School in January 2020 was as follows:

School	% of Pupils
Berriew C.P. School	4.2%
Castle Caereinion C. in W. School	75.0%
Guilsfield C.P. School	8.3%
Llanidloes C.P. School	4.2%
Welshpool C. in W. School	8.3%

This suggests that 75% of pupils attending the school were attending their closest primary school, whilst 25% of pupils attending the school live closer to other primary schools.

##### Updated information – PLASC 2021

The closest provider for pupils attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School on the PLASC counting date 2021 was as follows:

School	% of Pupils
Berriew C.P. School	4.0%
Castle Caereinion C. in W. School	68.0%
Guilsfield C.P. School	8.0%
Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School	8.0%
Welshpool C. in W. School	12.0%

This suggests that 68% of pupils attending the school were attending their closest primary school, whilst 32% of pupils attending the school live closer to other primary schools.

**ii) After-school clubs and extra-curricular activities provided by the school**

The school provides the following after-school clubs and extra-curricular activities including the following:

- Craft Club
- Coding Club
- Sports Club
- Science Club
- Breakfast Club

**iii) Any other facilities or services the school accommodates or services the school provides**

The school accommodates or provides the following other facilities or services:

The school works closely with Castle Caereinion Bright Sparks playgroup. The children from the playgroup benefit from the use of the school building as well as the Community Centre. This helps the children familiarise themselves with the school in readiness for their transition. It also enables a sharing of equipment and resources between the school and the playgroup. This close working relationship allows for the youngest members of the community to attend a playgroup that is linked to their feeder primary school. The playgroup is able to take place in the hall as the school covers the hiring fee for the time that the hall is being used by Bright Sparks.

**iv) Other use by the community of the school building**

The school building is used by the community to provide the following activities:

- Various activities such as school plays and Summer and Winter fetes, which are very popular with members of the community.

**v) Other links between the school and the community**

- The school are regular attendees at the Church for Services, with children doing readings and singing at Services.
- Links with the Castle Caereinion Recreation Association.
- Members of the community are invited to all school events, which they enjoy being able to attend.

- The school have organised for a Dragon Bags clothes recycling bank to be sited in the school carpark to allow members of the community to have clothes recycling facilities in their immediate area.
- The Community Hall benefits from using the school's refuse facilities, thus saving them additional costs.
- The school contributes to the community's quarterly newsletter, Castle News.
- Community Remembrance Day activities, to include collecting money and attending a prayer service with local members of the community.
- Harvest – the school collects donations of food items to create hampers which are then donated to members of the local community who are most in need, which are delivered by the children.
- The school is the main financial contributor to the Community Centre.

**vi) If accommodation, facilities or services are provided by a school, where would they be provided in the event of closure?**

Should the proposal be implemented, then the intention is that all existing pupils would transfer to their nearest alternative school, and Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would close.

As a Church in Wales School, The Castle Caereinion School building is owned by the Diocese, therefore the Diocese would need to determine the building's future use, and whether or not facilities would remain in Castle Caereinion.

It is acknowledged that there would be a significant impact on the community of Castle Caereinion were the school to close. There would be a potential loss of community facilities and services provided by the school.

Comments received during the consultation suggest that the adjacent Community Centre would be unviable as the school is the main financial contributor.

**vii) Distance and travelling time involved in attending an alternative school of the same language category**

Should the proposal be implemented, then the intention is that all existing Castle Caereinion C.in W. pupils would transfer to their nearest alternative school. There would therefore be an impact on distance and

travelling times for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School for whom this is currently their closest school.

The closest alternative school for the pupils that were attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School according to PLASC 2021 is as follows:

	<b>Pupils' closest school should there be no school in Castle Caereinion</b>
Berriew C.P. School	60.0%
Guilsfield C.P. School	8.0%
Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School	16.0%
Welshpool C. in W. School	16.0%

**Travelling distances for all pupils attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School (PLASC 2021):**

<b>Current average travelling distance to Castle Caereinion C. in W. School</b>	<b>Average travelling distance to alternative provision, if there was no school in Castle Caereinion</b>
2.02mi	2.76mi

<b>Current maximum travelling distance to Castle Caereinion C. in W. School</b>	<b>Maximum travelling distance to alternative provision, if there was no school in Castle Caereinion</b>
6.54mi	3.88mi

**Travelling distances for pupils for whom Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is their closest school:**

<b>Average travelling distance to Castle Caereinion C. in W. School</b>	<b>Average travelling distance to alternative provision, if there was no school in Castle Caereinion</b>
0.59mi	3.63mi

<b>Maximum travelling distance to Castle Caereinion C. in W. School</b>	<b>Maximum travelling distance to alternative provision, if there was no school in Castle Caereinion</b>
2.50mi	3.88mi

Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, it is also acknowledged that there could be an impact on some pupils' ability to access after school activities, and could impact on the ability of parents to take part in school events, meetings etc.

**viii) How parents' and pupils' engagement with the alternative school and any facilities it may offer could be supported**

Should the Council proceed with the statutory process and eventually implementation of the preferred option, support would be provided to pupils and their parents as part of the transition process, to ensure full engagement with their new schools. The nature of this support would depend on the needs of the parents / pupils, however this could include provision for effective transition to the receiving school by the headteacher and class teachers.

**ix) Any wider implications e.g. impact on public transport provision, wider community safety issues**

The school's grounds are used by members of the community and local children outside of school hours. Children, young people and their families sit in the gardens of the school grounds having picnics and using the frames to play on. If the school was closed, this facility may no longer be available, and there would be an impact on community safety as this forms a safe place for families and children to be when the school is closed, without requiring children to cross the road to the local playground.

Should the school close, although the Local Authority would provide transport for pupils, if a parent needed to attend the new school they would struggle to get there in a timely manner with the current public transport options.

**x) Additional considerations for rural schools**

The School Organisation Code includes a number of additional considerations that are likely to be relevant when carrying out a

community impact assessment for a rural school closure. As Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is identified as a rural school, these factors are considered below:

- **Whether closure would encourage families with school-age children to leave the community or discourage young families from moving to the community**

Information received from the school suggests that the school provides a number of facilities which could be attractive to families, and which increase the attractiveness of the community to potential young families.

Should there be no school in Castle Caereinion, it is possible that families would leave the village in order to live in the community of any alternative school, and that young families would be discouraged from moving to the village.

- **What impact closure might have on other services provided locally, for instance if the school is the only remaining public building in a community**

Should the Council proceed with the proposal, there would be no school in Castle Caereinion. As a Church in Wales School, the school building is owned by the Diocese, therefore the Diocese would need to determine the building's future use, and therefore whether or not facilities would remain in Castle Caereinion.

- **Whether, or not, the school is a real hub of community life, used for other purpose – such as public meetings, local events, fetes surgeries, and other get togethers – which would either cease or be diminished by being required to move elsewhere**

Information received from the school suggests that are extensive links between the school and the community, and that the school and the support and join each other's events. The school's outdoor space is available for use by the members of the community, and functions being held in the hall also use the school's outdoor areas for some of their activities, and events held by the school are attended by the whole community. There are also extensive links with the local church.

Should the Council proceed with the proposal, there would be no school in Castle Caereinion. As a Church in Wales School, the school building is owned by the Diocese, therefore the Diocese

would need to determine the building's future use, and therefore whether or not facilities would remain in Castle Caereinion.

- **Whether or not the loss of the school, and potentially families, will have a detrimental effect on the wider economy of the community**

It is possible that the loss of the school could impact on the local economy. In particular, there would be a reduction in employment opportunities in the village, and an impact on local businesses in Castle Caereinion and the surrounding area. It is also noted that the school is an important funding source for the community centre, and therefore in the longer term, it is possible that closure of the school could impact on the viability of the community centre.

- **How parents' and pupils' engagement with the alternative school and any facilities it may offer could be supported (e.g. how pupils, (particularly any less advantaged pupils) will be helped to participate in after school activities)**

Should the Council continue with the statutory process and eventually implementation of the preferred option, support would be provided to pupils and their parents as part of the transition process, to ensure full engagement with their new schools. The nature of this support would depend on the needs of the parents / pupils, however this could include provision for effective transition to the receiving school by headteacher and class teachers.

It is acknowledged that there would be an impact on pupils' ability to participate in after school activities as there would be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities/events.

- **The overall effect of closure on the local community (including the loss of school based facilities which are used by the local community)**

The information received from the school indicates that there are extensive links between the school and the local community. It is therefore likely that the proposal to remove school provision from the village of Castle Caereinion would have a significant effect on the local community.

As a Church in Wales School, the Castle Caereinion School building is owned by the Diocese, therefore the Diocese would need

to determine the building's future use, and therefore whether or not facilities would remain in Castle Caereinion.

**xi) Issues raised during the Consultation period**

A number of comments were received during the consultation period which related to the proposal's impact on the community.

These comments are listed in full in the consultation report, along with the Council's response to the points raised, and these are also summarised below:

- **Travel implications**

- The proposal would lead to additional travel
- Concern about the impact on the environment
- Concern about impact on pupils' access to after school activities
- Concern about the impact on low income families

- **Comments about Church in Wales provision**

- Links between the church and the school
- Concern that pupils would not be able to access alternative Church in Wales provision
- Transport to alternative Church in Wales provision

- **Impact on the community**

- General concern about the impact on the community / village
- Concern about impact on the community centre
- Reference to housing developments in Castle Caereinion
- Closure of the school would mean that people would not want to live in Castle Caereinion
- Reference to the loss of other community facilities
- The school brings the community together / is a focus for community activity
- Concern that pupils would no longer feel part of the community
- Comments relating to community well-being
- Reference to previous generations of families that have attended the school
- General comments about the closure of rural / village schools
- Queries about what would happen to the school building

**xii) Issues raised during the Objection Period**

A number of comments were received in the objections received following issue of the Statutory Notice, which related to the proposal's impact on the community.

The objections raised and the Council's response to these issues are included in the Objection Report published in respect of this proposal, however the main points raised in the Objections in respect of the impact on the community and transport arrangements are as follows:

- **Concern about the impact on the community**
  - o General concern about the impact on the community
  - o Concern about the impact on the community centre
  - o Concern about the impact on the local church
  - o Reference to housing developments in the village
  
- **Comments about transport**
  - o Concern about the impact of additional travel time
  - o Comments about the cost of transport
  - o Concern about the environmental impact of transport
  - o Concern that reliance on transport would impact on pupils' ability to access after school activities
  - o Queries about the transport that would be provided

### **xiii) Conclusion**

The proposal would have a significant impact on the community of Castle Caereinion as there would be no provision in Castle Caereinion. Many comments received during the consultation and objection period emphasise the importance of the school within the local community and the benefits of being part of a close community on the development of pupils. It is also recognised that there are strong links between the school, being a C. in W. school and the local church, and how this contributes to pupils' development, and that this would be lost should the school close.

In particular, there could be an impact on the financial viability of the community centre, and closure of the school could mean that people would not want to live in Castle Caereinion in the future, and could lead to a reduction in community activity in the village. In addition, the village has already suffered a loss of community facilities, and there is concern that closure of the school could lead to the closure of other facilities in the village.

It is clear that a wide range of extra-curricular activities are available to pupils at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, and that as the school is a small school, all pupils are able to take part in all activities. Should the proposal be implemented, then the school would close with pupils moving to their nearest alternative school. These would be larger schools, and the expectation is that at least a similar range of

activities would be available for pupils. However, it is acknowledged that pupils would need to travel to the alternative schools, which could impact on their ability to access activities, particularly where these take place after school.

Should the proposal be implemented, there would be no school provision in the village of Castle Caereinion. The information provided above indicates that there is currently extensive community use of the Castle Caereinion building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. As a Church in Wales School, the Castle Caereinion School building is owned by the Diocese, therefore the Diocese would need to determine the building's future use, and therefore whether or not facilities would remain in Castle Caereinion.

It is also acknowledged that implementation of the proposal would result in additional travel to school for pupils for whom Castle Caereinion is currently their closest school. Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the home to school transport policy which is in operation at that time, it is acknowledged that there could be an impact on some pupils' ability to access after school activities, and could impact on the ability of parents to take part in school events, meetings etc.

Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils to their nearest alternative school in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities / events, which is likely to have a greater impact on low income families and/or families who do not have access to their own transport. The Council recognises that should Castle Caereinion C. in W. School close, pupils would transfer to alternative primary schools, and that some of these would be in a different secondary cluster i.e. Welshpool High School. The Council also agrees that this would have transport implications as outlined below:

Pupils who attend Castle Caereinion CiW School normally transfer to Caereinion High School and free home-to-school transport is normally provided for those pupils attending Castle Caereinion CiW School to Caereinion High School. Should Castle Caereinion CiW Primary School close, pupils living in the Castle Caereinion area would be provided with free home-to-school transport to their nearest or catchment secondary school. In the case of pupils choosing to attend Berriew CP School, Welshpool CiW Primary School or Guilsfield CP School, they would ordinarily transfer to Welshpool High School.

Pupils currently accessing free home-to-school transport from the Castle Caereinion area to Caereinion High School would continue to receive this service until they finish their education. However, this would not be available to pupils from Castle Caereinion if they have transferred to Berriew C.P. School, Guilsfield C. P. School or Welshpool C. in W. School unless Caereinion High School is their nearest secondary school. This would have an implication for families who may already have older siblings being transported to Caereinion High School.

This page is intentionally left blank

## CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE  
23 November 2021

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

REPORT TITLE: Churchstoke C.P. School

---

REPORT FOR: Decision

---

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021, the Council has carried out consultation on the following proposal:
- To close Churchstoke C.P. School from the 31st August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet members of the responses received to the consultation and to determine whether or not to proceed with the statutory process to close the school.
- 1.3 The report is supported by the following appendices:
- **Appendix A** – Consultation Document
  - **Appendix B** – Consultation Report
  - **Appendix C** – Minutes of meetings with School Council, Governors and Staff
  - **Appendix D** – Updated Impact Assessments

## 2. Background

### Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys

- 2.1 On the 14th April 2020, a new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys was approved by the Leader via a delegated decision.
- 2.2 The Strategy was developed following extensive engagement with a range of stakeholders during two separate periods between October 2019 and March 2020. The Strategy sets out a new vision for education in Powys, as follows:

*'All children and young people in Powys will experience a high quality, inspiring education to help develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that will enable them to become healthy, personally fulfilled,*

*economically productive, socially responsible and globally engaged citizens of 21st century Wales.'*

2.3 The new strategy also sets out a number of guiding principles which will underpin the transformation of education in Powys. These are as follows:

- *A world class rural education system that has learner entitlement at its core*
- *Schools that are fully inclusive, with a culture of deep collaboration in order to improve learner outcomes and experience*
- *A broad choice and high quality of provision for 14 – 19 year old learners, that includes both academic and vocational provision, meeting the needs of all learners, communities and the Powys economy*
- *Welsh-medium provision that is accessible and provides a full curriculum in Welsh from Meithrin to age 19 and beyond*
- *Provision for learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN)/Additional Learning Needs (ALN) that is accessible as near to home as is practicably possible, with the appropriate specialist teaching, support and facilities that enables every learner to meet their potential*
- *A digitally-rich schools sector that enables all learners and staff to enhance their teaching and learning experience*
- *Community-focused schools that are the central point for multi-agency services to support children, young people, families and the community*
- *Early years provision that is designed to meet the needs of all children, mindful of their particular circumstances, language requirements or any special or additional learning needs*
- *Financially and environmentally sustainable schools*
- *The highest priority is given to staff wellbeing and professional development*

2.4 The new strategy sets out a number of Strategic Aims and Objectives, to shape the Council's work to transform the Powys education system over the coming years. One of the Strategic Aims of the Strategy is to '*improve learner entitlement and experience*'. Within this aim, the Strategy sets out a Strategic Objective to '*rationalise primary provision*'.

2.5 On the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021, the Council's Cabinet considered an options appraisal paper in respect of Churchstoke C.P. School, and agreed to carry out consultation on the following:

- To close Churchstoke C.P. School from the 31st August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools

## **Background**

2.6 Churchstoke C.P. School is an English-medium community primary school located in the village of Churchstoke, in north Powys, close to the border with England. The school primarily serves Churchstoke and the surrounding area.

2.7 The challenges facing the school as outlined in the Consultation Document are:

### **i) Low pupil numbers**

Current pupil numbers<sup>1</sup> at Churchstoke C.P. School are as follows:

	<b>R</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	5	8	5	5	3	11	2	39

The Welsh Government defines a ‘small school’ as a school with less than 91 pupils. Pupil numbers at the school are significantly lower than this and the latest projected pupil information suggests that they are not expected to increase significantly for the foreseeable future.

The school’s low pupil numbers have also resulted in a high number of surplus places at the school.

### **ii) High budget per pupil**

Based on the Council’s Section 52 Budget Statements:

- 2020/2021  
Churchstoke C.P. School: £7,475  
Powys Average: £4,264
- 2021/2022  
Churchstoke C.P. School: £6,932  
Powys Average: £4,617

### **iii) Building condition and suitability**

The Welsh Government’s survey of school buildings carried out in 2009 identified issues with the building condition and suitability of Churchstoke C.P. School. The building condition was assessed to be condition C – Poor, whilst its suitability was assessed to be condition B/C – Good/Poor.

---

<sup>1</sup> Teachers Centre November 2021

**iv) Leadership**

Whilst there is permanent leadership in place in Churchstoke C.P. School, the headteacher has a significant teaching commitment, which limits the time available to focus on leadership of the school.

**v) Combined age classes**

The small pupil numbers at the school mean that pupils are taught in whole key stage classes, with Key Stage 2 in one class and Foundation Phase in another class. Because pupil numbers in each year group are small, it is more difficult to ensure all pupils are appropriately challenged.

**2.8 Closest schools**

The nearest school for pupils attending Churchstoke C.P. School based on PLASC 2021 data is as follows:

<b>School</b>	<b>% of Pupils</b>
Churchstoke C.P. School	76%
Bishop's Castle Primary School	11%
St Michael's C. in W. School	5%
Montgomery C. in W. Primary School	3%
Long Mountain CofE Primary School	3%
Welshpool C. in W. Primary School	2%

If there was no school in Churchstoke, the nearest alternative schools for pupils attending the school would be as follows:

<b>School</b>	<b>% of Pupils</b>
Chirbury CofE Primary School	74%
Bishop's Castle Primary School	11%
St Michael's C. in W. School, Kerry	5%
Montgomery C. in W. Primary School	5%
Long Mountain CofE Primary School	3%

Welshpool C. in W. Primary School	2%
-----------------------------------	----

### **The Consultation Period**

- 2.9 Consultation on the proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School commenced on the 21st April 2021 and ended on the 9th June 2021.
- 2.10 The consultation document was available on the Council's website throughout the consultation period. The document was also distributed to stakeholders as required by the School Organisation Code (2018). The consultation document that was issued is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.11 Consultees were asked to respond to the consultation by either completing the online consultation form, filling in a paper copy of the form and returning it to the Transforming Education Team, or by writing to the Transforming Education Team.
- 2.12 During the consultation period, virtual meetings were also held with the following:
- Staff of Churchstoke C.P. School
  - Governors of Churchstoke C.P. School
  - School Council of Churchstoke C.P. School

The minutes of these meetings are attached as Appendix C, and the issues raised in the meetings are included in the Consultation Report (Appendix B).

### **Consultation Responses**

- 2.13 347 respondents completed the consultation response form which was included in the consultation document. This included paper copies as well as responses submitted using the online response form. In addition, 163 written responses were received from respondents including Estyn, by e-mail or post.
- 2.14 The written responses also included an online and paper petition to 'Save Churchstoke CP School Now - Urgent', which received 1,744 signatures.
- 2.15 As well as responses from parents, pupils, staff and governors at Churchstoke C.P. School and members of the local community, responses were received from the following organisations:
- Churchstoke Community Council
  - Chirbury Parish Council
  - Worthern with Sheleve Parish Council
  - Welsh Language Commissioner
  - Russell George MS

- Churchstoke Little Explorers
- Churchstoke Recreation Association
- Churchstoke Football Club
- St Nicholas' House Residential and Nursing Home
- Barcud Housing Association
- We Do Tennis
- Churchstoke Tennis Club
- Active8Kids Ltd
- Language Magnet
- Abbey Construction
- Kerry Vale Vineyard
- Montgomery Waters Limited
- Girlguiding Montgomeryshire
- Co-operative Food Centre Churchstoke
- St Nicholas Church Churchstoke
- Bryn Coed Homes Limited
- Churchstoke Women's Institute
- Churchstoke Football Club
- Early Years Wales
- Inspired Building Techniques Limited
- Powys Council's Schools Budget Forum

2.16 Estyn's response to the consultation is provided on page 15 of the Consultation Report (Appendix B).

2.17 The consultation response form asked respondents to answer a number of questions. The findings are provided in full on pages 7 to 9 of the Consultation Report (Appendix B).

### **Consultation Findings**

2.14 As part of the consultation, a consultation response form was issued, which was completed by 347 respondents. 76.7% of respondents indicated that they were associated with Churchstoke C.P. School, 5.8% indicated that they were associated with another school and 17.3% of respondents indicated that they were not associated with any school.

2.18 The issues raised in the written responses to the consultation and those raised in the consultation meetings, are listed in the Consultation Report (Appendix B) from page 18 onwards, along with the Council's response to these issues.

2.19 The issues raised relate to the following headings:

1. Comments about Churchstoke C.P. School
2. Comments about current / future pupil numbers
3. Comments about early years provision

4. Comments about small and rural schools
5. Impact on pupils
6. Impact on protected characteristic groups
7. Impact on parents / families
8. Comments about other schools pupils might transfer to
9. Comments about impact on the community
10. Travel implications
11. Comments about impact on the Welsh language
12. Comments about impact on staff
13. Financial implications
14. Comments about Council strategies
15. Comments about Welsh Government initiatives
16. Criticism of Powys County Council
17. Comments about the consultation process
18. Comments about the consultation documentation
19. Alternative options
20. Other comments

### **3 Advice**

- 3.1 Based on the findings of the consultation, and further assessment of the options in accordance with the requirements of the School Rural Schools, the advice of officers is that the Council **should not proceed** with the proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School.
- 3.2 During the consultation exercise, further information was obtained about the fact that a significant number of pupils (approximately 80) from the area travel to schools in Shropshire, even though Churchstoke C.P. School is their closest school, therefore it is apparent that pupil numbers at Churchstoke C.P. School aren't as high as they should be. There are also a significant number of completed and planned housing developments in Churchstoke and the wider area which has the potential to put pressure on school places. Many comments were also received about the impact on the Welsh language and culture if parents chose schools in Shropshire instead of a Powys school for their children.
- 3.3 Given the above, the advice of officers is that the Council should not proceed with the current proposal to close the school. However, concerns remain in respect of the school. The Council will further consider options to address these concerns, and a further report will be brought back to Cabinet in due course.

### **4. Resource Implications**

- 4.1 There are no additional resource implications.
- 4.2 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the content of the report.

## **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 Legal: The recommendations can be accepted 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 Cllr Michael J. Jones (Churchstoke):

I support the recommendation of the Portfolio holder for Education and the Schools Transformation Team to keep Churchstoke C.P. School open.

Firstly I would like to thank the transformation team for their hard work and diligence in producing a full and comprehensive report. The consultation has been a long process and a very difficult, some would say a traumatic, experience for the community of Churchstoke especially the pupils, parents and staff of the school. Although many thought the process was unnecessary, what it has done is bring the community together to fight to ensure the survival of the school. This is evident in the unprecedented number of responses from the public, local organisations & stakeholders and the amount of evidence submitted. I would especially like to pay tribute to the pupils, parents, staff and governors of the school and the people of Churchstoke and district for, hopefully, a successful campaign. Also a special thank you to the members of the Save the School group who did a tremendous job leading and co-ordinating the campaign.

There is still work to do, as the report suggests, especially in encouraging families to choose Churchstoke school over cross border alternatives. If the Cabinet agrees with the reports recommendation the community will have a new beginning in an expanding, vibrant village, a growing school and pre-school and a new curriculum. The future is bright for Welsh education in Churchstoke.

Finally I would respectfully ask the Cabinet to endorse the recommendation of the Portfolio holder to keep Churchstoke School open.

## **7. Integrated Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 An initial impact assessment was considered by Cabinet on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

7.2 In addition, a range of draft impact assessments were produced as part of the consultation documentation. These included an Integrated Impact Assessment, an Equalities Impact Assessment, and a Community Impact Assessment.

7.3 These draft impact assessments have been updated to reflect issues raised during the consultation period, and are attached in Appendix D.

## 8. **Recommendation**

- To receive the Consultation Report in respect of the proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School.
- To end the current process in respect of closing Churchstoke C.P. School.
- To further consider options to address issues identified in respect of the school.

Contact Officer:	Marianne Evans
Tel:	01597 826155
Email:	Marianne.evans@powys.gov.uk
Head of Service:	Emma Palmer – Head of Transformation & Communications Lynette Lovell – Interim Chief Education Officer
Corporate Director:	Dr Caroline Turner

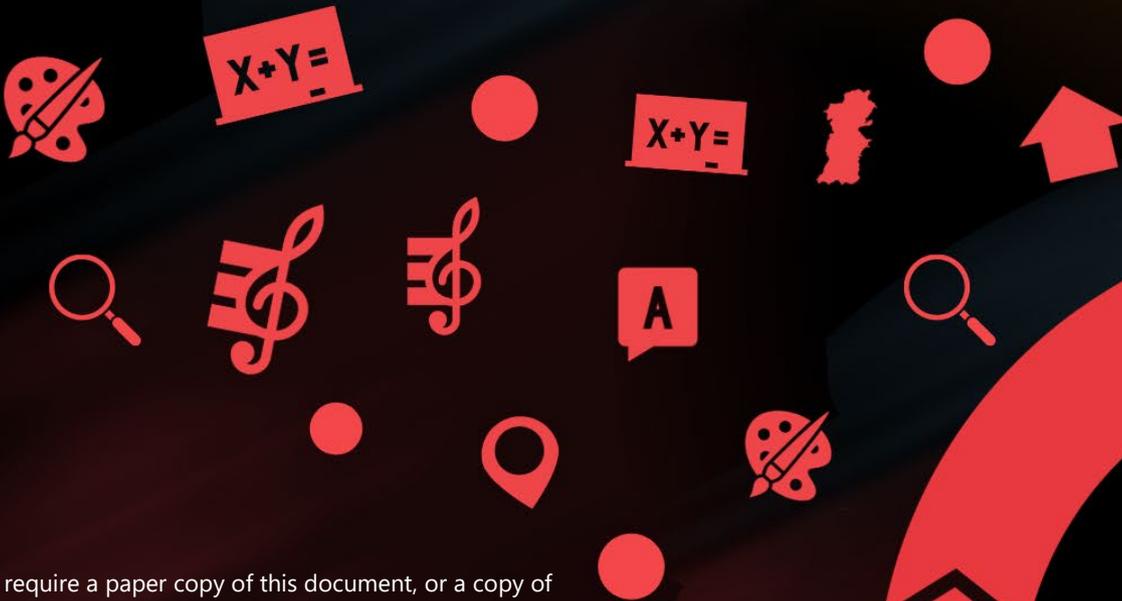
CABINET REPORT TEMPLATE VERSION X

This page is intentionally left blank



## Proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School

Consultation Document



# Consultation on the closure of Churchstoke C.P. School

## Contents

<b>OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PART A – THE CASE FOR CHANGE.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1. BACKGROUND.....	4
2. WHY CHANGE IS NEEDED IN POWYS.....	6
3. THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT.....	8
4. WHY CHANGE IS NEEDED IN CHURCHSTOKE.....	9
5. OPTIONS CONSIDERED .....	10
6. PREFERRED OPTION.....	10
<b>PART B - THE PROPOSAL .....</b>	<b>12</b>
7. OVERVIEW.....	12
8. REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL.....	12
9. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES .....	12
10. RISKS.....	13
11. POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION TIMESCALE .....	13
<b>PART C – LIKELY IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL.....</b>	<b>15</b>
12. IMPACT ON PUPILS .....	15
13. IMPACT ON STAFF.....	16
14. IMPACT ON NURSERY / EARLY YEARS PROVISION .....	16
15. IMPACT ON GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS.....	18
16. IMPACT ON QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN EDUCATION .....	18
17. NEED FOR PLACES AND IMPACT ON AVAILABILITY OF PLACES AND ACCESSIBILITY OF SCHOOLS .....	24
18. RESOURCING OF EDUCATION AND OTHER FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS.....	26
19. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS .....	28
21. EQUALITY AND COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT .....	31
<b>PART D – CONSULTATION DETAILS .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>APPENDIX A - KEY DATA.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>APPENDIX B – SWOT AND CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>APPENDIX C – IMPACT OF EACH OPTION ON RURAL SCHOOLS CRITERIA .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>APPENDIX D – REASONS WHY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS HAVE NOT BEEN TAKEN FORWARD .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>APPENDIX E – RESPONSE FORM .....</b>	<b>61</b>

If you require a paper copy of this document, or a copy of the document in a different format, please contact the Transforming Education Team on 01597 826618, or e-mail [school.organisation@powys.gov.uk](mailto:school.organisation@powys.gov.uk).

# Consultation on the closure of Churchstoke C.P. School

## OVERVIEW

### 1. The Proposal

Powys County Council is consulting on a proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School. The proposal is as follows:

- To close Churchstoke C.P. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys

### 2. How to respond to the consultation

You can respond to this consultation by completing the online questionnaire which is available on our website:

<https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/10567/Churchstoke-C.P.-School>

A paper copy of the questionnaire is also available at the back of this document. Alternatively, you can respond in writing using the contact details below.

All responses must be received by the **9<sup>th</sup> June 2021**.

### 3. Contact details

All responses should be sent to the following address:

Transforming Education Team  
Powys County Council  
County Hall  
Llandrindod Wells  
Powys  
LD1 5LG

E-mail: [school.consultation@powys.gov.uk](mailto:school.consultation@powys.gov.uk)

Phone: 01597 826618

### 4. What will happen next

Once the consultation period has ended, a consultation report will be produced which will outline the feedback received. The Council's Cabinet will consider the consultation report and will consider whether or not they wish to proceed with either of the options outlined in the consultation document. This is expected to happen in the autumn of 2021.

If the Cabinet decide to proceed with the proposal, a statutory notice would be published, and there would be a period of 28 days for people to submit objections. The Cabinet would then need to consider another report summarising any objections received and decide whether or not to proceed with implementation.

## PART A – THE CASE FOR CHANGE

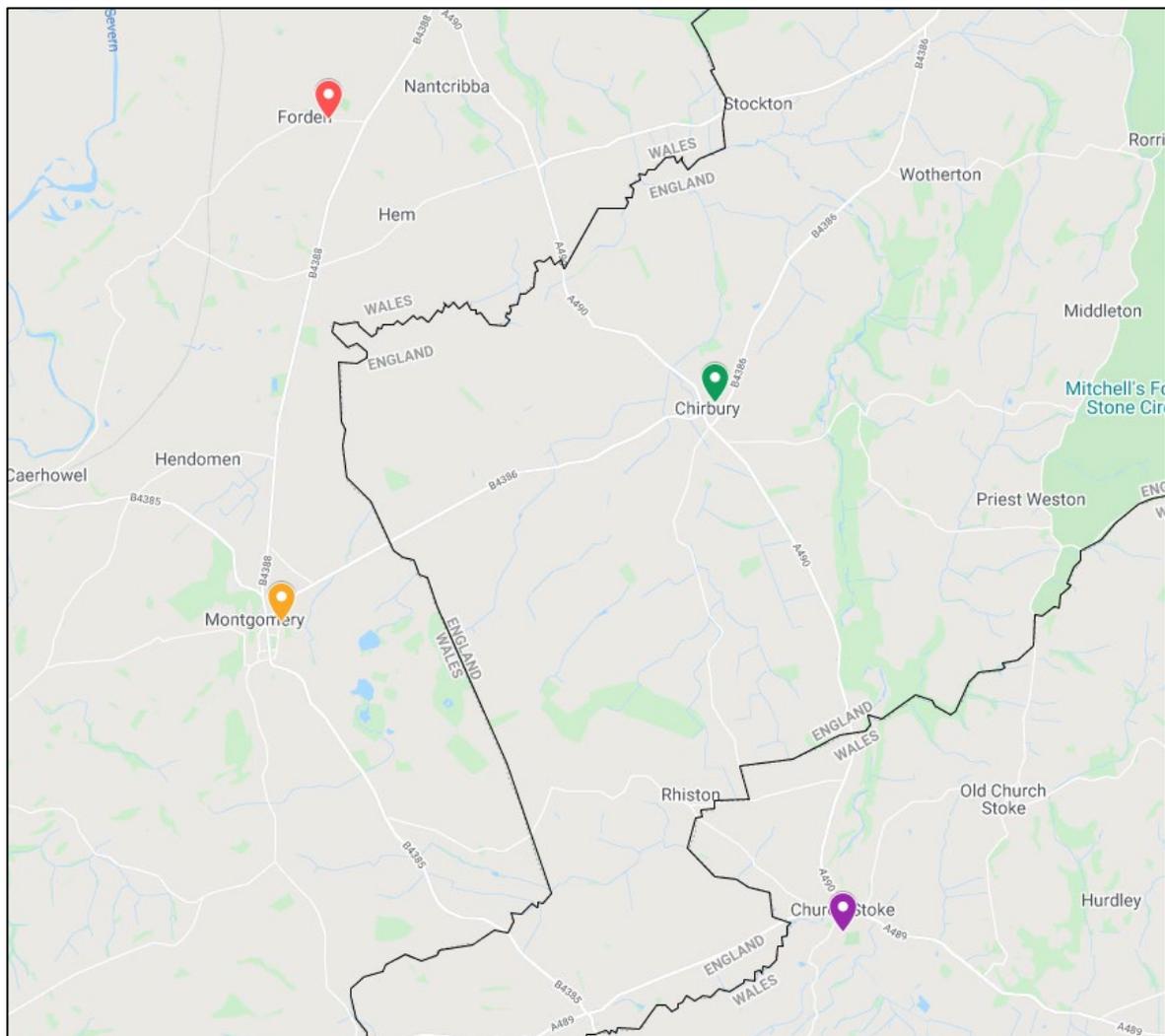
**Powys County Council is consulting on a proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School. The proposal is as follows:**

- **To close Churchstoke C.P. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys**

### 1. BACKGROUND

Churchstoke C.P. School is an English-medium community primary school located in the village of Churchstoke, in north Powys, close to the border with England. The school primarily serves Churchstoke and the surrounding area.

The following map shows the location of schools in the area:



**Key:** Purple – Churchstoke C.P. School, Orange – Montgomery C. in W. School, Red – Forden C. in W. School, Green – Chirbury CofE Primary School

The following table provides general information about the school:

School name and location	School Category	Language Category	Admission Number	Rural School <sup>1</sup>
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School, Churchstoke, Montgomery, Powys, SY15 6AA</b>	Community Primary  School building owned by Powys County Council	English-medium	10	Yes

Current pupil numbers<sup>2</sup> at the school are as follows:

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	8	4	5	3	10	2	4	36

In April 2020, the Council approved a new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys, which sets out a number of aims and objectives to transform the Powys education system over the next few years, in order to provide the best possible opportunities to Powys learners now and in the future. One of the objectives included in the strategy is to ‘improve learner entitlement and experience’ and includes an objective to ‘rationalise primary provision’.

The Council has carried out an options appraisal exercise to identify a preferred option for Churchstoke C.P. School.

The following steps have been undertaken:

- Options appraisal exercise
- Recommendation considered and agreed by the Transforming Education Programme Board

On the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021, the Council’s Cabinet considered a report in respect of Churchstoke C.P. School, and agreed to commence consultation on the following:

*“To close Churchstoke C.P. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys.”*

<sup>1</sup> Annex F of the Welsh Government’s School Organisation Code (2018) (<https://gov.wales/sites/default/publications/2018-10/school-organisation-code-second-edition.pdf>)

<sup>2</sup> Finance NOR – 2020 Pupil Count Day (6<sup>th</sup> November 2020)

## **2. WHY CHANGE IS NEEDED IN POWYS**

Powys is a large, rural authority. Covering a quarter of the landmass of Wales, it contains only 4.2% of the population, making it the most sparsely populated county in Wales. Delivering services across such a large, sparsely populated area is challenging and expensive.

Whilst there has been some school reorganisation activity in Powys over recent years, the county's schools' infrastructure largely remains similar to that which was in place 20 years ago.

The Council's new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys outlines a number of challenges facing education in Powys, which were identified following engagement with key stakeholders during the autumn term 2019 and spring term 2020.

The following is a summary of the main challenges facing the Council:

### **i) High proportion of small schools**

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

### **ii) Decreasing pupil numbers**

Pupil numbers have decreased over the past decade, and are expected to decrease further over the next five years. Pupil numbers in the primary sector in Powys are expected to decrease by approximately 4% by 2025.

### **iii) High number of surplus places**

Based on PLASC 2019 figures, there was 18% surplus capacity in Powys primary schools. With pupil numbers across Powys projected to decrease overall over the coming years, the proportion of surplus places across the county will continue to increase.

### **iv) Building condition**

Whilst the Council has invested in its school's estate through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme and the Asset Management Plan, building condition remains an issue across Powys, with associated maintenance costs.

### **v) Financial pressures**

The Council is currently facing significant financial pressures in general. This is affecting all service areas, including the schools' sector. There are significant variations in the budget share per pupil across Powys schools, ranging from £3,127 to £7,877 in the primary sector.

**vi) Inequality in access to Welsh-medium education**

In contrast to other areas of Wales, there has been no growth in Welsh-medium pupil numbers in Powys over recent years. Significant changes are needed to the Welsh-medium offer in Powys 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.

**vii) 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.

**viii) Inequality in access to SEN provision**

Within Powys, pupils with special education needs (SEN) attend a range of settings, including special schools, specialist centres, the pupil referral unit (PRU) as well as mainstream schools.

Currently, not all pupils are educated in the setting that meets their needs best, and depending on where pupils live, they have access to a different quality and type of provision.

**ix) Historical lack of political decision making**

Although there have been some developments in terms of the schools' infrastructure over recent years, the Council's failure to implement a number of high-profile proposals in the last few years has left a legacy in Powys, and there has been a reluctance to embark on large scale reorganisation of education provision since then.

### 3. THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

In the summer of 2019, Powys Education Services were inspected by Estyn. The report published by Estyn following the inspection 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.'

Following the publication of the inspection report, the Council carried out a strategic review of schools during 2019-20, which led to the development of a new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys. The strategy, which was developed following engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, was approved in April 2020.

The strategy sets out a Vision Statement and Guiding Principles which will underpin the Council's work to transform the Powys education system over the coming years.

The Vision Statement is as follows:

***All children and young people in Powys will experience a high-quality, inspiring education to help develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that will enable them to become healthy, personally fulfilled, economically productive, socially responsible and globally engaged citizens of 21st century Wales.***

In order to achieve the vision and guiding principles, the strategy outlines a number of aims and objectives to transform the Powys education system over the next few years, in order to provide the best possible opportunities to Powys learners now and in the future. One of these aims is to 'improve learner entitlement and experience' and this aim includes an objective to 'rationalise primary provision'.

The current proposal in respect of Churchstoke C.P. School is in line with these priorities.

#### 4. WHY CHANGE IS NEEDED IN CHURCHSTOKE

The following is a summary of the main challenges facing Churchstoke C.P. School:

##### i) **Low pupil numbers**

Current pupil numbers<sup>3</sup> at Churchstoke C.P. School are as follows:

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	8	4	5	3	10	2	4	36

The Welsh Government defines a 'small school' as a school with less than 91 pupils. Pupil numbers at the school are significantly lower than this and the latest projected pupil information suggests that they are not expected to increase significantly for the foreseeable future.

The school's low pupil numbers have also resulted in a high number of surplus places at the school. Based on current pupil numbers, there is currently 50% surplus capacity at the school.

##### ii) **High budget per pupil**

Based on the Council's Section 52 Budget Statement for 2020-21, the school's budget share per pupil during 2020-21 was £7,475. This is significantly higher than the Powys average of £4,264. Churchstoke is ranked the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest school in Powys by budget share per pupil.<sup>4</sup>

##### iii) **Building condition and suitability**

The Welsh Government's survey of school buildings carried out in 2009 identified issues with the building condition and suitability of Churchstoke C.P. School. The building condition was assessed to be condition C – Poor, whilst its suitability was assessed to be condition B/C – Good/Poor.

##### iv) **Leadership**

Whilst there is permanent leadership in place in Churchstoke C.P. School, the headteacher has a significant teaching commitment, which limits the time available to focus on leadership of the school.

##### v) **Combined age classes**

<sup>3</sup> Finance NOR – 2020 Pupil Count Day (6<sup>th</sup> November 2020)

<sup>4</sup> Section 52 Budget Statement 2020/2021

The small pupil numbers at the school mean that pupils are taught in whole key stage classes, with Key Stage 2 in one class and Foundation Phase in another class. Because pupil numbers in each year group are small, it is more difficult to ensure all pupils are appropriately challenged.

## 5. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The following options have been identified which could potentially provide a solution.

Option	Description
1	Status quo – continue as a standalone school
2	Federation with another school  This is not a viable option as there are no other C.P. schools in the vicinity which Churchstoke C.P. School could federate with, therefore this option is <b>DISCOUNTED</b>
3	Merge with Montgomery C. in W. School to establish a new school on two sites
4	Close Churchstoke C.P. School, but retain the site as part of Montgomery C. in W. School
5	Close Churchstoke C.P. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools in Powys
6	Close Churchstoke C.P. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools

SWOT analyses have been carried out for each of these options. In addition, the options have been assessed against a number of Critical Success Factors, and the likely impact of each option on quality and standards, the community and travelling arrangements was also considered. These can be found in Appendix B and Appendix C of this document.

## 6. PREFERRED OPTION

Based on the SWOT analyses, the assessment against the Critical Success Factors and the consideration of the likely impact of each option on quality and standards, the community and travelling arrangements, the preferred option is as follows:

### **Option 5: Close Churchstoke C.P. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools in Powys**

The reasons for this are:

- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers

- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- Revenue saving to the Council
- Pupils would attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities
- Pupil would be taught in classes with peers of similar ages
- Pupils would attend schools with better quality accommodation
- Minimal impact on any other schools
- Would enable pupils to continue to access provision in Powys
- Meets all of the Critical Success Factors

This is the basis for the current proposal on which the Council is consulting. The proposal is further explored in the following section. The reasons why other options considered have not been taken forward are summarised in Appendix D of this document.

## PART B - THE PROPOSAL

### 7. OVERVIEW

Powys County Council is consulting on a proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School. The proposal is as follows:

- To close Churchstoke C.P. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys

### 8. REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL

The Council is proposing to close Churchstoke C.P. School for the following reasons:

- To address the issue of low pupil numbers
- To reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- To provide a revenue saving to the Council
- To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities
- To enable pupils to be taught in classes with peers of similar ages
- To enable pupils to attend schools with better quality accommodation
- To enable pupils to continue to access provision in Powys

### 9. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

The advantages and disadvantages of the current proposal in respect of Churchstoke C.P. are summarised below:

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers</li><li>- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools</li><li>- Revenue saving to the Council</li><li>- Pupils would attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities</li><li>- Pupil would be taught in classes with peers of similar ages</li><li>- Pupils would attend schools with better quality accommodation</li><li>- Minimal impact on any other schools</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Additional travel for those pupils for whom Churchstoke C.P. School is currently the closest school</li><li>- Pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School would have to transfer to alternative provision</li><li>- Loss of provision from Churchstoke</li><li>- Impact on the current staff of Churchstoke C.P. School</li><li>- Impact on the Churchstoke community</li><li>- Some pupils may transfer to alternative provision in England</li><li>- Possible loss of early years provision on the Churchstoke school site</li></ul>

- Opportunity for the Council to realise a capital receipt from sale of the school site	
---	--

## 10. RISKS

As with all school reorganisation proposals, there are risks associated with the proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School.

These are outlined below, along with suggested mitigating actions:

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Actions
Insufficient capacity at nearest Powys school to accommodate all pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School.	Medium	Medium	There is sufficient capacity at other Powys schools in the local area to accommodate all pupils, and capacity at schools in Shropshire which pupils may choose to transfer to should Churchstoke C.P. School close.
Parents of pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School choose for their children to attend provision in Shropshire instead of transferring to alternative schools in Powys.	Medium	Medium	Engagement with parents to take place throughout the process.
Period of uncertainty for Churchstoke C.P. School if a statutory process is carried out and implemented which might have a negative effect on standards at the school	Medium	Medium	The Council to provide advice and support to the school and governing body to ensure that standards and performance do not deteriorate during the transition period.
Uncertainty for staff whilst the process is ongoing	Medium	Medium	Engagement with staff to take place throughout the process and staff to be kept informed of developments.

## 11. POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION TIMESCALE

Should Cabinet decide to proceed with the proposals, potential implementation timescales are as follows:

Formal Consultation	21 <sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
Consultation Report to be published, and considered by Cabinet	September 2021

**If Cabinet decide to proceed:**

Publish Statutory Notice (28 days objection period)	October 2021
Objection Report to be published and considered by Cabinet	December 2021

**If Cabinet approves implementation:**

School closes	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2022
---------------	------------------------------

## **PART C – LIKELY IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL**

### **12. IMPACT ON PUPILS**

#### **i) Pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School**

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the proposal, Churchstoke C.P. School would close and pupils would transfer to their nearest alternative school in Powys. It is acknowledged that this would have an impact on pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School, as they would need to transfer to an alternative school. Should the proposal be implemented, the Council would work closely with the current school and the alternative schools to ensure a smooth transition for pupils.

Whilst the Council's preferred option is for pupils to transfer to alternative provision in Powys, it is acknowledged that a number of pupils live closer to alternative provision in Shropshire, and therefore it is possible that they would transfer to this provision. This would mean that they would no longer access the Welsh curriculum, which could have an impact on their Welsh identity in the longer term.

As Churchstoke C.P. School would close and pupils would transfer to their nearest alternative provision in Powys, additional transport would be required for pupils for whom Churchstoke C.P. School is currently the closest school. Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's home to school transport policy, it is acknowledged that there could be an impact on pupils' ability to access after-school activities, and that there could be increased travelling times to school for some pupils.

#### **ii) Pupils attending other nearby primary schools in Powys**

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the proposal, Churchstoke C.P. School would close and pupils currently attending the school would transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys. For the majority of pupils, this would be Montgomery C. in W. School. Therefore, implementation of the proposal could impact on pupils at any alternative schools in Powys which pupils may choose to transfer to, as those schools would receive additional pupils.

However, the total number of pupils attending Churchstoke C.P. School is currently relatively small, therefore it is not anticipated that this would have a significant impact on pupils attending other nearby primary schools in Powys. Whilst the Council's preferred option is for pupils to transfer to alternative schools in Powys, it is also possible that some pupils would choose to transfer to schools in Shropshire, which would reduce the number of pupils transferring to Powys schools, and therefore the impact on pupils currently

attending these schools. The numbers admitted to each alternative school would be in line with the admissions number for each school.

**iii) Pupils attending other nearby primary schools in Shropshire**

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the proposal, Churchstoke C.P. School would close and pupils currently attending the school would transfer to alternative schools. Whilst the Council's preferred option is for pupils to transfer to alternative schools in Powys, it is also possible that some pupils would choose to transfer to schools in Shropshire.

Therefore, it is possible that implementation of the proposal could impact on pupils attending other nearby primary schools in Shropshire, as those schools could receive additional pupils. However, the total number of pupils attending Churchstoke C.P. School is currently relatively small, therefore it is not anticipated that this would have a significant impact on pupils attending other nearby primary schools in Shropshire. Pupils would need to apply for a place at schools in Shropshire using Shropshire County Council's Admissions Procedure, and the numbers admitted to each alternative school would be in line with the admissions number for each school.

**13. IMPACT ON STAFF**

Should the proposal be implemented, Churchstoke C.P. school would close. A staff redundancy process would be necessary for staff currently employed at Churchstoke C.P. School. This would be conducted in line with the relevant HR policies for teaching and support staff. All cleaning and catering staff that are currently employed centrally by the Council would be supported by the relevant HR policies for Council employees

**14. IMPACT ON NURSERY / EARLY YEARS PROVISION**

In September 2017, the Council changed the age of admission to primary schools in Powys from "at the start of the term in which they attain their fourth birthday" to "at the start of the school year following his/her fourth birthday". Following this change, there are no nursery aged pupils attending Churchstoke C.P. School.

However, ten hours of funded early years education provision is available on the school site at Churchstoke Little Explorers. Information about this provision is provided below<sup>5</sup>:

**Churchstoke Little Explorers**

Churchstoke Little Explorers is a non-maintained community run setting which operates from the site of Churchstoke C.P. School. They also provide the Childcare Offer for Wales. Standards of nursery education and

---

<sup>5</sup> All information correct as of Summer Term 2021/22

sufficiency of accommodation at this provider are good. The setting is bright, inviting and practitioners are friendly and approachable.

There are 16 ten hours early years education places available at this provider which are currently sufficient to meet the need for early years education in the area.

Whilst implementation of the proposal to close the school would not directly affect the early years provision which is available on site, it is possible that this could impact on the provision's viability in the longer term.

Should there be no early years provision in Churchstoke, there are a number of other registered early years providers in the area, including providers in Powys and providers in Shropshire. Information about these providers is provided below:

### **Montgomery Pre-School**

Montgomery Pre-School is a non-maintained school run setting which operates from the community hall in Montgomery. They also provide the Childcare Offer for Wales. Standards of nursery education and sufficiency of accommodation at this provider are good. The setting is welcoming and has an inclusive family ethos.

There are 16 ten hours early years education places available at this provider which are currently sufficient to meet the need for early years education in the area.

### **Busy Bees Nursery (Chirbury CofE Primary School)**

Busy Bees Nursery is a maintained school run setting which operates from the site of Chirbury CofE Primary School in Shropshire. Standards of nursery education and sufficiency of accommodation at this provider are good. Outdoor learning opportunities make the most of the school's rural location.

The admission number for this setting is 12.

### **Long Mountain CofE Primary School**

Long Mountain CofE Primary School is a maintained school run setting which operates from the site of Long Mountain CofE Primary School in Shropshire. Standards of nursery education and sufficiency of accommodation at this provider are good. The setting provides a nurturing and safe environment for children.

The admission number for this setting is 11.

It is acknowledged that should there be no early years provision in Churchstoke in the future, parents currently accessing provision in Churchstoke may need to travel

further to access alternative provision. Should this be the case, nursery / early years provision would be available at the alternative providers listed above.

## **15. IMPACT ON GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

Implementation of the proposal would result in the closure of Churchstoke C.P. School and the Governing Body of Churchstoke C.P. School would be dissolved.

## **16. IMPACT ON QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN EDUCATION**

### **i) Standards, wellbeing and attitudes to learning**

#### **Standards and progress overall, of specific groups and in skills**

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the preferred option, Churchstoke C.P. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools in Powys. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative school in Powys would be Montgomery C. in W. School. Some pupils may also choose to attend schools in Shropshire, in particular Chirbury CofE School.

The Council's view is that Montgomery C. in W. School would provide education for pupils which is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Churchstoke C.P. School, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on standards and progress overall.

Whilst the Council does not have direct experience of the provision at Chirbury CofE School, the school's last Ofsted inspection which was carried out in December 2019 judged the school's overall effectiveness and quality of education to be Good, therefore it is likely that the provision is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Churchstoke C.P. School.

This also applies in respect of pupils belonging to specific groups, such as pupils eligible for Free School Meals, pupils for whom English is an Additional Language, Looked after Children and pupils with Additional Learning Needs. Based on PLASC 2020 information, approximately 10% of pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School are eligible for Free School Meals, and there are a small number of pupils with Additional Learning Needs. However, it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on the standards and progress of these pupils.

This is also the case in respect of the impact on the skills of all pupils, including literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils would transfer to larger schools, which would provide improved opportunities to share staff expertise and resources, and which have an improved ability to monitor pupil progress in these aspects.

## **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning**

In the short term, it is possible that there would be an impact on pupils wellbeing, as they would need to transfer from Churchstoke C.P. School to alternative schools. It is possible that pupils could choose to transfer to different schools, which could have a further impact on their wellbeing. However, the receiving school(s) would provide full support to the pupils during the transition period, to minimise any negative impact on them.

For some pupils, implementation of the preferred option could result in additional travel, which could have an impact on pupil well-being. However, alternative primary provision would be available at a number of other schools located within 10 miles of Churchstoke C.P. School, including schools located in Powys and schools located in Shropshire. It is not considered that the additional travel time required to alternative provision would be excessive.

In the longer term, the intention is that implementation of the preferred option would have a positive impact on pupil wellbeing and attitudes to learning as they would transfer to larger schools with larger cohorts of pupils, providing improved social and extra-curricular opportunities.

### **ii) Teaching and learning experiences**

#### **Quality of teaching**

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the preferred option, Churchstoke C.P. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative school in Powys would be Montgomery C. in W. School. Some pupils may also choose to attend schools in Shropshire, in particular Chirbury CofE School.

The Council has no concerns about the quality of teaching at Montgomery C. in W. School, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on the quality of teaching experienced by pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School.

Whilst the Council does not have direct experience of the provision at Chirbury CofE School, the school's last Ofsted inspection which was carried out in December 2019 judged the school's overall effectiveness and quality of education to be Good, therefore it is likely that the quality of teaching is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Churchstoke C.P. School.

#### **The breadth, balance and appropriateness of the curriculum**

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the preferred option, Churchstoke C.P. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools in Powys. For the majority of pupils, the closest

alternative school in Powys would be Montgomery C. in W. School. Some pupils may also choose to attend schools in Shropshire, in particular Chirbury CofE School.

The Council's view is that Montgomery C. in W. School would provide a curriculum which is at least equivalent to that currently provided at Churchstoke C.P. School. Pupils would transfer to a larger school, therefore the expectation would be that there would be an improvement in the breadth, balance and appropriateness of the curriculum provided to pupils, and that the alternative school would be better placed to develop provision which meets the requirements of the new curriculum.

Montgomery C. in W. School is a Church in Wales school, whilst Churchstoke C.P. School is a community primary school. This would impact on some aspects of the curriculum should pupils transfer to Montgomery C. in W. School. However, alternative C.P. provision is available within 10 miles of Churchstoke, ensuring that non-Church in Wales provision would continue to be available to those pupils who wished to access it.

Should pupils transfer to Chirbury CofE School, they would access education in England, therefore would receive a different curriculum to that provided in Wales. One significant difference is that Welsh would no longer be a part of their curriculum. Whilst the Council is committed to providing continued access to education in Wales to pupils living in Churchstoke, it is acknowledged that some pupils may choose to transfer to alternative schools, which would impact on the curriculum they receive.

### **The provision of skills**

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the preferred option, Churchstoke C.P. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools in Powys. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative school in Powys would be Montgomery C. in W. School. Some pupils may also choose to attend schools in Shropshire, in particular Chirbury CofE School.

The Council has no concerns about the provision of skills at Montgomery C. in W. School, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on the provision of skills for pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School.

Whilst the Council does not have direct experience of the provision at Chirbury CofE School, the school's last Ofsted inspection which was carried out in December 2019 judged the school's overall effectiveness and quality of education to be Good, therefore it is likely that the provision of skills would be of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Churchstoke C.P. School

### **iii) Care support and guidance**

#### **Tracking, monitoring and the provision of learning support, personal development and safeguarding**

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the preferred option, Churchstoke C.P. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative school in Powys would be Montgomery C. in W. School. Some pupils may also choose to attend schools in Shropshire, in particular Chirbury CofE School.

In general, it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on tracking, monitoring and the provision of learning support, personal development and safeguarding for pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School. In respect of pupils transferring to Montgomery C. in W. School, it is anticipated that the arrangements would be at least equivalent to the current arrangements at Churchstoke.

For pupils choosing to transfer to schools in Shropshire, it is acknowledged that there could be a greater impact in the short term as it is likely that there would be different systems in place for tracking and monitoring pupils, and the provision of learning support, personal development and safeguarding. However, once the pupils have transferred, there is no reason that the arrangements would not be at least equivalent to the arrangements at Churchstoke. Whilst the Council does not have direct experience of the provision at Chirbury CofE School, the school's last Ofsted inspection which was carried out in December 2019 judged the schools overall effectiveness and personal development to be Good, therefore it is likely that the arrangements would be at least equivalent to the current arrangements at Churchstoke C.P. School.

#### **iv) Leadership and management**

##### **Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers, self-evaluation processes and improvement planning**

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the preferred option, Churchstoke C.P. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools in Powys. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative school in Powys would be Montgomery C. in W. School. Some pupils may also choose to attend schools in Shropshire, in particular Chirbury CofE School.

Both Churchstoke C.P. School and Montgomery C. in W. School have permanent leadership arrangements, and both were categorised in the Yellow support category with an improvement capacity of B in the latest school categorisations carried out in 2019, therefore the Council's view is that leadership and management at the alternative school would be at least as good as the current arrangements at Churchstoke. Montgomery C. in W. School is larger than Churchstoke C.P. School, therefore it is expected that the headteacher would have more time available to focus on leadership and management.

Whilst the Council does not have direct experience of the provision at Chirbury CofE School, the school's last Ofsted inspection which was carried out in December 2019 judged the school's overall effectiveness and leadership and management to be Good, therefore it is likely that these aspects would be at least equivalent to the current arrangements at Churchstoke C.P. School.

### **Professional learning**

It is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would impact on professional learning opportunities. Staff currently employed at Churchstoke C.P. School would be subject to a management of change process.

### **Use of resources**

Churchstoke C.P. School is not currently forecasting a cumulative deficit budget.

Whilst there are no significant concerns about the use of resources within the school, there are concerns about use of resources overall within the Powys schools infrastructure. As indicated earlier in this document, one of the main challenges facing the Powys schools infrastructure is the high proportion of small schools in the county. Churchstoke C.P. School is among the smallest schools in the county, and the budget share per pupil at the school is higher than the Powys average for primary schools. The school also currently has 50% surplus capacity, which is inefficient use of the Council's resources.

Closure of the school would reduce the number of schools in Powys, and would enable the Council to use its resources more effectively for the benefit of all Powys learners.

Should the preferred option be implemented, pupils would transfer to larger schools, ensuring more effective use of the Council's resources. In addition, larger schools often have more resources available in terms of number of staff and educational resources, therefore pupils would benefit from the opportunity to access these resources.

It is also the case that pupil numbers feed into the distribution formula used by Welsh Government to distribute funding to the Council via the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). Should Churchstoke C.P. School close, there is potential for pupils to opt to go to schools outside of Powys, which may in turn result in a reduction in the RSG to the Council from Welsh Government.

#### **v) Impact on vulnerable groups, including children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

Implementation of the emerging preferred option would result in the closure

of Churchstoke C.P. School. It is acknowledged that there would be an impact on any pupils belonging to vulnerable groups currently attending the school, including any pupils with SEN, and that in the short term, these pupils would need to transfer to alternative schools.

Based on January 2020 PLASC information, 16% of pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School were on School Action, and 4% of pupils were on School Action Plus. There were no statemented pupils.

Whilst the preferred option would impact on these pupils, as they would be required to move to alternative schools, there is no reason to believe that the schools to which they might transfer would not be able to meet their needs.

Should the option be implemented, the Council would work with Churchstoke C.P. School and the receiving school(s) to ensure an effective transition for any vulnerable children, including children with SEN, and their families. This would include working with schools located in Shropshire for any pupils choosing to transfer to schools located in Shropshire.

**vi) Impact on the schools' ability to deliver the full curriculum in the foundation stage and each key stage**

Should the proposal be implemented, Churchstoke C.P. School would close and pupils would transfer to alternative schools, therefore Churchstoke C.P. School would no longer need to deliver the curriculum at any key stage.

Should Churchstoke C.P. School close, pupils would transfer to alternative schools. This would lead to an increase in pupil numbers at the schools to which the pupils transfer. However, current pupil numbers at Churchstoke C.P. School are small, and therefore the number of pupils likely to transfer to each year group at an alternative school would be low. Therefore the impact on alternative schools is not likely to have a significant impact on their ability to deliver the full curriculum at the foundation phase and in each key stage of education.

In some schools, it is possible that an increase in pupil numbers would improve their ability to deliver the curriculum. However, depending on the class structure and current breakdown of pupils, it's likely that some schools would need to make adjustments to their class structure in the short term to accommodate any additional pupils.

**vii) Impact on other schools**

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the preferred option, Churchstoke C.P. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools in Powys. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative school in Powys would be Montgomery C. in W. School. Some

pupils may also choose to attend schools in Shropshire, in particular Chirbury CofE School.

Whilst it is possible that this could have some impact on the schools pupils may wish to transfer to, particularly in the short term when they receive additional pupils, the total number of pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School is relatively small, therefore it is not anticipated that this would have a negative impact on the quality and standards in education (to include standards; wellbeing and attitudes to learning; teaching and learning experiences; care support and guidance and leadership and management) at each of the schools pupils may transfer to. In some cases, it is possible that implementation of the proposal would have a positive impact on quality and standards in education at the alternative schools, as it would lead to an increase in pupil numbers and the opportunity to provide enhanced opportunities to pupils.

## 17. NEED FOR PLACES AND IMPACT ON AVAILABILITY OF PLACES AND ACCESSIBILITY OF SCHOOLS

- i) **Will the alternative provision have sufficient capacity and provide accommodation of at least equivalent quality for existing and projected pupil numbers?**

The following table shows the number of spaces available and the building condition of Powys schools providing English-medium education located within 10 miles of Churchstoke C.P. School:

School	Capacity <sup>6</sup>	Current pupil numbers <sup>7</sup>	Available spaces	Available capacity	Building Condition	Building Suitability
Montgomery C. in W. School	119	90	29	24.4%	C	B/C
Forden C. in W. School	102	68	34	33.3%	B/C	B
Abermule C.P. School	92	64	28	30.4%	B	C
Leighton C.P. School	91	71	20	22.0%	B/C	B
Berriew C.P. School	106	85	21	19.8%	B	B

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government School Places Return – August 2020

<sup>7</sup> Finance NOR – 2020 Pupil Count Day (6<sup>th</sup> November 2020)

St. Michael's C. in W. VA School	140	91	49	35.0%	B	B/C
----------------------------------	-----	----	----	-------	---	-----

This suggests that there is sufficient space in Powys schools located within 10 miles of Churchstoke C.P. School to accommodate all pupils currently attending the school. The building condition of all the schools in the above table has been assessed as either condition B or condition C. The condition of Churchstoke C.P. School has been assessed as condition C, therefore it is likely that the quality of accommodation at the alternative schools would be at least equivalent to the quality of accommodation at Churchstoke C.P. School.

In addition to the Powys schools listed above, Chirbury C of E Primary School and Bishops Castle Primary School are located within 10 miles of Churchstoke C.P. School. Whilst the Council is committed to continuing to provide access to Churchstoke pupils in Powys schools, it is possible that some pupils would choose to attend provision in Shropshire. The following table shows the number of spaces available of Shropshire schools providing English-medium education located within 10 miles of Churchstoke C.P. School:

School	Capacity <sup>8</sup>	Current pupil numbers <sup>9</sup>	Available spaces	Available capacity	Building Condition	Building Suitability
Chirbury C of E Primary School	84	66	18	21.4%	N/A	N/A
Bishops Castle Primary School	175	135	40	22.9%	N/A	N/A
Long Mountain C of E Primary School	100	98	2	2%	N/A	N/A

This suggests that there are some spaces available at Chirbury C of E Primary School and Bishops Castle Primary School.

- ii) **Is the alternative provision sufficient to meet existing and projected demand for schools of the same language category and designated religious character?**

<sup>8</sup> Get information about schools via GOV.UK - <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>

<sup>9</sup> Information received from Shropshire County Council – April 2021

As indicated in the table in section (i) above, there is sufficient English-medium capacity within 10 miles of Churchstoke C.P. School to accommodate the school's current and projected pupil numbers.

Churchstoke C.P. School is a community primary school. Whilst the school's neighbouring schools are mainly Church in Wales schools, alternative community primary provision is available within 10 miles of Churchstoke C.P. School at Abermule C.P. School, Forden C.P. School and Berriew C.P. School, as well as at Bishops Castle Primary School in Shropshire, therefore community primary provision is available in the local area for any pupils not wanting to attend a Church in Wales school.

**iii) What will be the nature of journeys to alternative provision and resulting journey times for pupils including SEN pupils?**

As indicated in the table in section (i) above, there are alternative primary places available at several other schools located within 10 miles of Churchstoke C.P. school. Should Churchstoke C.P. School close, it is not considered that the length and nature of journeys for pupils to alternative provision would be excessive. This includes journeys for SEN pupils. One-way journeys to alternative provision would not be in excess of 45 minutes.

**iv) Is there evidence of current or future need/demand in the area for additional places?**

Pupil numbers in Churchstoke C.P. School are low, however it is acknowledged that some increase has been seen in pupil numbers recently, as a result of new housing developments in the village. The Council's latest projected pupil figures for the school suggest that pupil numbers at the school are not expected to increase significantly over the coming years, however it is possible that further housing developments planned for the village will lead to an increase in the demand for places in the area.

**v) Will the proposals improve access for disabled pupils in accordance with requirements under the Equality Act 2010?**

Implementation of the proposal would mean that pupil would attend their nearest alternative school in Powys. The latest Welsh Government School Premises Return 2020, indicates that these schools are either compliant, or partially compliant with the Equality Act 2010 with all of the schools having statutory Accessibility Plans in place.

## **18. RESOURCING OF EDUCATION AND OTHER FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**i) What effect will the proposals have on surplus places in the area?**

Churchstoke C.P. School currently has 50% surplus places. Implementation of the preferred option would result in closure of Churchstoke C.P. School,

and would therefore lead a reduction in surplus places in the area, and in the Council's overall surplus places in primary schools.

**ii) Do the proposals form part of the local authority's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Investment Programme and contribute to the delivery of sustainable schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and to the better strategic management of the school estate?**

The review of Churchstoke C.P. School does not form part of the local authority's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Investment Programme.

However, the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys identifies a number of issues relating to the overall Powys schools' estate, including a high proportion of small schools, a high number of surplus places and issues with building condition. The Strategy includes a strategic objective to 'Reconfigure and rationalise primary provision', which aims to address these issues, to ensure better strategic management of the Powys school estate. The review of Churchstoke C.P. School is being carried out in order to meet this objective.

**iii) What are the recurrent costs of proposals over a period of at least 3 years and is the necessary recurrent funding available?**

The recurrent costs of this proposal would be the increased transport costs which are currently estimated to be an additional £19,000 per annum as detailed in (iv) below. This has been included in the delegated revenue costing and is funded through savings in other areas of the formula in relation to this proposal.

**iv) Will additional transport costs be incurred as a result of the proposal?**

It is estimated there will be additional transport costs of £19,000 per annum, this is based on pupil's current location and assuming the pupils will go to the next nearest school in Powys.

**v) What are the capital costs of the proposal and is the necessary capital funding is available?**

It is not anticipated that capital funding would be required in order to implement the emerging preferred option. As indicated in the table in section 17(i) above, there are sufficient places at schools located within 10 miles of Churchstoke C.P. School to accommodate all current and projected pupils.

**vi) What is the scale of any projected net savings (taking into account school revenue, transport and capital costs)**

It is estimated that this would result in annual revenue savings to the Council of around £50,000. This overall figure comprises a potential saving on

Schools' delegated funding of over £61,000, estimated additional transport costs of £19,000 and savings on catering costs of around £7,500.

**vii) Without the proposals, would the schools affected face budget deficits?**

Churchstoke C.P. School is not currently forecasting a cumulative deficit budget.

**viii) Will any savings in recurrent costs be retained in the local authority's local schools budget?**

Any savings would be reinvested in the Council's corporate budget and any reinvestment in the schools' system would be agreed as part of the annual budget planning cycle.

**ix) Will the proceeds of sales (capital receipts) of redundant sites be made available to meet the costs of the proposal or contribute to the costs of future proposals which will promote effective management of school places?**

Any capital receipts received from sale of the Churchstoke C.P. School site would be reinvested into the Schools Transformation programme in order to improve the educational provision across Powys.

## **19. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

**i) Impact on educational attainment among children from economically deprived backgrounds**

Implementation of the preferred option would impact on any pupils from economically deprived backgrounds currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School. All pupils currently attending the school, including any from economically deprived backgrounds, would need to transfer to alternative schools. Free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with Council's home to school transport policy, however it is acknowledged that there would be an impact on families due to the requirement to travel to school events, which could have a greater impact on children from economically deprived backgrounds.

Based on PLASC figures from January 2020, approximately 10% of pupils attending Churchstoke C.P. School were eligible for Free School Meals, therefore it is acknowledged that the proposal would impact on some pupils from economically deprived backgrounds. However, whilst there would be an impact on these pupils in the short term as they would need to transfer to alternative schools, it is likely that they would transfer to larger schools, would be able to provide more opportunities to the pupils, therefore having an overall positive impact.

**ii) Land and Buildings**

**Comparison of the quality of accommodation at the school from which pupils would be transferred**

Information about the quality of accommodation at Churchstoke C.P. School and other schools to which pupils may transfer is provided in Appendix A.

**Information on any building works necessary to ensure that transferred children can be accommodated**

No building works are necessary as there is sufficient capacity at alternative provision in Powys for existing Churchstoke C.P. School pupils.

**Details of any potential transfer or disposal of land or buildings that may need to occur as a result of the proposals**

Any sites which are surplus following any school closure would be disposed of in accordance with the Council's asset management policy.

**Is the school / schools involved subject to any trust or charitable interests which might be affected by the proposals, for example in relation to the use or disposal of land?**

Churchstoke C.P. School is not subject to any trust or charitable interest which might be affected by the proposal.

**iii) Walking routes to school**

Should the proposal be implemented, walking routes which are currently established for Churchstoke C.P. School would no longer be required, as pupils would attend alternative schools.

For those pupils for whom Churchstoke C.P. School is currently the closest school, additional travel would be required to access alternative provision. For these pupils, it is unlikely that walking or cycling to the alternative school would be possible.

**iv) School Admissions**

Should the proposal be implemented, admissions to any alternative school in Powys would continue to be administered by the Council in accordance with the Council's Admissions Policy, which is available on-line at:  
<https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/1158/Applying-for-a-School-Place>

For pupils wishing to transfer to schools in Shropshire, this would be administered by Shropshire County Council in accordance with their

Admissions Policy which is available at: [www.shropshire.gov.uk/school-admissions/](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/school-admissions/).

**v) Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP)**

The proposal is to close an English-medium primary school. The proposal is not linked to the targets in the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

The proposal would not expand or reduce the availability of Welsh language provision.

**19. SPECIFIC FACTORS IN THE CONSIDERATION OF SCHOOL CLOSURES**

**i) Whether the establishment of multi-site schools might be considered as a means of retaining buildings, or the reasons for not pursuing this option**

A range of options have been considered in respect of Churchstoke C.P. School, these are outlined in Appendix C of this document, as well as an assessment of each option which includes a summary of the weaknesses / threats associated with each.

Pupil numbers at Churchstoke C.P. School are low, and whilst some increase in pupil numbers has been seen recently following housing developments in the village, the school is projected to remain a small school. Establishing a multi-site school would not address this issue.

**ii) Whether alternatives to closure, such as clustering, collaboration or federation with other schools, might be considered or the reasons for not pursuing these as an alternative**

Federation of Churchstoke C.P. School is not a viable option as there are no other C.P. schools in the vicinity which Churchstoke C.P. School could federate with, therefore this is not a possible option.

**iii) Whether the possibility of making fuller use of the existing buildings as a community or educational resource could be explored**

The Council's view is that making more use of the existing building as a community or educational resource would not address the issues identified in respect of Churchstoke C.P. School.

Pupil numbers at Churchstoke C.P. School are low, and whilst some increase in pupil numbers has been seen recently following housing developments in the village, the school is projected to remain a small school. Establishing a multi-site school would not address this issue.

**iv) The overall effect of closure on the local community (including the loss of school based facilities which are used by the local community)**

Implementation of the preferred option would mean that there would no longer be provision in Churchstoke. It is acknowledged that this would have a negative impact on the Churchstoke community, including the loss of any community facilities associated with the school from the village. However, there is a Community Hall in Churchstoke, which would continue to be available should there be no school in the village.

An initial community impact assessment has been carried out, with input from the school to identify the potential impact on the community. This will be updated throughout the process to reflect any feedback received, and will be considered by the Council's Cabinet as part of the decision making process.

**v) How parents' and pupils' engagement with any alternative schools and any facilities they may offer could be supported**

Should the Council proceed with the statutory process and eventually implementation of the preferred option, support would be provided to pupils and their parents as part of the transition process, to ensure full engagement with their new schools. The nature of this support will depend on the needs of the parents / pupils, however this could include meetings with new headteacher and receiving schools to ease transition into their new school.

## **21. EQUALITY AND COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Draft impact assessments have been carried out in respect of the proposal. These will be updated following the consultation period to reflect any additional issues raised. The assessments are available on the Council's website:

<https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/10567/Churchstoke-C.P.-School>

A summary of the assessments are provided below:

**i) Equalities impact assessment**

Should the proposal be implemented, Churchstoke C.P. School would close, and pupils transfer to their nearest alternative school in Powys.

This would have a significant impact on pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School, including any pupils belonging to the protected characteristic groups that attend that school, as some additional travel would be required in order to attend their nearest alternative school.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposals would impact on pupils belonging to the protected characteristic groups that attend the school, there is no reason to believe that the nearest alternative schools would be unable

to meet the needs of pupils belonging to the protected characteristic groups that would be affected, including pupils with Additional Learning Needs and pupils eligible for Free School Meals.

**ii) Impact on the community**

It is clear that a wide range of extra curricular activities are available to pupils at Churchstoke. Should there be no school in Churchstoke, pupils would transfer to alternative schools. These would be larger schools, and the expectation is that at least a similar range of activities would be available for pupils. However, it is acknowledged that pupils would need to travel to the alternative schools, which could impact on their ability to access activities, particularly where these take place after school.

Should the proposal be implemented, this would mean that there would be no school provision in the village of Churchstoke. The information provided above indicates that there is currently extensive community use of the Churchstoke school building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. There is a village hall located in Churchstoke, therefore should the school no longer be available, community events and activities could take place at the hall.

It is also acknowledged that implementation of the proposal would result in additional travel to school for pupils for whom Churchstoke is currently their closest school. Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the home to school transport policy which is in operation at that time, it is acknowledged that there could be an impact on some pupils' ability to access after school activities, and could impact on the ability of parents to take part in school events, meetings etc.

## **PART D – CONSULTATION DETAILS**

### **Who will we consult with?**

The Council will consult with a range of stakeholders as required by the School Organisation Code, which include the following:

- Parents, carers and guardians at Churchstoke C.P. School and other schools which may be affected by the proposals
- Governors at Churchstoke C.P. School and other schools which may be affected by the proposals
- Pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School and other schools which may be affected by the proposals
- Staff at Churchstoke C.P. School and other schools which may be affected by the proposals
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities
- The Welsh Minister for Education
- Shropshire County Council
- Local Powys Councillors
- Town and Community Councils in the local area
- The prospective candidates for Member of the Senedd for Montgomeryshire and prospective candidates for Members of the Senedd for the Mid and West Wales region
- The MP for Montgomeryshire
- Estyn
- Teaching and staff trade unions
- ERW
- The Police & Crime Commissioner for Dyfed Powys
- Nursery providers in the local area
- Mudiad Meithrin
- The Powys Children and Young People's Partnership

Consultation with pupils will take place in accordance with the Welsh children and young people's national participation standards<sup>10</sup>.

### **The consultation period**

The consultation period will commence on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and end on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

### **The statutory process**

Consultation on this proposal will follow the guidelines set out by the Welsh Government in the revised School Organisation Code which became operational on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018. The process is summarised below:

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://gov.wales/children-and-young-peoples-national-participation-standards>

## **i) Consultation**

Consultation will start on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and will end on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Feedback from the consultation will be collated and summarised, and a consultation report will be produced and shared with stakeholders.

It is important to note that responses made to the consultation will not be counted as objections to the proposal, and that only objections can be registered following publication of a statutory notice.

The Council's Cabinet will consider the consultation report and the feedback received during the consultation period, and will decide whether to proceed with the proposal, to make changes to the proposal, or to not proceed with the proposal. If the Cabinet decides not to proceed, that will be the end of this proposal.

It is anticipated that the Consultation Report will be considered by the Cabinet in September 2021.

## **ii) Statutory notice**

If the Cabinet decides to proceed with the proposal, statutory notices would be published after the Cabinet meeting. There would then be a period of 28 days for people to submit written objections.

If there were objections, the Council would publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and the Council's response to them before the end of 7 days beginning with the day of the local authority's determination. Only written objections submitted during the statutory notice period will be considered as objections and included in this report. Comments submitted as part of the consultation period would not be counted as objections. Should stakeholders wish their consultation responses to be considered as objections, they would need to be re-submitted in writing during the statutory notice period.

A further report would be presented to the Council's Cabinet, which they would consider alongside the objection report, in order to decide whether or not to approve the proposal.

It is anticipated that a final decision would be made by December 2021.

## **iii) Implementation**

If the Council's Cabinet were to approve the proposal, it would be implemented in accordance with the date given in the statutory notice or any subsequently modified date.

## How to respond to the consultation

A consultation response form is attached to this document. An online version is also available on the Council's website:

<https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/10567/Churchstoke-C.P.-School>

Alternatively, you can respond in writing.

Completed forms and other written responses should be sent to the following address:

*Transforming Education Team, Powys County Council, County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, LD1 5LG*

*E-mail: [school.consultation@powys.gov.uk](mailto:school.consultation@powys.gov.uk)*

All correspondence should be received by the **9<sup>th</sup> June 2021**.

If you have any further questions about this proposal, you can contact the Transforming Education Team using the above contact details, or by phoning (01597) 826618.

## APPENDIX A - KEY DATA

Key data about the affected schools is provided below:

### 1. Churchstoke C.P. School

#### General information

	School Type	Language Category	Admission Number	Rural School? <sup>11</sup>
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	Community Primary  School building owned by Powys County Council	English-medium	10	Yes

#### Pupil Numbers

##### i) Current pupil numbers<sup>12</sup>

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	8	4	5	3	10	2	4	36

##### ii) Historical pupil numbers<sup>13</sup>

	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2015	Jan. 2016	Jan. 2017	Jan. 2018	Jan. 2019	Jan. 2020
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	64	54	53	41	39	28	25

##### iii) Projected pupil numbers (Birth rate)<sup>14</sup>

	Jan. 2021 <sup>15</sup>	Jan. 2022	Jan. 2023	Jan. 2024	Jan. 2025
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	22	21	21	17	16

<sup>11</sup> Annex F of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2018) (<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/school-organisation-code-second-edition.pdf>)

includes a list of 'rural schools', to which the 'Presumption against the closure of rural schools' applies.

<sup>12</sup> Finance NOR – 2020 Pupil Count Day (6<sup>th</sup> November 2020)

<sup>13</sup> PLASC

<sup>14</sup> Powys Schools Service Projections (R – Yr6) based on PLASC 2020 & Birth Rates

<sup>15</sup> These are the projected figures based on PLASC 2020 information, therefore include a projection for January 2021. PLASC 2021 information and projected pupil numbers based on PLASC 2021 are not yet available.

iv) **Projected pupil numbers (Finance projections)<sup>16</sup>**

	Jan. 2021	Jan. 2022	Jan. 2023	Jan. 2024	Jan. 2025
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	36	39	44	N/A	N/A

**Building Capacity and Condition**

i) **Capacity**

The following table provides information about the school's current capacity:

	Current Capacity <sup>17</sup>	Currently Filled	Surplus Capacity
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	72	36 (50.0%)	36 (50.0%)

ii) **Building condition<sup>18</sup>**

In 2009, Welsh Government carried out condition and suitability assessments of the school.

	Condition	Suitability	Access to hall on site
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	C Poor	B/C Good to bad	Yes

**Quality and Standards of Education**

i) **Estyn**

	<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>
<b>Date of Inspection</b>	April 2015
<b>Standards</b>	Good
<b>Wellbeing</b>	Adequate
<b>Learning experiences</b>	Good

<sup>16</sup> Powys Finance Projections – February 2021

<sup>17</sup> Welsh Government School Places Return – August 2020

<sup>18</sup> Premises Data Return to Welsh Government – 2020

<b>Teaching</b>	Good
<b>Care, support and guidance</b>	Good
<b>Learning environment</b>	Good
<b>Leadership</b>	Adequate
<b>Improving quality</b>	Adequate
<b>Partnership working</b>	Good
<b>Resource management</b>	Adequate
<b>Follow Up</b>	School to draw up action plan. Estyn to monitor progress.  The school was removed from Estyn monitoring in November 2016.

ii) **School Categorisation<sup>19</sup>**

	<b>Standards Group</b>	<b>Improvement Capacity</b>	<b>Support Capacity</b>
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	N/A	B	Yellow

**Financial information**

i) **Cost per pupil<sup>20</sup>**

	<b>Budget share per school</b>	<b>Budget share per pupil</b>	<b>Notional SEN budget</b>	<b>Non ISB funds devolved to the school</b>
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	£202,000	£7,475	£16,000	£7,000
<b>Powys average (Primary)</b>	N/A	£4,264	N/A	N/A

**Equalities Information**

i) **National identity**

<sup>19</sup> 2019. Categorisations were not carried out in 2020 due to Covid-19.

<sup>20</sup> Section 52 Budget Statement 2020/2021

(Pupils aged 5 or over on the 31st August 2019)

	British	English	Irish	Scottish	Welsh	Other	Not supplied	Refused
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	32.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.0%

ii) **Ethnic Group**

(Pupils aged 5 or over on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019)

	White British	Other known ethnicity	Information not yet obtained / not recorded
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	92.0%	0.0%	8.0%

iii) **English as an Additional Language**

	% EAL	% EAL A/B/C
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	0.0%	0.0%

iv) **Free School Meals<sup>21</sup>**

	Pupils who had a free school meal on Census day
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	8.0%

v) **Pupils in care<sup>22</sup>**

	Pupils in care
<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	0%

vi) **SEN/ALN<sup>23</sup>**

	School Action	School Action Plus	Statement

<sup>21</sup> PLASC 2020

<sup>22</sup> PLASC 2020

<sup>23</sup> PLASC 2020

<b>Churchstoke C.P. School</b>	16.0%	4.0%	0.0%
--------------------------------	-------	------	------

## 2. Other schools that could be affected

Should the proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School be implemented, pupils would transfer to their nearest alternative school. Whilst the Council's preferred option is that pupils transfer to their nearest alternative school in Powys, it is possible that some pupils would transfer to provision in Shropshire, which may be closer to their homes.

The expectation is that the number of pupils transferring to each school would be small, and therefore the impact on these schools would not be significant. However, information about schools in Powys and Shropshire to which pupils may transfer is provided below:

	<b>School Type</b>	<b>Language Category</b>	<b>Admission Number <sup>24</sup></b>
<b>Chirbury CofE Primary School (Shropshire)</b>	Voluntary Controlled Primary	English medium	12
<b>Montgomery C. in W. School</b>	Voluntary Controlled Primary	English medium	21
<b>Bishop's Castle Primary School (Shropshire)</b>	Academy Primary	English medium	25
<b>Long Mountain CofE Primary School (Shropshire)</b>	Voluntary Controlled Primary	English medium	11

### Pupil Numbers

#### i) Current pupil numbers<sup>25</sup>

	<b>R</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Chirbury CofE Primary School</b>	12	7	6	7	6	19	9	66
<b>Montgomery C. in W.</b>	11	13	12	17	10	15	12	90

<sup>24</sup> Powys Schools – Powys County Council Admission Arrangements and Information 2021/22 / Shropshire Schools – Get Information about Schools Service – GOV.UK & own school websites & Shropshire Parents Guide to Education 2021/22

<sup>25</sup> Powys Schools - Finance NOR – 2020 Pupil Count Day (6<sup>th</sup> November 2020) / Shropshire Schools – Shropshire Council

School								
<b>Bishop's Castle Primary School</b>	20	11	23	19	21	24	17	135
<b>Long Mountain CofE Primary School</b>	19	12	17	17	12	12	9	98

ii) **Historical pupil numbers<sup>26</sup>**

	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2015	Jan. 2016	Jan. 2017	Jan. 2018	Jan. 2019	Jan. 2020
<b>Chirbury CofE Primary School</b>	58	55	59	55	52	48	48
<b>Montgomery C.W Primary School</b>	124	127	125	116	107	103	97
<b>Bishops Castle Primary School</b>	145	135	127	133	136	143	144
<b>Long Mountain CofE Primary School</b>	153	133	114	87	92	102	96

iii) **Projected pupil numbers (Birth rate)<sup>27</sup>**

	Jan. 2021	Jan. 2022	Jan. 2023	Jan. 2024	Jan. 2025
<b>Chirbury CofE Primary School</b>	65	66	60	66	73

<sup>26</sup> PLASC 2020 / Shropshire Schools – Spring Census

<sup>27</sup> Powys Schools Service Projections (R – Yr6) based on PLASC 2020 & Birth Rates / Shropshire Schools – Forecast with Housing

<b>Montgomery C. in W. Primary School</b>	95	95	91	95	92
<b>Bishops Castle Primary School</b>	133	136	146	143	151
<b>Long Mountain CofE Primary School</b>	100	102	110	107	98

iv) **Projected pupil numbers (Finance projections)<sup>28</sup>**

	<b>Jan. 2021</b>	<b>Jan. 2022</b>	<b>Jan. 2023</b>	<b>Jan. 2024</b>	<b>Jan. 2025</b>
<b>Chirbury CofE Primary School</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Montgomery C. In W. Primary School</b>	90	88	83	N/A	N/A
<b>Bishops Castle Primary School</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Long Mountain CofE Primary School</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Building Capacity and Condition**

i) **Capacity**

The following table provides information about the school's current capacity:

	<b>Current Capacity<sup>29</sup></b>	<b>Currently Filled</b>	<b>Surplus Capacity</b>
<b>Chirbury CofE Primary School</b>	84	66 (78.6%)	18 (21.4%)
<b>Montgomery C. in W. Primary School</b>	119	90 (75.6%)	29 (24.4%)
<b>Bishops Castle Primary School</b>	175	135 (77.1%)	40 (22.9%)
<b>Long Mountain CofE Primary School</b>	100	98 (98.0%)	2 (2.0%)

<sup>28</sup> Powys Finance Projections based on data provided by the school – November 2020

<sup>29</sup> Welsh Government School Places Return – August 2020 / Get Information about Schools – GOV.UK

## ii) Building condition

### **Powys Schools**

In 2009, Welsh Government carried out condition and suitability assessments of the school.

	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Suitability</b>
<b>Montgomery C. in W. Primary School</b>	C	B/C

### **Shropshire Schools**<sup>30</sup>

The following is a summary of the condition of Chirbury CE Primary School and Long Mountain CE Primary School:

#### **Chirbury CE Primary School, Chirbury**

The property consists of a pre-1919 traditional school building, supplemented by significant demountable building provision (RG Stones).

The demountable classrooms were provided around 1993 and, whilst sectional build and considered temporary, have a life expectancy of 25 years plus and are considered to be in reasonable condition. Based on the average of the condition rating scores (A-D) for building fabric and electrical and mechanical installations, the property could be considered to have a B rating – satisfactory.

In addition to this, regular maintenance actions are carried where legislation dictates.

#### **Long Mountain CE Primary School, Worthen**

The original building dates from around the early 1980s and was extended and improved in 2018 with a new classroom, nursery accommodation and new front entrance. Based on the average of the condition rating scores (A-D) for building fabric and electrical and mechanical installations, the property could be considered to have a B rating – satisfactory.

In addition to this, regular maintenance actions are carried where legislation dictates.

#### **Bishops Castle Primary School**

Bishops Castle Primary School is an academy, therefore the local authority does not have up-to-date information on the condition of the school's buildings.

---

<sup>30</sup> Information from Shropshire County Council, April 2021

## Standards of Education

### i) Estyn

	<b>Montgomery C. in W. School</b>
<b>Date of Inspection</b>	February 2019
<b>Standards</b>	Good
<b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b>	Good
<b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>	Good
<b>Care, Support and Guidance</b>	Good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Good
<b>Follow up</b>	The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

### ii) Ofsted

	<b>Chirbury CofE Primary School</b>
<b>Date of Inspection</b>	December 2019
<b>The quality of education</b>	Good
<b>Behaviour and attitudes</b>	Good
<b>Personal development</b>	Good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Good
<b>Early years provision</b>	Good

	<b>Bishops Castle Primary School</b>
<b>Date of Inspection</b>	December 2013
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	Good
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	Good
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	Good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Good

	<b>Long Mountain CofE Primary School</b>
<b>Date of Inspection</b>	November 2016
<b>Effectiveness of leadership and management</b>	Good
<b>Quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	Good
<b>Personal development, behaviour and welfare</b>	Good
<b>Outcomes for pupils</b>	Good
<b>Early years provision</b>	Good

iii) **School Categorisation (Wales)<sup>31</sup>**

	<b>Standards Group</b>	<b>Support Capacity</b>
<b>Montgomery C. in W. Primary School</b>	N/A	Yellow

iv) **Overall Performance (England)<sup>32</sup>**

	<b>% of pupils meeting expected standard<sup>33</sup></b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Maths</b>
<b>Chirbury CofE Primary School</b>	100%	3.8 Average	2.3 Average	2 Average
<b>Bishops Castle Primary School</b>	65%	-3.8 Well below average	-2.8 Average	-1.4 Average
<b>Long Mountain CofE Primary School</b>	21%	-5 Well below average	-4.1 Well below average	-8.7 Well below average

<sup>31</sup> 2019

<sup>32</sup> Compare School Performance Service – GOV.UK for performance standards at end of Key Stage 2 in 2019

<sup>33</sup> Pupils are meeting the expected standard if they achieve a scaled score of 100 or more in their reading and maths tests, and their teacher assesses them as 'working at the expected standard' or better in writing.

## Financial information

### i) Cost per pupil<sup>34</sup> (Section 52 Budget Statement, 2020/2021)

	Budget share per school	Budget share per pupil	Notional SEN budget	Non ISB funds devolved to the school
Montgomery C. in W. Primary School	£407,000	£4,153	£10,000	£10,000
Powys average (Primary)	N/A	£4,264	N/A	N/A

### ii) Total income and cost per pupil<sup>35</sup>

	Total income	Total expenditure per pupil
Chirbury CofE Primary School	£393,723	£6,703
Bishops Castle Primary School	£714,157	£5,389
Long Mountain CofE Primary School	£642,419	£5,611

## Equalities Information

### i) National identity

(Pupils aged 5 or over on the 31st August 2019)

	British	English	Irish	Scottish	Welsh	Other	Not supplied	Refused
Chirbury CofE Primary School	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Montgomery C. in W. Primary School	49.0%	14.4%	0.0%	0.0%	13.4%	6.3%	0.0%	16.5%
Bishops Castle Primary	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

<sup>34</sup> Section 52 Budget Statement 2020/2021

<sup>35</sup> Schools Financial Benchmarking Service for 2019/2020

School								
<b>Long Mountain CofE Primary School</b>	N/A							

ii) **Ethnic Group**  
(Pupils aged 5 or over on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019)

	<b>White British</b>	<b>Other known ethnicity</b>	<b>Information not yet obtained / not recorded</b>
<b>Chirbury CofE Primary School</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Montgomery C. in W. Primary School</b>	77.3%	4.1%	16.5%
<b>Bishops Castle Primary School</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Long Mountain CofE Primary School</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A

iii) **English as an Additional Language<sup>36</sup>**

	<b>% EAL</b>	<b>% EAL A/B/C</b>
<b>Chirbury CofE Primary School</b>	4.2%	N/A
<b>Montgomery C. in W. Primary School</b>	3.1%	0.0%
<b>Bishops Castle Primary School</b>	2.8%	N/A
<b>Long Mountain CofE Primary School</b>	0.8%	N/A

iv) **Free School Meals<sup>37</sup>**

<sup>36</sup> PLASC 2020 / GOV.UK Compare School Performance Service – Pupil Population 2018/2019

<sup>37</sup> PLASC 2020 / GOV.UK – Get Information about Schools

	Number of pupils who had a free school meal on Census day
<b>Chirbury CofE Primary School</b>	6.0%
<b>Montgomery C. in W. Primary School</b>	0.0%
<b>Bishops Castle Primary School</b>	14.6%
<b>Long Mountain CofE Primary School</b>	16.2%

v) **Pupils in care<sup>38</sup>**

	Number of pupils in care
<b>Chirbury CofE Primary School</b>	N/A
<b>Montgomery C. in W. Primary School</b>	0.0%
<b>Bishops Castle Primary School</b>	N/A
<b>Long Mountain CofE Primary School</b>	N/A

vi) **SEN/ALN<sup>39</sup>**

	School Action	School Action Plus	Statement
<b>Montgomery C. in W. Primary School</b>	7.2%	2.1%	0.0%

vii) **Education, Health and Care Plans<sup>40</sup>**

	Number of pupils with SEN Support	Number of pupils with an SEN Education, Health and Care Plan
<b>Chirbury CofE Primary School</b>	14.6%	2.1%

<sup>38</sup> PLASC 2020 / England School Census 2019/2020

<sup>39</sup> PLASC 2020

<sup>40</sup> GOV.UK Compare School Performance Service – Pupil Population 2018/2019

<b>Bishops Castle Primary School</b>	16.8%	1.4%
<b>Long Mountain CofE Primary School</b>	16.1%	1.6%

## APPENDIX B – SWOT AND CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

### 1. SWOT ANALYSES

SWOT analyses for each of these three options identified in section 5 are provided below:

#### Option 1: Status quo – continue as a standalone school

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would retain provision in Churchstoke</li> <li>- There would be no additional transport costs</li> <li>- Would continue to provide access to a community primary school</li> <li>- No requirement for a reorganisation process</li> <li>- No change for staff</li> <li>- No impact on pupils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pupil numbers at Churchstoke would continue to be low, based on the projections</li> <li>- Would not lead to a rationalisation of primary provision</li> <li>- Would still need to maintain the Churchstoke building</li> <li>- Would not reduce surplus places</li> <li>- Would not lead to a financial saving</li> <li>- Would not address issues with the Churchstoke CP School building</li> <li>- Would not address the high budget per pupil</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunities for further collaboration with other neighbouring schools to provide increased opportunities for pupils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not able to secure retention of staff due to small number of pupils</li> </ul>

#### Option 2: Federation with another school

This is not a viable option as there are no other C.P. Schools in the vicinity which Churchstoke C.P. School could federate with, therefore this option is **DISCOUNTED**.

#### Option 3: Merge with Montgomery C. in W. School to establish a new school on two sites

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would retain provision in Churchstoke</li> <li>- Pupils would continue to attend school on their current site</li> <li>- More opportunities could be provided to pupils from being part of a larger school</li> <li>- There would be no additional transport costs</li> <li>- Could provide a financial saving to the Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pupil numbers at Churchstoke would continue to be low, based on the projections</li> <li>- Churchstoke pupils would still be taught separately</li> <li>- Would not reduce surplus places</li> <li>- Would not lead to a rationalisation of primary provision</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunity for all staff to secure positions in the new school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would still need to maintain the Churchstoke building</li> <li>- Would also impact on the staff of Montgomery C. in W. School</li> <li>- Different in the size of the two schools – would have a disproportionate impact on Montgomery C. in W. School</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunities for further collaboration across the sites</li> <li>- More opportunities for networking and sharing good practice between staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Possible tension between Church in Wales status and C.P. status</li> </ul>

**Option 4: Close Churchstoke C.P. School, but retain the site as part of Montgomery C. in W. School**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would retain provision in Churchstoke</li> <li>- Pupils would continue to attend school on their current site</li> <li>- More opportunities could be provided to the pupils</li> <li>- There would be no additional transport costs</li> <li>- Could provide a financial saving to the Council</li> <li>- Montgomery C. in W. School would retain its identity</li> <li>- Minimal impact on staff at Montgomery C. in W. School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pupil numbers at Churchstoke would continue to be low, based on the projections</li> <li>- Churchstoke pupils would still be taught separately</li> <li>- Would not lead to a rationalisation of primary provision</li> <li>- Would still need to maintain the Churchstoke building</li> <li>- Would not reduce surplus places</li> <li>- Would not address issues with the Churchstoke building</li> <li>- Churchstoke C.P. School would lose its identity</li> <li>- Possible reduction in staffing requirements</li> <li>- There would be no access to C.P. provision locally</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunities for further collaboration across the sites</li> <li>- More opportunities for networking and sharing good practice between staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Possible tension between Church in Wales status and C.P. status</li> </ul>

**Option 5: Close Churchstoke C.P. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools in Powys**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers</li> <li>- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools</li> <li>- Revenue saving to the Council</li> <li>- Pupils would attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities</li> <li>- Pupil would be taught in classes with peers of similar ages</li> <li>- Pupils would attend schools with better quality accommodation</li> <li>- Minimal impact on any other schools</li> <li>- Would enable pupils to continue to access provision in Powys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional travel for those pupils for whom Churchstoke C.P. School is currently the closest school</li> <li>- Pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School would have to transfer to alternative provision</li> <li>- Loss of provision from Churchstoke</li> <li>- Possible impact on early years provision in Churchstoke</li> <li>- Impact on the current staff of Churchstoke C.P. School</li> <li>- Impact on the Churchstoke community</li> <li>- Some pupils may choose to transfer to alternative provision in England</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunity for the Council to realise a capital receipt from sale of the school site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loss of pupils to England</li> </ul>

**Option 6: Close Churchstoke C.P. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers</li> <li>- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools</li> <li>- Revenue saving to the Council</li> <li>- Pupils would attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities</li> <li>- Pupil would be taught in classes with peers of similar ages</li> <li>- Pupils would attend schools with better quality accommodation</li> <li>- Minimal impact on any other schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional travel for those pupils for whom Churchstoke C.P. School is currently the closest school</li> <li>- Pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School would have to transfer to alternative provision</li> <li>- Loss of provision from Churchstoke</li> <li>- Possible impact on early years provision in Churchstoke</li> <li>- Impact on the current staff of Churchstoke C.P. School</li> <li>- Impact on the Churchstoke community</li> <li>- Some pupils may transfer to alternative provision in England</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunity for the Council to realise a capital receipt from sale of the school site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loss of pupils to England</li> </ul>

## 2. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

The options have also been assessed against the following Critical Success Factors:

Critical Success Factor	Description
1 – Strategic fit and business needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The option must align with the Council’s Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-2030, to include the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Address the challenges facing education in Powys, as outlined in the Council’s Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-2030</li> <li>- Align with the Vision and Guiding Principles outlined in the Council’s Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-2030</li> <li>- Align with the Strategic Aims and Objectives outlined in the Council’s Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-2030</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The option must optimise the benefits of the Council’s Transforming Education Programme</li> </ul>
2 – Value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The option must optimise the resources available for the delivery of learning</li> <li>• The option must provide value for money in the delivery of learning</li> </ul>
3 – Potential achievability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The option must be achievable within current legislation</li> <li>• The option must be operationally achievable</li> <li>• The option must be physically achievable</li> </ul>
4 – Potential affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which the option is affordable within the Council’s forecasted revenue</li> <li>• The extent to which the option is affordable within the forecasted capital funding available to the Council</li> </ul>

Each option has been assessed against the Critical Success Factors based on the following criteria:

✓ – Meets    ? – Could meet    x – Does not meet

The assessment for each option is as follows:

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6
1 – Strategic fit and business needs	x	X	x	x	✓	?
2 – Value for money	x	X	x	x	✓	✓
3 – Potential achievability	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
5 – Potential affordability	x	X	x	x	✓	✓
<b>Total ✓</b>	1	0	1	1	4	3
<b>Total x</b>	3	4	3	3	0	0
<b>Outcome</b>	Discount	Discount	Discount	Discount	<b>Preferred option</b>	<b>Possible option</b>

## APPENDIX C – IMPACT OF EACH OPTION ON RURAL SCHOOLS CRITERIA

The likely impact of each option on quality and standards, the community and travelling arrangements is considered below:

Option	Likely impact on quality and standards	Likely impact on the community	Likely impact of different travelling arrangements
<b>Option 1: Status Quo – continue as a standalone school</b>	There would be no impact on quality and standards – pupils would continue to attend the current provision at Churchstoke.	There would be no impact on the community – provision would continue to be available in Churchstoke.	There would be no impact on travel arrangements – pupils would continue to attend Churchstoke C.P. School.
<b>Option 2: Federation with another school</b>	Discounted – N/A	Discounted – N/A	Discounted – N/A
<b>Option 3: Merge with Montgomery C. in W. School to establish a new school on two sites</b>	<p>It is anticipated that this option would have a positive impact on quality and standards through the establishment of one larger school, with a larger number of pupils and a larger team of staff.</p> <p>Whilst pupils would continue to attend separate sites, therefore would not benefit from all being taught together, this option would provide additional opportunities for staff expertise and resources to be shared across both sites.</p>	<p>The impact on the community would be minimal – provision would continue to be available in Churchstoke.</p> <p>However, one new governing body would be responsible for both sites, therefore there could be a perceived reduction in community involvement in management of the school, depending on the make up of the federated governing body.</p> <p>In addition, it is possible that joint school activities would take place on the Montgomery site as more pupils attend this site, which could</p>	<p>Pupils would continue to attend school on the current site of Churchstoke C.P. School.</p> <p>However, some additional travel may be required between schools in order to access activities and events.</p>

		lead to a reduction in activity on the Churchstoke site.	
<b>Option 4: Close Churchstoke C.P. School, but retain the site as part of Montgomery C. in W. School</b>	<p>Implementation of this option would result in closure of Churchstoke C.P. School, however provision would continue on the current site. Churchstoke C.P. School are both in the yellow support category based on the 2019 categorisations, therefore it is not anticipated that the impact on quality and standards would be negative.</p> <p>The school would be a larger school, with a larger number of pupils and a larger team of staff, which could have a positive impact on the opportunities available for pupils and staff.</p> <p>Whilst pupils would continue to attend separate sites, therefore would not benefit from all being taught together, this option would provide additional opportunities for staff expertise and resources to be shared across both sites.</p>	<p>Provision would continue to be available in Churchstoke. However, the site would be managed by the current governing body of Montgomery C. in W. School, therefore there could be a perceived reduction in community involvement in management of the school.</p> <p>In addition, it is possible that joint school activities would take place on the Montgomery site as more pupils attend this site, which could lead to a reduction in activity on the Churchstoke site.</p>	<p>Pupils would continue to attend school on the current site of Churchstoke C.P. School.</p> <p>However, some additional travel may be required between schools in order to access activities and events.</p>
<b>Option 5: Close Churchstoke C.P. School, pupils to attend nearest</b>	Implementation of this option would mean that pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School would transfer to their nearest	There would be a significant impact on the community of Churchstoke as there would be no provision in Churchstoke.	Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Churchstoke School.

<p><b>alternative schools in Powys</b></p>	<p>alternative schools in Powys. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative Powys school would be Montgomery C. in W. School.</p> <p>Based on the latest categorisations carried out in 2019, both Churchstoke C.P. School and Montgomery C. in W. School are categorised as Yellow schools. The Council's view is that quality and standards at Montgomery C. in W. School would be at least as good as the provision at Churchstoke.</p>	<p>Should the school close, the Council would need to determine the future use of the building. Should the Council declare the building to be surplus to requirements and seek to sell the building, this would mean that the school's facilities would no longer be available to the community in Churchstoke.</p> <p>Early years provision is currently provided on the school site, closure of the school could also mean that early years provision would no longer be available to the community.</p>	<p>Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities / events.</p>
<p><b>Option 6: Close Churchstoke C.P. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools</b></p>	<p>Implementation of this option would mean that pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School would transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative schools would be Chirbury C. of E. School which is located in Shropshire.</p> <p>Chirbury C. of E. School was last inspected by Ofsted in December 2019, when the school's overall effectiveness was judged to be Good. It is likely therefore that the</p>	<p>There would be a significant impact on the community of Churchstoke as there would be no provision in Churchstoke.</p> <p>Should the school close, the Council would need to determine the future use of the building. Should the Council declare the building to be surplus to requirements and seek to sell the building, this would mean that the school's facilities would no longer be available to the community in Churchstoke.</p>	<p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Churchstoke School.</p> <p>Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities / events.</p>

	quality and standards at the school would be comparable to that available in Churchstoke C.P. School.	Early years provision is currently provided on the school site, closure of the school could also mean that early years provision would no longer be available to the community.	
--	---	---	--

## APPENDIX D – REASONS WHY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS HAVE NOT BEEN TAKEN FORWARD

Option	Description	Reason for discounting
1	Status quo – continue as a standalone school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pupil numbers at Churchstoke would continue to be low, based on the projections</li> <li>- Would not lead to a rationalisation of primary provision</li> <li>- Would still need to maintain the Churchstoke building</li> <li>- Would not reduce surplus places</li> <li>- Would not lead to a financial saving</li> <li>- Would not address issues with the Churchstoke CP School building</li> <li>- Would not address the high budget per pupil</li> <li>- Does not meet the Critical Success Factors</li> </ul>
2	Federation with another school	This is not a viable option as there are no other C.P. schools in the vicinity which Churchstoke C.P. School could federate with, therefore this option is <b>DISCOUNTED</b>
3	Merge with Montgomery C. in W. School to establish a new school on two sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pupil numbers at Churchstoke would continue to be low, based on the projections</li> <li>- Churchstoke pupils would still be taught separately</li> <li>- Would not reduce surplus places</li> <li>- Would not lead to a rationalisation of primary provision</li> <li>- Would still need to maintain the Churchstoke building</li> <li>- Would also impact on the staff of Montgomery C. in W. School</li> <li>- Difference in the size of the two schools – would have a disproportionate impact on Montgomery C. in W. School</li> <li>- Does not meet the Critical Success Factors</li> </ul>
4	Close Churchstoke C.P. School, but retain the site as part of Montgomery C. in W. School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pupil numbers at Churchstoke would continue to be low, based on the projections</li> <li>- Churchstoke pupils would still be taught separately</li> <li>- Would not lead to a rationalisation of primary provision</li> <li>- Would still need to maintain the Churchstoke building</li> <li>- Would not reduce surplus places</li> <li>- Would not address issues with the Churchstoke building</li> <li>- Churchstoke C.P. School would lose its identity</li> <li>- Possible reduction in staffing requirements</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There would be no access to C.P. provision locally</li> <li>- Does not meet the Critical Success Factors</li> </ul>
5	Close Churchstoke C.P. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools in Powys	N / A – This is the option which has been taken forward.
6	Close Churchstoke C.P. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional travel for those pupils for whom Churchstoke C.P. School is currently the closest school</li> <li>- Pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School would have to transfer to alternative provision</li> <li>- Loss of provision from Churchstoke</li> <li>- Impact on the current staff of Churchstoke C.P. School</li> <li>- Impact on the Churchstoke community</li> <li>- Some pupils may transfer to alternative provision in England</li> <li>- Does not meet the Critical Success Factors</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX E – RESPONSE FORM

### PROPOSAL TO CLOSE CHURCHSTOKE C.P. SCHOOL

Powys County Council is consulting on a proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School. The proposal is as follows:

- To close Churchstoke C.P. School from the 31st August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools

A consultation document which provides more information about the proposals is available on the Council's website at <http://www.powys.gov.uk/transformingeducation>. This consultation response form gives you the opportunity to let us know your view on the Council's proposal. The response form can also be completed online – a link to the online form is available by following the link above.

The closing date for this consultation is the **9<sup>th</sup> June 2021**. All responses must be received by this date.

For information on how the Transforming Education Team protects and uses personal information collected during consultation processes, please see the Transforming Education privacy notice, which is available via the following link:  
<https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/9803/Transforming-Education-Privacy-Notice>

#### Part 1 – About You

**1. Please indicate how you are associated with the schools affected by this consultation:**

- |                          |                           |                          |                                       |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Parent, carer or guardian | <input type="checkbox"/> | Prospective parent, carer or guardian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Governor                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Member of staff                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Member of the community   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Organisation e.g. Community Council   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No association            | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other                                 |

If you said 'Other' or are responding on behalf of an organisation, please specify:

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Please specify which school you are associated with:**

- |                          |                         |                          |                |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Churchstoke C.P. School | <input type="checkbox"/> | Another school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No association          |                          |                |

If you are associated another school, please specify which school:

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Please provide your postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_





**Impact on the Welsh language**

7. In your opinion, what positive or adverse effects would the proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School have on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

---

---

---

---

8. How do you think the proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School could be formulated or revised so that it would have positive / more positive effects, or so that it would not have adverse effects / less adverse effects on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

---

---

---

---

**Copy of Consultation Report**

9. At the end of the Consultation Period, the Council will publish a Consultation Report, summarising the issues raised in the consultation responses received and providing the Council's response to these issues.

Would you like to be informed of the publication of the consultation report?

Yes

No

If you answered 'Yes', please provide an e-mail address or postal address:

---

**Part 3 – Equalities Information (Optional)**

We want to ensure that we include all sectors of the community in our consultation, and are requesting that you provide this information to enable us to identify whether the consultation has been inclusive. However, these questions are optional.

**10. How old are you?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Under 16	<input type="checkbox"/> 16-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 25-34
<input type="checkbox"/> 35-44	<input type="checkbox"/> 45-54	<input type="checkbox"/> 55-64
<input type="checkbox"/> 65-74	<input type="checkbox"/> 75-84	<input type="checkbox"/> 85+
<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say		

**11. What is your gender?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Gender Fluid
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Binary	<input type="checkbox"/> Gender neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say

**12. Can you understand, speak or write Welsh?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
------------------------------	-----------------------------	--

**13. If you have school-aged children, are they entitled to receive free school meals?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
------------------------------	-----------------------------	--

**14. If you have school-aged children, do they have any additional learning needs?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
------------------------------	-----------------------------	--

**15. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
------------------------------	-----------------------------	--

**16. What is your ethnic group?**

<input type="checkbox"/> White	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> Black, African or Caribbean
<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed	<input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy/Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say		

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire.**

Completed questionnaires should be sent to the following address, to arrive **no later than the 9th June 2021.**

*Transforming Education Team, Powys County Council, County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, LD1 5LG*

*E-mail: [school.consultation@powys.gov.uk](mailto:school.consultation@powys.gov.uk)*

This page is intentionally left blank



## Closure of Churchstoke C.P. School Consultation Report



# Consultation on the closure of Churchstoke C.P. School

## Contents

<b>1. OVERVIEW OF THE CONSULTATION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
i) Consultation methods .....	4
ii) Responses received .....	4
iii) Summary of issues raised .....	5
<b>2. CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>3. CONSULTATION WITH PUPILS</b> .....	<b>13</b>
i) Meeting with the School Council of Churchstoke C.P. School .....	13
ii) Summary of other comments made by pupils.....	22
<b>4. CONSULTATION MEETINGS WITH STAFF AND GOVERNORS</b> .....	<b>24</b>
i) Consultation meeting with Staff of Churchstoke C.P. School .....	24
ii) Consultation meeting with Governors of Churchstoke C.P. School .....	30
<b>5. ESTYN</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b>6. ISSUES RAISED DURING THE CONSULTATION PERIOD</b> .....	<b>41</b>
1. Comments about Churchstoke C.P. school .....	41
2. Comments about current / future pupil numbers.....	67
3. Comments about early years provision.....	90
4. Comments about small and rural schools.....	102
5. Impact on pupils.....	108
6. Impact on protected characteristic groups .....	124
7. Impact on parents / families .....	131
8. Comments about other schools pupils might transfer to .....	132
9. Comments about impact on the community.....	146
10. Travel implications .....	170
11. Comments about impact on the Welsh language .....	193
12. Comments about impact on staff .....	206
13. Financial implications.....	207
14. Comments about Council strategies .....	216
15. Comments about Welsh Government initiatives .....	223
16. Criticism of Powys County Council .....	228
17. Comments about the consultation process.....	231

18. Comments about the consultation documentation .....	246
19. Alternative options .....	277
20. Other comments .....	302
21. Comments in favour of the proposal .....	303
<b>7. FURTHER ASESSMENT AND CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>305</b>

If you require a copy of the document in a different format, please contact the Transforming Education Team on 01597 826618, or e-mail [school.organisation@powys.gov.uk](mailto:school.organisation@powys.gov.uk).

## **Consultation on the closure of Churchstoke C.P. School**

### **1. OVERVIEW OF THE CONSULTATION**

Powys County Council consulted on a proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School. The proposal is as follows:

- To close Churchstoke C.P. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools

The consultation took place from the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2021 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021.

#### **i) Consultation methods**

The consultation documentation was available on the Council's website throughout the consultation period, and was distributed to stakeholders, as required by the School Organisation Code (2018). A separate version for pupils was also available on the Council's website throughout the consultation period.

Consultees were invited to respond to the consultation by either completing an online consultation form, filling in a paper copy of the form and returning it to the Transforming Education Team at County Hall, or by e-mailing / writing to the Transforming Education Team.

Meetings were held virtually with the following:

- Staff of Churchstoke C.P. School – 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021
- Governors of Churchstoke C.P. School – 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021
- Churchstoke C.P. School Council – 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021

#### **ii) Responses received**

A total of 347 respondents completed the consultation response form which was included in the consultation document. This included paper copies as well as responses submitted using the online response form.

In addition, 163 written responses were received from respondents, including Estyn. The response received from Estyn is provided on page 38, in-line with the requirements of the School Organisation Code.

The written responses also included an online and paper petition to 'Save Churchstoke CP School Now - Urgent', which received 1,744 signatures.

As well as responses from parents, prospective parents, members of staff and members of the community, responses were received from the following organisations:

- Churchstoke Community Council
- Chirbury Parish Council
- Worthern with Sheleve Parish Council
- Welsh Language Commissioner
- Russell George MS
- Churchstoke Little Explorers
- Churchstoke Recreation Association
- Churchstoke Football Club
- St Nicholas' House Residential and Nursing Home
- Barcud Housing Association
- We Do Tennis
- Churchstoke Tennis Club
- Active8Kids Ltd
- Language Magnet
- Abbey Construction
- Kerry Vale Vineyard
- Montgomery Waters Limited
- Girlguiding Montgomeryshire
- Co-operative Food Centre Churchstoke
- St Nicholas Church Churchstoke
- Bryn Coed Homes Limited
- Churchstoke Women's Institute
- Churchstoke Football Club
- Early Years Wales
- Inspired Building Techniques Limited
- Powys Council's Schools Budget Forum

### **iii) Summary of issues raised**

The issues raised in the consultation responses are listed in detail in section 6 on page 41. This includes the Council's response to each issue. The following is a summary of the issues raised:

#### **1. Comments about Churchstoke C.P. School**

1. General positive comments about the school
2. Comments about the quality of provision at the school
3. Comments about pupil numbers at the school
4. Comments about the school being a small school
5. Everyone is friends at the school

6. Comments about school staff
7. Comments about the attainment of former pupils
8. Comments about the school's role in the community
9. Comments about the school buildings, grounds and resources
10. Comments about the school's catchment area / location
11. Families have chosen to attend Churchstoke School
12. Comments about extra-curricular / wraparound provision at the school

## **2. Comments about current / future pupil numbers**

1. Comments about current pupil numbers at the school
2. Comments about future pupil numbers
3. Churchstoke is a growing village
4. Comments about housing developments in the area
5. People won't want to move to the new homes if there is no school in the village
6. Concern about the impact on housing developers
7. Comments about the LDP
8. Comments about a possible increase in people moving to the area following Covid

## **3. Comments about early years provision**

1. Comments relating to the Early Years Provision at Churchstoke
2. Concern about the future of the Early Years Provision at Churchstoke
3. Comments about grants provided to the pre-school provision
4. Comments about alternative early years provision

## **4. Comments about small and rural schools**

1. Positive comments about small/rural schools
2. Concerns about larger schools
3. Comments about the Council's treatment of small / rural schools

## **5. Impact on pupils**

1. General concern about the impact of the consultation on pupil well-being
2. Comments about consultation taking place during the Covid pandemic
3. Concern about the impact on pupils of having to move to a different school
4. Concern that pupils would be separated from their friends
5. Concern about pupils' future opportunities
6. Concern about the impact of additional travel on pupils
7. Concern that pupils would no longer feel a sense of 'belonging' to the community
8. Other comments

## **6. Impact on protected characteristic groups**

1. Benefits of Churchstoke C.P. School / small schools for pupils belonging to protected characteristic groups
2. Impact on pupils with additional learning needs
3. Impact on disabled pupils / parents
4. Impact on pupils that are eligible for free school meals
5. Impact on other protected characteristic groups

## **7. Impact on parents / families**

## **8. Comments about other schools pupils might transfer to**

1. Montgomery C. in W. School
2. Schools located in Shropshire
3. Concerns about available capacity in neighbouring schools
4. Comments about quality of provision in alternative schools
5. Comments about pupils transferring to provision in England
6. Comments about pupils transferring to denominational provision
7. Concern that consultation will be carried out on other schools in the area within a few years
8. Other comments

## **9. Comments about impact on the community**

1. General concern about impact on the community/village
2. The school is the heart of the community
3. Closure of the school would mean that the community would lead to a loss of community cohesion
4. Concern about the impact on local businesses / the local economy
5. Concern about the impact on the community centre
6. Concern about the impact on other services
7. Concern about the impact on other community groups / activities
8. People would no longer want to live in Churchstoke
9. Comments about previous generations of families that have attended the school
10. Queries about what would happen to the school building / grounds
11. Comments about previous school closures
12. Other comments

## **10. Travel implications**

1. The proposal would lead to additional travel
2. Comments about additional transport costs
3. Concern about the impact on the environment

4. Children would be unable to walk to school
5. Comments about the impact of additional travel on low income families / families without access to a car
6. Concern that it would be more difficult for parents to get to school if there was an emergency
7. Concern about traffic congestion
8. Concern about impact on pupils' access to after schools activities
9. Comments about the suitability / safety of school transport
10. Comments about flooding in Churchstoke

#### **11. Comments about impact on the Welsh language**

1. Comments about the use of Welsh at Churchstoke School
2. General concerns about the proposal's impact on Welsh
3. Concerns that the proposal would mean that Churchstoke pupils would not have the opportunity to learn Welsh
4. The proposal would not impact on the Welsh language
5. Comments about Welsh Government policy
6. Suggestions for how the Council could improve Welsh
7. Other comments

#### **12. Comments about impact on staff**

#### **13. Financial implications**

1. Comments relating to the estimated saving from closing the school
2. Comments relating to the budget share per pupil / funding formula
3. Comments about capital funding
4. Other comments

#### **14. Comments about Council strategies**

1. Vision 2025
2. Transforming Education Strategy
3. Active Travel Plan
4. Climate Emergency Declaration
5. The Powys Well-being Plan: Towards 2040

#### **15. Comments about Welsh Government initiatives**

1. Well-being of Future Generations Act
2. Other

#### **16. Criticism of Powys County Council**

#### **17. Comments about the consultation process**

1. Comments about consultation taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic
2. Comments about consultation meetings
3. Comments about consultation with parents
4. Comments about consultation with pupils
5. Comments about consultation with the early years setting
6. Suggestion that people didn't know about the consultation
7. Comments about visiting the school
8. Comments about the presumption against closing rural schools
9. Other comments about the process

#### **18. Comments about the consultation documentation**

1. Data
2. Costings
3. Comments about the Strategic Context
4. Comments about 'Why change is needed in Churchstoke?'
5. Comments about the reasons for the proposal
6. Options considered
7. SWOTs
8. Risks
9. Other comments suggesting there are inaccuracies in the document
10. Other comments about the consultation document
11. Comments about the impact assessments

#### **19. Alternative options**

1. Status Quo
2. Delay the proposal
3. Encourage more pupils to attend the school
4. Improve the provision at Churchstoke
5. Expand the school
6. More community use of the school / site
7. Invest in the school
8. Shared headteacher
9. Federation
10. Merge with another school
11. Clustering
12. Make changes to other schools
13. Invest in small / rural schools
14. Make other changes in order to save money
15. Other

#### **20. Other comments**

#### **21. Comments in favour of the proposal**

## 2. CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

155 respondents completed the English language consultation response form, which was available online, and 0 respondents completed the Welsh language consultation response form which was available online. 192 respondents sent the consultation response form by email in English, and 0 respondent sent the consultation response form by email in Welsh.

The quantitative findings of the questionnaire are summarised below. Written comments were also provided in the consultation response forms. The issues raised in these comments are included in Section 6 of this report.

### Part 1 – About you

1. Please indicate how you are associated with the schools affected by this consultation:

Response	No.	%
Parent, carer or guardian	52	15.0%
Prospective parent, carer or guardian	22	6.3%
Governor	2	0.6%
Member of staff	5	1.4%
Member of the community	209	60.2%
Organisation	12	3.5%
Pupil	4	1.2%
No association	32	9.2%
Other	9	2.6%
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

2. Please specify which school you are associated with:

Response	No.	%
Churchstoke C.P. School	266	76.7%
Another school	20	5.8%
No association with any school	60	17.3%
Not Answered	1	0.3%
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

3. Please provide your postcode:

Response	No.	%
Montgomery	255	81.7%
Newtown	26	8.3%
Welshpool	15	4.8%
Chirbury / Minsterly	11	3.5%
Craven Arms	5	1.6%

Llanfyllin	4	1.3%
Bishops Castle	4	1.3%
Shrewsbury	2	0.6%
Bridgwater	2	0.6%
Other	11	3.5%
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Part 3 – About you

4. How old are you?

Response	No.	%
Under 16	5	1.4%
16-23	18	5.2%
25-34	50	14.4%
35-44	61	17.6%
45-54	55	15.9%
55-64	46	13.3%
65-74	58	16.7%
75-84	32	9.2%
85+	5	1.4%
Prefer not to say	17	4.9%
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

5. What is your gender?

Response	No.	%
Male	106	30.5%
Female	221	63.7%
Gender Fluid	0	0.0%
Non-Binary	0	0.0%
Gender neutral	0	0.0%
Prefer not to say	20	5.8%
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

6. Can you understand, speak or write Welsh?

Response	No.	%
Yes	102	29.4%
No	192	55.3%
Prefer not to say	53	15.3%
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

7. If you have school-aged children, are they entitled to receive free school meals?

Response	No.	%
Yes	14	4.0%

No	182	52.4%
Prefer not to say	151	43.5%
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

8. If you have school-aged children, do they have any additional learning needs?

<b>Response</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	23	6.6%
No	166	47.8%
Prefer not to say	158	45.5%
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

9. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

<b>Response</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	22	6.3%
No	267	76.9%
Prefer not to say	58	16.7%
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

10. What is your ethnic group?

<b>Response</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
White	315	90.8%
Asian	0	0.0%
Black, African or Caribbean	0	0.0%
Mixed	1	0.3%
Gypsy/Traveller	0	0.0%
Other	1	0.3%
Prefer not to say	30	8.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### **3. CONSULTATION WITH PUPILS**

Comments received from pupils are outlined below. This includes the notes of a meeting held with pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School, as well as a summary of the written responses received from pupils to the consultation exercise.

#### **i) Meeting with the School Council of Churchstoke C.P. School**

Officers from Powys County Council met virtually via Microsoft Teams with representatives from the School Council of Churchstoke CP School to discuss the consultation to close Churchstoke CP School with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools in Powys.

The School Council group consisted of 9 pupils, two of year 2, one of year 3, two of year 4, one of year 5 and three of year 6.

Officers explained that Powys County Council was reviewing the future of schools in Powys, including Churchstoke CP School and is wondering whether or not to close the school. It was explained that there was now a period of consultation where people were being asked what they thought about the idea to close Churchstoke school. It was emphasised that this was only an idea at this time, and no final decision had been made. The views of pupils at Churchstoke CP School are a very important part of the process, and pupils were welcome to ask any questions regarding the proposal.

The pupils were asked several questions and their responses are summarised below:

#### **Do you understand why we are here?**

- Yes

#### **What do you like about Churchstoke school?**

- The staff, because they focus on each child
- The cooks and the food
- Everyone is very friendly
- Lots of help
- The learning. I'm from a Welsh-medium school in South Wales and came here with no knowledge of Maths in English, and in my previous school there were 300 people. The staff there didn't focus on each child independently as Churchstoke does.

#### **You've seen a difference then since you've come to Churchstoke?**

- Yes

**Do you like the school building?**

- Yes
- The big field the equipment there
- My friends
- We can do lots of sports and sport competitions

**What kind of sports do you do?**

- Rounders, sports day events, swimming and tennis
- Also the Community Hall, we go there in winter to do PE

**Do many of you live in Churchstoke?**

- Yes

**Do you all walk to school?**

- Not all but some do

**Is there anything you don't like or could be better about the school?**

- Heating in our classroom
- The size of the school building could be bigger

**What's good about your learning in the school?**

- Teachers give support to each individual child, and will work at their level
- We are challenged appropriately, for example one year 5 pupil is doing year 6 and 7 work.

**What else do you like about your learning?**

- Everything

**If you could change anything what would you change?**

- Maths and have Welsh maths instead
- We do Spanish and Welsh but I would like to focus on one and then learn more languages – a different one each term
- More history

**Have you learnt a lot about the history of your local area? What can you tell me about Churchstoke?**

- There used to be a war in Churchstoke
- The border has changed back to England and back to Wales a number of times

**If you were going shopping to a big place, where would you go?**

- Welshpool, Tuffins, Birmingham, Shrewsbury, Hereford, Newtown

**If the school was to close, and there was no school in Churchstoke, what would be different for you?**

- We would make a lot of friends
- It would be weird because I have lived my whole life in Churchstoke school and it would be weird seeing Churchstoke without a school,
- Houses are being built and there's no point building houses if there is no school in the village
- School is the main attraction to the village

**What would no school in the village mean for the village?**

- Nobody would want to move here, especially if people had children as they would have to take children to a different school
- The community will break apart. People would not talk to each other any more. Parents talk and meet when taking children to school. School is a very important part of Churchstoke
- Would we get to our new school in time?

**Does the school get used for different things in the community?**

- Brownies Guides and Rainbows use the school field
- After school club

**Is the after school club very important to you and your families?**

- Yes
- After school club is very important because parents are working and can pick you up later

**How many go to breakfast club?**

- Only 2 or 3 don't go to breakfast club
- There is a breakfast club which most go to, and that is very handy. We go because our parents are having to go to work. It's important to our families

**If there was no school in Churchstoke and you went to other school do you think it would be helpful to you and your parents to go to other after school clubs?**

- No, because there would be more stress on parents
- We would not be able to walk to school
- Also going on a bus to a different school, there would be no after school activities as we would have to leave when school bus leaves

**Have you got younger brothers and sisters that go to Little Explorers. If there was no school in Churchstoke what would the effect be on Little Explorers?**

- If there was no school you would destroy Little Explorers

**How do you think that would impact on families and parents?**

- I don't think the toddlers will have as many friends
- It's harder for people to make friends as a toddler. They can make friends in Little Explorers, but they would find it difficult if there was no Little Explorers
- Also Little Explorers has dinners at the school, and if there was no school they wouldn't be able to have dinners

**So there would be quite an impact on Little Explorers if there was no school in Churchstoke?**

- Yes

**Where would you go if there was no school in Churchstoke?**

- Montgomery, Montgomery, Bishops Castle, Welshpool, Welshpool, Bishops Castle, Bishops Castle, don't know, Bishops Castle

**Which high school do you usually go to?**

- Bishops Castle mostly. Some people go to Welshpool

**If there was no school in Churchstoke, the Council is keen that children from Churchstoke have an education in Wales. Is that important for you?**

- Yes, because it keeps Welsh education

**Do you like learning Welsh? Ydych chi'n hoffi dysgu Cymraeg?**

- Yes

- ‘Os fyddech chi yn chi yn cau yr ysgol bydd plant yn mynd i ysgolion Saesneg a bydd hynny yn golygu colli Cymraeg yn ein pentref. Bydd hynny yn golygu llai yn siarad Cymraeg.’ (*Translation: If you close the school, children will go to English schools and that would mean losing Welsh from the village. That would mean that less would speak Welsh.*)

**Do you know that you follow a different curriculum in Wales? How would that affect you if you moved to a school in England**

- All pupils would probably find the English curriculum much harder than the Welsh curriculum. Because we don't have Welsh spellings, we have English spellings, so the spellings are a lot harder, and a lot of stuff in England will be different to Wales and it would be all new.

**What else would you lose?**

- It would affect how we speak Welsh.

**Anything else you would lose if you went to a school in England?**

- Spanish

**Is there anything else you could think of that would be worse for you if Churchstoke school closed and you went to a different school?**

- One of my youngest siblings has speech problems and if going to a different school it would affect his speech and he probably would not have as many friends as he does now
- We would lose contact with some friends, but also if you made new friends in a new school, they would live further away and therefore you wouldn't be able to see them after school, only at school
- My younger sibling has no one to one by Powys, so if the school closes she would go to Bishops Castle.

**Do you think that your younger sibling gets more support in Churchstoke school? Do you think that would be lost if she went to Bishops Castle?**

- No, she gets more support in Churchstoke school, but Shropshire provide more one to one in Bishops Castle than Powys does
- I might be split up from my siblings
- My siblings might have to go to different schools

**A lot of questions have been asked as to why the Council is doing this. One reasons is because Churchstoke is a small school. Can you tell me what do you think is good about Churchstoke because it is a small school?**

- In a bigger school you probably would not get as much help from teachers as you have in a smaller school. Here teachers and staff pay more attention to you
- In a bigger school you are in a class with pupils of the same year, but here classes are mixed ages, so year 6 can help year 3 so you don't always have to go to the teachers. Teachers are busy
- I have been to a 300 pupil school and it is not better. There are fights every day
- In a bigger school we would have to work more independently without any help if you really need it. That is bad, as your education would not be as good
- Some teachers will be working with lots of different children rather than helping children that actually need the help

**Is there anything which you think might be better if you went to a different school?**

- More friends

**Are any of you the only pupil or one of only two in your year group?**

- Yes, I have been for two years, until someone else joined

**Did being the only pupil in your year group make a difference?**

- It did make a difference, but a good difference. As I was the only person in my year group, there was no point in me doing just abacus so I got to a stage higher than I was. I did maths with a year group above me and that definitely helped me.

**Would you be going to the same secondary school as the pupil in same year group as you?**

- Yes. I would be happy to go to high school with a friend I know.

**When there wasn't somebody in the same year group as you, were you worried?**

- It did worry me a tiny bit that I would be going to high school with nobody I knew
- I have been on my own most years. I was worried in going to high school because I had no friends, until another girl joined my class

**Questions from pupils**

Pupils asked the following questions. The responses provided are summarised beneath each question:

- Why do you want to close the school?

The Council need to look at the 90 primary schools it has in Powys, and from time to time we have to look at schools which are very small such as Churchstoke. The Council has to make sure it has enough schools and in the right places for the amount of pupils it has.

- Have you ever visited Churchstoke?

Yes, but not to the school.

- Have you seen the school and the new houses?

I haven't been to the school but I am hoping to visit the school in the next few weeks if we're allowed to.

- Why do you think that a school with more children will help us learn better?

It won't be just because it is a larger school. We're looking at the whole experience of school, how the learning is organised, the friendship groups. It doesn't necessarily mean you would learn better just because a school is larger, but that's what we're looking at the moment. We're looking at giving you just as good an experience that you have now, if the school closes. It's important that your learning and needs are considered, so that's why we are here today and giving you the opportunity to say what you think.

It doesn't always mean that little schools are bad, and that big schools are good. We look at the learning you have, the curriculum, whether your school is well equipped to provide the curriculum, your wellbeing, that you're having good learning experiences, that you can learn what you want to not just what school decides, making sure there are good social groups and good opportunities to mix with other children. We want to make sure that nobody is losing out. We don't necessarily think a bigger school is better than a small school, but we have to look at all schools in Powys and make sure that the opportunities are there for all the pupils in Powys.

- What will happen to the school site?

If the school closes, the Council would talk to community to see if the community would want to use the school building. If that's not possible, the Council would then sell the site and the money gained from the sale would go

to the Council education budget and used for schools and education across Powys.

- Will the money from the sale go towards our education or would it go to any education?

It would go to the education pot for the whole County, so to everybody.

- What happens to the Community Hall?

What do you think would happen?

- I don't think that the Community Hall could still continue as the school gives it money and without that money the school would be unable to run

Is the hall attached to school building?

- It's next door on the school field

Is the Community Hall used a lot by the community?

- Yes

You think if the school closes there would be an impact on the Community Hall? Do you think it would survive without the school?

- I don't think it could survive without the school.

Is it just used by the school during the school day?

- Yes, just the school uses it during the school day. We use it for PE and activities, we don't have lunch there
- Have you considered the environmental impact on the school and the wildlife on the school site?

If there was no school there, we would have to make sure that the ecology is protected as much as we can. It's an important factor. In terms of considering any environmental impact we have one of our documents in the consultation process which is an impact assessment and we consider the impact on the environment in that and if we get any more or different information about the environmental impact, we will update the document before the end of the consultation process.

- Why is it a good idea to go on a bus to school rather than walk?

We are looking at everything. If there would be no school in Churchstoke then you would have to travel further. But a lot of pupils across Powys already have to travel to school, because the County is so rural, and it is a natural part of everyday life across Powys.

- But so many buses are being used, how will that help with the environment?

It's one of the things we have to take into account. We have to look at a lot of things and balance them. If there is a need for any additional transport, we have to look at how we can minimise the impact. We would have to look at what we could do, for example electric buses.

Educating children across the County in lots of different buildings also has an environmental impact. It's balancing the environmental cost at the moment and what that would be if you were transported. You have to look at the whole picture.

- If the school closes, we have free transport to the closest schools. Fuel would cost a lot, because we would need a lot more buses.

It would not necessarily be buses, it could be a taxi or a minibus. That's still a cost to the environment but it's not quite as bad as having a big bus.

- Have you considered how closing the school would affect children's mental health and wellbeing as we would be split from our friends?

It's a difficult time, as you have been in and out of school and in bubbles over the past year.

The impact on pupil's wellbeing is very very important to the Council. We are here today so that you can tell us exactly what you think about the proposal, and we can then take back your views which will then be considered by the Council's Cabinet. If you say there would be an impact on your wellbeing, you need to tell us that and we will feed that back.

- Have you thought that parents who have been through the school would want their children to come to the school as well?

We do need to consider how important the school is to the community and the emotional connection with the school which they might not have with the school down the road.

This might not happen, but if it does, we don't want you to worry. For example if you went to High School, the schools and the teachers talk to each other

and find out about the pupils. The same would happen here, if you went to a different primary school. If you were to go to a new school we would ask you how we could help you make the move better. We would want to help you to settle in. Say what you think now but try not to worry as it might not happen, we don't know.

- What about resources like Ipads and other equipment?

If the school was to close, we would look at the equipment there and see what equipment there is in the schools you are moving to. We would spread the resources to other schools.

- What if half the pupils went to for example Bishops Castle in England and half to Powys schools. Would you share them out?

No, we would only share them out to schools in Powys, not in England.

- Will teachers be given new jobs?

It depends where there are other available jobs. It could be if all pupils go to the same school that school would need an extra teacher, and it could be that one of your teachers would go there. But it's not guaranteed. In the past everyone's situation is different, and some teachers move to other schools, and some teachers decide that they want to do something else.

- How do our parents get answers to questions that they have?

During this consultation period anyone can let us know what they think. At the end of the consultation period we will have to prepare a report and the Council will have to respond to what's been said, so any questions we get during the consultation period, we will have to respond to in the consultation report which Cabinet will consider and then decide whether or not to carry on with the process.

The children were thanked for their comments and questions, and reminded again that if they or their friends thought about any further questions or comments after today, then they should send them in by 9 June when the consultation closes.

## **ii) Summary of other comments made by pupils**

In addition to the meeting with the School Council, 3 online responses and 16 written responses were received from pupils.

The comments raised in these responses are included in the 'issues raised' in section 6 of this report. However, they are also summarised below:

### **Impact on the community**

- There will be a significant impact on the community if the school closes

### **Impact on pupils**

- The well-being and mental health of the pupils may be negatively affected
- Pupils may be split from their friends in different schools

### **Impact on staff**

- Teachers may lose their jobs

### **Comments about small/rural schools**

- Combined age classes allow pupils to be appropriately challenged or assisted
- Larger schools may not be able to support pupils as well as a small school
- Small schools provide better learning opportunities

### **Comments about Churchstoke C.P. School**

- Provision at Churchstoke is excellent
- Wildlife at the grounds would not be looked after as thoroughly if the school closed

### **Comments about pupil numbers/surplus spaces**

- Housing being built near the school will cause pupil numbers to increase in the future

### **Impact on Welsh**

- Pupils moving to schools in England may not learn Welsh as a result

#### **4. CONSULTATION MEETINGS WITH STAFF AND GOVERNORS**

Consultation meetings were held with the staff and governors of the school.

The issues raised at these meetings are summarised below:

##### **i) Consultation meeting with Staff of Churchstoke C.P. School**

- Why are the predictions for pupils' numbers, the additional learning needs, and the free school meal numbers so out of date? Updated data already exists. We have a current situation that could have been used. The paper was published in February 2021 and the data has changed considerably since then and we informed the transformation team at the meeting with the governors that there was a considerable change. It seems bizarre just to continue using what the local authority knows to be outdated data.
- I think the concern is how misleading the data is bearing how much the village has changed. It gives a very misleading picture of the school and of the situation that we have and for that to be published as part of a closure consultation, it guides people into a decision that they might make with regard to consultation and when the local authority know that the data is inaccurate, perhaps that should have been stated in the document as well as that the data is considerably out of date.
- Are the transformation team aware of the housing developments, not just in Churchstoke but also in Montgomery, Chirbury, Forden, Kerry and another surrounding catchments?
- I would disagree with you that there is a detailed analysis in the document. I think that there is very superficial analysis in the document, but the concern is will there be space for all our children in the other local schools. Will they go to one school? Will they be expected to move on because that school is full? They would certainly fill year groups up to the admissions number in some of the schools. The concern is how much it is going to fragment the village when children are being moved into one school and then find there is not room there and then have to go to a different school. The other concern is regarding siblings, where there may be room in one year group for one child but not for the other. We're concerned about families and all siblings should be in the same school.
- It (the Council reviewing the needs of any schools that accept Churchstoke pupils) is not offering any certainty to anybody. That lack of reassurance, that uncertainty is very unsettling for parents and is likely to lead them to send their children elsewhere.
- If a lot of parents choose to send their children to Montgomery, could you even guarantee that siblings will be kept together there?
- You are looking to close our school and move the children off to somewhere where there is no room for them, that's the concern. And you cannot guarantee that either. You cannot say that they have a place in Montgomery School. The

concern is that once parents have chosen, and the school will be closed it will be too late to realise how needed we are in the area.

- Surely part of the decision that must be made is whether and where children are going to go, and you do not know that? How can that then impact on the decision Powys County Council is going to make regarding school closure?
- The parental preference is overwhelmingly Churchstoke. As you say the nearest alternative school is not necessarily in Powys and it is not necessarily Montgomery but because you have not named either the uncertainty is extremely unsettling for the whole community.
- Powys are passing the buck as you expect them to go to their nearest school in Powys, which is Montgomery, which will not take all the pupils which means some of them will be going to Shropshire.
- I think what we are trying to say is that people are saying the place they want to stay in is Churchstoke.
- If it is important to Powys that pupils receive an education in Wales, they really have got to provide more security and more information to parents because at the moment there is nothing there to give any security that Powys is the place to send their children as they are not getting enough information.
- In the consultation document, page 8, it states that closing the school will improve learner entitlement and experience. Can you detail what improvements we will see and provide evidence as to the better outcomes for the children?
- You are not answering anything about the actual evidence that by closing Churchstoke School they would get better provision elsewhere. I am hearing a lot of opinion but no evidence. If we produce a self-evaluation, we have to back it up with concrete evidence and there are a lot of sweeping statements throughout this document that presents a statement with no evidence to back it. There is another statement that says people numbers in each year group are small, it is more difficult to ensure peoples are appropriately challenged. We feel that is not true, but you have not presented any evidence for that statement. For the statement that larger schools have improved ability to monitor pupil progress, again, we feel that is not true. In our small classes, in our family classes we monitor our progress very well. There is a statement saying pupil well-being is better in larger schools, we say that is not true. There is no evidence presented in any documentation we have seen. No evidence for these statements says this will be better in Montgomery. There are an awful lot of sweeping statements throughout. It says Montgomery School would be a better place to develop provision which meets the requirements of the new curriculum, without evidence. Now, that would not be acceptable from a school presenting something to Estyn or presenting its self-evaluation report to the local authority. And yet this document throughout it has sweeping statements that are opinion, not backed by the evidence, or not backed by clear and transparent evidence that everyone can sit down and look at.
- It is a generalization and that is not what we are about. What we are looking for is specifics. You have said that surplus places need to be addressed. Our

surplus places are decreasing because our pupil numbers are rising rapidly, so we are already addressing that here. The only evidence I have had mentioned still, is an inspection report from 2015, that is already six years out of date and core visits from a Challenge Advisor who has never actually visited the school at all. That does not seem to me to be up to date with current evidence and the kind of thing that should be used in a matter that is this important.

- How is Montgomery better equipped to meet children's needs?
- You said about the number being below 91 as being too small. That is an awful lot of schools you are going to have to close in North Montgomeryshire.
- So, will we have a village school in any villages or is it going to be just an amalgamation outside Llanidloes, outside Newtown, outside Machynlleth, outside Welshpool and a village school will no longer be a thing because there is not a school in a village anymore?
- So, for the likes of Trefeglwys, Caersws, Llanbryn-mair, Llandinam, Llangurig you would close all of them and move them to Llanidloes or Newtown?
- One of the concerns we have is that we have not been included in any review of an area, that we have been targeted. When you look at the document, the current pupil numbers in Montgomery are 90. In other words, they are a small school. Forden with 68 is a small school, Abermule with 64 equals a small school, Leighton with 71 is a small school and Berriew with 85 pupils, a small school. All of the schools that are potentially receiving schools for our pupils are small schools themselves. One of our concerns is that the children who move from us to Montgomery will very soon have another review and have to go through the whole process again, which would be completely unfair. As you have identified, all of these schools are small schools and therefore you should be looking at reorganisation in those areas. Why us and why is the area not looked at all together?
- Montgomery is in a better condition than us, but they do not have the room to expand. There is a need for something in this area, but our pupils would move into a situation where they are going to have all this disruption again, or they have that choice of either staying with the uncertainty within Powys or to move to a stable situation in Shropshire.
- The consultation document says in terms of mitigating action, engagement with parents will happen throughout the process. So why is that not happening? Some of the staff feel that this is a human rights issue there as you are not properly engaging with the community and refusing to have a public meeting, with Churchstoke Explorers as well who are on this site. The document says they will not be affected which is patently absurd. Why is it that Powys County Council refuses to properly engage with the community?
- Parents and the community are finding a way to respond, it has more to do with engagement and how do they get their questions answered, surely a public meeting where you have direct engagement is better. Parents need the answers to the questions in order to respond, for clarification and so on.
- What about the playgroup, engaging with other professionals that will be directly affected?

- At present, the setting meet in one of our buildings. They have developed an area outside with grants from Powys County Council. They use the disabled toilet facilities and our staff toilets. They have their dinners in the school as well, so in the absence of the school, it is beyond anyone's comprehension how they could not to be affected. We have also got the fact that parents who are able to, would be more likely to take their children to the early year setting that their children would be going to school in. Their numbers would fall and would not be viable. No one here has any doubt that losing the school will be the end of the play group as well. The difficulty being the impact on the community. Those who could afford it or who are able to do so will transport their children. A third of the community that we have got are on free school meals, who do not have transport, and who cannot afford it and would be deprived of pre-school education.
- If they are really, really important, I would urge you to engage with the Playgroup Little Explorers because they give you far more detail, so if these facts really are important, then you really need to have a meeting with Explorers.
- Plans for the site is the next question. Are there plans to replace the wildlife, environmental and amenity value of the site, if it should be developed following the closure of the school?
- Is it part of the critical path and that certain things must happen before other things can happen in the area? Is the sale of our school site part of that critical path to possibly do something in the area?
- There is a concern over the community hall as well because the school make a substantial contribution to the community hall funds for the use of sports facilities. Recreation and association are quite certain that without that contribution the hall will no longer viable. That is another issue that really needs to be highlighted, losing not just the play group but the community hall as well.
- Again, engagement with the community more fully would probably help inform you. There's a couple of points in the consultation documents along the lines of "it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would impact on professional learning opportunities for staff", and there is also one that says "it is not expected that it would impact on the salary arrangements of staff". I do not understand how you can say that when the majority of staff will be made redundant?
- We have another sweeping statement that says "the children will have access to additional resources at the alternative schools". What additional resources will they have access to an alternative school that they do not have access to here?
- In terms of the leadership and monitoring, I mean I have got two classes to monitor. A larger school has more classes. I do not necessarily agree that the benefits are as great as they are stated in terms of the ability to provide better leadership within a school and better management of the school. By implication, the leadership and management in this school is being criticised simply because it is a small school, I think that is being overstated.

- When it comes to the extracurricular benefits that is all very well, provided the children can access them, and the paper itself admits that children who have to rely on free school transport cannot necessarily access the benefits of these supposed additional extracurricular activities.
- The concern is that it is going to greatly increase social division, in that the ones who can afford for their parents to go and collect them at the end of the day will be able to access the extracurricular activities, or for that matter things like concerts, parents evenings and those kinds of things, those who must rely on free school transport will not be able to. Contrary to what the document says, we have got 29% of children on free school meals here. That is a full 1/3 of the school community that we would be looking at being disadvantaged not advantaged by the transfer. The whole argument over extracurricular activities and increased extracurricular activities, is very divisive and not true.
- The difficulty is that what we are asking Montgomery to do is change what they're doing for the sake of the pupils that are coming in. It's been stated that so few pupils are coming in that the local schools won't be greatly affected by taking the pupils in and now we appear to be saying actually they're going to change what they're doing in order to accommodate the fact that some pupils will be coming to them. It is one of the contradictions in the report. I think that the concern is that you are saying that the school will not have to change what it is doing, and it won't be greatly affected, but it will have to change what it's doing.
- How do you know that we are not providing extracurricular activities such as lunchtime clubs, after school clubs, because you have not asked us, you do not know that we do not provide those already.
- It was actually in the Community Impact Assessment, and I think someone has commented on the considerable amount of extracurricular activity that we do here. I must admit I do not know what Montgomery have, but I do not think it will necessarily be greater.
- You discussed previously about masses of buses taking children to school. That is not environmentally friendly especially when Wales is trying to reduce its carbon footprint.
- Surely if you need more transport, that is going to be detrimental, and it is better to keep the children in the village where they can walk to school. Most of our children walk to school.
- One of the many concerns is that Powys have declared a climate emergency. They have policies and procedures that have supposed to be directed towards improving the carbon footprint and improving the environmental sustainability of the local authority. And yet we have proposals such as the one that is being made that actually acts against it, and that will put far more vehicles on the road and whatever we think about getting electric buses, we will not have enough electric buses to take all these children to school.
- Putting one bus on the road will not be a solution for us when the children have to go to at least three different schools. We are not talking about putting

one more vehicle on the road. We are talking about putting lots more vehicles on the road.

- There are no buses running from Churchstoke to Chirbury or Montgomery. The only bus that runs from Churchstoke to Bishops Castle is the secondary transport from Churchstoke to Bishops Castle which does not go to the same site and it is full anyway. It will mean a considerable increase of buses on the road. Also, for the ALN transport as well, you would need 2 or 3 taxis. We are not talking about just putting one more bus on the road.
- The numbers of children is an issue. If you go on Powys estimates, its 22 children to transport in September 2025, but the actual numbers are 52 plus. There are also a number of children within the community who already go to school in Shropshire. In the absence of this school, their closest school will become the school that they are going to, and Powys will be liable for transporting them as well, providing free transport. We have come up easily with 30 names. You are looking at transporting 80 children, not 20 odd, which is why I am saying the idea of one bus on the road, is nowhere near being close to accurate.
- Pupils are living within the catchment of the school, but are already attending Primary schools in Shropshire. If Churchstoke closes, then their nearest alternative school will be in Shropshire and therefore Powys would be liable to pay for their transport.
- Just a query on the consultation document, it says that Montgomery school currently has 0% of free school meals, we have 29%. The question is, is the figure for Montgomery correct and what experience have Montgomery got in meeting the needs of vulnerable children.
- I have a concern about social economic status and a divide, if our free school meal children were going to Montgomery school and if it is correct that they have zero free school meals children or disadvantaged children, they are probably not going to be happy about a massive wave of Churchstoke children coming to their school anyway. I am worried that there would be even more of a divide. With children that are maybe more disadvantaged anyway with those things such as new school uniform, new shoes etc. I worry for our children.
- Picking up on that, I think it was polling day and I was sat there giving out the forms and both Chirbury and Montgomery parents were willing to fill these forms in because they did not want our children at their schools. I was devastated by the fact that these parents from other schools are willing to fill in these forms to keep our school open as they did not want our children at their school and so many people did not know they had to fill in the consultation form. They all thought they had to sign the petition but did not know they had to fill in a consultation form. People do not know that they have to fill the consultation form.
- There is a commitment within the document to support pupils with the transition process and I can see that working within Powys schools. However my concern is with the Shropshire schools and how well Powys can engage with them, because like it or not there are going to be large number of families

who choose to send their children to an English school because there'll be free transport there because it's their closest school. It will cut down journey times for the younger pupils, the funding in Shropshire school is better and there is that bit of distrust towards Powys at the moment.

- The way we can support their transition into Shropshire is a concern if parents make that decision. Also is the fact that it will deny children access to the Welsh curriculum and to the Welsh language and the Welsh ethos. I know that it is a concern right across the wider community and the Welsh Language Commissioner has been in touch about it. How does it fit in with the local authority and the Welsh Assembly's plan to increase the use of Welsh language when so many of our pupils are being pushed across the border into England?
- I think better engagement with the community would have helped from the start. There will be a drastic effect on the Welsh ethos and the Welsh identity in the village and that is a concern to everyone who thinks that the Welsh curriculum is getting it right and that learning Welsh is the right thing to do. I do not think you would see Churchstoke as a Welsh village in anything other than name if the closure goes ahead.
- There is a feeling that the consultation has all been operated at too much of an arm's length, too remotely and not being able to have face to face meetings doesn't help. But within the community, staff, and people from Little Explorers there is a feeling of the remoteness of Powys which we feel a lot of the time anyway I think and the outlying areas of Powys are just being knocked off and far from creating an outstanding rural education system, what's being imposed is an urban rural education system on a rural area.

## **ii) Consultation meeting with Governors of Churchstoke C.P. School**

- What I hope we can start to achieve with discussions at this meeting is to prove to you that Churchstoke school should not be closed, particularly when you're using a flawed and contradictory consultation document with inaccurate figures and facts, and without there being a presumption by you to keep rural schools open. Your actions, if you go ahead will rip the heart out of the community of Churchstoke and have a massive knock-on effect. More importantly, we intend to prove to you that you will make no financial saving. In fact, it's going to cost you more.
- The consultation document states on Page 6 that closing our school will improve learner entitlement and experience. I know this has really upset our staff. Could you please detail what improvements we would see and provide evidence of better outcomes for our children? Having had four children go through Churchstoke, I feel that without evidence, this is just the opinion of those writing the proposal or making the decision, without any evidence or any understanding of standards in Churchstoke and to what depth? Even our current Challenge Advisor has never visited the school. What input has there been to the consultation document from Challenge Advisors who provided the

information which informed this statement and where did they get their information from?

- Some would argue that you have a better educational process in a much smaller school because problems you have can be identified.
- Why have the transformation team continued to use out of date data in the consultation document in relation to number on roll, free school meals, funding per pupil, surplus places, despite the fact they were quite clearly informed that the data has dramatically changed in the past year. Why have you chosen not to use current data? Because I feel the deficiencies in the data mean that the Cabinet have been misled when they approved going forward with the proposal.
- It's annoying when we inform you of the deficiencies of the data, and nothing happened. But I appreciate you're saying you have to use a certain set of data.
- All our surrounding schools are small schools by the Welsh Government definition. Every single one of them are also small schools.
- What birth rate has been used in the consultation document? As you may be aware, because we are reasonably close to the border, our families are registered at both Montgomery and Bishops Castle medical practices. Does the source of your birth rate data reflect this? If not, why? School health services have already informed us that you have not looked at the data properly.
- The school health service have given us sort of definite information that whereas they have access to the Powys statistics on birth dates, they don't have access to the Shropshire ones. In fact, a good half of our pupils won't be recorded on there. That is something that I think the transformation team need to take into account, not just for Churchstoke but all the way up and down the border as it will be happening elsewhere as well.
- Why close the school to address the issue of low pupil numbers as stated in the consultation document, at a time when pupil numbers are growing significantly? We are forecast to have 52 pupils on roll in September 2022. This is an increase of 108% since January 2020 and it is based on current known children in the school and preschool plus those that are already known to be moving into the area who have asked for admission, so these are real people and we do have names for all of them. Playgroup is currently at capacity with 22 pre-school children on the books and this does not take into account any of the additional housing developments in progress. Why does the consultation document say that our pupil numbers are not expected to increase for the foreseeable future? Powys forecasts are demonstrably inaccurate. A projection of 22 in January 21, when actual pupil numbers were 38.
- There are still 100 houses to be built (in the area).
- Our capacity is 72. I appreciate that the Welsh Government's definition of a small school is 91 or fewer pupils. We cannot get to 91 even if we wanted to.
- We feel that the section on future need and demand in the area for additional places, page 26 of the consultation document is completely inadequate. There

has not been a proper consideration of the housing developments. It has been brushed under the carpet and ignored. There is the potential for us to reach our capacity and beyond. There just has not been a proper analysis of Powys housing development, even though the planning is all being passed by Powys, not just in Churchstoke but in the surrounding communities as well. There's some increase that's allowed within the document. But it's another hundred houses. That is not some increase. That is a major increase and to say that people numbers at the school are not expected to increase significantly is not correct. They have done and they will continue to do so.

- The slightly crazy thing is some of the houses are being built by Powys as affordable housing, so perhaps the Planning Department and the Schools Department should talk to each other a little bit? I can assure you that parents of school age children have bought quite a lot of the houses.
- It would have helped if housing and community development had actually been included in the engagement proposal. But the impact assessment actually says that they were not. Why were housing and community development not included in the impact assessment? The fact that it says in the impact assessment that they weren't included is wrong?
- In the consultation document projected pupil numbers for Shropshire schools include housing projections. Why have you not used housing projections for Churchstoke? You have partly answered this question, but I just want to emphasize it. Similarly on page 42, why have you used current capacity data and not forecast capacity with the housing data?
- In the consultation document, page 50, why does the SWOT analysis say that option one, continue as we are, would not reduce surplus places? It stands to reason that as our numbers grow, our surplus places reduce. Why does the same table also state that option one would not address the high budget per pupil? It stands to reason that as our numbers grow, our funding per pupil reduces. Can you explain your statements?
- You've mentioned a couple of times about how we're using current data. It's not current, but it's your latest current data if you like from reports that you have and that you will update things when you know what actual numbers are come this September. Actually, we're making a decision here. That is, a decision that impacts on our community forever. So actually, if in 2-3 years' time, given all the 100 extra houses, we potentially have 70, 80, 90 pupils on our roll, we surely need to be making a decision today that reflects that, not just what's currently in place. Otherwise, it's not going to be fit for purpose in the future, is it? I just think it's very short sighted to say that you will use current data to decide whether to close your school. It just worries me.
- But we also need to be looking at our numbers and I appreciate they are just estimates, but we need to be really mindful of those estimates because we can't make a decision now that impacts the community and the children and the young families in this community 2-3 years down the line. We've got to look forward.
- Can I just add to that, Churchstoke is designated a large village and it is therefore prioritized for housing and economic development.

- The consultation document states that the federation option was discounted because there are no other CP schools in the vicinity. There are in fact three CP schools under 10 miles away from Churchstoke and six more within 15 miles. There are many examples of successful federations covering distances between schools greater than 10 miles in Shropshire, and the Carno, Llanbrynmair and Glantwymyn federation for example in Powys. The distance between those schools is greater than 10 miles. Do you not see this as a successful federation in Powys?
- The School Organisation Code states that there must be a strong reason for closure and that all other options, including federation, must be properly considered. We have no evidence that this has been done at all.
- There are three schools within 10 miles; Berriew, Leighton and Abermule.
- Merger is of course an option as well, and that's still within the proposal. The problem with that is it takes away CP provision in the area. As you said yourself, the surrounding schools are all Church in Wales. If parents want their children to have a CP education, their only option is to take their children into Shropshire. That's not something that we want to see. So, the idea of keeping CP provision within Churchstoke, allowing parents that option I think is a very powerful one and federation with one of our neighbouring CP schools. I don't see anything wrong with that.
- The consultation document states alternative CP provision is available within 10 miles, which we've just established. Will you provide free transport to these schools, bearing in mind you're depriving parents of any choice closer than this? If the CP schools are too far away for us to federate with, why are you saying that it is appropriate for our children to travel to these schools on a daily basis?
- The impact on protected characteristics of faith or belief is assessed as neutral. But if Powys do not fund transport to a CP school, there is a definite negative impact for families who do not wish their children to attend a Church in Wales School.
- In the Consultation Document, page 27-28, is the funding formula saving of £61,000 based on 52 Churchstoke pupils in September 2022? If not, then how many? I suspect your answer is no.
- Just basing these proposals on 25 pupils just makes the whole thing fatally flawed. And to be honest, Powys are looking at running into serious financial difficulties if they take it forward on the basis of 25 pupils because there just will not be 25 pupils in September 2022.
- When you've managed to model the funding formula savings based on better pupil data, would it be possible for us to see those calculations? I appreciate that it's confidential what funding other schools get, but we actually see every school's funding formula anyway, don't we? So, would it just be possible at least to know how many pupils in how many different schools? Because I know that a big concern for parents is how many different schools our children will be squeezed into? So what will be really key is how many schools you've modelled that funding formula calculation on, and how many children are going to each of those schools, so that we can understand the financial

impact of this. Because that's got to be key to any decision made. What we're really concerned about is that a decision could be taken that increases the costs of Powys County Council greatly, rather than making any savings so it would be useful if we could see that detail if that's possible.

- How many alternative schools for our children have been included in the formula calculations? We have asked for details on how the calculations are being made but have not received the information requested.
- How much does the consultation process cost? And although it's a one-off cost, why is it not being included in the finance calculation? Does this include the cost of engaging lawyers and barristers, if there is a legal challenge to any of the outcomes of a judicial review?
- This is about the transport costs, which we believe have been horrifically underestimated. We've been told that the additional transport costs of the proposal will be £19,000 per year based on £100 per day. What is the basis for £100 a day? How many buses to how many different schools? Is it based on each day and for how many pupils? I believe at the moment you thought it would just be one minibus to one school. You're going to need a minimum of five minibuses. You're also going to need two taxis for the ALN statemented pupils who can't travel on public transport. If children decide to go to Chirbury or Bishops Castle, you're also going to have to pay for the transport there. We also have about 30 children within the catchment area that, for whatever reason, have decided to be educated in Shropshire. It may be that they don't want to learn Welsh or other reasons. If you close Churchstoke school, their nearest school will be closed so you will then have to transport all of those pupils as well, so that will be about 80 pupils at an absolute minimum. How are the young children going to be transported? They can't go on a Secondary school bus because the buses are full and a year seven and year eight pupils that don't want to go on Secondary school buses. We just need to know why you have woefully underestimated your transport costs.
- Just to clarify that you are not funding them because at the moment they're not going to their nearest school. We are their nearest school. They are choosing to take them a little bit further. Parents are choosing to send them a little bit further. However, if Churchstoke closes then the school they're going to will then become their nearest school, therefore Powys, then become liable for costs.
- You made a comment before. I think you were trying to say why these children are not at Churchstoke because they're in the catchment area. What you have to understand is that the border weaves in and out and pupils that would be considered as being in the catchment area may actually be just in Shropshire, so they then go to a Shropshire school perhaps due to the choice of their parents. It may be easier for people when they work. It may be because they went to a Busy Bee's play group. It does not mean that we are a bad school which I think was sort of a suggestion coming there, some of them go to Welsh schools, some go to Forden for example.
- Some of them may go to Bishops Castle because there is actually longer childcare in Bishops Castle, and if you work you have no choice. We have

pretty good wraparound care, but they have much longer childcare there so it just may be a necessity. And of course, some people may not want the Welsh education.

- The other big factor, of course, is the significantly additional funding that Shropshire schools get compared to Powys schools. So extra funding for pupil deprivation grants, etc. ALN funding. All of their per pupil funding through the core formula budget is significantly higher and hence they can sometimes offer smaller classes or increased resources. I firmly believe it doesn't mean you necessarily get a better education that way, but some parents will believe that actually they can access more at a school that is significantly better funded which we know Shropshire is.
- Why does the map in the consultation document not show all of the Churchstoke catchment area? It appears to be centred on Chirbury village. Where I live is not shown and that really annoyed me. It omits most of the catchment including important border areas. Why does it not show the location of all the nearest schools? Bishops Castle is not shown on it, yet it is the closest to the east side of the catchment. Nor are the neighbouring CP schools named in the Impact Assessment. Now I appreciate it can be difficult with a map, but I would have thought you could have done a bit better.
- The consultation document on page 11 states pupils would attend schools with better quality accommodation. But Montgomery school building condition is also rated as poor. Can you explain how it is better accommodation than the Churchstoke building as both Churchstoke and Montgomery have identical buildings ratings, condition C and suitability B/C, but the report on Churchstoke is outdated. Since the report you've used, we have had a new disabled entrance built, and I think that makes our building a lot better.
- When it comes to the Equality Act 2010 why have you not answered question 17 Part 5 on page 26, which states will the proposal improve access for disabled pupils in accordance with the Equality Act 2010? Is it because the simple answer is, no? The statement made does not answer the question, will it improve access and which schools are fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and which partially? Specifically, is Montgomery fully or partially compliant? Will Montgomery be able to properly accommodate our disabled pupils? What about the Shropshire schools which are not included in this section at all? Was any inquiry made to Shropshire Council to check on this? Why is the impact on those disabilities assessed as neutral in the impact assessment, when the consultation document states that some of the schools are only partially compliant with the Equality Act? What about the impact of additional travel on those with disabilities? This has to be a negative impact, not neutral.
- Why have you stated in the consultation document that Montgomery school has an admission number of 21 when your admissions 21/22 document refers to Powys County Council admission arrangements and information stating that it's 17? Similarly, why are some of the Shropshire data, including income and cost per pupil figures incorrect when compared to the references?

- It's clear from the consultation document that there is insufficient capacity at Montgomery School for our children, which we are all agreed on. Do you intend to squeeze our children into other schools to fill the gaps, and how many other schools? Potentially we have as we've already said, 52 pupils needing to be accommodated. The premise of the consultation paper is that they all transfer to Montgomery. You said there are 29 spaces in Montgomery, but this number does not take into account their new development of 33 affordable homes at the bottom of the town.
- Which other Powys schools would pupils have to travel to, and have both the cost and distance to these schools been factored into consideration bearing in mind the pupils furthest from Montgomery will be the last to get a place under the Powys Admissions arrangements? How long will it take to get for existence from Pentre or Snead to a receiving Powys school if it's not Montgomery? What would happen if there was room in one year group for a pupil but not in another for their sibling? Can Powys guarantee under their admission arrangements that siblings would be kept together?
- What is going to happen in Montgomery if say our pupils go there and they fill the whole school, and then the 33 affordable houses are built by the fire station in Montgomery, which there is permission for. Where are all those children going to go?
- It's not forward thinking in my opinion (the current proposal). You need something that will go on into the future, not just now.
- Just to make the point that under the admissions criteria our pupils are going to come bottom of the pile all the time. Because distance is one of the criteria, and the pupils closest to the school would get places before those further away. Churchstoke pupils are going to be at the bottom of the pile in every school along the line. If there is no room for them in Montgomery they are even further away from the next school. So, they're kind of being dropped to the bottom of the pile all the time.
- The point I'm making it is that it is a reason not to close the school. It disadvantages pupils from the village greatly in terms of admissions because if they want to stay in Powys they are going to travel further and further into Powys. The further you expect them to travel, the more likely they are to take the Shropshire route.
- When deprived of the school payment for use, and with the cuts in funding from Powys County Council, how do you think the Community Hall will make up the shortfall in order to survive? Does the local authority appreciate how tight the finances of the Recreation Association are, and I know about this because I've only just left this committee. Do they know how much the school contributes? Do they know what effect the closure of the Community Hall would have on the local community, such as the Football Club? Would they be prepared to, for instance, grant fund the Hall?
- Regarding the Community Recovery Grant, just to clarify, that's not ongoing. That is just the Covid recovery grant. It's not something that is going to solve the problem long term.

- Given that Little Explorers, which is the playgroup, use our site and that the consultation document states that closure of the school would not directly affect the early years provision, what are your plans for our site and buildings? Why were the Little Explorers not included in the consultation? And why will no one at Powys County Council answer the questions they have? Why were Little Explorers given £10,000 to enhance the outdoor space shared with the school at the same time as starting a consultation to close the school? Given that the Council is currently facing significant financial pressures, do you think that this was an effective budget management or forward thinking?
- It's (Little explorers) full to the rafters because it's so successful, the children eat their meals in the school so there's intertwined provision in Churchstoke. I think that if the school closes that we know pre-school provision will go. So not only would the school go, but the pre-school provision would also go, which comes on to my next question. How does the inevitable loss of the pre-school provision in Churchstoke, which currently shares the school site, fit into the Council's plans for early years provision?
- How would you ensure that the 29% of Churchstoke pupils on free school meals – 29% not 8% as stated in the document – and those whose parents do not have transport, all of whom would rely on free school transport, are able to access extracurricular and after school activities or even breakfast club?
- You should be aware that many parents are dependent on the wrap around care currently offered at the school, meaning that the work of the parents may no longer be viable or that they would be unable to take on jobs. We have letters to prove that from Saint Nick's House and Montgomery Spring Water to back this up. What effect do you feel this would have on social disadvantage and the local economy?
- A lot of the parents of these children do not have their own transport, and that's the reason they go to Churchstoke so they can walk and then they are employed in places practically next to the school as well. I mean all that would go. You have to understand.
- A question we skipped over which is important to me is why you have undertaken not to have a wider view of provision in our area?
- Talking about this programme and if you close our school, our children only have the option to go to other small schools. What is the likelihood that our children would need to then go through this process all over again?
- One thing before you have your meeting with the School Council, the governing body know that I love a quote, usually Shakespeare. But tonight, it's going to be Anne Frank. A quote from her is "even if people are very young, they shouldn't be prevented from saying what they think". And I hope that will come out in the School Council consultation that you are doing next with our lovely pupils.

## **5. ESTYN**

Estyn's response to the consultation is provided below:

This report has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer

### **Introduction**

This is a proposal by Powys Council to close Churchstoke C.P. School from 31 August 2022, with pupils transferring to their nearest alternative schools.

The proposer explains clearly the reasoning behind the proposal, set against the Council's approved new 'Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys'. The strategy sets out several aims and objectives to transform the Powys education system over the next few years with the aim of providing the best possible opportunities for Powys learners, now and in the future. Two of the objectives included in the strategy are to 'improve learner entitlement and experience' and 'rationalise primary provision'. This proposal is in line with these objectives.

The council's new strategy clearly outlines several challenges facing education in Powys as identified following engagement with key stakeholders. For instance, the high proportion of small schools, decreasing pupil numbers, high numbers of surplus spaces, the condition of existing buildings and inequalities in accessing Welsh medium education and Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision.

### **Conclusion**

Estyn believes that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards in terms of education, provision, and leadership and management.

### **Description and benefits**

The proposer has identified a clear rationale for the proposal and gives reasons why change is necessary, including the strengths and weaknesses of the status quo. The proposer has identified four main risks to the proposal and clearly outlined mitigating actions. Examples of these are, that there being sufficient capacity at other Powys schools in the local area to accommodate all pupils, full engagement with parents throughout the process and the council providing advice and support to the school and governing body to ensure that standards and performance do not deteriorate during the transition period.

The proposer lists several advantages to the proposal, such as addressing the issue of low numbers; reducing the council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools; pupils being taught in classes with peers of similar ages; pupils attending larger schools could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities.

The proposer identifies that one of the disadvantages to its preferred option is additional travel for those pupils for whom Churchstoke C.P. School is currently the closest school. It acknowledges that this could have an impact on pupil wellbeing. Whilst the local authority provides free home to school transport to eligible pupils, it identifies that there could be an impact on pupils' ability to access after-school activities. The proposal further notes that there would impact on families due to the expectation that they to travel to school events. This could have a greater impact on children from economically deprived backgrounds. The proposer offers too little information on how these issues may be alleviated, other than its consideration that alternative primary provision would be available at several other schools located within 10 miles of Churchstoke C.P. School, which it does not consider excessive.

The proposer has considered other options, for example the status quo, establishing formal federations and merging with another local primary school to establish a new school on two sites. Whilst the proposer recognises the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative, it concludes that the preferred option is for the pupils of Churchstoke C.P. School to attend nearest alternative school in Powys.

### **Educational aspects of the proposal**

The proposer has considered the effects of the proposal on the quality of standards, provision, and leadership and management. Consideration has been given to the latest Estyn and Ofsted inspection reports for nearby schools and concludes that it is likely that the quality of standards, provision, and leadership of the alternative preferred option is of at least equivalent quality as that provided currently at Churchstoke C.P. School.

The council's view is that the school to which it expects most pupils to transfer, Montgomery C. in W. School, would provide a curriculum which is at least equivalent to that currently provided at Churchstoke C.P. School. Pupils would transfer to a larger school, therefore the expectation would be that there would be an improvement in the breadth, balance and appropriateness of the curriculum provided to pupils, and that the alternative school would be better placed to develop provision which meets the requirements of the new curriculum for Wales.

The proposer has undertaken a full impact assessment for each school in relation to aspects such as the possible impact on the community, the travel arrangements for pupils, costs and savings. Transport would be provided in accordance with the Council's transport policy for schools. The proposer is committed to working with the community in Churchstoke. For example, there is a village hall and should the school no longer be available, community events and activities could take place there.

The proposer has undertaken a comprehensive impact assessment for its potential impact on equality and the Welsh language. The conclusion suggests that there is no reason to believe that the nearest alternative schools would be unable to meet the needs of pupils belonging to the protected characteristic groups that would be affected, including pupils with Additional Learning Needs and pupils eligible for Free School Meals. In addition, that the proposal would not expand or reduce the availability of Welsh language provision

### **Presumption against the closure of rural schools**

Churchstoke C.P. School is a designated rural school. The proposer identifies the reasons for formulating the proposal along with the key challenges which the school faces. The proposer outlines suitably the reasons why it considers the school is no longer viable and considers reasonable alternatives to closure. All reasonable alternatives have been considered and an assessment undertaken of their merits and viability. These include assessments of the likely impact on the quality of standards in education, on the community and the likely impact of different travelling arrangements.

## 6. ISSUES RAISED DURING THE CONSULTATION PERIOD

The following tables list the issues raised during the consultation period and provide the local authority's response to these issues.

### 1. COMMENTS ABOUT CHURCHSTOKE C.P. SCHOOL

#### 1.1 General positive comments about the school

1.1.1	Churchstoke C.P. School provides a happy, stimulating environment.	The Council notes these positive comments about Churchstoke C.P. School
1.1.2	Churchstoke is a lovely village school where students are thriving	As above.
1.1.3	Pupils love the school	As above.
1.1.4	It's a brilliant school to go to.	As above.
1.1.5	People come to Churchstoke school because it's a good school.	As above.
1.1.6	I have heard nothing but amazing reviews about Churchstoke and the school and it is where I desperately seek to send my children.	As above.
1.1.7	This is a fantastic forward thinking school valued by its fast growing community	As above.
1.1.8	It's a safe, friendly and fun place to learn.	As above.
1.1.9	Churchstoke school is a small school, but it has an excellent record of serving the needs of the village.	As above.
1.1.10	The school supports individuals to be the best they can be within their own capabilities.	As above.
1.1.11	Churchstoke school, like others is not just made up of bricks, wood and glass. It is made up of the teachers, staff and pupils who attend it and I have to say that I could not be more proud of	As above.

	the pupils to which my son is one of them. They are hard working and crave to learn. The teachers I believe are some of the best Powys has to offer. My son is taught by both the head master and a teacher who have really had an impact on my son.	
1.1.12	After the recent pandemic our children have returned to school and been cared for and nurtured.	As above.

## 1.2 Comments about the quality of provision at the school

1.2.1	We have continued to develop the use of the assessment foundations insert software to record, track and plan for children's progress and are looking forward to using their Taith360 development to transfer this to the New Curriculum Framework.	Comment noted. However, all schools are responsible for monitoring and tracking the progress of all learners, throughout the academic year.
1.2.2	We continue to seek out examples of good process. In fact, some of the work that has been done pre pandemic was identified by our Challenge Advisor as good practise to be shared with other schools.	Comment noted. However, good practice in key stage 2 Science was identified pre-Covid.
1.2.3	Some of the practise at Churchstoke in preparing for the new curriculum that was found by Hayley Smith was identified to be distributed to other schools as examples of good practise. Has this happened at Montgomery? In fact the way in which we work, including the mixed age group classes lends itself to the new curriculum approach and we have been very successfully working in this way for several years at. Is there an issue in the way that we are preparing for the new curriculum in Churchstoke?	See above. The identified good practice was not specifically for preparation for the new curriculum. Revisiting the four purposes and forming a vision for Curriculum for Wales remain priorities for the school. It was noted, during the pupil consultation, that members of the School Council had very limited knowledge of their own locality or local history.
1.2.4	We continue to seek out opportunities and experiences to broaden horizons and experience, both our pupils and of staff. despite the small numbers of staff they are supported in professional development, focused on the priorities in the school	Comment noted. However, professional learning (for example, on the new ALN Act) poses a challenge where the headteacher is also the ALNCo and has a high teaching commitment.

	and staff development plans. This includes Management and Leadership training organised by Portal Education being undertaken by teaching staff.	
1.2.5	These school collaborate and work in partnership with a range of other schools, particularly those in the Clusters we are a part of. This includes formal collaborations such as shared moderation and professional development opportunities (preparation for the new curriculum, ALN and Yoga and mindfulness have been recent training undertaken with colleagues from other schools) and also informal contacts and collaborative work (including part time staff who work in other schools, and cross border contacts giving a different perspective on shared challenges). The development of skills and experience in online training and communications has been a huge boon in this. (Is this all one thing?)	<p>Attending cluster meetings during the school day poses a challenge for a headteacher with a high teaching commitment.</p> <p>The digital skills of both staff and pupils improved during the pandemic. However, the school provided no synchronous or asynchronous learning during lockdown, and limited opportunities for pupils to interact or learn collaboratively.</p>
1.2.6	Work is planned following the children's interests and motivations, and a range of local clubs, coaches and societies supported by giving local opportunities which would otherwise not be available. The Curriculum is enhanced by extra-curricular links to extend answer port the children's experiences. This helps with engaging and motivating the pupils. Staff have detailed knowledge of each pupils' individual needs and pupils get personal and individual planning and attention throughout their time in school. As a school we don't play the borderline game either, concentrating solely on those who can make statistics look better. Every child matters, every child against the individual focus to be the best that they can be. As our header says, we put children first.	It is an expectation that all schools consider the needs of individual pupils and monitor their progress accordingly.
1.2.7	The planning system developed for blending learning during lockdown is still in use as an independence and curriculum broadening tool. As during home learning the KS2 children have	'Independent learning' does not refer solely to pupils completing tasks on their own: It should include collaborative learning, independent of teachers, but

	independent learning tasks set to support the explicit teaching in the classroom.	including opportunities for pupils to learn from each and develop communication and other skills.  The school provided limited opportunities for collaborative learning or pupil interaction during lockdown.
1.2.8	Before the 1st lockdown and school closure we had made good progress in introducing the four purposes to the children of, working with them to convert the purposes to “I can” statements and identifying what the children already do (both at home and in school) that fits into each, giving the children individual ‘ownership’ of the purposes. We have a well developed programme for developing independent skills and this is being revisited in the light of last years experiences and the new curriculum. This includes developing the children's problem solving skills in the widest context and the school to school support for genius hour activities has supported excellent work in this area.	Developing pupil independence remains a priority for the school.
1.2.9	In many ways we already are teaching the new curriculum and to a certain extent have been for a while, So what we are doing is adapting to what we do to the new framework. Class planning, medium and short term, is already based on the four purposes and areas of learning. There is no doubt that the pandemic, with school closures and distance learning, has changed the way in which we have had to work, and the independent expected of the children in terms of their learning. It has also delayed the preparation work which we had planned, particularly the school to school support opportunities and professional development opportunities. However, staff have joined in training through cluster, school to school support and elsewhere both on the new curriculum (on AOLES and teaching methods, including genius	All schools are expected to be preparing for Curriculum for Wales. It is difficult to claim that any school is already teaching the new curriculum since Curriculum for Wales: The Journey to 2022 is still evolving. Revisiting the four purposes and forming a vision for Curriculum for Wales remain priorities for the school.

	hour). we now have plans to catch up with the training opportunities missed through the use of RISC and PD funding carried over from last year to buy into online courses offered by Collective Learning. These can be shared with other schools, subject to licencing arrangements.	
1.2.10	As a school we have always worked on the basis of a thematic and topic work, with a holistic curriculum and subjects being visited through active learning. We have spent a lot of time on developing the outdoor areas for use in curriculum work, not just for Foundation Phase but for Key Stage 2 as well, this is something which has benefited the play group as well. We had an established programme of working together across our classes, KS2 working with FPh until the need to separate bubbles prevented it. This included the whole school thematic weeks, based on the areas of learning. These included Enterprise Weeks where the children researched, designed and produced items for sale to parents and the wider community. We are continuing to work across the school as far as possible, albeit in separate bubbles, and on projects topical to the children's' experience. One example is a current whole school project on travel to school, with foundation phase pupils collecting and presenting data on travel distances and methods and key stage two pupils analysing the data. Real issues, real problems, real solutions, developed organically from the children's concerns and motivations.	Thematic working, a holistic curriculum and learning through real-life contexts/experiences are all to be commended. This should also include a focus on developing pupil skills.
1.2.11	The teaching is of a high quality, school in now Amber and still improving, PCC Advisor is very happy with the school, balanced budget in spite of not getting full allocation for ALN and FSM pupils.	National categories no longer apply. School Improvement Advisors do not pass judgement on how 'happy' they are with a school. The school receives its full allocations for ALN and eFSM pupils, in accordance with current procedures.

1.2.12	Churchstoke CP School provides an excellent local community resource to our children and families. Every child is treated as an individual and fully supported to reach their potential. Mixed age classes enable children to be challenged and supported easily within the classroom. Learning is based on ability rather than age. More able children work in groups with older children and those needing additional support can work with younger children on tasks to develop their confidence. This works incredibly well for the learner in Churchstoke School.	All schools are expected to treat pupils as individuals and support them to reach their full potential. For learners, there is no advantage in differentiation by organising ability groups across ages; it could pose challenges in terms of differing maturity, interests and child development (for example, a more able year 3 pupil would probably have very different reading interests and developmental needs from a low attainer in year 5, even if their attainment was similar).
1.2.13	In fact, we are very successful both at challenging pupils and supporting the less able come up because they are in a mixed age group classes. Differentiation for purpose of challenge and support is actually easier to arrange. More able can easily work with the year groups above and less able with those below. Powys Schools have been doing it very successfully for years and it is extremely disappointing to see the hard work of everyone involved denigrated in this way. Has there ever been an issue with appropriate levels of challenge or standards in Churchstoke? Feedback from both feeder secondary schools is very positive.	See above.  This reasoning does not then apply to the more able pupils in year 6.  There is no denigration of the hard work undertaken by small schools, rather an acknowledgement of the difficulties presented.
1.2.14	Challenge and support is built into the mixed age classes. More able pupils are able to work naturally alongside older pupils, whilst those who need a greater degree of support can work alongside younger pupils. Ability grouping is easier to arrange in mixed age classes.	See above.
1.2.15	We have excellent links both with our feeder play group and with these secondary schools which we feed onto. Transition in both directions, even during last year's difficulty's, has always been excellent. This includes the recognition of cross border issues, including pupils who transfer into Powys from England and those who transfer into England from Powys.	Effective transition is a requirement for all schools.

1.2.16	Grant funding has been well utilised to ensure good admin support, benefiting pupils and families, and finance is overseen by a very experienced Governor's Finance Committee, now supported by the Welshpool Cluster Business Manager.	Effective financial management and grant usage are requirements for all schools and monitored by the Local Authority.
1.2.17	Do you have an issue with pupil progress in Churchstoke?	Updating pupil assessments, IEPs, one-page profiles and provision maps were a priority for the school during the last support visit (16/06/21)

### 1.3 Comments about pupil numbers at the school

1.3.1	The school has grown over the last year from 25 to 38, and with new families moving in it is set to grow more very quickly. Having visited the new families I know they have babies and young children who will be attending our school in Churchstoke in the future.	<p>The Council recognises that there has been a slight increase recently in the number of pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School. However, this follows a period of significant decrease in numbers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jan 2014 – 64</li> <li>• Jan 2015 – 54</li> <li>• Jan 2016 – 53</li> <li>• Jan 2017 – 41</li> <li>• Jan 2018 – 39</li> <li>• Jan 2019 – 28</li> <li>• Jan 2020 – 25</li> </ul> <p>The current numbers on roll are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R – 5</li> <li>• Y1 – 8</li> <li>• Y2 – 5</li> <li>• Y3 – 5</li> <li>• Y4 – 3</li> </ul>
-------	---	---

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Y5 – 11</li> <li>• Y6 – 2</li> <li>• Total – 39</li> </ul> <p>The Council recognises that there are a significant number of housing developments in the area which may lead to a further increase in pupil numbers at the school, and it is recognised that the playgroup has healthy numbers as well. However, as stated in the Council’s Strategy for Transforming Education, which was developed with extensive engagement with schools and other stakeholders, there is a concern that Powys has too many small schools and an inequity in terms of funding per pupil. The Welsh Government’s definition of a small school is a school with fewer than 91 pupils – Churchstoke C.P. School is currently significantly below this number.</p> <p>120 dwellings are in the process of being built or allocated in Churchstoke. The Council’s planning department uses a pupil-yield ratio of .45 pupils for each house build. Based on this ratio, the housing developments could potentially lead to an increase in approximately 54 children in Churchstoke. However, it must be recognised that this is an estimate and that such an increase would probably happen gradually over a period of time.</p>
1.3.2	There are a reasonable number on roll.	As above.
1.3.3	I think this is very short-sighted of the Council to consider this move. Churchstoke is a growing village and within the last twelve months the numbers of children have increased to 38 children in	As above.

	the school and in the Playgroup at the school 19 children. There will also be several even younger children who are not yet in Playgroup.	
1.3.4	Pupil numbers at the school are forecast to be over 50 by September next year and this does NOT include any families yet to move to the village.	As above.
1.3.5	The school has almost doubled in size in the last year or so. I think that shows that the number of pupils is not a reason to close the school!	As above.
1.3.6	I can't understand why you want to close the school now as pupil numbers are the highest they have been in a long time and will continue to go up with all the new houses being built in the area. Where are all these children going to go??	As above.
1.3.7	Pupil numbers are increasing. Since Jan 20 <sup>th</sup> they have increased by 52% because of recent housing development within the village, with more underway and more in planning, the village is growing very quickly!	As above.
1.3.8	I can't understand why you feel now is the time to close the primary school taking the preschool with it, when the pupil intake is increasing month on month.	As above.
1.3.9	Increasing pupil numbers automatically decrease the surplus capacity. By September it will be reduced to below 27% and below 19% by 2025.	As above.
1.3.10	Our surplus places are decreasing naturally as our numbers increase.	Churchstoke C.P. School has a capacity of 72. There are 39 pupils currently on roll, meaning that the school has 33 surplus places.

#### 1.4 Comments about the school being a small school

1.4.1	Because it's a small school the staff at Churchstoke know all the children by name they know the parents and even grandparents, they know each child's character and when that child may be struggling with something they recognise it and deal with it accordingly, this is absolutely invaluable and something that will be lost in a larger school.	All schools, regardless of size, would expect teachers to know each child individually and to be able to support, challenge and nurture all children to achieve their full potential.
1.4.2	Our teachers knew each one of us individually and knew exactly how to get the best out of us. They also knew our families well so that if we were having any problems at home they could support us fully. I always felt safe and happy.	As above.
1.4.3	All people are treated respectfully and equally at Churchstoke. This is not as easy in a larger establishment where not everyone is known to everyone else.	All schools, regardless of size, are expected to treat everyone respectfully and equally.
1.4.4	My learner experience at Churchstoke was excellent. Because I was in mixed aged classes I was taught in groups based on my ability rather than just my age, often working with children older than me so that the work was appropriately challenging and always engaging. I have many friends in secondary school that went to large town primary schools and they do not talk of their primary school experience in such a positive way.	Comment noted.
1.4.5	My child has a disability. We have moved to Churchstoke from a larger school as it did not suit them.	Comment noted.
1.4.6	We had decided to move from Powys back into Shropshire, but there was no way we were going to send our son to a school that had 32+ pupils in a class, when Churchstoke had just 10 pupils in a year. So I used to travel every day for our son to attend this wonderful little school.	Comment noted.

1.4.7	The children themselves (most notably those who have transferred into Churchstoke from larger schools) have identified the fact that coming to a smaller school has improved their educational experience.	Comment noted.
1.4.8	Pupils have identified that coming to a smaller school has improved their educational experience, most notably from pupils who have transferred to Churchstoke CP School from larger schools.	Comment noted.
1.4.9	My concern is that by moving our children to a larger school, they too might slip through the net and not receive any help that they may possibly need.	All schools, regardless of size, are expected to support, challenge and nurture all children to achieve their potential.
1.4.10	Pupils are able to benefit from working with children in the year above.	Comment noted.
1.4.11	Staff know all the children and have an amazing connection with them. In a larger school and being bussed in these families wouldn't be known in the same way, the children wouldn't have the same rapport with staff who they see as other members of the community outside of school.	Comment noted. All schools, regardless of size, develop a sense of community.
1.4.12	Because Churchstoke School was relatively small and we were taught in mixed aged classes, I was able to work with friends in the years above me for maths and English as I found these subjects fairly easy.	Comment noted.
1.4.13	At school the juniors also have a daily exercise routine, which would not be provided in a larger school.	All schools are required to provide physical exercise as part of the curriculum.
1.4.14	Because it was a small school I had the opportunity to do lots of things as a whole school rather than just a class. We all looked after each other. The older children help the younger ones. I don't think it would feel like that in a large school.	Comment noted.

1.4.15	Every child is treated as an individual based on their individual needs. The staff know every child and their family well. This is the beauty of a local school serving a local community. Larger is not always better. One size does not fit all.	All schools, regardless of size, are required to meet the individual needs of all pupils.
1.4.16	Do you have an issue with pupil well-being at Churchstoke? Why do parents seek out family atmosphere of schools such as Churchstoke? parents do not want large schools. Quite the opposite, they want smaller, more family schools, where their children are known and cared for. This is one of the things that attracts families to our Powys villages. Note: the well-being statement in the last inspection report (from six years ago) was solely as a result of 'variable attendance rates', a result of using percentages inappropriately in smaller schools.	The Council does not have any concerns about the wellbeing of pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School.  The Council notes the comment about parents choosing smaller schools because of a more 'family' environment. However, there are a number of reasons for parental choice of school.

### 1.5 Everyone is friends at the school

1.5.1	I don't want my school to close. I know everyone in my school and I can say hi and talk to them.	The Council notes these comments.
1.5.2	Friendships are made for life and the children bond together.	As above.
1.5.3	It's small and friendly [at the school].	As above.
1.5.4	I love this school also because they were lovely kind kids and lovely teachers and lovely staff.	As above.
1.5.5	It's a lovely friendly school, that helps to mould the children into caring adults.	As above.
1.5.6	The school has always been a very happy school.	As above.
1.5.7	The children all know each other and look out for each other.	As above.

1.5.8	Churchstoke school is not only a place of learning but also a school where every child is known by name, and all children know all of the staff, as our motto says “putting children first”.	As above.
1.5.9	I am thrilled at the thought of my children accessing this school in the knowledge they will be surrounded by friends and family.	As above.
1.5.10	Children can make friends with children who live in the same area. This is an important factor in any community.	As above.
1.5.11	Our school is not only one of friendship for children in its care, but also for the parents, new and old, who meet at the school gates, the playgroup, who run next the school, and the old people's home. Playgroup get to see what “big school” is like and to watch their siblings at work and play.	As above.

## 1.6 Comments about school staff

1.6.1	The key factor in ensuring the best opportunities for all pupils is the dedicated and passionate staff at Churchstoke, including every member of staff. Planning is focused on the individual needs, there is a high degree of teamwork and shared visions, and shared supportive family ethos. Partnership with parents is excellent, and this extends to an awareness of the needs of all, not just of the children but of the families within a wider community focus. Staff have undertaken DANGOs training, equipping them to support families with advice on benefits and support available from local and national government, making the school a ‘one stop shop’ full family support, in the absence of other alternatives in the immediate environment. This wider support is vital and the social need in the community is as high as it is in Churchstoke at present. Support is always available for those who need it, whatever the reason.	The Council notes these comments.
-------	---	-----------------------------------

1.6.2	The school has brilliant teachers.	As above.
1.6.3	The school has caring teachers.	As above.
1.6.4	The quality of the teaching at the school was to an excellent standard and the teachers treated each pupil individually.	As above.
1.6.5	The children and their families are known personally to all staff, and because of this, individual needs are catered for quickly and efficiently.	As above.
1.6.6	My teacher always made sure my work was challenging so I didn't get bored.	As above.
1.6.7	Teaching at the school has been excellent.	As above.
1.6.8	The teachers are great and always encourage pupils to do their best.	As above.
1.6.9	The teachers at the school are doing a fantastic job with my child and are helping him build his confidence and achieve work goals.	As above.
1.6.10	The staff are very patient, they treat the children as people not just a number.	As above.
1.6.11	The staff all know the children personally.	As above.
1.6.12	The head and staff know every parent and pupil.	As above.
1.6.13	Concerns that the number of pupils has decreased at Churchstoke C.P. School due to leadership at the school.	As above.

### 1.7 Comments about the attainment of former pupils

1.7.1	I attended Churchstoke school and feel that I got an exceptional education.	The Council notes these comments.
-------	---	-----------------------------------

1.7.2	As an ex-pupil, I have nothing but happy memories. This village school set a strong base in my education, give me confidence, and inspiration to achieve, which led me to get a university degree. Looking at ex-pupils they have gone on to achieve great jobs, why put a stop to this success? Clearly smaller schools achieve greatness too!	As above.
1.7.3	Each of my grandchildren attended Churchstoke school and had a very happy and secure start to their education. All have degrees and successful careers. Without this secure grounding I doubt if these careers would have been achieved.	As above.
1.7.4	I am a proud Mum to children who have all thrived through their Primary school years in Churchstoke School. One is studying for a degree, another two are starting their GCSEs at the top of their classes and another who is on the autistic spectrum is receiving amazing support which is allowing her to flourish and challenge herself and is also now pushing her abilities above her expected levels.	As above.
1.7.5	My son did very well at Churchstoke School, progressed very well and obtained a first class honours in masters degree and is now just looking to move up the housing ladder and without the help and dedication to his maths in Junior School he may not be where he was today.	As above.
1.7.6	Our son attended this wonderful village school. Before that he attended the nursery school next door to the school, so the move from nursery school to primary was made all that much easier with the teachers introducing themselves to all the children and parents. Our son has gone on to a fantastic career in the Royal Navy.	As above.
1.7.7	I have three daughters who all went on to study at University.	As above.

1.7.8	When I went to secondary school, I was put in the top set for every subject because of the excellent start I had had in Churchstoke School. I would not have had a better learning experience in another school and certainly not a larger one where I would have been constrained to learning with pupils of the same age.	As above.
1.7.9	I went from Churchstoke Primary School to a large secondary school but this didn't phase me at all because my primary school teachers made sure I was a confident and independent learner ready for secondary school life. I had such a good start at Churchstoke Primary School that I went into all the top sets at secondary school and achieved 11 A* grades at GCSE. I do not believe I could have had any better learning experience at any other primary school, contrary to what you say.	As above.
1.7.10	I attended the school from 2006 until 2013. The teaching standards in my experience were outstanding and the school allowed me to push myself and reach my potential, which propelled me into the top sets once I reached secondary school, and I left with fantastic GCSEs.	As above.
1.7.11	I attended Churchstoke Primary School. I am now about to leave high school and go to college with excellent prospective grades even given everything we have been through this last year. Personally I put this down to the start I received in Churchstoke Primary school.	As above.
1.7.12	The students who feed into high school from Churchstoke have, in my experience, had a very well rounded and high quality education. They are often amongst our highest achievers in their cohort and have always clearly thrived in this setting.	As above.

## 1.8 Comments about the school's role in the community

1.8.1	The school and playgroup are an essential part of the community. We organise annual events which are always supported well by those in the village, many of whom attended the school themselves. These events allow older members of the community to get involved with social events and help to tackle rural isolation which is prevalent in the aging rural communities. The children have a fantastic relationship with the residents in the adjoining care home, and regularly go in to visit and sing to them, which is greatly appreciated, and a number of our student's parents work in the home.	The Council has recognised the central role that the school plays in the community in the draft Community Impact Assessment. This will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.
1.8.2	The school is part of the community	As above.
1.8.3	The school has strong links with all the community, bringing people together at the events they have, like harvest festivals, Christmas concerts, various fundraising they have held over years like bingo events, fun days, barbecues etc. All family and friends, and community are invited to these events. It brings people together.	As above.
1.8.4	Events by Churchstoke School are enjoyed by most of the community in Churchstoke.	As above.
1.8.5	The church and the school work well together	As above.
1.8.6	The school has connections with the Church as far as putting on school plays and after school clubs.	As above.
1.8.7	The church and churchyard are used by the school as an educational resource; school Harvest Services and Christmas concerts are held in church; mock 'wedding services' and 'baptism services' are held with the children acting out the roles; church and school work together for fundraising events at Christmas; church members have run themed Activity Days for all the	As above.

	children in school; every summer our church presents Youth Bibles to all year 6 school leavers; various members of our church family have run an After School Club and run 'Open the Book' in school and taken school assemblies.	
1.8.8	The church is nearing completion of a major building project in church, adding toilets, extending the kitchen, creating a meeting room, developing exhibition space for displays and adding a stage at the front. We undertook this in the knowledge that it would benefit the school and make the church building far more usable for schoolchildren. We would feel very depressed if there were no school to use these new facilities!	As above.
1.8.9	Children visit local old people's care homes which provide a positive effect on residents welfare and cheers them up. If the school closes this would be lost.	As above.
1.8.10	Prior to Covid-19 we often had school children attend St Nicholas House and take part in activities with us and come and sing at Christmas. Some of our residents also like to enjoy the Christmas concerts and harvest festivals that the children put on. Residents like to walk around the corner or have a ride out in the wheelchair to see the children and remember their own childhood memories.	As above.
1.8.11	The children visit St Nicholas House and take harvest gifts and sing Christmas carols. The residents also join the children to watch sports day and other fundraising events.	As above.
1.8.12	There is a nursing home in Churchstoke, Saint Nicholas house, where in the past residents have enjoyed it watching children's events from the school. If Churchstoke school closed this would not be able to happen.	As above.
1.8.13	The children visit the nursing home and the old people love to see them.	As above.

1.8.14	The links between the school and Saint Nicholas House has such a positive effect on the mental health of our residents, seeing children brightens their day.	As above.
1.8.15	Prior to the pandemic the children regularly visited the residents at St Nicholas House. We would really like this to continue when the pandemic is over.	As above.
1.8.16	The link between our home and school is so important and essential that it remains in the village, some residents are blessed with family close by and others are not so for these individual visits from the children are so important to the happiness and well-being. Not only is this school a positive for our residents but very important in the welfare of the children, social interactions with the elderly give them many benefits to, and insight into history from the wheel storytellers and teachers respect and understanding of individuals.	As above.
1.8.17	The school enjoys excellent support from the community, not just parents and Friend of the School, but also wider community, including local businesses and societies. We have been able to access good funding from Friends of the School and from local grant providers to ensure that the children have access to a good range of quality resources and experiences.	As above.
1.8.18	Churchstoke is a thriving community and the school is one of the reasons that make it so.	As above.
1.8.19	The school is the centre of the community.	As above.
1.8.20	The school is the hub of the community.	As above.
1.8.21	It is a small school, but it is central to the Churchstoke community and is a key reason why the village has continued to thrive.	As above.

1.8.22	The school is really at the heart of the village and enables families to meet other members of the community.	As above.
1.8.23	The school provides opportunities for new parents to meet and socialise and its use of the community hall keeps the facility from becoming unviable.	As above.
1.8.24	The school is at the very heart of the community, offering a warm, supportive, inclusive education and vital family support to those living in and around the village.	As above.
1.8.25	The school is important for social cohesion, it is a meeting place for parents, grandparents and friends. This is important for everyone's sense of well-being.	As above.
1.8.26	Surely the school is a vital service to a fast growing village, the school helps support the local supermarket (co-op) the local church, and the village community hall, and keeping the community active, young and old. The school is only going to increase in pupils due to the housing being built so why close it??	As above.

### 1.9 Comments about the school buildings, grounds and resources

1.9.1	The school building and community hall in Churchstoke is in good condition	<p>According to Welsh Government's condition survey carried out in 2009, the condition and suitability of the school were graded as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Condition – C Poor</li> <li>• Suitability – B/C Good to Bad</li> </ul> <p>The Council commissioned a new condition survey in 2020 which concluded that the school's overall condition was a C-. This survey did not consider</p>
-------	--	--

		suitability therefore was not included in the Consultation Document. Other schools named in the document have not yet received an updated condition assessment, therefore the 2009 data was used for all schools, including Churchstoke C.P. School.
1.9.2	It is considered that the school site in Churchstoke is adequate in terms of provision of buildings and space.	As above.
1.9.3	Back in 2009 the school buildings were considered poor. Why hasn't anything been done for improvement – still poor 2019.	<p>The Council prioritises building improvement work at schools according to a scoring matrix.</p> <p>Since 2009, the Council has carried out the following works to Churchstoke C.P. School:</p> <p>2013 – £145,000 on DDA extension works.  2014 – £27,900 on new boiler and controls  2020 – £1,000 on replacing water tank</p> <p>The school also receives funding for repairs and maintenance as part of its delegated budget.</p>
1.9.4	We have children who struggle physically, as a school we have full disability facilities to aid these learners	Comment noted.
1.9.5	We have the best disabled facilities	Comment noted.
1.9.6	The school should stay open, it has the best disabled facilities in the area. They have the best general facilities in the area, Montgomery have none.	<p>Montgomery C. in W. Primary School's condition and suitability are outlined below, based on the 2009 condition assessment, which is comparable with Churchstoke C.P. School.</p> <p><b><u>Montgomery C. in W. School</u></b></p>

		Condition – C Suitability – B/C  The Council has identified within the Major Improvements Programme that there are some adaptations needed at Montgomery C. in W. School to improve accessibility.
1.9.7	Churchstoke school has all modern disabled facilities to cater for any disabled children.	Comment noted.
1.9.8	Churchstoke was adapted a few years ago for disabled access if you close the school you have just wasted a load of (our) tax payers money	Comment noted.
1.9.9	The school has full disabled access and toilets for use for those with special needs. I am concerned that other schools may not have these facilities to our standards.	Comment noted.
1.9.10	Churchstoke C.P. School is fully equipped with disabled facilities and therefore the Council should consider this as a strong reason to retain our school for the future.	Comment noted.
1.9.11	Churchstoke got facility for disability: toilets, ramps, door. Well catered for.	Comment noted.
1.9.12	The school site is safe for pick up and drop with large car parking and turning space	Comment noted.
1.9.13	There is also plenty of suitable parking for parents during drop off and collection times of day.	Comment noted.
1.9.14	There is a safe drop off and pick up area nowhere near a busy road. Other schools don't have this safe option, I know because I have to pass them on my way to work.	Comment noted.
1.9.15	There is a good car park to pick children up safely.	Comment noted.

1.9.16	Churchstoke school has space around it for expansion, car parking and community hall.	Comment noted.
1.9.17	It is a very good little school with plenty of space around it.	Comment noted.
1.9.18	A lovely space all around the school. When I am outside with the children I always think how lucky we are to be in this lovely school.	Comment noted.
1.9.19	The sports field and play park next to the school are wonderful assets as well as the community hall. What a shame to see it all go to waste if the school was to close.	Comment noted.
1.9.20	The school has great facilities as there is a football field and playing fields, a village hall and a big car park	Comment noted.
1.9.21	It's a lovely school with great facilities either in house or right on the doorstep.	Comment noted.
1.9.22	The school has better facilities than many other schools.	Comment noted.
1.9.23	I understand that that the current sports facilities are excellent at Churchstoke school. This needs to be given consideration.	Comment noted.
1.9.24	The Community Hall is designed as both a meeting space and a sports facility. It has been described by a professional sports teacher as providing the children of Churchstoke School with 'better facilities than any other primary school in the area.' The proposal to close the school will deny these facilities to the pupils.	Comment noted.
1.9.25	The community of Churchstoke built a sports hall for the community 26 years ago, with the specific intent of enabling the local primary school to use this facility. I am unaware of any other primary school nearby that has such excellent sports facilities for their pupils.	Comment noted.

1.9.26	The school is fully equipped and modernised to be in a good position to cater for an increased number of pupils that are moving into the village. This makes a strong point for the Council to consider.	Comment noted.
1.9.27	The school is well located near to a main road but far enough away for the children to be as safe as possible. The community being next to the school gives great opportunities for when doing plays etc.	Comment noted.
1.9.28	There is no room for expansion at other local schools, unlike Churchstoke.	Comment noted.
1.9.29	Churchstoke School has by far the best site position for parking, playing sport with the recreation field and the Community Centre next door. The alternative schools do not have the space for all the pupils in the coming years, there is no off-street parking creating an extra danger for pupils getting out of the car and getting through the school gates.	Comment noted.
1.9.30	As a school we are amply equipped with ICT facilities with one chrome book per 2 children, as well as ipads, PCS and Codable hardware.	There has been significant investment in digital equipment in all schools over the last two years as part of the Welsh Government Education Technology Programme. Most Powys primary schools now have a better ratio of devices than one device per pair of children.

### 1.10 Comments about the school's catchment area / location

1.10.1	In my time at Churchstoke school at least 3 other local schools closed, and joined us, so it is already serving a large area.	The Council notes these comments about the school's catchment area.
1.10.2	The school has a large catchment area.	As above.

1.10.3	Several years ago a number of small schools locally were closed and Churchstoke was built to accommodate them and stills covers those increased areas.	As above.
1.10.4	The community of Churchstoke is geographically very widespread.	As above.
1.10.5	Since Mellington primary school was closed many years ago this school seems to be important.	As above.
1.10.6	The school is embedded in the community having grown out of the closure of Mellington and Hyssington over the years. These bonds hold a community together	As above.
1.10.7	A bigger societal impact to consider is that Churchstoke is uniquely positioned in this area as a hub for the main routes from Welshpool, Newtown and Montgomery.	As above.
1.10.8	I believe that the significance of the location of Churchstoke Primary means that it should remain open.	As above.

### 1.11 Families have chosen to attend Churchstoke School

1.11.1	Families have also bought homes in Churchstoke or moved here for the main reason of being able to send their children to Churchstoke CP school.	The Council notes these comments.
11.11.2	People are moving to the area because of the school.	As above.
1.11.3	The school in the village was one of the reasons we moved here.	As above.
1.11.4	We wouldn't have chosen to live in Churchstoke had we wanted our children to go to a big school.	As above.

1.11.5	Families have chosen Churchstoke, built houses and homes with their children's learning considered based on the excellent school provision available.	As above.
1.11.6	Several of our volunteers chose to move to Churchstoke because of the school provision (for their own children), making use of new houses and the sense of belonging to a village that is so tangible there.	As above.
1.11.7	Parents have moved from Sarn to Churchstoke so that their children can attend Churchstoke school, to make this more convenient and possible due to work commitments.	As above.
1.11.8	I have friends who have moved to the children from other schools to Churchstoke because it is a good school and they're very impressed with how their kids are doing.	As above.

### 1.12 Comments about extra-curricular / wraparound provision at the school

1.12.1	The school provides plenty of extra-curricular opportunities for learners as well with baking clubs, forest school, and Gardening clubs that have been run, as well as after school club and outside organisations we also work with to provide tennis club as well, which if the school were to close, the children would not have access to.	The Council notes these comments.
1.12.2	My daughter attends all after school clubs and activities in Churchstoke village. These include Churchstoke Tennis Club, and after school club provided by little explorers which is the pre school located on Churchstoke school premises.	As above.
1.12.3	There is a breakfast club which helps parents who need to go to work.	As above.

1.12.4	There is a breakfast club and after school clubs which help parents out as they need to go to work.	As above.
1.12.5	The children have access to after school club 2 days a week from 3:30 to 5:30pm with programmed activities and light snacks provided.	As above.
1.12.6	There is also a very successful after school club that was set up in November 2020 that will attract children that we have previously lost to other schools.	As above.
1.12.7	There is junior tennis coaching after school on a Wednesday.	As above.

## 2. COMMENTS ABOUT CURRENT / FUTURE PUPIL NUMBERS

### 2.1 Comments about current pupil numbers at the school

2.1.1	Churchstoke is a growing community with many new housing developments, this has resulted in an increase in pupil numbers at the school, there are 38 pupils currently on the school role.	<p>The Council recognises that there has been a slight increase recently in the number of pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School. However, this follows a period of significant decrease in numbers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jan 2014 – 64</li> <li>• Jan 2015 – 54</li> <li>• Jan 2016 – 53</li> <li>• Jan 2017 – 41</li> <li>• Jan 2018 – 39</li> <li>• Jan 2019 – 28</li> <li>• Jan 2020 - 25</li> </ul>
-------	---	---

		The Council recognises that there are a significant number of housing developments in the area which may lead to further increase in pupil numbers at the school, and it is recognised that the playgroup has healthy numbers as well. However, as stated in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education, which was developed with extensive engagement with schools and other stakeholders, there is a concern that Powys has too many small schools and an inequity in terms of funding per pupil. The Welsh Government's definition of a small school is a school with fewer than 91 pupils – Churchstoke C.P. School is currently significantly below this number.
2.1.2	At Churchstoke CP school, pupil numbers are increasing, with 52% increase in pupil numbers since January 2020. This is a result of housing developments in Churchstoke village, which has seen a dramatic increase in families with young children.	As above.
2.1.3	The school has already benefitted from additional pupils following the first phase of building, this is a sign that pupil numbers will grow with every phase.	As above.
2.1.4	Churchstoke school has struggled for numbers for many years and yet planning permission has been granted for at least two brand new estates, aimed in the most part at bringing in families. As a resident, this has been a change that, it was assumed, would at least ensure the future of the school and has been accepted as such.	As above.
2.1.5	Numbers have gradually declined over the years (as have many other schools), but with the building of new houses numbers have started to increase.	As above.

2.1.6	I am aware that this is a small village school and in the past numbers of pupils were low, however it has been great to see so many children arriving in Churchstoke due to the newbuild family housing which is still continuing and will mean even more children needing school places and pre-school.	As above.
2.1.7	The school has had hardly any pupils for the last five years and it has stayed open. Now Churchstoke has two new housing estates built and being built and quite a few new children and families to the area, and now you want to close the school when it is really needed. I am confused how you can be even contemplating shutting with all the new influx to the school.	As above.
2.1.8	The number of pupils currently in reception at the school is higher than recent years and I believe that the number will only increase due to the residents of Churchstoke increasing.	As above.

## 2.2 Comments about future pupil numbers

2.2.1	If the number of children has fallen in recent years it will surely increase again, once all the housing is completed.	<p>The Council acknowledges that pupil numbers have increased and are forecasted to rise again, as identified in the Consultation Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jan 2022 – 39 pupils</li> <li>• Jan 2023 – 44 pupils</li> <li>• Jan 2024 – N/A</li> <li>• Jan 2025 – N/A</li> </ul> <p>The Council recognises that there are a significant number of housing developments in the area which may lead to further increase in pupil numbers at the school, and it is recognised that the playgroup has</p>
-------	--	---

		<p>healthy numbers as well. However, as stated in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education, which was developed with extensive engagement with schools and other stakeholders, there is a concern that Powys has too many small schools and an inequity in terms of funding per pupil. The Welsh Government's definition of a small school is a school with fewer than 91 pupils – Churchstoke C.P. School is currently significantly below this number.</p> <p>120 dwellings are in the process of being built or allocated in Churchstoke. The Council's planning department uses a pupil-yield ratio of .45 pupils for each house build. Based on this ratio, the housing developments could potentially lead to an increase in approximately 54 children in Churchstoke. However, it must be recognised that this is an estimate and that such an increase would probably happen gradually over a period of time.</p>
2.2.2	By September 2022, pupil numbers are expected to reach approximately 52, this number does not include families moving into the village.	As above.
2.2.3	Pupil numbers are ALREADY forecast to be 52 by September 2022 and this does not include any new families or new home owners	As above.
2.2.4	Churchstoke is a growing community with more families moving into the village, and therefore pupil numbers will increase at quite a fast rate over the next few years.	As above.
2.2.5	Churchstoke school could easily double in size with all the new builds.	As above.

2.2.6	The growth of the village and building proposals will have a great impact on the pupil numbers at the school and the community.	As above.
2.2.7	Numbers might be low at the moment, but they will go up as more families move into the village.	As above.
2.2.8	In a year or so the school will be full again with all the houses that are being built.	As above.
2.2.9	With lots more houses being built in Churchstoke, means there will be more children in the future that will be needing the school & pre-school.	As above.
2.2.10	A lot of houses have been built in Churchstoke that are yet to be occupied, and when they are, I'm sure there'll be a huge increase in demand for the school!	As above.
2.2.11	Up-to-date figures show numbers at the school are growing and with the influx of residents will soon reach capacity and close to average costs per pupil.	As above.
2.2.12	The predicted pupil numbers make it obvious that a school in Churchstoke is needed and this rise in our pupils on role automatically makes the  lower and in line with other Powys schools.	As above.  The Council recognises that increasing pupil numbers while maintaining current funding levels would reduce the budget share or cost per pupil.
2.2.13	The increasing pupil numbers automatically decrease the surplus capacity. Powys state ours is 50% at present (although in fact it is 47%), this will reduce to below 27% by September 2022 and below 19% by 2025.	The Council recognises that increasing pupil numbers would reduce the surplus places at the school.
2.2.14	Our surplus capacity is currently 47% however by September 2022 it will already be down to under 27% and 19% by 2025, which could be greater after housing developments.	As above.

2.2.15	Churchstoke CP School's capacity is 72. At 52 on roll (expected September 2022 based on current known pupils in the school and pre-school) the surplus capacity would be 28%. At 72 on roll (forecast based on additional 40 houses currently being built) the surplus capacity would reduce to 0%. The further 60 houses planned will see the number on roll rise well above 90 on roll at which point there will be need for increased capacity at the school.	As above.
2.2.16	Increased pupil numbers automatically reduce the surplus spaces in school. Predicted numbers suggest we would reach our capacity figure, eliminating surplus places.	As above.
2.2.17	Powys is concerned about Surplus places but as the village grows at a fast rate predicted numbers would mean the school reaching capacity and thus eliminating any surplus places	As above.
2.2.18	It is predicted full capacity will soon be reached in Churchstoke School. Most of the pupils will have no choice but to attend their nearest school out of Powys, even though their parents pay their council tax to Powys.	As above.
2.2.19	The proposal really seems to be a retrograde step, considering that the village is expanding in size with current and proposed developments ongoing. Even if only some of these houses are brought by families, it would increase the number of actual or potential people in the school.	The Council notes these comments about the impact of current and planned housing developments.
2.2.20	There are 60 new houses being built in Churchstoke at this moment. If half of the new houses had just one child in primary school, that's another 30 to the list of pupils already there.	As above.
2.2.21	Churchstoke has expanded very much in the last few years and I understand that 28 social housing properties have recently been completed and occupied. Some of these are for older residents	As above.

	<p>but already the school number has increased by 14 children. The pre-school group has also increased from this development. The actual number of children on this development is 27 with 13 of them being pre-school or at other schools. There are 40 houses being constructed at the moment ten of which are for social housing. There is also planning permission for approximately, another 45 houses. As the average on the 28 houses equals one child per household then that is 95 children.</p>	
2.2.22	<p>Number on roll is used as an indicator for school closure, but the number of pupils in a school will fluctuate. In some parts of the UK schools will be built to serve a new housing development and then as the years go by there are less children as they transfer to secondary and the working world. As the housing development matures it is anyone's guess as to how many children will be available to attend the school. This is where primary teachers need to be aware of how schools can progress through federation and the "executive headteacher" THAT CAN SAVE THE SCHOOL FOR THE COMMUNITY although the teaching structure will change and offer new opportunities for staff development.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
2.2.23	<p>Powys estimated that by September 2022 our school would contain 21 children, running as it currently is it will be closer to 52 children and this does not include any children coming to live in the new developments still under way.</p>	<p>The School Organisation Code requires authorities to publish five year forecasts of pupil rolls, which the Council base on the PLASC January data.</p> <p>These projections are based on postcode-linked live birth data and historical cohort survival rates for individual schools. New external factors and changes that have no historical bases can not be included in forecasting models. The 2020 PLASC return shows an increase in inaccuracy from the previous 2 years. There have been many new factors making NOR</p>

		<p>predictions at primary school level difficult to built into a statistical model. However, analysis comparing the predicted figures for Jan 2020 with the actuals recorded in PLASC show that, for Powys as a whole, the model over-estimated by 9.2%. 53% of schools were no more than 5% different from their forecast NOR and 76% no more than 10% different. Housing developments aren't included within this methodology.</p> <p>However, the Council also includes a second set of projections which are up to three year projections based on the latest information held by the Council's finance team. This data is verified with the schools during the financial surgeries.</p> <p>The difference between both sets of projections shows that the first set of data predicts an increase whilst the finance data indicates a small increase.</p>
2.2.24	<p>We do not know how Powys has arrived at their future predictions for pupil numbers at the school but they appear to be way off the mark. We would also question what they have based their current information on. In January 2021 there were actually 38 children in the school, Powys predicted 21 - based on what? I believe it is predicted that there could be as many as 58 by 2025. That doesn't include new families that would occupy the latest housing development.</p>	As above.
2.2.25	<p>The consultation document also states projected pupil numbers (birth rate) for January 2021 was 22 reducing to 16 in January 2025. These figures are completely incorrect. Actual numbers in the school and pre-school are evidence that the birth rate is very</p>	As above.

	different to that quoted in the consultation document. It is my belief that the consultation document only includes birth rate data for families registered at Powys medical practices. Many of the families in Churchstoke are registered with Bishop's Castle Medical Practice in England. Using incorrect data in a consultation document is inexcusable.	
2.2.26	The proposal brought forward stating that there is no likelihood of numbers changing significantly within the school is disappointing and inaccurate. We know that your prediction for future numbers has been produced from inaccurate information as you only use birth rate figures from the Powys Health Board when at least half of the community actually use Bishops Castle doctors.	As above.
2.2.27	What birth rate data has been used in the CD? Our families are registered at both Montgomery and Bishop's Castle medical practices. Does the source of your birth rate data reflect this? If not, why not? (School Health Service have already informed us that it does not.)	<p>The forecast model is drawn from Live Birth information supplied directly from the Office of National Statistics (ONS).</p> <p>Live Birth data from the ONS is used as it includes all births within the Powys boundary rather than what medical practice a family is registered with.</p> <p>Each year in September the Office for National Statistics (ONS) releases anonymised live birth data by postcode for the academic year ending 12 months previously. Hence in September 2020 data for 2018/19 was made available. As the pupil level annual school census (PLASC) provides data on pupil postcodes it is possible to calculate the proportion of the school population accessing each school from similar home postcodes. These percentages can then be applied to the live birth data to generate forecasts for the Reception year group in each school 5 years hence.</p>

--	--	--

### 2.3 Churchstoke is a growing village

2.3.1	Churchstoke school is in a growing village.	The Council notes these comments about the impact of current and planned housing developments.
2.3.2	Churchstoke is a growing community which most definitely needs a village school.	As above.
2.3.3	The school should not close, it will affect the growth of the village.	As above.
2.3.4	The closure would have a profoundly negative impact on the growing community of Churchstoke.	As above.
2.3.5	Having moved to Churchstoke over three years ago, I have seen the village grow rapidly, even in that short time, attracting new, young families to the community and promoting the age diversity of the area. It was therefore astonishing to learn that Powys County Councillors are now considering the closure of the only primary school in the village and indeed for several miles, putting the future of the village at risk of being severely damaged.	As above.
2.3.6	I think in a village the size of Churchstoke it is essential to maintain the primary school. Churchstoke is growing rapidly and should therefore definitely not be thinking of closing its school.	As above.
2.3.7	With Churchstoke's population ever increasing and taking away such a big part of the community, this is going to have a massive impact on all children, parents and grandparents in the village.	As above.
2.3.8	Churchstoke is a growing, attractive, large village for young families and it will be a devastating blow to the community to lose the primary school.	As above.

2.3.9	A growing community with lots of new build houses and more planned.	As above.
2.3.10	Churchstoke is a growing community with more children so why close the school now?	As above.
2.3.11	Although the village is at present small, it is growing and expanding. New houses have been built and planned to be built. Family homes with children of all ages.	As above.
2.3.12	Churchstoke is a growing community with many new houses being built, which will have more families moving into them.	As above.
2.3.13	Churchstoke is a very popular village that is growing fast, the preschool is at maximum capacity, numbers of pupils are growing.	As above.
2.3.14	Churchstoke is growing rapidly with mainly affordable housing. I see an influx of families, maybe one parent or not so well off parents who maybe cannot afford a car and are moving to this area to be in a self contained, well provided community.	As above.
2.3.15	Being as the village is expanding dramatically it just seems mad to close the school.	As above.
2.3.16	Churchstoke is an expanding rural community with new housing.	As above.
2.3.17	A local school is always at the heart of any community, Churchstoke is now a growing community, with a considerable amount of new homes being built. More and more new families with young children are now moving into the village who will need easy access to a local school.	As above.
2.3.18	Churchstoke is an area in absolutely high demand at present, in one of the worst periods this Country has ever seen, this means that there is going to be a population boom and the main beneficiary of this will be the school and village itself which	As above.

	ultimately means, the school will remain profitable for many years to come.	
2.3.19	As the major retailer of food and home products in the area we have seen a significant rise in our sales especially on home products as new build houses in the village are being sold and new families move into the area.	As above.
2.3.20	Situated at the junction of two main roads, with good facilities, land, and easy access to Newtown, Welshpool and the towns of Shropshire, Churchstoke is ripe for further development over the coming years.	As above.

#### 2.4 Comments about housing developments in the area

2.4.1	Lots of houses are being built in Churchstoke for families, this will bring more children to the area.	The Council notes these comments about the current and planned housing developments, not only in Churchstoke but also in the wider area.
2.4.2	Many new houses have been built or are under construction, of a type designed to appeal to families which I suspect would not have been built had the school not existed.	As above.
2.4.3	With all the new builds going up and the demand for housing extremely high, this makes no sense as the more people that settle in the area, the bigger the school will ultimately become and now people will be debating (us included) on whether to move to the area or not because of an ultimately poorly conceived idea to save money by closing the smaller schools.	As above.
2.4.4	There is continual new housing being built in Churchstoke and even possible planning for developments going through that residents don't yet know about.	As above.

2.4.5	30 houses are presently being built with planning for many more, the likelihood of lots more children moving to the village.	As above.
2.4.6	40 more houses are currently being built with 45 proposed self build along with a number of small developments so it is possible Churchstoke school could be full in the near future.	As above.
2.4.7	At least 45 houses / family homes recently built – more planned for village / Churchstoke. At least one school child in each.	As above.
2.4.8	Churchstoke has expanded in the last few years and is going to expand in the future. There are 40 houses being constructed at the moment, 10 of which are for social housing. There is also planning permission for approx. another 45 houses which could easily push the number of children needing primary education to over 100. There is also a lot of potential building land available in the future.	As above.
2.4.9	Churchstoke school is vital for the village with an ever increasing population within Churchstoke alone. There has recently a new housing estate been built with 28 houses and a number of families with young children recently moved in. There is also a new housing development in Churchstoke under construction. There is approximately 40 new homes of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom which will no doubt house new families that will rely on a school within the area.	As above.
2.4.10	Against the backdrop of around 100 new houses under construction and granted planning in the village this proposal seems even more incredulous	As above.
2.4.11	Churchstoke school may be small at the moment, but with Powys County Council granting planning permission for nearly 100 new homes, why on earth take away one of the most important resources if not the most important resource away. It will be one of the things that new families moving to the village will want “a	As above.

	village school". This village needs and wants to keep its school "to stay open".	
2.4.12	The council should be considering that Churchstoke is a growing village with some 100 new houses being delivered now and in the near future. It is our understanding that these are a mix of social and open market and have been designed to attract families to the village. Thus increasing the need for a pre school and school to be retained in Churchstoke.	As above.
2.4.13	120 new homes in Churchstoke is without doubt going to bring in a larger number of primary school age children.	As above.
2.4.14	It seems illogical to close a school due to lack of numbers when the numbers of children have increased by over a third this year with the first phase of new family housing in the village being built and over 70 more houses yet to be built. Why build so many new affordable family homes but remove the services that are vital for those families like childcare provision and schooling?	As above.
2.4.15	Churchstoke has approximately 120 family homes, either recently constructed, in construction, or have been granted planning permission. These family homes will add to pupils numbers in Churchstoke School.	As above.
2.4.16	Recently Mid Wales Housing have built some houses and now there is a 'for profit' development of some 40 houses or so, and I also believe the council own some land which is likely to be earmarked for housing. I believe the potential increase in pupil numbers as a result of this development will reduce/remove the surplus places in the school, which I believe is the council's concern	As above.
2.4.17	We are currently building 30 homes at Ridgeway View Church Stoke along with Mid Wales Housing who are building another 10,	As above.

	all 40 of these homes will be available to buy under either the “Rent to buy Wales” or the “Help to buy Wales” initiatives which are both Welsh government backed schemes aimed at helping young couples and families buy their own home in Wales.	
2.4.18	Barcud is looking forward to a further 10 family size mix of properties being let in 2021 due to popular demand for families wishing to live within the village.	As above.
2.4.19	It also puzzles and annoys me that after circa 30 new housing association and ‘local needs’ houses being built and more in the pipeline that Powys council education authority can't recognise the current and proposed new student influx our school has to cope with now and in the near future which will make it extremely viable.	As above.
2.4.20	Powys County council has recently permitted the building of 45 new homes in Churchstoke, and there are 28 new homes, that are for rent from Mid-Wales Housing Association, which are now fully occupied. A further 13 new homes are currently being built right next door to my own home in Maes Neuadd. Overall there are 120 new homes that have either recently been built or are being built in Churchstoke. Given this current level of housing investment, it is beyond belief that Powys County Council is not looking at the longer-term needs of the community.	As above.
2.4.21	Are the Transformation Team at all aware of the housing developments, not just in Churchstoke but also in Montgomery, Chirbury, Forden, Kerry and other surrounding catchments?	As above.
2.4.22	I am also concerned that with all the new houses being built in Churchstoke, Montgomery and Chirbury where are all these children going to go ?	As above.

2.4.23	Churchstoke is a thriving village with many new homes. This is the same as in areas such as Chirbury and Montgomery, villages thriving with plans to build many new homes.	As above.
2.4.24	Housing developments are continuing in the village meaning an increase in pupil numbers at both the school and pre-school. There are currently a further 120 houses either in planning stage or being built in the village which is almost definitely going to bring more children to the village. Not only this but the local schools in the area also have planning for more houses, Montgomery (34 homes at planning stage), Chirbury (40 homes in planning), Forden (32 outline planning stage) and Kerry (62 close to completion). If all these houses bring more children to the area then these schools will not have enough space to accommodate our children.	As above.
2.4.25	In view of increasing housing developments not just in Churchstoke but also in Montgomery (at least 34 homes at the planning stage), Chirbury (at least 40 homes in planning), Forden (32 at outline planning stage and beyond) and Kerry (62 close to completion) CCC believes the risks to delivery of a successful educational service with sufficient capacity are high.	As above.
2.4.26	Powys Council must be aware that there are a number of potential family housing developments in the surrounding area which will have an impact on the capacity of neighbouring schools to accommodate the children from Churchstoke if this closure goes ahead. Montgomery (at least 34 homes at the planning stage), Chirbury (at least 40 homes in planning), Forden (32 at outline planning stage and beyond directly by the school) and Kerry (62 close to completion, Marton (20 in the preplanning phase), Hope (9 in the planning system) and Worthen has been designated a hub with 55 new homes proposed.	As above.

2.4.27	There are a lot of houses being built in Churchstoke, Kerry, Sarn and Chirbury.	As above.
2.4.28	Montgomery and Chirbury villages have planning permission for more houses to so that means more children for their school. So where would ours go??	As above.
2.4.29	In addition to our numbers growing there are also housing developments in planning stages in all the surrounding areas of the proposed alternative schools. There is a real risk of having insufficient local capacity for the number of pupils involved.	As above.
2.4.30	A proposed school closure when new housing estates are being built is short-sighted.	As above.
2.4.31	Why grant planning permission to build an estate when there are plans to close the school?	As above.
2.4.32	I think you should not give planning permission for all these new houses in Churchstoke and then decide to close the school!	As above.
2.4.33	I think Powys County Council should review the amount of new affordable homes that have been granted planning permission in the village. With this information they can gather a more accurate picture of how vital the school is to the village. In five years time there may be a school crisis where a number of children have no avenue to attend a well school and learn about our beautiful language and culture.	As above.
2.4.34	The rate at which Churchstoke & surrounding villages are growing means that more young families will be in the area and all fighting for places in nearby schools.	As above.
2.4.35	2020 saw the introduction of 28 new homes at Orchard Close, Churchstoke. A total of 27 under 11 year olds (six, 0-3 yrs and twenty-one 4- 11 yrs) currently occupy the new family properties.	As above.

2.4.36	When you consider that PCC themselves have (very recently ) passed planning for in the region of 120 houses in the village which by historic reference will equate to circa 0.5 children per house therefore 60 children , how can Councillor Phil Davies possibly suggest that pupil numbers are not expected to rise in the foreseeable future?	As above.
2.4.37	A further 40 houses are in the process of being built. On the basis of 0.5 primary age pupils per house (as per the housing development completed last year) this could potentially bring a further 20 primary age pupils to the school taking our forecast on roll to over 70.	As above.

## 2.5 People won't want to move to the new homes if there is no school in the village

2.5.1	You must be aware of all the new homes being built in Churchstoke surely there will be new children moving into them, won't their parents consider whether there is a village school before buying one of them.	The Council notes these comments about the current and planned housing developments. Community Impact Assessment.
2.5.2	Do you really think families will move to the village with no school in the village?	As above.
2.5.3	Families will not want to come to a village with no school. It is one of, if not the most important, factor in making a move to a new place, especially if you are parents of young children. What is the point of new housing if you have to transport your child somewhere else to be educated?	As above.
2.5.4	Churchstoke is an expanding community with many new houses either recently completed or just being built. As many of these new homes are affordable housing it is to be expected that they will be occupied by younger adults with children and a local	As above.

	school will probably be the reason for them locating to Churchstoke!	
2.5.5	No account has been taken of the new estate being built in Churchstoke (120 houses). These are affordable houses which many young couples will be able to afford bringing children to a village with no school. Who will buy them now?	As above.
2.5.6	The presence of the school attracts both developers, and families that subsequently move into the homes, and provide much needed regeneration of the village population. Indeed we have already seen this start to happen as younger families have begun to move to the village.	As above.
2.5.7	People are buying the new houses with a proviso that there is a school in the village.	As above.
2.5.8	One of the reasons the houses on new developments are being bought is because of the school being in walking distance.	As above.
2.5.9	The prospect of moving into a village where parents can watch their children walk to school means so much to those families.	As above.
2.5.10	A school such as Churchstoke attracts buyers to the village especially as we have a good size Coop in the village and a post office.	As above.
2.5.11	Families have moved here with the expectation that their children will attend the village school.	As above.
2.5.12	The houses being built are family sized and therefore the children will need a school close by.	As above.
2.5.13	Many new family homes have recently been built in the village and others are under construction. Once these are all occupied there are likely to be many more children who will boost the school's roll. This will in turn lead to further growth in local housing	As above.

	and further demand for local school places. In this way, the school helps to create a virtuous circle of local growth. Without the school, the opposite is likely. There will be far less incentive for young families to live in Churchstoke, so the village will follow the pattern of other rural communities and become a place for old people and second homers - an unsustainable position in the long term.	
2.5.14	The growth of population in the village is at an all time high and yet the last of the new homes are not due for completion until I believe next year. Many of these sales will be in the knowledge that in the village there are amenities of a shopping centre, post office, pub, takeaway and of course the school. Being a rural area, should the school close then there is less chance of the new houses, many of which are affordable homes, being sold, as parents may not be able to arrange daily travel to other schools.	As above.
2.5.15	We have really strong interest and properties reserved for occupation in June this year, I would say that somewhere in the region of 85% of prospective purchasers are asking about the nearest primary school and are thrilled to hear that it is in the village and within easy walking distance.	As above.

## 2.6 Concern about the impact on housing developers

2.6.1	From a developer's point of view we would like you to keep the school open as having a local school is a key factor for most buyers also with us building more houses in the area this will provide more pupils for the school if it stays open	The Council notes this comment.
2.6.2	We feel that this could potentially cause a massive effect on our chances of selling our new build properties as a developer we	As above.

	pride ourselves in building quality family homes and have been building on land in Churchstoke for quite some time now.	
2.6.3	Concern that closure of the school would impact on the business of local tradesmen who work on building new homes and renovating barn conversions.	As above.

## 2.7 Comments about the LDP

2.7.1	Churchstoke has been identified for many years in the LDP as a village to expand. However, much of the land which was identified for housing has not been used until fairly recently.	The Council notes these comments about the Local Development Plan.
2.7.2	The LDP also says “that at least 25% of the planned housing growth in Powys will be directed to Large Villages”. Consequently Churchstoke has over 100 houses either just completed, under construction or with extant planning permission. Churchstoke is growing so surplus places at the school will be eliminated in the next few years with the consequent reduction in the cost per pupil.	As above.
2.7.3	At a time when the village population is growing at its fastest rate ever, and will continue to expand, based on the Local Development Plan, the decision to close the school is wrong and is not in the best interests of the pupils and parents in the village in the short and long term.	As above.
2.7.4	Churchstoke is also classed as a larger village, which will mean further housing is considered here along with the 120 houses already being build or with planning approval.	As above.
2.7.5	The Powys LDP classifies Churchstoke as ‘Large Village’, meaning it is a focus “for development in order to reinforce and enhance their attractiveness as places to live and work and their ability to provide and sustain community services and facilities”.	As above.

	The LDP states that for Large Villages accommodate “at least 25% of the Plan’s housing growth and up to 20% of the Plan’s employment land” and “a significant proportion of new housing development required will be directed to Large Villages. This will be through commitments and new allocations and on suitable sites within the development boundary”. CCC is of the view that business case for proposed closure is inconsistent with the aspirations if the LDP for Churchstoke as a growing large village and seems myopic beyond comprehension.	
2.7.6	Churchstoke is designated a Large Village in the current Local Development Plan (LDP) which is defined as “smaller in population than towns and provide services to their own and surrounding communities”. I contend that as in most large villages in Powys this includes a school.	As above.
2.7.7	As Churchstoke is a large village, it is prioritised for housing and economic development under the local development plan, another reason Churchstoke school should not close. Churchstoke is a village that at present is growing very quickly, so it needs a school in the village now more than ever.	As above.
2.7.8	Powys County Council classifies Churchstoke as a large village meaning that it is ear marked for substantial growth, surely closing the school is inconsistent with the growth of the village.	As above.
2.7.9	The local development plan sets out the strategy for meeting the future needs of the county’s communities. It makes provision for the 4500 new houses to be built by 2026 including 952 affordable homes. The LDP focuses development and economic opportunities on powers is market Towns and larger villages. Churchstoke is classified as a larger village under the LDP, and therefore is prioritised for housing and economic development.	As above.

## 2.8 Comments about a possible increase in people moving to the area following Covid

2.8.1	I find the closure of Churchstoke Primary School an odd proposition, given the clear growth spike small communities like this are going to see in the post-COVID world.	The Council considers the ONS Population Estimates for forward planning purposes across a range of services. The latest data shows that in 2019, there were 5746 in-migrants into Powys from the rest of the UK. In 2020, this fell to 5,442. There is no evidence that Powys is expecting a significant increase in in-migration.
2.8.2	It is a common trait of the human brain to park long term success, in order to satisfy immediate gratification. In this case the immediate gratification is making short term savings, and the long term being a period of serious growth in rural areas over the next decade. Small villages like Churchstoke will see a boom with town and city workers flooding to quieter areas in the country to raise families. Office working is a dying concept. The reality is businesses are cutting desk space and saving millions by encouraging their employees to work from home for large parts of the week where possible.	As above.  The aim of the proposal is not to make short term savings. The aim of the proposal is to improve entitlement and experience for all learners. As stated in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-30, the Council faces a challenge due to the high proportion of small schools in the county and the lack of equity amongst schools. Churchstoke C.P. School teaches children in two classes of mixed aged groups. With such low pupil numbers the teacher-pupil ratio is notably different to many other schools in the area, and due to the Council's funding formula, the school's funding per pupil is higher than the Council's average. This does not provide equity across the education system – teachers in larger schools are required to provide the same education as smaller schools for less funding per pupil. Powys' Strategy is intended to improve equity across the education system and to ensure an improvement for every pupil's learning entitlement and experience.

2.8.3	I doubt very much if there is sufficient space at other 'local' schools which are at least 5 to 10 miles away because there is a definite shift since Covid for the population to move to rural areas.	<p>The capacity of other local Powys schools is as follows:</p> <p><u>Forde C. in W. School</u> 59 pupils on roll. 102 capacity</p> <p><u>Abermule C.P. School</u> 70 pupils on roll. 92 capacity</p> <p><u>Berriew C.P. School</u> 88 pupils on roll. 106 capacity</p> <p><u>Leighton C.P. School</u> 71 pupils on roll. 91 capacity</p>
-------	--	---

### 3. COMMENTS ABOUT EARLY YEARS PROVISION

#### 3.1 Comments relating to the Early Years Provision at Churchstoke

3.1.1	Over the past few years the playgroup, Churchstoke Little Explorers, has been able to develop a brand new 3+ setting within the school grounds. We have recently had a grant of £10,000 to refurbish the outdoor area. Playgroup moving permanently onto the premises allowed us to offer more hours for preschool children and this has seen a great uptake with 22 children currently on the register proving this combined setting is attractive to young families who are choosing to move into the village. This is allowing us to provide a more cohesive service, especially as they now run an afterschool club which is attractive to many working parents who may not have accessed the school before, alongside	The Council recognises that Churchstoke Little Explorers is a thriving early years setting. The Council provided a grant of £10,000 to the setting as part of the Welsh Government's Childcare Offer Capital Grant, which has enable the setting to offer more hours, which has increased the numbers of children on register.
-------	--	--

	the already flourishing breakfast club in school. So, by September 2022, when you are proposing to close the school, there will very likely be over 70 children at the setting with 52 in school and 20+ in Churchstoke Little Explorers. Change is happening and a village school is still very much needed.	
3.1.2	The school has an excellent preschool group with the next best to nursery education as formerly provided by Powys. This is what children and their parents need or alternative education will be available in Shropshire.	As above.
3.1.3	Little Explorers pre-school playgroup – at the moment there about 20 children who attend and they meet in a demountable classroom with in the grounds of the school and they are the biggest group in Powys.	As above.
3.1.4	Churchstoke Little Explorers is located on the Primary School site with the school premises being used for staff and disabled toileting and school dinners being provided to the preschool setting.	As above.
3.1.5	In the village is also a playgroup connected to the school with 19 children. The playgroup supports the childcare offer and 3+ funding	As above.
3.1.6	As you are aware the school also has an excellent playgroup within its grounds, “Churchstoke Little Explorers”, which is currently running at capacity. A high percentage of the children that attend this group then go on to school there. They have good contact with the school and have their dinners in the school, so becoming accustomed to their future surroundings. The numbers from the playgroup that feed into the school do not appear to have been taken into account.	As above.

3.1.7	The pre-school (run on the site of the school) has 22 children currently attending; we are able to provide accurate figures for the next at least 3 upcoming years of intake for the School. The pre-school also shares its facilities with the School, staff toilets, disabled toilets, attending the school for dinner each day allowing the children to have the option of a fresh, hot cooked meal. They also share the school field so they can carry out forest school activities with the children.	As above.
3.1.8	Churchstoke Little Explores operates from the school site in Churchstoke and provides childcare from 9:00am – 3:00pm for children in the area. Notably many of the families using this childcare do not drive and access the childcare setting by walking to it from within the village.	As above.
3.1.9	There are 19 Children attending the attached preschool (which is currently running at capacity) all with intentions to attend Churchstoke CP school.	As above.
3.1.10	There has also been an increase in numbers at the pre school groups on school land and were given a grant to modernise the mobile classroom on the school land. There are 40 children attending during week.	As above.
3.1.11	Churchstoke Little Explorers is thriving and at capacity. This is the best indication that the future numbers for the school will increase significantly.	As above.
3.1.12	Play group is operating at capacity this scenario is set to continue, with further housing development in the village (over 60 further family homes) either at late stages of completion or planned.	As above.
3.1.13	Are you aware that there are currently 24 children 2-4 years old attending our setting?	As above.

3.1.14	Churchstoke Little Explorers is up to capacity, with 22 children attending.	As above.
3.1.15	The pre-school is at full capacity.	As above.
3.1.16	Many of the children attending pre-school also feed into the primary school in Reception Class and the number of children in pre-school is continuing to grow year-on-year. These young children should not be forced to have to travel long distances from their homes or away from their crucial friendship groups in their rural community because of a money saving exercise for the council.	As above.
3.1.17	The pre-school is also a vital element of Churchstoke CP School, and it appears no consideration has been given to this when proposing the school closure.	As above.
3.1.18	Churchstoke Little Explorers (Playgroup), Tea and Tots (Mother and Baby Group) and After School Club operate from the building in the school grounds.	As above.
3.1.19	Are you aware that our numbers in Churchstoke little explores are actually higher than those in other areas? And the additional groups it offers with mothers and toddlers and an afterschool club, which we recognised, was a reason for children attending other schools. On a personal note tea and tots has given me support and friendships with being a first time mum whilst familiarising my daughter to the playgroup setting which has really helped her settle with no problems, any parents wish!	As above.
3.1.20	You have not looked at the numbers in the attached pre-school – at capacity most days.	As above.
3.1.21	I do believe the whole set up at Churchstoke CP School including Churchstoke Little Explorers (Playgroup) and Tea and Tots (mother and baby group) has been completely overlooked as they	As above.

	all operate from the school premises – they work very closely together, playgroup having lunch in the school and attending social events together, playgroup consisting of 22 children most accessing childcare offer and 3 plus funding which is limited in this area if you wanted to replicate that. There is also a very successful after school club that was set up in November 2020 that will attract children that we have previously lost to other schools.	
3.1.22	My child attends the Little Explorers Nursery and has thrived in this environment in so many ways. He is more confident, he feels safe and always comes home with a smile on his face. The staff are amazing always there to support the children and parents. The nursery is a real asset to the community and I hope it continues to thrive.	As above.
3.1.23	The Early Years setting is heavily linked with the school creating excellent transition for pupils.	As above.

### 3.2 Concern about the future of the Early Years Provision at Churchstoke

3.2.1	With the closure of the school we will face closure of the Preschool	<p>The Council has recognised in both the Consultation Document and the draft Community Impact Assessment that there may be a detrimental impact on early years provision if Churchstoke C.P. School closed.</p> <p>This will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.</p> <p>The Council is aware that Little Explorers is situated in a building on the grounds of Churchstoke C.P. School</p>
-------	--	---

		<p>and has a lease with the Council. Should the school close, the Council's Corporate Asset Policy would be followed. This would include consideration of a community asset transfer or a sale on the open market via different methods. The Council's policy is to dispose of any surplus assets.</p> <p>There would need to be consideration and dialogue about the impact of this on the early years facility. There may be an option to transfer the asset to the setting.</p>
3.2.2	If the school shuts we will lose the pre-school.	As above.
3.2.3	There will be no play group if you close this school.	As above.
3.2.4	Preschool will close with a massive loss to the community especially lower income families.	As above.
3.2.5	The closure of Churchstoke School would also mean that the Pre School in the grounds would be closed as well.	As above.
3.2.6	Churchstoke Little Explorers would close should consultation to close Churchstoke Primary School be successful.	As above.
3.2.7	Closure of the school will also put the pre-school, a vital service, at almost certain risk of closure.	As above.
3.2.8	I wanted to raise concerns about the impact on the childcare setting Churchstoke Little Explorers.	As above.
3.2.9	All children are entitled to a pre-school education and if school closes so will little explorers due to being held in a school building.	As above.
3.2.10	Closing the school would leave Churchstoke Little Explorers with no home.	As above.

3.2.11	Also if the school closed then Churchstoke little explorers would have to close as they use school premises which at the moment is thriving.	As above.
3.2.12	If you remove the school then you will directly impact Little Explorers taking away our building. A building that is used 5 days a week 9-3 and then additional hours for after school clubs. It is a thriving pre-school that needs some consideration during this decision when it feeds children into the school.	As above.
3.2.13	Without the school Churchstoke Little Explorers cannot survive.	As above.
3.2.14	There is a risk that if Churchstoke is closed, then this will impact/risk the closure of the pre-school setting, 'Little Explorers', as it is on the same site as the school. Early years education is vital for children and the effect of this needs to be factored in.	As above.
3.2.15	The pre school meet in the school building and share many of the schools resources. They would have nowhere to meet.	As above.
3.2.16	The pre-school currently uses a number of areas of the primary school building and grounds, where are they to go should the school close?	As above.
3.2.17	Will Churchstoke Little Explorers continue to be able to lease their building from Powys County Council should the school closure go ahead?	Churchstoke Little Explorers would continue to be able to lease their building from the Council should the school closure go ahead. If the Council decides to dispose of the school, then further discussions would need to take place about the setting's building and lease agreement.
3.2.18	Given that Little Explorers use our site and that the Consultation Document states that closure of the school "would not directly affect the early year's provision", what are your plans for our site and buildings?	As above.

3.2.19	Will the plans include selling of the premises currently occupied by Churchstoke Little Explorers therefore leaving us with no accommodation and directly causing us to close? Or do you have an alternative premises you envisage us leasing of you to continue to provide and Early Years Setting on Childcare setting in Churchstoke used by the wider rural community?	As above.
3.2.20	If the closure of the school also means the closure of the pre-school provision then Churchstoke as a village will become a transit village with folks living here but not belonging. The benefits of pre-school provision in any village is far ranging. Not only allowing the children to learn through play, which we know is the best foundation for later learning, but also provides a learning source for parents, peer support, essential in these times of ever diminishing professional support for parents.	As above.
3.2.21	Closure of the school would mean that parents (where they are able to do so) will take their pre-school children to the play group that feeds their nearest available school. All of that will be left will be those who are not able to take their children to alternative provision and play group would not be viable on this basis.	As above.
3.2.22	Powys states that the attached pre-school would be unaffected by the closure of the school, this is quite blatantly incorrect as families would no longer wish to send their children to a preschool without a local school, it would be extremely hard for those children to make lasting friendships only to be split up when being moved to other schools further afield.	As above.
3.2.23	Without to follow unschooled in the village is likely that parents will choose to send their children to another play group where there is a school that they can naturally progress to this will inevitably lead to the possible closure of the play group.	As above.

3.2.24	How does the inevitable loss of the pre-school provision in Churchstoke which currently shares the school site fit into the councils plans for early years provision?	As above.
3.2.25	Have you taken into account that if you close this school you close the play group as well?	As above.
3.2.26	Loss of pre-school and foundation education in the area, leading to loss of childcare provision, making life difficult for working parents.	As above.

### 3.3 Comments about grants provided to the pre-school provision

3.3.1	The pre-school little explorers has also recently received a £10,000 grant from Powys County Council and now they face closure. Another waste of money if it closed.	The Council wishes to ensure that all settings are able to benefit from the Welsh Government's Childcare Offer Capital Grant, regardless of whether a school is under review.
3.3.2	We are a very popular setting and have recently received a Powys Grant of £10,000 to update our outside area which is great for the kids to be able to benefit from outdoor space tailored to their needs.	Comment noted.
3.3.3	The preschool on the same premises has just received £10000 for refurbishment only for it now to be facing closure as a direct consequence of their proposal.....total misuse of clearly troubled finances.	As above.
3.3.4	Our newly (March 2021) refurbished outdoor area will go to waste if the school closure goes ahead. This was money granted to our setting by the Welsh Government for use in our Local Authority of Powys. Does this not seem a waste of precious funds for it only to be forced to close within 18 months of it being provided?	As above.

3.3.5	You are saying it's about finances, yet £10,000 was given to preschool to revamp the outdoor area, now you want to close the doors, it doesn't make any sense.	As above.
3.3.6	How is it good use of Powys' funding to allow a grant of £10,000 to Little Explorers at the same time as proposing to close the school?	As above.
3.3.7	Why were Little Explorers given £10,000 to enhance the outdoor space shared with the school at the same time as starting a consultation to close the school? Given that the council is currently facing significant financial pressures do you think this was effective budget management?	As above.
3.3.8	You have just given them £10,000 to do up there outside area and now you are threatening to take that away, now that's a waste of money!!	As above.

### 3.4 Comments about alternative early years provision

3.4.1	If the pre-school is closed many young children would be unable to access early years' provision as they rely on the fact that it is local and within walking distance of their home. There is no free transport for early years' children to access provision elsewhere. With 30% FSM in the primary school, it is a hugely important resource for our vulnerable families.	<p>The Council has recognised that there may be a detrimental impact on early years provision if Churchstoke C.P. School closed.</p> <p>The draft Impact Assessment will be updated to include information gathered during consultation, such as the impact on low income families if the setting closes and they don't have access to transport.</p>
3.4.2	There would be no transport system to allow the under fives to access pre-school provision in other villages. This could have a very detrimental effect on these children and their parents.	As above.

3.4.3	There is no free transport to neighbouring early years settings.	As above.
3.4.4	Lack of transport would mean alternative out of village [pre-school] provision would not be available to low income families.	As above.
3.4.5	Many parents do not drive and so should this pre-school setting close, children will be unable to access early years education.	As above.
3.4.6	If this provision closed then parents without access to a car would not be able to get their children into a childcare setting pre-school age creating a socio-economic divide in our village which is not what we want for our children.	As above.
3.4.7	There would be an increase in special deprivation and division, with the more well off able to access early years provision and the less well-off and those without transport unable to do so.	As above.
3.4.8	If Little Explorers is closed as a result of Churchstoke School being closed, it will mean that very young children will have to be transported some distance to be able to attend a similar facility. This again impacts on cost, the environment and also on the wellbeing of these young children.	As above.
3.4.9	Given that there is no free transport to for early years children, what provision will be available to parents without transport to get pre-school children to any sort of early years provision?	If there was no early years provision in Churchstoke, parents would need to arrange their own transport to another early years provider. The Council recognises that this would be difficult for parents without access to a car.
3.4.10	It will drive young families out of the area who require access to important childcare facilities such as the 3+ setting of Churchstoke Little Explorers, and with it many of the area's vital key workers who are parents to the children of the school will be forced to move away to areas with better service provisions for their childcare needs.	Comment noted.

3.4.1 1	Where is your suggested alternative setting for children that require childcare e.g. 9am-5pm for working parents? The suggested alternative early years provision settings do not have as extensive opening hours as our setting does.	The Council recognises that should there be no early years provision in Churchstoke then parents would not be able to access the same hours of childcare easily within the vicinity, without going to childminders or childcare providers further afield. The Council recognises that this would have a significant impact on working parents, and this will be included in the updated Impact Assessments.
3.4.1 2	What provision do you expect Foundation Phase children to attend that would walk to access our facility? Does this mean that they will miss out on those hugely formative years of early education and social interaction should they not drive or afford the travel costs to alternative setting outside the village of Churchstoke?	The Council recognises that, should Churchstoke C.P. School close, pupils who currently walk to school would no longer be able to do so. However, free home-to-school transport would be provided for eligible pupils to their nearest school in Powys i.e. if they live more than 2 miles from their nearest school in Powys.
3.4.1 3	The Consultation Document names alternate early years providers. What surplus capacity is there in the alternative early years provision? The suggested alternative early years provisions do not have capacity to admit all of our current children.	Montgomery Pre-School is currently funded for the provision of 16 places. They have capacity during all sessions provided Tuesday to Friday.  Busy Bees Nursery in Chirbury has an admission number of 12 and Long Mountain CofE Primary School's nursery setting has an admission number of 11.
3.4.1 4	Churchstoke CP school provides a dedicated building and set up for the provision of early years child care; which is something Montgomery does not have.	Comment noted. However, whilst it is recognised that Churchstoke Little Explorers operates from its own facility and that Montgomery Pre-School operates from the Community Centre next to Montgomery C. in W. Primary School, neither Estyn nor Care Inspectorate Wales identified any negative issues with the learning environment at Montgomery Pre-School in their latest inspection reports.

3.4.1 5	Many parents would choose early years provision in England, with consequent damage to the area's Welsh identity.	Comment noted.
------------	--	----------------

#### 4. COMMENTS ABOUT SMALL AND RURAL SCHOOLS

##### 4.1 Positive comments about small/rural schools

4.1.1	As someone who grew up in a village with a small school, I know how much a child's education extends beyond the classroom environment. It is far more beneficial for the children, when it is a local school with a strong and passionate community behind it.	The Council has recognised the central role that the school plays in the community in the draft Community Impact Assessment. This will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.
4.1.2	I know all too well the benefits of a smaller school. Students thrive from the extra care and attention they receive, which may otherwise be lost in a large class of 30+. They feel safe and secure, building on communication and team building skills as they learn to work alongside their peers (who may be older or younger) rather than just being with students their exact age.	The Council notes these comments about smaller schools. The aim of the proposal is to improve entitlement and experience for all learners. As stated in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-30, the Council faces a challenge due to the high proportion of small schools in the county and the lack of equity amongst schools. Churchstoke C.P. School teaches children in two classes of mixed aged groups. With such low pupil numbers the teacher-pupil ratio is notably different to many other schools in the area, and due to the Council's funding formula, the school's funding per pupil is higher than the Council's average. This does not provide equity across the education system – teachers in larger schools are required to provide the same education as smaller schools for less funding per pupil. Powys' Strategy is intended to improve equity across the education

		<p>system and to ensure an improvement for every pupil's learning entitlement and experience.</p> <p>It is clear that the Council's expenditure on children in the smallest schools is very generous, but through all of the engagements with stakeholders and the subsequent development of the Strategy to Transform Education in Powys, it is very apparent that there needs to be a vision for a stronger entitlement for all learners in Powys and equity for learners across the county. That vision, as the education professions moves towards the realisation of the new Curriculum for Wales does require the Council to pursue a transformational vision that secures an attractive entitlement and equity for all learners, professional learning for all staff and secure leadership across all schools.</p> <p>High levels of flexibility and organisation are needed in lesson planning to ensure that teaching caters for both age groups and all abilities within the class. This additional workload is a risk that the education profession needs to manage together, given the limited numbers of teachers to carry the additional roles and responsibilities in a very small school. Two-class schools not only have fewer qualified teachers in school to design the curriculum, but generally the limited numbers of staff will in all probability between them have a narrower range of disciplinary-specific expertise for the learners in that school than would probably be the case in a large school. In a larger school, each member of staff can lead on a specified</p>
--	--	---

		area where they may have an appropriate background and in which they can continue to gain growing levels of expertise. Effective learning and teaching requires disciplinary-specific expertise which will become increasingly relevant in developing a curriculum as learners progress. Although the guidance promotes inter-disciplinary approaches, it also recognises the importance that disciplinary-specific expertise plays in such approaches.
4.1.3	You are completely ignoring the benefits of family schooling in local community schools with mixed age groups. It is actually proving to be easier to differentiate work between more and less able students as they can naturally work alongside the year above or below. The new curriculum almost encourages this from what I have seen, for children to work independently, of which one of our teachers was being recommended to other schools for best practice. My daughter was actually the only student in her year group for two years. Initially I was concerned, as your automatic response to the situation would be. However, I have found that there has been no detriment to her learning and friendships she has made within school, in fact quite the opposite, she has become very confident amongst her peers and very caring and considerate to younger pupils.	As above.
4.1.4	It is not always a benefit allowing children to be taught in classes that are with peers of similar ages, however, there are many benefits to children when taught in key stages in small community schools. These children grow up learning how to help each other, and it also makes it easier to differentiate work for the more and less able these children are able to work alongside those in the	As above.

	year above or below giving them a greater advantage to the stage of their individual learning.	
4.1.5	I think children feel more confident in a smaller school where they would have more attention.	Small schools do not necessarily mean that pupils have more attention as the classes usually have up to four year groups within each class. 'More attention' is not a measure of the quality of provision; it can encourage over-dependence on adults.
4.1.6	Smaller classes allow teachers to get to know their pupils and assess needs of their pupils because they can spend more time with them.	As above.
4.1.7	A small school provides tailored education to meet more individuals specific needs.	As above.
4.1.8	In the lovely country schools the children thrive from having a smaller school and get more teacher time.	As above.
4.1.9	Village schools are local for a reason. The care and dedication of the staff in small classes, meaning each child can have the attention that he or she may need, and is not just a name and number on a register.	As above.
4.1.10	Smaller village schools bring great qualities including smaller class sizes, more focused adult:child 1:1 care.	As above.
4.1.11	Small schools are amazing for allowing children to thrive & grow.	All schools, regardless of size, are expected to support, challenge and nurture all pupils to achieve their potential.
4.1.12	Small class sizes make it easier to monitor pupil progress. In larger schools pupils can be 'lost'. we know every pupil, every family.	As above.

4.1.13	I for one given the choice would always choose a small village school over a large school where children become just another number.	All schools, regardless of size, are expected to treat every pupil as an individual.
4.1.14	These smaller rural schools are essential to many many children. Taking the opportunity away from them where they have more chance of reaching their potential and thriving as an individual is heart breaking. Many children don't have the confidence when in a larger school and lose them self. Small schools are highly beneficial.	As above.
4.1.15	A small school is better for learning properly.	The quality of education is dependent on the quality of teaching, not the size of the school.
4.1.16	Smaller classes mean a better education.	As above.
4.1.17	As the Estyn report on Small Schools in Wales says, schools of all sizes can provide a high-quality education for pupils.	As above.
4.1.18	There is countless evidence which shows that pupils benefit from a smaller, more focussed learning environment.	As above.
4.1.19	My children have been much more confident, resilient and happy whilst attending smaller schools. With smaller classes, the children have more interaction with their teachers and are able to grow, learn and develop in a safe, friendly environment.	Comment noted.
4.1.20	A small rural school gives a huge amount of 'other' often not considered extra benefits that a larger school lacks – this is well-documented.	Comment noted.

## 4.2 Concerns about larger schools

4.2.1	These big schools are ok if your child is in a small class or specialist room but otherwise if your child struggles they will get unnoticed and left out, if you're not clever there you don't have any hope.	All schools, regardless of size, are required to support, challenge and nurture all pupils to meet their full potential.
4.2.2	Larger schools do not automatically mean better education	The quality of education in any school is dependent on the quality of teaching, and not the size of a school.
4.2.3	Larger schools do not always mean better	As above.
4.2.4	The claim that larger schools will provide a better standard of education across all subjects has not been proven by any data provided.	As above.
4.2.5	Larger schools are not for all, pupils and their parents should be treated as individuals and they should be given a choice, large schools with large class numbers can prove very overwhelming for some and it is very easy for them to become lost and overlooked.	As above.
4.2.6	There are more pupils and staff in a larger school and so more to deal with. Increasing the non contact time as schools get bigger is necessary to meet the additional workload, it does not make leadership better or schools more successful.	See 4.1.2
4.2.7	Can you explain why you feel larger is better for children? What evidence do you have that this is true?	See 4.1.2

### 4.3 Comments about the Council's treatment of small / rural schools

4.3.1	Children are individuals and 'one size does not fit all'. Why does Powys County Council consistently ignore and suppress the benefits of local community village schools? Parents both know the benefits and actively seek out these schools. Many small	See 4.1.2
-------	--	-----------

	Powys schools have been providing an excellent education for years. Our communities recognise this, why does Powys County Council not do so?	
4.3.2	Bigger schools aren't better schools!! Children who need support get much better education in a local village school, not these super schools. The Council really need to look at what they are considering doing.	As above.
4.3.3	Powys are constantly negative about small schools, but they have many positives.	As above.
4.3.4	Pupils state that they prefer smaller schools but Powys County Council consistently downplay and rubbish the undeniable benefits of small schools education.	As above.
4.3.5	The Council is discriminating against rural children who should have access to established Primary Schools within their local community in Wales.	The Council is not discriminating against rural children – the aim of the proposal is to improve learner experience and equity for all learners and to ensure equity across the system.

## 5. IMPACT ON PUPILS

### 5.1 General concern about the impact of the consultation on pupil well-being

5.1.1	Moving school may affect the children's mental health. It may stop their children from learning properly.	The Council recognises that any school reorganisation process creates a period of uncertainty for all involved, including children. The Council is committed to supporting schools and learners, including through periods of change. An experienced member of staff from the Council is supporting school leaders
-------	---	--

		<p>effectively to help them manage possible changes for their learners.</p> <p>It is also expected that school governors, staff and parents support the children to ensure that there isn't a detrimental impact on their wellbeing.</p> <p>Schools receiving pupils as a result of a school closure are expected to work with the closing school, the pupils and their families to provide full support to pupils to ensure a smooth transition.</p>
5.1.2	If the school did close it would affect their mental health for the other pupils.	As above.
5.1.3	The upset and anxiety it will cause to children are already at the school and feel content, safe, and secure. I feel strongly about this and urge powers council to reconsider.	As above.
5.1.4	This will cause unnecessary anxiety.	As above.
5.1.5	I am a parent of a child in Churchstoke CP school and am very concerned the impact of closing her school will affect her mental health and well-being. She is settled into her school. She has formed strong friendships and feels safe in her school, and with the staff she knows.	As above.
5.1.6	My primary concern is for the health and wellbeing of my child, he is a highly sensitive child who has suffered greatly through the pandemic with not seeing his friends and family, the thing he looked forward to the most was the day he went back to school and things could get back to somewhere near normal, he was in tears the day he heard that Powys had plans to close his school and I absolutely believe that after everything he has been through	As above.

	this past year this would have a detrimental effect on his mental health.	
5.1.7	I am concerned about the children's mental health and well-being and my boys going back to square 1 with change this will have a negative impact on them.	As above.
5.1.8	I believe that closing Churchstoke school would be damaging to the children's developmental, emotional and mental health needs.	As above.
5.1.9	The effect the closure of the school would have on these pupils would be detrimental to their health and well-being.	As above.
5.1.10	I think the council should consider the mental health of all the children that attend the school and pre school.	As above.
5.1.11	The wellbeing of the children should far outweigh the costs, and should be at the forefront of the council's minds.	As above.
5.1.12	Unfortunately, we know everything comes down to money, but when you are making your decisions about school closures please ensure that you also consider the welfare and wellbeing of the children as being of paramount importance.	As above.
5.1.13	Concern about the mental and emotional wellbeing of the children who are growing up here.	As above.
5.1.14	I am deeply concerned about the impact on the mental health and well-being of the current pupils aged 4-11 suddenly being uprooted from a school where they know everyone, a school they can walk to and join in extra curricular activities. A lot of children struggle with the transition at 11 to secondary school. How are kids this age going to cope?	As above.
5.1.15	You go on about children's mental health but that's a joke.	As above.

5.1.16	I believe the school closure would mean unnecessary stress, pressure, potentially leading to mental health issues and behavioural issues as some children struggle with being uprooted, having their education disrupted, being separated from the friends and having to travel further to school.	As above.
5.1.17	Children's mental health is already seeing rise, a global pandemic and then now taking their school a sense of security from them shameful!	As above.
5.1.18	Children at the school are happy, please don't make them sad.	As above.
5.1.19	The children are clearly very happy, how sad it is that their happiness and safety is not being taken into account. I feel this proposal is very short sighted – I do hope it does not come to fruition.	As above.
5.1.20	Young children do not need stress or unhappiness put upon them to satisfy the need of a team who seem, apparently to follow the American education system, where children disappear into the mass of pupils.	As above.

## 5.2 Comments about consultation taking place during the Covid pandemic

5.2.1	Children have experienced enough disruption to their education over the past year from Covid-19, closing the school would only add to this.	The Council recognises that any school reorganisation proposal creates a period of uncertainty and concern for local stakeholders. However, in order to address the issues raised by Estyn regarding the organisation of its schools, it is necessary to continue with the development and consultation on proposals during the current pandemic. The Welsh Government provided non-statutory guidance for local authorities to manage consultations during periods of lockdown. The level and
-------	---	--

		detail of responses received to all recent consultations outlines that stakeholders have engaged fully in the consultations, even though there have been restrictions in place.
5.2.2	First of all I'd like to say that I think your timing of this is horrible, we're in the middle of a pandemic and children have already suffered enough without having to worry about their school closing.	As above.
5.2.3	Children have had a very difficult year 2020 to 2021.	As above.
5.2.4	Closing the school, especially at this time of stress for everyone due to the unprecedented restrictions caused by the covid pandemic, would add extra worry and confusion to the children. It is widely acknowledged that children have been detrimentally affected by not being able to attend school as normal for such a long time. To announce the closure of school and pre-school here, just as our children are getting a bit of normality returning, I think is putting their needs – mental health – behind other plans in terms of importance.	As above.
5.2.5	I think after the last 18 months of a world wide pandemic u have taken advantage of the situation and all of this will damage the children's mental heath.	As above.
5.2.6	The stress on the staff and children at a time of such uncertainty and disruption due to the pandemic has been bad and to now threat to close the school now is unkind and cruel to the children.	As above.
5.2.7	It is unfair and cruel to put these young children under such pressure and stress, particularly in the midst of a global pandemic.	As above.
5.2.8	We are concerned pupils will suffer mentally, having been through COVID restrictions, and to be moved and split will cause anxiety.	As above.

5.2.9	During the last year children have been through an awful lot due to the coronavirus pandemic, without being made to suffer even more by closing their school.	As above.
5.2.10	Every news bulletin talks of the importance of getting every child back into school for both educational and emotional reasons. And yet you choose this time to bring further turmoil to these same children by proposing to close their school!	As above.
5.2.11	Please explain to me after the year these children have had in a world wide pandemic how changing school and friends and all the worries that goes with this is good for my children's mental health?	As above.
5.2.12	The Mental Health of these children who are already attending the school and pre school with COVID they have already had to adjust to the changes that has caused now the council is asking them to adjust again to going to another school which it traumatising to young children they need a Safe,Happy Stability.	As above.
5.2.13	As a result of COVID children's education has been greatly affected and acknowledged by all – surely every effort should be made to avoid any further disruption to children's education, especially young children who are arguably more easily affected.	As above.
5.2.14	Plases do not disrupt our children, in such traumatic time with COVID. There has already been effected having to loose so much valuable learning, I feel that the closure of our school will effect their education even more and their mental health.	As above.

### 5.3 Concern about the impact on pupils of having to move to a different school

5.3.1	The closure of the school would have an adverse effect on pupils being moved to different area schools.	Schools receiving pupils as a result of a school closure are expected to work with the closing school, the pupils and their families to provide full support to pupils to ensure a smooth transition.
5.3.2	It will be a source of upheaval for those kids to have to resettle in another school.	As above.
5.3.3	Pupils feel safe at the school and might not like another school.	As above.
5.3.4	Pupils trust their teachers at Churchstoke and don't want teachers they don't know.	As above.
5.3.5	Moving schools is a traumatic experience for children of any age for many reasons.	As above.
5.3.6	The pupils have learned to adapt to their peers and get along nicely, moving schools may increase the chances of bullying due to them standing out more because they are new. This isn't something we want or need surely? Kids need to feel safe and secure in a place of education, forcing them to move schools will cause a massive amount of stress for them, they're only kids they shouldn't be scared at this age.	As above.
5.3.7	Expecting my daughter to travel by bus every day to another school where she knows no one, does not know the location, does not know the teachers will be very frightening to a child her age, and she will not feel safe. She feels safe in Churchstoke CP school where she has settled, and settled in the community of Churchstoke. It is very unfair to just assume she will adjust to a new environment, I know she will not.	As above.
5.3.8	I have witnessed how difficult it can be for children to move to a school with already established friendship groups.	As above.
5.3.9	Pupils don't want to get taught by other teachers.	As above.

5.3.10	My children have only just moved to this school and mentally it would be detrimental to them having recently moved schools on top of the pandemic we have had to face as well as moving home. They love their school and have settled in really well.	As above.
5.3.11	To put some pupils in a larger school could be detrimental to their learning if they are sensitive.	As above.
5.3.12	Large schools do not meet all children's needs.	As above.
5.3.13	Moving children to a bigger school doesn't necessarily mean they will get a better education.	As above.
5.3.14	Education of our children will be comprised by bigger classes and unknown environments.	As above.
5.3.15	If certainly won't improve the educational opportunities of the children to be torn from friends and a familiar environment and thrust into a strange and much larger one.	As above.
5.3.16	The children in the school are settled and happy, many will have to go to different schools, some in another country which is absolutely not fair.	As above.
5.3.17	Pre-school infants would be most affected and less secure knowing parents or carers are not nearby.	As above.
5.3.18	What support will be provided to pupils during the transition period? In particular some staff have been extremely concerned by comments made by parents from Chirbury that they do not want children from Churchstoke in their school. How will PCC ensure there is support for transition into Shropshire schools that will tackle this problem?	The Council would contact all alternative schools to ensure that they are able to work with the closing school and its pupils and families to ensure a smooth transition. This would be the same for schools in Powys and Shropshire.
5.3.19	I would never want to move school because I used to go to a small school before I came here. If this school closed, I would	The proposal is to close Churchstoke C.P. School and pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative school in

	have to go back to my old small school again. I don't want to so please don't close our school.	Powys. However, parents can apply for a place for their child(ren) at any school.
--	---	---

#### 5.4 Concern that pupils would be separated from their friends

5.4.1	A lot of the children will be split up in having to travel different directions to a future school.	<p>The Council acknowledges that children and families would need to go through a period of change, should Churchstoke C.P. School close. It also understands that this is a real concern for children, especially if friendship groups go to different schools. However, children are able to be part of friendship groups even if they attend different schools and are able to become part of new friendship groups.</p> <p>All schools that receive pupils as a result of a school closure are expected to work with the closing school, the pupils and their families to provide full support to ensure a smooth transition and help pupils settle into their new schools.</p>
5.4.2	All the kids will be split from their friends' primary school is where lifelong friends start.	As above.
5.4.3	Children could be at different schools so losing the friendships made in the local village.	As above.
5.4.4	Children don't want to leave their friends	As above.
5.4.5	Pupils are concerned that they might get split up from their friends	As above.
5.4.6	The local children will be split up from the start.	As above.

5.4.7	Pupils that have lots of friends in Churchstoke School might find it hard to make new friends.	As above.
5.4.8	I feel that this will have a negative affect on the pupils attending this school due to them having to move to other locations away from friends they have made in this current one.	As above.
5.4.9	Pupils will possibly be split up from their friends due to limited spaces in proposed alternative schools.	As above.
5.4.10	Children have suffered enough without having to possibly leave friends and / or siblings if there isn't room in the new school.	As above.
5.4.11	I also think if it did close it would make people sad and unhappy because they possibly could not see their friends and they could be split up.	As above.
5.4.12	There is one thing that will be upsetting if the school closes, which is friends splitting up! I think of this because there will not be enough room for everyone to go to the same school and people might choose different schools and it will be very sad.	As above.
5.4.13	The children of Churchstoke would be split 4 ways, friendships would be lost and they could lose their Welsh identity. Once again their welfare has not been taken into consideration.	As above.
5.4.14	To split the pupils between four schools is very unfair to all concerned in this manner.	As above.
5.4.15	If you close a school it will cause mayhem in a child's learning, because they will be separated from close friends if they go to different schools which will cause anxiety and depression which certainly will affect their learning which will add extra pressure on parents.	As above.
5.4.16	Surrounding schools are currently larger than Churchstoke school, but not one school has the surplus capacity to	As above.

	accommodate all pupils from Churchstoke. Pupils would be split between several schools, fragmenting the community.	
5.4.17	If Churchstoke School closes it will mean they will not even be with the friends they have made in our school as they will be possibly be split between 3 schools or even have to travel further afield.	As above.
5.4.18	It would end up with children from one village being split between numerous primary schools, this can be very damaging to friendship bonds especially when then transferring on to high schools.	As above.
5.4.19	Students would be spread across different schools.	As above.
5.4.20	Pupils would be split up between 4 different schools, ripping the community apart.	As above.
5.4.21	Have you considered how closing the school would affect children's mental health and well-being when you split them from their friends?	As above.
5.4.22	You will spilt families and friendships across schools.	As above.
5.4.23	Children having to be bused to various local schools, as no one school has sufficient capacity to take all the children, has a negative effect. Friends will be split up and there is even the danger of siblings not being able to attend the same school.	As above.
5.4.24	Having young children from the same community 'farmed out' to different primary schools will impact on their ability for social inclusion as a year group and will impact negatively socially.	As above.
5.4.25	Have you thought about what happens with siblings if they can't get in to the same school and how this will effect them? How they might be split up from friends?	As above.

5.4.26	Of the schools suggested as alternatives, not one of them has space for all the pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School meaning peer groups and even sibling s may be split up, this would shatter the community in Churchstoke.	As above.
5.4.27	Pupils have formed friendships which began in Churchstoke toddler group. They went to Churchstoke play group with the same friends, and now attend Churchstoke CP school with these same friends. They have all formed very close friendships, and yet they will all be forced to attend different schools. How is this fair? It is certainly not in their best interests, yet Powys County Council just expect them to accept this situation because they are children and will probably be fine.	As above.
5.4.28	This saddens me to think that my child who has been attending the attached pre school Churchstoke little explorers since he was 2. The bonds he had formed and relationships he has made are very strong, it would be devastating for him and his friends if they were not able to attend the school that they already have strong links with	As above.
5.4.29	If children are educated away from their own village, they will naturally make friends from outside their community. This means that any social interaction after school and during holidays is greatly curtailed, and the children could become depressed, anxious and lonely.	As above.
5.4.30	Sending children to different schools outside of the village will be detrimental to their interaction with friends who would not live in the village. At this age they need their friends nearby to be able to make strong bonds and parents would know the families with whom their children interact with, which has to be a very important safety factor.	As above.

5.4.31	Pupils are concerned that they won't make friends in a different school.	As above.
--------	--	-----------

## 5.5 Concern about pupils' future opportunities

5.5.1	It will affect children's futures. Deprive them of their human rights future careers.	<p>The aim of the proposal is to improve learner entitlement and experience, and to ensure equity across the system. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative school in Powys would be Montgomery C. in W. School. Some pupils may also choose to attend schools in Shropshire, in particular Chirbury CofE School.</p> <p>The Council's view is that Montgomery C. in W. School would provide education for pupils which is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Churchstoke C.P. School, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on standards and progress overall.</p> <p>Whilst the Council does not have direct experience of the provision at Chirbury CofE School, the school's last Ofsted inspection which was carried out in December 2019 judged the school's overall effectiveness and quality of education to be Good, therefore it is likely that the provision is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Churchstoke C.P. School.</p>
5.5.2	Attending a school outside Wales would narrow down the children's chances of getting jobs which require some understanding of Welsh when there older.	The Council agrees that having an understanding of Welsh is certainly a benefit in the Welsh job market, and therefore the Council's preference is that, in the event that Churchstoke C.P. School closes, then pupils

		would transfer to their nearest schools in Powys. However, the Council also recognises that some parents may choose a Shropshire school for their child(ren).
5.5.3	If they attended a school outside Wales, pupils would be disadvantaged, having to play catchup, also when seeking a job needing Welsh qualifications.	As above.
5.5.4	What study has been done on the effect of standards of transferring from the Welsh to the English education system? How will children who do so be supported by Powys County Council? Can Churchstoke School cease to prepare these pupils for the New Welsh National Curriculum and instead prepare them for the change to the English one? If so, how can we teach and prepare for two different National Curriculums alongside each other?	<p>All schools in Wales are expected to prepare for the implantation of the new Curriculum for Wales and the Council would not support Churchstoke C.P. School ceasing in its preparations.</p> <p>The Council is not aware of any study about impact on standards of transferring from the Welsh education system to the English education system. The proposal is for Churchstoke C.P. School to close and for pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative school in Powys. This is to ensure that they have the opportunity to access the Curriculum for Wales.</p> <p>If parents whose children currently attend Churchstoke C.P. School choose to send their child(ren) to a Shropshire school, then the Council would expect the receiving school to work with Churchstoke C.P. School to ensure a smooth transition for these pupils.</p>

## 5.6 Concern about the impact of additional travel on pupils

5.6.1	The children will suffer having to travel further afield	The Council recognises that there would be additional travel required for pupils who currently live closer to
-------	--	---

		Churchstoke C.P. School. However, the Council's view is that this would not be excessive.
5.6.2	The children will be tired before they arrive for 1st lesson	As above.
5.6.3	Children will be tired from travel	As above.
5.6.4	I'm disappointed that they will face a further commute, which can be tiring for youngsters.	As above.
5.6.5	Being on buses for long periods makes it a very long day for youngsters and not conducive to a good mindset or learning mode.	As above.
5.6.6	The additional time taken up in the travelling may also lead to an adverse effect on the children due to tiredness therefor affecting their ability to study and greater risk of accident.	As above.
5.6.7	Closing cause more cars on roads and make more stress on parents and children. Resulting in more absence less education.	As above.
5.6.8	Have any thought being given to the stress caused to pupils and parents if they have to travel miles to school at the beginning and end of every day?	As above.
5.6.9	How the extra time traveling a day might effect them?	As above.
5.6.10	Having children from the junior school travel further for their education will more than likely effect the children's sleeping pattern so they will feel sleep deprived among other things such as mental health etc.	As above.
5.6.11	How is it in the 'best interest' of the pupils.....? Travelling further to school making their school day longer.	As above.
5.6.12	Pupils will be scared travelling to a school and place they don't know all by themselves on a bus.	As above.

5.6.13	Being transported by bus could be quite traumatic to young children when they already have a perfectly good school that they feel happy and safe in which helps them to learn.	As above.
--------	--	-----------

### 5.7 Concern that pupils would no longer feel a sense of ‘belonging’ to the community

5.7.1	The sense of “belonging” to a place will disappear.	The Council has recognised, in the draft Community Impact Assessment, the central role that the school has in the community of Churchstoke. This will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.
5.7.2	It would diminish the sense of community that is gained from attending a local school	As above.
5.7.3	Transporting children to different schools breaks the link with the community and the village will suffer	As above.
5.7.4	I believe it is so important for children to be educated where they live - not to travel away from their community.	As above.
5.7.5	Being bussed in to another school, besides the cost, logistics etc is detrimental to the sense of belonging for these very young children. There will be plenty of that when they get to high school and further. These toddlers and pre-teens need a school in their community to be part of that community. Please don't take that away from them and those yet to come.	As above.

### 5.8 Other comments

5.8.1	Again rural young people put at a disadvantage	The Council is not putting rural young people at a disadvantage. The aim of the proposal is to improve learner entitlement and experience for all learners, and to ensure equity across the system.
-------	--	---

5.8.2	'Local schools for local children' is the best way of ensuring equality of opportunity for the children of Churchstoke and its locality.	As above.
-------	--	-----------

## 6. IMPACT ON PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC GROUPS

### 6.1 Benefits of Churchstoke C.P. School / small schools for pupils belonging to protected characteristic groups

6.1.1	Many parents of disabled children choose to send their children to a small school because of just that. The fact it is a small school. A school that has less children meaning more one to one support and learning. Less children in a small school means that disabled children can be prioritised. Less children means less bullying, a factor that is common for children with disabilities. Small schools are essential for the education of any person who falls under the equality act. The council needs to consider this, nothing has been mentioned of the sort by them so far. If you close the school, you need to outright say that you are damaging the education and wellbeing of disabled children at Churchstoke school because that is the truth.	<p>The council does not accept that pupils with disabilities have greater one to one support in small schools, compared to larger schools. The council does not agree that pupils, including those with disabilities, are less likely to be bullied in small schools. There is no evidence in the council to support this.</p> <p>The council believes that the wellbeing of all pupils, including those with disabilities, can be equally well supported in any school in Powys. All schools in Powys have had the same opportunities for training and guidance in supporting pupils' wellbeing and mental health and have access to online resources. All schools in Powys have been provided with training in the new ALN act and code and equally able to support the needs of pupils with disabilities.</p>
6.1.2	Churchstoke is a small school and children with SEN are provided for exceptionally.	The council acknowledges this comment. This is true of other schools in Powys.
6.1.3	Churchstoke school is equipped for disabilities for children either at the school or the children at the schools playgroup.	The council acknowledges this comment. This is true of other schools in Powys.

6.1.4	Churchstoke CP School has an excellent reputation for supporting pupils with protected characteristics and is the choice of a number of local parents for precisely this reason. These pupils and their parents would be profoundly disadvantaged by the closure of the school.	The council acknowledges this comment. This is true of other schools in Powys; therefore, we disagree that pupils and parents would be disadvantaged by the closure.
6.1.5	Churchstoke CP School is particularly successful in responding to and caring for local children with protected characteristics and loss of the school would impact negatively on this group.	As above.
6.1.6	Our SEN children, they are so settled and happy. Great disability facilities!	Comment noted.
6.1.7	Every pupil is a person at Churchstoke primary school, not one is left behind. It' s catered for all needs of the attending pupils	Comment noted.
6.1.8	Churchstoke school is an all-inclusive setting and pupils are all welcomed and treated equally. The pupils who struggle socially who currently attend Churchstoke will find their education greatly disrupted.	The council acknowledges this comment. This is true of other schools in Powys; therefore, we disagree that pupils who need support would be disadvantaged by the closure.
6.1.9	Being a smaller school pupils with any additional needs get more one on one and help.	The council considers that pupils with additional needs across all schools are able to access equal help and support.
6.1.10	I also believe that a smaller school with less children is in fact a benefit to the children with special needs, that has been evident by how pupils have thrived and came on in all aspects of his education.	The council does not agree with this comment. This is also true of larger schools in Powys.
6.1.11	Churchstoke is a small school, which gives the flexibility to cater for the above protected characteristics.	The council accepts this comment. This is also true of larger schools in Powys.

6.1.12	Local schools are so much better for people with protected characteristics as they feel safer, have more support and are better managed.	The council does not agree with this comment. This is also true of larger schools in Powys.
6.1.13	The needs of pupils that have moved to Churchstoke from larger schools have been better met as they slipped through the net in the larger school.	The council does not agree with this comment.
6.1.14	Nearly one third of pupils have additional learning needs – disability is one of them. They are far better catered for locally where parents can engage properly with the school and teachers and there is general support for them and their families within the village.	The council accepts this comment.
6.1.15	There has been a dramatic increase in the amount of children having FSM and also children with ALN. These children are better suited to smaller schools and are able to achieve better in class sizes where they're not lost.	The council does not agree with this comment. This is also true of larger schools in Powys.
6.1.16	Village schools and smaller classes mean one to one pupils find it easier to mix with mainstream pupils, who are also able to help with their wellbeing.	The council does not agree with this comment. This is also true of larger schools in Powys.
6.1.17	The pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated the already increasing issue of mental health and SEBD in young children of primary age. These children and those on the autistic spectrum are known to benefit hugely from known and smaller environments.	The council accepts this comment.

## 6.2 Impact on pupils with additional learning needs

6.2.1	29% of pupils have additional learning needs	The council accepts this comment.
-------	--	-----------------------------------

6.2.2	Those attending the school with special educational needs feel happy safe and secure with staff they work closely with, a school like an extended family and smaller class sizes.	The council accepts this comment.
6.2.3	A huge impact on the several children who have SEN.	The council does not accept this comment. Other schools in the area will be equally able to support pupils with ALN.
6.2.4	For pupils with SEN, the proposal would cause more stress.	The council does not accept this comment. Other schools in the area will be equally able to support pupils with ALN.
6.2.5	There are a few children with SEN in the school. Moving schools would be very detrimental for these children.	The council does not accept this comment. Other schools in the area will be equally able to support pupils with ALN.
6.2.6	Children with ALN will have their everyday routines disrupted, which will have a negative impact on their well-being.	The council accepts this comment but will work with schools to support transition.
6.2.7	There are children with additional needs who have grown attached to staff and would require additional funding to get transported to a school further away.	The council accepts this comment but will work with schools to support transition and transport.
6.2.8	There are now a number of children with ALN who are currently settled and thriving at the school. Closure of the school would be very detrimental to them. Most of these children currently walk to school with their parent. The need for transport to a distant school would also have detrimental effects.	As above
6.2.9	Concern about pupils who are statemented, who have to have one to one care which includes the disabled toilets and changing facilities in the school. They would not handle change or having to travel on public transport.	The council accepts this comment but will work with schools to support transition and transport.

6.2.10	Would have a detrimental impact on any pupils with autism who are thriving at Churchstoke.	The council accepts this comment. Other schools in the area will be equally able to support pupils with ALN.
6.2.11	Would have an impact on pupils with ADHD/autism that currently go to the school, the move would have an impact on them mentally, socially, emotionally and academically.	The council accepts this comment. Other schools in the area will be equally able to support pupils with ALN.
6.2.12	Pupils with SEN who can currently walk to school safely with parents will be left feeling vulnerable in places they don't know and with people they don't know.	The council accepts this comment but will work with schools to support transition and transport.
6.2.13	Children with SEN who currently walk to Churchstoke School safely with their parents will be left in a vulnerable situation, they will need to be transported to school with one to one support by taxi. If the school closes, so will the preschool located on the premises. Parents who cannot drive will be unable to travel to take their children to other preschools.	As above.
6.2.14	Our SEN children are so settled and happy, where will they go? Will they have taxis with a carer to travel with them?	The council accepts this comment but will work with schools to support transition and transport.
6.2.15	Children with additional learning needs / disabilities need special transportation which will be an extra cost to the council.	The council accepts this comment but will work with schools to support transition and transport.
6.2.16	Pupils with SEN / disabilities need to be part of a local community.	The council accepts this comment.

### 6.3 Impact on disabled pupils / parents

6.3.1	Children who have disabilities will be greatly impacted by Churchstoke school closing. They are thriving in our school and get excellent support. Churchstoke has extremely good disabled facilities which meet their needs. They are happy and secure in this school.	The council accepts this comment. Other schools in the area will be equally able to support pupils with ALN.
-------	--	--

6.3.2	I have many concerns over the impact on children with disabilities from the school closing. There are children at the school currently with disabilities that need extra help and support from staff at all times. Closing the school would make it harder for these children, having a negative impact on their education.	The council does not accept this comment. Other schools in the area will be equally able to support pupils with ALN and those who have disabilities.
6.3.3	Disability- you will disrupt routine, you will need further money on private taxi and escorts, larger class sizes will not help there learning or confidence. Could lead to isolation problems.	As above. There is no evidence that larger classes negatively impact children's confidence or create problems with isolation. The greater school population may make it easier to develop friendships where there are more pupils with similar challenges.
6.3.4	The extra distance involved in travelling to other schools would seriously impact people with disabilities.	The council accepts this comment but will work with schools to support transition and transport.
6.3.5	The proposed alternative transport to other schools is a high school bus, a bus that does not cater at all for wheelchair users.	The council accepts this comment but will work with schools to support transition and transport. We have extensive experience in securing transport for pupils with a range of additional learning needs and disabilities.
6.3.6	Children with disabilities can be taken in their wheelchairs to school, much easier and safer for parents to take them rather than struggling getting child and wheelchair into a car.	See above.
6.3.7	It would be difficult for disabled parents to travel far away and disabled children who might need special transports would feel different to their friends.	See above.
6.3.8	Well-being of disabled pupils will be affected by extra travelling and parents being further away if there is a health issue for example.	See above.
6.3.9	Moving children with disabilities out of the village will cause immense emotional pressure on the individual children and	See above.

	families. The teachers and people of the village know their families and problems and will protect them.	
6.3.10	Disabled parents and children would have to travel further to school and this isn't always possible	See above.

#### 6.4 Impact on pupils that are eligible for free school meals

6.4.1	Low income families relying on free school transport would be restricted in their involvement with any new school. This would further exacerbate social inequality.	The Council recognises that there would be an impact on low income families' ability to attend the school for meetings or activities if they did not have access to transport. This will be reflected in the updated impact assessments.
6.4.2	Low income families would undoubtedly suffer and be unable to take part in after school extracurricular activities, thus increasing social inequality.	As above.
6.4.3	Low income families relying on free school transport would be unable to engage well with a school outside the village and social inequality would increase.	As above.
6.4.4	The less well off families will be the most affected and this will make the gap between richer and poorer families even greater.	As above.
6.4.5	The school at present has a breakfast club and after school groups, no school is available for children of essential workers and children at risk from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The school has children at risk attending getting free school meals.	As above.

#### 6.5 Impact on other protected characteristic groups

6.5.1	Closure will impact anyone with protected characteristics	The Council has recognised the impact on protected characteristic groups in the Draft Equality Impact Assessment. This will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.
6.5.2	This closure will have an impact on ALL pupils and future pupils so of course it will also affect those with protected characteristics, they are woven through society and our community!	As above.
6.5.3	100% people with one of the protected characters will be the most effected. They won't be able to receive as much 1:1 support and are likely to feel overwhelmed in large classes	As above.
6.5.4	Women would be disadvantaged as mothers and workers.	As above.

## 7. IMPACT ON PARENTS / FAMILIES

7.1	Closure of the school would mean a lot of juggling for parents to arrange the school/working week.	The Council recognises that, should Churchstoke C.P. School close, then parents would need to adapt to new arrangements.
7.2	Loss of the care facilities offered by the school, including Breakfast Club and After School Clubs, will make it difficult for working parents.	Montgomery C. in W. Primary School would be the nearest school for the majority of pupils currently at Churchstoke C.P. School, and has a Breakfast Club and after school clubs.
7.3	The school has a breakfast club and after school activities which provide local jobs and also give parents the opportunity to work because their children are looked after and they can pick them up on their way home	As above.
7.4	Without access to the school's breakfast club, working mothers would have to terminate their employment.	As above.

7.5	Working mothers need to access breakfast club and afterschool club for their job.	As above.
7.6	As a working mother I can organise myself with the wrap around care that is received at Churchstoke CP School to carry out my position, there is adequate and safe drop off and pick up locations with plenty of room at the school	As above.
7.7	Concern about the amount of travelling parents would have to do, and the impact on parents jobs with loss of time taking and fetching their children.	As above.
7.8	More difficult for working parents as more time needed to find childcare and more time to take and fetch children from childcare.	As above.
7.9	Has any consideration been given to the fact that those on low income or unemployed would be unable to access breakfast or after school clubs due to reliance on school transport? Are PCC aware that many parents are dependent on the wrap around care currently offered by the school, meaning that their work may no longer be viable or that they would be unable to take on jobs? (We have letters from local employers, including St Nicholas's House and Montgomeryshire Spring Water, that back this up.) What effect do they feel that this will have on social disadvantage and the local economy?	The Council will update the draft impact assessments to take account of these issues.

## 8. COMMENTS ABOUT OTHER SCHOOLS PUPILS MIGHT TRANSFER TO

### 8.1 Montgomery C. in W. School

8.1.1	We believe the Montgomery school building to be in a similar state of repair to Churchstoke, therefore, there is no advantage at all, as far as we can see, in the children going to this school.	The building condition and suitability of Montgomery C. in W. Primary School is similar to that of Churchstoke C.P. School. The Council's view is that Montgomery C. in W. School would provide education for pupils which is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Churchstoke C.P. School.
8.1.2	Montgomery school is limited for parking, the road is single track and can get very busy. More pupils from other areas mean more cars. I walk my children to school, which makes life so much easier, but I see how hectic it can get during drop off, pick up time.	The Council recognises that Montgomery C.P. School has access issues but the school manages this well with supervision during drop off and pick up times.
8.1.3	Montgomery is probably oversubscribed and presents huge parking and transport difficulties. It's almost impossible to drive through Montgomery now, as it is.	Montgomery C. in W. School is not over-subscribed. The school's capacity is 119 and there are currently 88 pupils on roll, meaning that there are 31 places available at the school.
8.1.4	Montgomery school is a listed building with limited space and is pushed to its limits at drop off and collection times.	The Council notes this comment.
8.1.5	Montgomery school will be over capacity due to the addition of 30-60 new houses - there will be no space for children from outside of Montgomery	The Council recognises that there are current and planned housing developments in Montgomery – according to Powys' Local Development Plan there are two allocations for 50 and 53 unit respectively. The Council's planning department uses a pupil-yield ratio of .45 pupils for each house build. Based on this ratio, the housing developments could potentially lead to an increase of approximately 46 children in Montgomery. However, it must be recognised that this is an estimate and that such an increase would probably happen gradually over a period of time.

8.1.6	The nearest Welsh primary school you are suggesting that pupils move to from Churchstoke – Montgomery CinW school is a school I have moved my children from – this is due to the large class size and my son not progressing as well as I feel he could have, I moved him to another local small primary school and he is now thriving. If you look at the figures for Montgomery you will see that in the past 18 months alone a significant number of children, well into double figures have left Montgomery CinW primary to attend other local primary schools due to various issues across age groups within the school – to be suggesting a school where sadly a lot of pupils/parents have experienced significant enough issues to remove them from as replacement school for pupils from Churchstoke to me is really not right.	The Council notes this comment. 18 pupils have requested an in-year transfer from Montgomery C. in W. Primary since January 2020.
8.1.7	It would appear that Montgomery School does not have spare capacity for all the children who presently attend Churchstoke School.	It is recognised that there isn't sufficient capacity for all the pupils from Churchstoke C.P. School at Montgomery C. in W. Primary School. However, it is highly likely that not all parents would choose Montgomery C. in W. Primary School if Churchstoke C.P. School closed.
8.1.8	Montgomery has 29 spaces which does not allow for the 36 on the roll at Churchstoke and does not take into account the new building work in Montgomery.	As above.
8.1.9	Montgomery school is already full, under resourced and reliant on parent fundraising - education in Wales is already under funded, and cannot be stretched any further without a negative effect on the students.	Montgomery C. in W. Primary School is not over-subscribed and is funded in accordance with the Council's funding formula.
8.1.10	There is no room to expand at Montgomery.	Comment noted.

## 8.2 Schools located in Shropshire

8.2.1	It has been suggested that Chirbury would be another choice. However that school is already full because schools have closed in Shropshire and there is no room to expand.	The capacity of Chirbury CofE Primary School is 84, and the current number on roll is 72 which indicates that the school is almost full.
8.2.2	I know with Chirbury they are having lots of trouble with parking in mornings and afternoons as there is a lot of children there. They have staggered drop off/pick up times now, how can they cope with more vehicles and children? Staff there are already trying to cope with large classes. Also very importantly Chirbury will be starting building on large new housing estate there soon. Again more families in the area, Chirbury will not be able to function with all these large numbers of children going there.	There is currently planning permission currently under consideration for a hybrid application for 40 dwellings in Chirbury which are a mixture of affordable housing and market housing. <sup>1</sup>  As part of the Shropshire Local Plan 2016-2038, currently under review there is a total of 14 dwellings identified for Chirbury. <sup>2</sup>
8.2.3	I'm concerned about the impact on Chirbury Primary School should high numbers of pupils from Churchstoke go to Chirbury, especially as there is going to be a big housing development in Chirbury in the coming years so pupil numbers will increase with that.	As above.
8.2.4	The community has full capacity at Chirbury despite federating to save Stiperstones into the group. The Chirbury site has limited amenities and toilets etc and already lacks classroom space.	As above.
8.2.5	At the moment there only seems to be 3 schools in the area where the children now at Churchstoke CP school could go. Montgomery, Chirbury and Bishops Castle. I understand that Montgomery and Chirbury have their own planned development. This only leaves Bishops Castle. I am told that at the moment there are 38 children in Churchstoke School and by September 2022 there could be as many as 53 children attending. Are all	The Powys LDP makes provision for an additional 54 dwellings in Montgomery. A planning application for 33 affordable dwellings is currently under consideration on a site outside the LDP housing area. <sup>3</sup>  There is planned housing development in Chirbury as listed in 8.2.3.

<sup>1</sup> 21/01136/FUL - Shropshire Planning Portal

<sup>2</sup> Regulation 19: Pre-Submission Draft of the Shropshire Local Plan 2016 to 2038, pg 174

<sup>3</sup> 20/2118/FUL – Powys Planning Portal

	these children going to find a place in Bishops Castle school? I think that would be very doubtful.	
8.2.6	Bishops Castle Primary School is overloaded with children already.	The capacity of Bishops Castle Primary School is 175 with currently 135 pupils on roll.

### 8.3 Concerns about available capacity in neighbouring schools

8.3.1	I just wonder where are our children supposed to go to school as the villages around us have their own planned developments building family homes which would use up the vacant places in their schools. There would not be places for our children, they will not have priority in any of the proposed schools for them to move to.	<p>The proposal is to close Churchstoke C.P. School and for pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys. The nearest school in Powys for the majority of pupils currently attending Churchstoke is Montgomery C. in W. Primary School which has a capacity of 119 with 88 currently on roll. Other Powys schools in the vicinity are shown below. All these schools have available places.</p> <p><u>Forde C. in W. School</u> 59 pupils on roll. 102 capacity</p> <p><u>Abermule C.P. School</u> 70 pupils on roll. 92 capacity</p> <p><u>Berriew C.P. School</u> 88 pupils on roll. 106 capacity</p> <p><u>Leighton C.P. School</u> 71 pupils on roll. 91 capacity</p>
8.3.2	Where is it expected that these children should go? All surrounding primary schools are at capacity as it is without the	As above.

	proposal to absorb the children who would be attending Churchstoke Primary School.	
8.3.3	Are there places even available in other schools within the wider area to facilitate pupils from the Churchstoke area?	As above.
8.3.4	It will put such a strain for surrounding schools if Churchstoke were to close.	As above.
8.3.5	Our current children will struggle to fit in the proposed Powys and Shropshire schools let alone the future generations.	As above.
8.3.6	Montgomery and Chirbury both have major housing plans which will soon fill any vacant spaces in those schools.	The Council recognises that there are housing developments in these areas.
8.3.7	Montgomery, Chirbury and Forden all have housing developments of their own in the planning so where will our children go when the children in those communities will have priority?	As above.
8.3.8	Neighbouring villages of Montgomery and Forden and Chirbury also have planning for lots of new homes meaning their schools will be full too.	As above.
8.3.9	Chirbury School cannot take the Churchstoke pupils because they have housing development planned. They will need space for Chirbury people. It's the same in Montgomery school. They have housing development and space only for their pupils. The nearest Shropshire school except Chirbury is Bishops Castle and they are full up and no spare space for pupils.	As above.
8.3.10	I don't think there are any other options the school should not be closed. From what we hear plans to send children to Chirbury, Montgomery or Bishops Castle schools, will not work as most are full or nearly full. What do you do when children can't get places at schools reasonably near to their homes?	As above.

8.3.11	Houses are being built in surrounding villages so there will be less room in other schools to accommodate more children. Other villages don't want our children to attend their schools as then there won't be places for their own children.	As above.
8.3.12	Any families moving into the area will have nowhere to send their children.	As above.
8.3.13	Even providing transport to local Welsh primary schools will not help as these schools have little availability (Montgomery and Kerry, for example).	As above.

#### 8.4 Comments about quality of provision in alternative schools

8.4.1	The quality of teaching in these schools is not greater than what they are receiving now and more children per classroom means they will receive less "teacher-time", which can only harm their academic success. Therefore, I see no logical argument for this past supposed financial benefit to the council, with blatant disregard for the quality of the school experience for the children of the village.	Individual 'teacher time' is not a measure of the quality of provision; it can create an overdependence on adult input.
8.4.2	Do you believe there will be better Pupil/Teacher ratios at the alternative schools?	As above.
8.4.3	Why do you think that a school with more children will help us learn better?	The number of pupils in a school does not, in itself, determine the quality of educational provision.

#### 8.5 Comments about pupils transferring to provision in England

8.5.1	I would most likely choose a school in England because of the reviews at the other Powys school.	Comment noted.
-------	--	----------------

8.5.2	If the proposal were to go ahead, due to the location of the school on the border between England and Wales, many pupils next best alternative will be a primary school across the border in Shropshire.	Comment noted.
8.5.3	There are not enough spare spaces in neighbouring Montgomery school which would mean that many children in the area would have to receive their primary education across the border in Shropshire where they would no longer be able to access the Welsh curriculum.	Comment noted.
8.5.4	As Churchstoke is so close to the border several parents may end up transferring to an English primary school as this may logistically be a better choice for them, the opportunity to learn Welsh and add to pupils Welsh heritage would be lost.	Comment noted.
8.5.5	Closure would take children out of the county into England - this is not desirable for Welsh children and the Welsh nation	Comment noted.
8.5.6	Being a border school and rural you will be driving children away from Powys! So if you believe our children will get a better education in England then go ahead with your plans.	Comment noted.
8.5.7	If Montgomery is the closest school and it becomes oversubscribed, people may be forced to send their child to an English school.	Comment noted.
8.5.8	The uncertainty and lack of security over restructuring plans for the rest of the area mean that parents are far more likely to choose the secure Shropshire option over the insecure Powys, particularly for younger pupils who may have to undergo the disruption of further transformation plans.	Comment noted.
8.5.9	In your vision you say each child will receive "high quality, inspiring education." However, Powys will have no control over this as many of the children will choose Shropshire over Powys.	Comment noted.

8.5.10	I am appalled that in print schools outside Powys are listed as alternatives. Surely Powys can educate its own residents?	The proposal is to close Churchstoke C.P. School and for pupils to transfer to their nearest school in Powys. This is to ensure that the pupils have the opportunity to access the Curriculum for Wales.
8.5.11	Many of the students here already attend secondary in England. Closure could mean families will opt to send children to the associated primary school in Bishops Castle, this out of Wales entirely	Comment noted.
8.5.12	Many families will choose to send their children to an English school because: Powys will have to supply free transport there as it will be their nearest available school; it avoids the uncertainty of further restructuring in the Powys area; the funding of Shropshire schools is better than it is in Powys; the outlook of the area is towards England and Shropshire, rather than Wales and Powys; there is a lot of ill-feeling and distrust of Powys County Council in the area.	Comment noted.
8.5.13	Without transparency of local plans for schools and simply by not having a school in a border village you will most certainly lose Powys children to Shropshire schools. Churchstoke will lose its Welsh identity.	Comment noted.

## 8.6 Comments about pupils transferring to denominational provision

8.6.1	Churchstoke is a community school, the nearest Powys school is a church school. Some parents would not want their children to attend a religious school.	There are many Church in Wales primary schools in Powys, and Montgomery C. in W. Primary School is a voluntary controlled school. C. in W. schools provide the same type of education, and are also working towards implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales. Whilst C. in W. schools do have a distinct
-------	--	--

		Christian ethos, they operate within a supportive and inclusive environment.
8.6.2	All of our surrounding Powys schools are CinW schools. Why are Powys County Council restricting choice by closing the only CP school in the vicinity? The Consultation Document identifies neighbouring CP schools that parents could send their children to, but will they provide free transport to these schools?	The schools named in the Consultation Document are those that are closest to Churchstoke. If a parent wished for a non-denominational school for their child(ren), then they have the right to apply for a place at any community primary school. However, free home-to-school transport would only be provided to eligible pupils to their nearest school therefore parents would be responsible for transporting their children that school.
8.6.3	Closure and the proposed transport of pupils to a Church in Wales School in Montgomery would adversely impact the protected characteristic 'religion or belief', for the reason that to transport Churchstoke pupils to a Church in Wales School would be unfair to families who are not of Christian faith and those who choose to be of no faith.	<p>The Council has recognised that the proposal would have an impact on the protected characteristic 'religion or belief' in the draft Equality Impact Assessment. This will be updated to take account of information gathered during consultation.</p> <p>Many pupils that attend Church in Wales schools are non-denominational. All schools have to provide a form of daily collective worship, therefore, pupils attending a Church in Wales school or a non-denominational school would have the opportunity to partake in collective worship.</p>
8.6.4	The preferred school in the consultation document for pupils to move to is Montgomery as the nearest one. This means that children who are not of a Church in Wales background will be pressurised to attend a religious school. The majority of families here have no religious affiliation and should not be in a position to send their children to a school that does.	There is no pressure on families attending a Church in Wales school to be Christian or have any affiliation with the Church. If a parent wished for a non-denominational school for their child(ren), then they have the right to apply for a place at any community primary school. However, free home-to-school transport would only be provided to eligible pupils to

		their nearest school therefore parents would be responsible for transporting their children that school.
8.6.5	Churchstoke is a school without any affiliation to a religious belief. Sending the pupils to a religious school is a serious concern. In many counties, state and school have to be kept separate, to maintain equality and diversity.	As above.
8.6.6	Not all parents want their children to go to a Church school.	As above.
8.6.7	The two closest schools planned for pupil relocation are both church of England/Wales, not all families have the same religion. So they would be forced to travel further to access their educational needs.	As above.
8.6.8	The closest next options being a church in Wales or Church of England school and not a community primary school also does not offer a diverse alternative to the current provision.	As above.
8.6.9	Has there been any consideration of Catholic pupils who may want to attend St Marys in Newtown as an alternative?	Parents can apply for a place for their child(ren) at any school.

### 8.7 Concern that consultation will be carried out on other schools in the area within a few years

8.7.1	Surrounding Powys schools have not yet been reviewed by the transformation team and Powys' own timetable suggests this will happen within the next five years. This means our children face the prospect that within their primary years of schooling will have all the disruption and uncertainty to face again. Once is too often and has an effect on our children's mental health and well being, to do it twice to children is unacceptable.	The Council has an ambitious Strategy to Transform Education across the county, and all catchment areas will be reviewed during the lifetime of the Strategy. In accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, the planning and development of effective school organisation proposals is crucial to the Welsh Government's goal of transforming education in Wales and providing better educational outcomes. The Council has a duty to manage its schools infrastructure to ensure equity across the whole system and to
-------	---	---

		<p>ensure that learner entitlement and experience is improved.</p> <p>Should Churchstoke C.P. School close, then the Council cannot guarantee that an alternative school that pupils may transfer to won't be subject to a review in future.</p>
8.7.2	<p>Giving the children a chance to continue their education at an alternative Powys school means parents will need to be choosing Montgomery C in W school or next nearest St. Michaels school (Kerry). However, these Powys schools have not yet been reviewed by the transformation team and suggestions indicate this is likely to happen within the next 5 years. This means parents have more uncertainty that their children may have to go through the same process a few years down the line. This is not acceptable and for that reason parents are more likely to choose to send their children to an English school where there is more certainty. The effect this would have on the Welsh language and identity of the village would be devastating.</p>	As above.
8.7.3	<p>Can you guarantee that if my children have to move that they won't have to go through all this again when you start looking at other Powys school I DONT THINK YOU CAN OR WILL!</p>	As above.
8.7.4	<p>Given PCC's current drive to close small rural schools I am also afraid that if my children transfer to another Powys rural school, in the not too distant future, that they would face the prospect of any alternative school that they go to closing too.</p>	As above.
8.7.5	<p>I am worried for my children's mental health and wellbeing as if we move to a Powys school then they will have to go through the same process in their new school within 5 years.</p>	As above.

8.7.6	<p>You have not released any information about your future plans for transformation in all schools in our area, if you are considering a new 'hub' for example, then parents should know so they have an informed choice for the future. Fears are that if they choose another Powys school, they will have to go through this exhausting process of consultation all over again, being moved from pillar to post, going through this process twice is unacceptable. I believe this will result in parents choosing Shropshire alternative schools, which is another concern I will deal with in another point. Therefore, we should not be closing now and at the very least be included in any future consultations for whole areas to have a say instead.</p>	As above.
-------	--	-----------

## 8.8 Other comments

8.8.1	<p>If Montgomery was full, which other Powys schools would our pupils have to travel too, and has both the cost and distance to these other schools been factored into considerations? Bearing in mind the pupils farthest from Montgomery will be the last to get a place under Powys admissions arrangements, how long will it take to get for instance from Pentre or Snead to a receiving Powys schools if it is not Montgomery? What would happen if there is room in one year group for a pupil but not in another for their sibling can powers guarantee under their admission arrangements that siblings will be kept together?</p>	<p>Should Churchstoke C.P. School close, Montgomery C. in W. Primary School becomes the nearest Powys school for the majority of pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School. All applications from parents will be treated equally.</p> <p>Where a school is over-subscribed, all applicants will be considered against the oversubscription criteria set out below when allocating school places. This is with the exception of children looked after, children previously looked after, or children with a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or a local authority maintained individual development plan (IDP), will be given priority before these criteria are considered.</p>
-------	---	---

		<p>The following criteria are applied, in order of priority when allocating primary school places:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The presence of an elder sibling residing at the same household, with the household being the nearest primary school, when the pupil commences at the school. To qualify, primary siblings must be in Reception to Year 6 and, in the case of an All-Through school, secondary siblings must be in Years 7 – 13.</li> <li>b. The primary school is closest to the location of the home.</li> <li>c. Any medical and social needs relating to the individual child where attendance at particular school is essential. Evidence will be required to accompany the application form.</li> <li>d. The presence of an elder sibling residing at the same household, with the household NOT being the nearest primary school, when the pupil commences at the school. To qualify, primary siblings must be in Reception to Year 6 and in the case of an All-Through school, secondary siblings must be in Years 7 – 13</li> <li>e. The location of the home in relation to the school and alternative schools if the primary school applied for is not the one which is closest to the home location.</li> </ol>
8.8.2	Our children are the further away from the schools so will be at the bottom of the pile for admissions and siblings, friends and family will be split up and fighting for places.	As above.

8.8.3	Not only are these other neighbouring schools who will have to absorb the pupils schools near to their maximum class sizes they are already struggling to cope with traffic and drop off and pick up times.	<p>The current class structure in Montgomery C. in W. Primary School is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reception:</b> 14 pupils</li> <li>• <b>Year 1/2 class:</b> 23 pupils</li> <li>• <b>Year 3/4 class:</b> 28 pupils</li> <li>• <b>Y5/6 class:</b> 24 pupils</li> </ul>
-------	---	---

## 9. COMMENTS ABOUT IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

### 9.1 General concern about impact on the community/village

9.1.1	Losing the school will have a negative impact on the community	The Council has recognised in both the Consultation Document and draft Community Impact Assessment, that there would be a detrimental impact on the community should Churchstoke C.P. School close. The Community Impact Assessment will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.
9.1.2	It will be a very sad day for Churchstoke if this proposal goes ahead.	As above.
9.1.3	The school is part of the community and should not close.	As above.
9.1.4	To lose the school in Churchstoke would be just so sad, for the people of Churchstoke and surrounding communities	As above.
9.1.5	Churchstoke school is vital to the community of Churchstoke as well as neighbouring villages.	As above.
9.1.6	Closing the school will destroy this community.	As above.
9.1.7	Closing the school will kill the community.	As above.

9.1.8	It would be a terrible loss to the Community.	As above.
9.1.9	Closing the school would hugely inhibit the community spirit in the village.	As above.
9.1.10	Keep Churchstoke CP School open to keep the community thriving. It is the heart of the village in the community. Without the school, the village will slowly be destroyed.	As above.
9.1.11	I disagree with plans to close this school. I think it will take the soul out of the community.	As above.
9.1.12	The school is essential to the continued success of Churchstoke as a village.	As above.
9.1.13	Closing the school would be bad for the village and the local school children.	As above.
9.1.14	There will only be adverse effects from shutting this school. This will have a very negative effect on this happy and flourishing village.	As above.
9.1.15	Closing local amenities always has an adverse effect on the community.	As above.
9.1.16	Closing such a lovely hardworking school would be devastating for the community and also for Wales.	As above.
9.1.17	I would ask you reconsider please and keep the lifeblood of this village OPEN	As above.
9.1.18	I urge the council to reconsider their decision and ensure that the school remains open for the sake of the children already attending and for the sake of the viability of the whole village.	As above.
9.1.19	The presence of a school is an essential component of the community, and am sure its presence is part of the reason why the village has continues to thrive.	As above.

9.1.20	The school is essential to the survival of the village.	As above.
9.1.21	Rural schools appear expensive and an “easy?” financial gain achieved if closed. Primaries are involved in the real life of the local community and fully develop the children in belonging to the community.	As above.
9.1.22	Closing the school will have major ramifications through the village, contact between children and the care home, closure of village hall and preschool class, fewer jobs, more children going to schools in England, no Welsh Language, no youth activities.	As above.
9.1.23	If the school closes, it will affect the community massively such as the village hall, care home, church, as well as others, as the school works closely with these.	As above.
9.1.24	The detrimental knock-on effect would be felt by the local community for years to come. If I were a part of the local council, I wouldn't want the responsibility of mental health issues, a drop in approach to learning or prolonged sadness and suffering that the children, families and staff would inevitably experience to be my responsibility.	As above.
9.1.25	Open your eyes to the bigger picture and how this decision will impact not only our children's education and health but also the negative impact on the health and well being of all residents in the community of Churchstoke.	As above.
9.1.26	Closure of the school will have a negative impact on the social dynamics of the village.	As above.
9.1.27	I think this proposal is a backward step for Churchstoke because of the community feeling in the village, the growing attendance in school, a thriving playgroup section to provide pupils for the future, local shops, businesses, construction of affordable housing	As above.

	etc, everything in place to provide a friendly, local, caring environment for the children.	
9.1.28	To remove the school would mean that during the day, life would drain out of the village. Instead of the sound of our children going to and from school and at play there would be nothing! Apart from the sound of extra road traffic taking these children who knows where!	As above.

## 9.2 The school is the heart of the community

9.2.1	The school is the heart of the community.	The Council recognises the central role that Churchstoke C. in W. Primary has in the community. A draft Community Impact Assessment has been published which will be updated to take account of information gathered during consultation.
9.2.2	You will be taking away the heart of the community.	As above.
9.2.3	The heart of the village will be lost if the school is closed.	As above.
9.2.4	It is the heart of the village and community. Without the school the village will slowly be destroyed.	As above.
9.2.5	The school is the heart of the community and I urge you to keep this much needed facility open.	As above.
9.2.6	It's the heart of the ever expanding village.	As above.
9.2.7	Closing the school would tear the heart out of the community as it would effect so many other thing dreadfully!	As above.
9.2.8	To remove the school, and the pre-school would result in a village without a heart. The school provides so much more than a place of education; it provides community cohesion.	As above.

9.2.9	Churchstoke is a strong thriving community that would be torn apart by the closure of its school, it is the heart of our family and should not be closed	As above.
9.2.10	If you take a school out of a community you take the heart out of the community, you also lose the feeling of community.	As above.
9.2.11	A village school is the very heart of a community and small children need to feel that they are part of that community from a very early age.	As above.
9.2.12	Local village schools are the hub of the community, children make friends with their neighbours, parents get to know the people who live in the village.	As above.
9.2.13	The community needs to keep their village school. It is the heart of the village where many children can walk to and from.	As above.
9.2.14	Closing Churchstoke School will ruin the heart of the village community by sending children in 4 different directions.	As above.
9.2.15	Why do you think you have the right to rip the heart out of the community?	As above.
9.2.16	Churchstoke school is the hub of a great community and it will be devastating if the school goes.	As above.
9.2.17	The school and the village hall are the nucleus of Churchstoke – it must be saved.	As above.
9.2.18	Our primary school is at the heart of our local community. COVID and the past 12 months' pandemic restrictions have proven how vital our local community is. The school is a part of the community bringing together young and old, families and friends.	As above.

### 9.3 Closure of the school would mean that the community would lead to a loss of community cohesion

9.3.1	The school brings the community together	The Council has recognised in both the Consultation Document and draft Community Impact Assessment, that there would be a detrimental impact on the community should Churchstoke C.P. School close. The Community Impact Assessment will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.
9.3.2	The school brings young and old together through many events throughout the year	As above.
9.3.3	The school plays an important role in cohesion, social goods and community involvement / well-being – these goods and services should be central to decision-making	As above.
9.3.4	If the school closes, the community will become fractured.	As above.
9.3.5	This is a close knit community that will be torn apart.	As above.
9.3.6	You will rip apart the community, split friends and families and put all these children on expensive polluting buses.	As above.
9.3.7	The pupils will be split between at least four new schools ripping the community apart .	As above.
9.3.8	Pupils would be split between several schools both in England and Wales, fragmenting the community.	As above.
9.3.9	If local children were unable to go to Churchstoke C.P. school and were split between other schools this would divide the community.	As above.
9.3.10	Splitting up the children in the community by sending them to at least 4 new schools would further affect the community negatively and ensure the children lost any sense of belonging, pride etc. in the village. There are enough studies that show the impact this could have on future societal problems in the village.	As above.

9.3.11	As you can't guarantee capacity at the receiving schools a scatter gun approach will completely destroy the community within and outside of the school!	As above.
9.3.12	Closing the school is the start of the rot setting in the village. Community is created by shared experiences. With families dispersed and children not growing up together, I fear what will become of the village.	As above.
9.3.13	The community in Churchstoke will be forcibly pushed apart by a decision to close the school.	As above.
9.3.14	Churchstoke is a fragmented village, divided by a very busy main road, widely spread out and with little communal space - as such a sense of community is harder to achieve. The school is a focus for community and provides the village hall for community clubs.	As above.
9.3.15	By removing the school you are removing heritage links, damaging culture and community tradition, taking away so many events and opportunities from the school and the pupils to engage within their local area and with different age groups in their home village.	As above.
9.3.16	We should be keeping communities together, not ripping them apart especially at the current time when we have a coronavirus pandemic. The less travel, the better for everyone if we are all to remain safe and well, especially children.	As above.

#### 9.4 Concern about the impact on local businesses / the local economy

9.4.1	The retail outlets in the village would also suffer.	The Council has recognised in both the Consultation Document and draft Community Impact Assessment, that there would be a detrimental impact on the community should Churchstoke C.P. School close.
-------	--	---

		The Community Impact Assessment will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.
9.4.2	Local businesses would find it difficult to recruit and retain staff without the wraparound care offered by the school, including breakfasts club and after school club.	As above.
9.4.3	Local businesses will find it difficult to recruit and retain staff without the care facilities offered by the school, which includes Breakfast Club and After School clubs.	As above.
9.4.4	Without the breakfast and afterschool clubs it will be difficult for our working parents to keep our large village businesses supplied with staff to which we have 3 – St Nicolas House, Coop and Montgomeryshire Water Plant. It would put unnecessary strain on them in an area that is hard to recruit at the best of times.	As above.
9.4.5	Village support is important to local businesses. It makes staffing issues easier having a school close by that they could easily collect their children and a school brings families into an area, which is what businesses rely on.	As above.
9.4.6	I am concerned that our diverse village would attract an older generation meaning less opportunity for our local businesses to generate staff.	As above.
9.4.7	Tuffins now Coop, less footfall, jobs in Churchstoke, Sunday market, reduced to virtually nothing.	As above.
9.4.8	Our Churchstoke businesses rely on the support network of the school to be able to employ their staff – Coop and Montgomeryshire Waters employ 120 employees alone without including St Nicholas House which is extremely reliant on the school support network. It will be a retirement village with no hope for the local businesses to secure workforce.	As above.

9.4.9	Without a school in the village, Churchstoke becomes a less attractive place for families to live. As a rural business which already has a small local population this is a worrying prospect as the majority of our cafe customers are local residents and thus will have a noticeable negative impact on our much needed day to day income. The closure also makes recruiting and retaining staff problematic, resulting in reducing childcare access for staff with children.	As above.
9.4.10	It would impact on the availability of staff to St Nicholas House.	As above.
9.4.11	Residents of St Nicholas House like to see children playing, going to and from school etc.	As above.
9.4.12	You would impact on the positive benefits experienced by residents of St Nicholas House of the relationship which currently exists between the home and the school.	As above.
9.4.13	As a local business, such a closure will have a potentially very negative impact on us and the immediate local economy.	As above.
9.4.14	As a business, We Do Tennis would also be affected, and we engage the services of a young local tennis coach from Churchstoke. The negative impact of a school closure could also impact his ability to work in the village.	As above.
9.4.15	Pubs, the shop and businesses all benefit from a school being in the village. If the school closes the pubs etc are likely to be affected also, as who will want to move here if they cannot walk their children to school as many families do not benefit from a car.	As above.
9.4.16	People within the surrounding area, tradesmen, local businesses with all be impacted by this decision. Local businesses are accessible to local people without a school there is a huge risk of people relocating and the potential members wanting to move to	As above.

	the area could be hugely discouraged with no access to a local school.	
9.4.17	We have just started a business here too and closing the school will impact on our business as people will not want to move into a village without a school. This will again impact our children as it will prevent our business from building and make it harder for us to provide for our children.	As above.
9.4.18	The lack of a school would be a significant factor against further growth and will depress the local economy.	As above.
9.4.19	There is also an impact on the economy and environment. Business and planners will not find the village attractive without a school to support families who may move to the area.	As above.
9.4.20	Closure of the school will mean that more people will shop elsewhere.	As above.
9.4.21	Situated at the junction of two main roads, with good facilities, land, and easy access to Newtown, Welshpool and the towns of Shropshire, Churchstoke is ripe for further development over the coming years. The lack of a school would be a significant factor against further growth and will depress the local economy.	As above.

## 9.5 Concern about the impact on the community centre

9.5.1	Members of the committee of CSRA are the trustees for and manage Churchstoke Community Hall on behalf of the local community. The impact assessment on the proposed closure, produced by Powys County Council, states at several points that, in the event of closure, 'community facilities' would continue to be provided at the Community Hall. However, the impact assessment fails totally to acknowledge that the hall is managed as a joint use	The Council has recognised in both the Consultation Document and draft Community Impact Assessment, that there would be a detrimental impact on the community should Churchstoke C.P. School close. The Community Impact Assessment will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.
-------	--	--

	<p>facility between the school and CSRA, and that the school is a regular user of the hall. The Community Hall is designed as both a meeting space and a sports facility. It has been described by a professional sports teacher as providing the children of Churchstoke School with 'better facilities than any other primary school in the area.' The proposal to close the school will deny these facilities to the pupils. A significant element of CSRA's annual income derives from the joint use agreement with PCC, and loss of this income would put the future of the Community Hall in jeopardy. Therefore, closure of the school, and the consequent loss of income to CSRA, will threaten the provision of the hall facilities to the entire local community. Further, loss of the Community Hall potentially would threaten the loss of the adjoining community recreation land, including the football field. CSRA and the school have a close working relationship, including in the employment of staff to clean and caretake the Community Hall. The proposed closure puts these jobs under threat.</p>	<p>Should Churchstoke C.P. School close, it would be the responsibility of the Community Centre's Management Committee to ensure its viability.</p>
9.5.2	<p>A significant element of CSRA's annual income derives from the joint use agreement with PCC, and loss of this income would put the future of the Community Hall in jeopardy. Therefore, closure of the school, and the consequent loss of income to CSRA, will threaten the provision of the hall facilities to the entire local community. Further, loss of the Community Hall potentially would threaten the loss of the adjoining community recreation land, including the football field.</p>	<p>As above.</p>
9.5.3	<p>There has been a huge effort from a new committee to make the community hall successful for the residents of Churchstoke and beyond. If the primary school, that is situated next to the community hall, is forced to close then it will be detrimental to the village hall, the local football club, the children's groups, the over 60's groups, and all other possible clubs and events that are</p>	<p>As above.</p>

	being proposed to start at the hall as soon as Covid restrictions are lifted.	
9.5.4	What would happen to the community hall?	As above.
9.5.5	Concern that the community hall would close.	As above.
9.5.6	Concern about the impact on the village hall.	As above.
9.5.7	Concern that the village would lose the community hall and tennis courts.	As above.
9.5.8	Churchstoke needs the village hall to remain.	As above.
9.5.9	I fear should the school close the village hall which was built with money raised mainly by the community will also close and the site would be given over to further development.	As above.
9.5.10	Do they know what effect the closure of the hall would have on the local community?	As above.
9.5.11	Likely loss of the village hall and all the activities that supports.	As above.
9.5.12	The village hall is also on the same site and is used a great deal by the school.	As above.
9.5.13	The school is the main user of the community hall (sports hall). It was built as a joint-use facility.	As above.
9.5.14	And together with all this we will lose our village hall which relies on school income and therefore lose our important community clubs.	As above.
9.5.15	The community hall will close as it will no longer be able to survive financially without the income it gets from the school.	As above.
9.5.16	The hall would have to close as without the contribution from the school it would not be viable.	As above.

9.5.17	The adjacent community hall will inevitably close as the school is a significant user of the facility. This will then impact the wider community and take away a valued resource.	As above.
9.5.18	Concern about possible loss of the village hall which is reliant on school income and therefore loss of community clubs.	As above.
9.5.19	What about the Village Hall which received income from the school for using it for activities? The community will in that case lose the village hall as well.	As above.
9.5.20	The village hall will probably close because I know how it depends on Friends of School events for income.	As above.
9.5.21	The school is the hub of our village and funds the community centre so without the school we would lose this which the villagers worked so hard to fund when we first had it built.	As above.
9.5.22	Do they know how much the school contribute to the village hall?	As above.
9.5.23	When deprived of the school payment for use, and with cuts in funding from PCC, how do you think the Community Hall will make up the shortfall in order to survive?	As above.
9.5.24	Would the Council be prepared to grant fund the hall?	As above.
9.5.25	Do the local authority appreciate how tight the finances of the Recreation Association are?	As above.
9.5.26	There is also the knock on effect. Concerning the Community hall, will this and the playing field playing areas and football club also closed?	As above.
9.5.27	Where will all the local organisations go to meet if the village hall closes?	As above.
9.5.28	In the case of Churchstoke school, we would lose our village hall. Where then to hold events & village clubs?	As above.

9.5.29	Our rural school is at the heart of our community and a great deal of village life is reliant on it, including the support that the school gives to the village hall that will potentially be lost as they will have lost a large proportion of income meaning no central location for our local clubs including guides, brownies, football etc.	As above.
9.5.30	There is a need to review the impact that closure of the school would have on local community clubs with the closure of the village hall.	As above.
9.5.31	We would lose all our sports and social clubs from the village which keeps us functioning as a close-knit community as their base is the community centre.	As above.
9.5.32	The community hall is unlikely to survive without the community school. This would be bad for groups such as brownies and rainbows, snooker, after funeral teas, weddings and other parties and local community events also the football pitch requires the community hall.	As above.
9.5.33	If the school were to close, I believe the village hall would also close and a huge loss to the communities. So many groups/events which help to keep a sense of community but crucially provide a hub for the older, potentially isolated members of the community.	As above.
9.5.34	Community hall & all clubs that use it will then close; including football club & playing field & play areas. A great number of people enjoy the playing field (as do the dogs!)	As above.
9.5.35	The football team relies on the village hall for use of the changing rooms and showers and the kitchen to provide refreshments at home games. Without the village hall the football team would lose these facilities and no longer be able to run.	As above.

9.5.36	We are hoping to start a dance class in the village hall once life returns to normal. No chance if the school goes as so does the village hall.	As above.
9.5.37	I don't foresee the hall as viable without the school using it, which would sacrifice our community space and the youth groups which use it such as the thriving Rainbows, Brownies and Guides Units which bring children from a wide area together and which my daughters have and still enjoy. The football club would also be directly affected as they need to have the use of changing and shower facilities within the community hall. The local tennis club runs coaching sessions with strong links to the school too.	As above.
9.5.38	The school closure would cause social and economic cost to people across the community. Why expand the village and then take away the amenities as possibly the village hall that relies on the usage of the school will also close making Churchstoke an expanding village with no school or village hall which are both hubs of village life.	As above.

## 9.6 Concern about the impact on other services

9.6.1	Unfortunately, once you lose a school, you start to lose other services	The Council has recognised in both the Consultation Document and draft Community Impact Assessment, that there would be a detrimental impact on the community should Churchstoke C.P. School close. The Community Impact Assessment will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.
9.6.2	Closing Churchstoke School would rip the heart out of the community and I believe Churchstoke would soon become a ghost town.	As above.

9.6.3	Concern about the long-term effects on the village and the other services in the area, we don't want any more "Ghost Towns" which is what happens when you loose a school.	As above.
9.6.4	The removal of vital services from rural areas over the last decade is heart-breaking, and it is fairly obvious from the support the school has received recently, not only from within the village but from surrounding areas and others that are feeling the same isolation and lack of care for rurality and their reliance on services, that closing the school will be a devastating blow for the local economy.	As above.
9.6.5	The Doctor's has gone, the village will shrink further.	As above.
9.6.6	Other services, such as transport, would no doubt diminish to as demand decreased (or is that all part of the intention? If there are only a few people left, perhaps the local authority feels it does not matter if those few lack decent services?)	As above.

### 9.7 Concern about the impact on other community groups / activities

9.7.1	The school closure will impact the local care home and the local church, as the school is deeply integrated within the wider community.	The Council has recognised in both the Consultation Document and draft Community Impact Assessment, that there would be a detrimental impact on the community should Churchstoke C.P. School close. The Community Impact Assessment will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.
9.7.2	There would be a detrimental impact on the local old people's home.	As above.
9.7.3	The Tennis Club relies on children from the school in order for it to continue as there are a number of children from the school	As above.

	receiving tennis coaching and hopefully these children and their parents will help the club to have a future.	
9.7.4	The school is situated in a position next to the tennis courts and for obvious reasons is a source of participation for the tennis club with local children and families seeing the tennis courts and joining the club.	As above.
9.7.5	As a member of Churchstoke tennis club I would hope the school remains open as we strongly need the pupils from the school to survive. At the moment we have a number of children from the school receiving tennis lessons and hopefully this will continue into the future.	As above.
9.7.6	Closing the school would be a negative step for the area and our tennis club would be affected. The tennis club was down to 8 members and close to closing. A new coaching programme for juniors was set up in 2019 (mainly local children from Churchstoke School) and the club has began to prosper again. We have generated income from membership to have the courts painted and a local person from Churchstoke has qualified to become a tennis coach. I fear the school closing will destroy this improvement to date and close the tennis club as a secondary affect.	As above.
9.7.7	The football clubs thrives on a succession of new members, all of whom have a strong community spirit and identity and who work so well together in a friendly and thriving village.	As above.
9.7.8	The WI enjoy working closely with staff, parents and children during community events	As above.
9.7.9	Over the years we have seen in Girlguiding the impact on communities of school closures. Towns and villages with schools, such as Berriew and Abermule, are able to sustain Girlguiding	As above.

	units (If not all four sections, at least some of them). But villages without schools, such as Llandyssil, seem to lose all their Girlguiding units, with girls joining units in nearby towns or villages instead. This movement is in no small way connected with the loss of the school; the girls make friends further afield and then want to be with them for extra-curricular activities too. This then impacts further on the sense of loss of community, with girls and parents no longer feeling so much a part of their very local area. If Churchstoke school closes I am very concerned that we will lose our Girlguiding units too. The effect of any closure will ripple outwards in so many different ways.	
9.7.10	Losing the school would also be a loss for the community with the events a school brings such as fetes, plays, concerts and sports days.	As above.
9.7.11	Leisure activities in the area rely on children and their parents will stop when school closes the heart of the community goes with it.	As above.
9.7.12	Events and activities associated with the school will cease.	As above.
9.7.13	There would be a negative impact on all the local groups attached to the school building and grounds.	As above.
9.7.14	Closing the school would greatly affect the happiness of residents and staff at St Nicholas House.	As above.
9.7.15	Residents at St Nicholas Care Homes have built a relationship with the school and its pupils, this would be lost and have a negative impact on their well-being	As above.
9.7.16	Children visit the local care home which has a positive effect on residents welfare. If the school closes this would be lost.	As above.

## 9.8 People would no longer want to live in Churchstoke

9.8.1	Closing the school means that people will move elsewhere.	The Council has recognised in both the Consultation Document and draft Community Impact Assessment, that there would be a detrimental impact on the community should Churchstoke C.P. School close. The Community Impact Assessment will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.
9.8.2	Closing the school, and its associated playgroup, will actively discourage families from relocating to the village.	As above.
9.8.3	Who will want to move to the area with a young family if there is not a local school?	As above.
9.8.4	The village is expanding with new housing therefore it is vital school is retained in order for the village to attract young families.	As above.
9.8.5	What family will think of buying a house in a village where there is no school? This has a danger of leaving a dormitory where people commute to work and only returned to the village of to sleep.	As above.
9.8.6	People working in the village will leave jobs to new areas near new schools.	As above.
9.8.7	Removing this would force families to consider having to relocate away from the village to live closer to prospective schools - also taking investment and opportunities away from the village.	As above.
9.8.8	Not only that but it will mean a reduction in new young families moving into the village. Surely rural areas like this should be looking to attract younger people to move in, not continuing the trend of driving them out to cities?	As above.
9.8.9	If the school closes I believe many families will leave to be closer to any schools that may have room for the increasing number of	As above.

	children in our village. This would condemn us to being an elderly community instead of the thriving village it is at present.	
9.8.10	Business and planners will not find the village attractive without a school to support families who may move to the area.	As above.
9.8.11	The school closing would mean it would be unviable for me to purchase a house in this community. How many other families must feel the same way.	As above.
9.8.12	Closure of the school could draw away young families from the village.	As above.
9.8.13	It will drive young families out of the area who require access to important childcare facilities such as the 3+ setting, and with it many of the area's vital key workers who are parents to the children of the school will be forced to move away to areas with better service provisions for their childcare needs.	As above.
9.8.14	Without the school as an attraction, the village may not be even able to entice young families to move into the area.	As above.
9.8.15	Without the school, the attractions of living in Churchstoke that would greatly diminish for young families and the village would no doubt turn into yet another inhabited predominantly by retired people, doomed to a slow decline as they died off.	As above.
9.8.16	If there were no school in Churchstoke it would have a detrimental effect on the community: fewer people would want to move here and those who live here would feel more isolated as there would be no place for young families to gather, play and grow. These are the things that build community.	As above.
9.8.17	Young people won't move to the area or stay in the area and raise their own family if school options are few and far between. Closing	As above.

	the school would have a long-term effect on the age of the population in the village.	
9.8.18	No one would want to move to Churchstoke without the school being there so what is the point of building the houses.	As above.
9.8.19	People move to the area because there is a school in walking distance.	As above.
9.8.20	Closing the school would negatively impact on house values in the local community.	As above.
9.8.21	If the school were to be shut down then it would make Churchstoke a less attractive place to live for families and may reduce the cost of housing.	As above.
9.8.22	You will make our community less desirable and drive down house prices.	As above.
9.8.23	The only thing you will achieve will be to destroy a growing Welsh village, as without it the village will be less attractive place for young families, families with children to live. Fewer families will move into the village reducing the value of houses and affecting all local businesses.	As above.
9.8.24	Churchstoke is classified as a large village under LDP and prioritised for housing and economic development. Without a school the village will be less attractive for families to live. There is already an ageing population.	As above.
9.8.25	Closure will impact on all of the above and the whole community & growth of the village & village life. House prices could be affected. Families / people will be forced to move away.	As above.
9.8.26	This decision will irreversibly damage the fabric of this long-standing community, make the village less desirable to young	As above.

	families and drive away potential investment and local economic growth.	
9.8.27	Without our school there is a danger that Churchstoke will just become a retirement village, which is not good for anyone's mental wellbeing.	As above.
9.8.28	The village will face an aging population as people only seek to move to the countryside in retirement, yet there will be a lack of key workers in care homes. This is a long-term issue which we are already seeing evidence of and as a young person who will want to move back to their local community, it is disappointing that the Senedd does not seem to consider the viewpoint of rural communities, or of communities who live on the border who seek to access national resources such as the Welsh curriculum.	As above.
9.8.29	We struggle to recruit local people in this area and this is because we don't encourage our young adults to the area – why would a young family move into a village with no playgroup and school providing breakfast and after school club for support to help them work.	As above.

### 9.9 Comments about previous generations of families that have attended the school

9.9.1	Churchstoke has had a school for the community for over 200 years, please do not allow this heritage to be lost forever.	The Council notes these comments.
9.9.2	I was a pupil at the school in the 1940's, it has been at the centre of village life before then and ever since.	As above.
9.9.3	We are a 5 generation family attending Churchstoke school so feelings run very deep.	As above.

9.9.4	Having three generations of the family receiving education through school here in Churchstoke, I think it would be a let down for the community, should the present school close.	As above.
9.9.5	Churchstoke is also made up of families that have grown up in the village themselves, where their parents went to school, where they went to school and now where they want their children to go.	As above.

### 9.10 Queries about what would happen to the school building / grounds

9.10.1	What will happen to the school site?	Should Churchstoke C.P. School be closed, the Council's Corporate Asset Policy would be followed. This would include consideration of a community asset transfer or a sale on the open market via different methods. The Council's policy is to dispose of any surplus assets.
9.10.2	What are your plans for the building and grounds of Churchstoke School should closing it be successful?	As above.
9.10.3	What will the Council do to the school building? Sell it? For what purpose? What will happen to the field alongside the school currently used by Churchstoke Football Club?	As above.
9.10.4	What are your plans for our site? What plans do you have to replace the wildlife, environmental and amenity value of the site?	As above.
9.10.5	And what will happen to the building and the land maybe Powys council are thinking they may use the land to build more houses? Then where will the children from those houses go to school.	As above.
9.10.6	If you close the school you will use the land to build houses, more family homes with no school for the children to go to.	As above.

9.10.7	Is there a greedy company wanting to build more properties instead of keeping this school open?	As above.
9.10.8	What will happen to the lovely school and pre school that we have in Churchstoke will they sell the land to building companies who will build more house for families and then where will the children go to school?	As above.
9.10.9	A derelict school in the village is also not desirable for the local residents and may attract unwanted vandalism.	As above.
9.10.10	Is the school site part of a critical path and that certain things must happen before other things can happen in the area? Is the sale of the school site part of that critical path to possibly do something in the area?	As above. The school site is not part of any 'critical path'.

### 9.11 Comments about previous school closures

9.11.1	As someone who lives locally, I have already seen the impact shutting a school down has on a village-just take Sarn for example. Which since the school has closed has slowly lost other amenities such as a post office and pub. The school is the very heart of rural life, a place where people come together and thrive and Churchstoke as a community will undoubtedly suffer if this proposal does go ahead.	The Council notes these comments.
9.11.2	Look what happened to Sarn. Think very carefully before you take this action.	As above.
9.11.3	Having been through school closure with my child who attended Hope School, I know first hand how it can effect a community and the children.	As above.

9.11.4	Having previously worked in Shropshire I have experienced at first hand the significant disruption and upset caused when these ill-conceived closures take place.	As above.
--------	---	-----------

## 9.12 Other comments

9.12.1	Closure would also be likely to reduce health and care advice in the community by losing school staff trained to provide advice on a wide range of council and national services from the local area.	Comment noted.
--------	---	----------------

## 10. TRAVEL IMPLICATIONS

### 10.1 The proposal would lead to additional travel

10.1.1	It would be unfair for young children to have to travel a long way to school.	<p>The Council has recognised that, should Churchstoke C.P. School close, then there would be additional travel required for all pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School to their nearest alternative school in Powys.</p> <p>The current average travel distance for pupils attending Churchstoke C.P. School in September 2021 is 1.6 miles, with the maximum travel distance being 8 miles. If there is no school in Churchstoke and pupils travel to their nearest alternative schools in Powys, the average distance travelled would increase to 7.9 miles and the further distance would be 16.2 miles.</p>
--------	---	--

		<p>If pupils transferred to their nearest alternative school (i.e. in Shropshire or Powys) then the average travel distance would increase to 5.2 miles, with the maximum travel distance remaining at 8 miles.</p> <p>The Council does not consider these travel distances to be excessive.</p> <p>Free home-to-school transport would be provided for eligible pupils to their nearest alternative school in Powys. However, if a parent chose a school in England for their child(ren), and this was their nearest school, then the Council would provide free home-to-school transport to this school.</p>
10.1.2	Children will have to travel a fair distance just to go to school everyday.	As above.
10.1.3	Children under 5 need to stop in their local school, not have to travel miles to school.	Comment noted.
10.1.4	The thought of all the kids having to be bused off every morning and afternoon to and from school is ridiculous.	Comment noted.
10.1.5	Very young children would have to be transported to and from other schools.	Comment noted.
10.1.6	Children already have to travel far enough when they are 11 years old, they shouldn't have to when they are 3.	Comment noted.
10.1.7	It's not acceptable that children as young as four years should have to travel by bus to neighbouring schools when they have a perfect school where they live	Comment noted.

10.1.8	The additional travel will normalise a long commute for young children. This increases the length of their day and decreases valuable time they spend with their family.	Comment noted.
10.1.9	Busing children around areas is not good for them.	Comment noted.
10.1.10	Sitting on a bus going to and from school has a negative effect on the pupils' well-being.	Comment noted.
10.1.11	The alternative schools are miles away.	See 10.1.1.
10.1.12	It's unacceptable for the children of Churchstoke to have to travel to neighbouring villages for their education.	Comment noted.
10.1.13	More people will require transport or will need to use their own to travel at least 8 MILES to the nearest school. 16 miles per day x number of pupils x number of school days	See 10.1.1.
10.1.14	My child that can currently walk to school will need to travel up to 20 minutes in the car to the nearest school I would be happy for them to attend in Wales.	See 10.1.1
10.1.15	It's not fair for children as young as 4 to have to travel on school buses for up to 45 minutes each way (as mentioned in your document to close Churchstoke C.P. School).	See 10.1.1.
10.1.16	I do not see the logic in developing a 'village' and then taking away the school so that children have to be transported to a school some miles away either in private transport or council-funded transport.	Comment noted.

## 10.2 Comments about additional transport costs

10.2.1	The transport alone for the predicted pupil numbers (which are rising rapidly) is going to be extortionate. This money could be used to update the school facilities.	Estimated additional transport costs of £19,500 for current pupils have been included within the estimated annual savings of approximately £50,000.
10.2.2	The cost of transporting the children to the proposed nearest schools will be very expensive	As above.
10.2.3	To bus children to schools outside our area, this will cost.	The proposal is for Churchstoke C.P School and for pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative school in Powys. However, parents can apply for a place for their child(ren) at any school. If a parent chooses their nearest school and it is located in England, the Council would provide free home-to school transport. The original transport calculation in the Consultation Document was based on the proposal outlined above. However, a re-calculation has been carried out based on pupils transferring to Chirbury as their nearest school in England. The additional transport costs would range between approximately £32,000 and £44,000 instead of the £19,500 quoted above.
10.2.4	There will be a high cost of transporting children to other schools.	See 10.2.1 and 10.2.3
10.2.5	The cost of travel, the waste of council money to save money doesn't make sense to me.	See 10.2.1 and 10.2.3
10.2.6	If the school closes the cost of transportation to other schools will be astronomical.	See 10.2.1 and 10.2.3
10.2.7	Having to provide transport to other schools and having to provide staff on the transport to supervise the children would surely going to cost more in the long run as they will be more children with all the houses being built.	See 10.2.1 and 10.2.3
10.2.8	I believe that the travel costs will be high and outweigh the savings of the school closure.	See 10.2.1 and 10.2.3

10.2.9	Are the council aware of all the extra transport costs this will entail?	See 10.2.1 and 10.2.3
10.2.10	Has the extra cost to Powys County Council for providing transport for the children to alternative schools been properly and professionally calculated and audited?	Estimated costs and savings are undertaken by appropriately qualified and experienced staff and based on the best information available at the time they are calculated and are subject to change. The calculations are reviewed by a range of officers and sensitivity analysis is also carried out.
10.2.11	As more pupils would have to travel by bus, should Churchstoke primary school close, this would increase the school transportation costs to the local authority. It has been highlighted to me that it is felt the increased costs have been underestimated in the consultation documentation.	See 10.2.1 and 10.2.3
10.2.12	Given the increasing size of the village and the exorbitant cost Councils are charged by transport companies, should the numbers of new families increase beyond your predications, the cost of transport will increase too.	See 10.2.1 and 10.2.3
10.2.13	Does not include additional pupils in the future from the housing developments.	Comment noted.
10.2.14	Are the Local Authority aware of the number of children that they will have to provide free transport to, and how many schools?	See 10.2.1 and 10.2.3
10.2.15	Cost. From what I can gather the number of children who will have to be transported is not clear. Therefore, it is not known whether this proposal is even cost effective.	See 10.2.1 and 10.2.3
10.2.16	We have been told that the additional transport costs of the proposal will be £19,000 per year based on £100 per day. What is the basis for £100 per day? How many minibuses to how many different schools it is based on each day, and for how many pupils?	This figure is based on the proposal described in the consultation document, transporting 25 pupils to one school within Powys.

10.2.17	<p>With revenue saving being a main reason for closing the school I believe that you have grossly underestimated transport costs if the school were to close (£19,000). Considering that your data in relation to pupils is incorrect, also the fact that pupils will need transporting to as many as 4 different schools. Also Churchstoke school closure would make pupils not currently attending the school eligible for transport to their closest school. On top of this the need for a designated taxi provision for pupils with ALN. The actual figure for transportation costs is at least £76,000!</p>	<p>The drivers for the Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys is equity of educational provision across the authority, to improve learner entitlement and improve best learning outcomes/education, not solely to save money.</p> <p>The pupils not currently attending Churchstoke CP school who would become eligible for transport to their closest school would be accommodated within the estimated costs set out in 10.2.3.</p> <p>Should separate taxi provision be required this would cost approximately £11,000 to £14,000.</p>
10.2.18	<p>I also believe that the amount quoted for transportation has been underestimated. A more realistic figure is £100,000; this would wipe out any projected savings anticipated by the closure of the school.</p>	<p>See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.</p>
10.2.19	<p>Figures quoted for the transport of children to schools out of the village are underestimated, and research suggests a figure of £100,000 to be nearer the mark, wiping out any savings that would be made by closing the school.</p>	<p>See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.</p>
10.2.20	<p>The plan to bus the current pupils from Churchstoke to the nearest schools in Chirbury and Montgomery must also be properly calculated to include the future increase in pupil roll, as new families have settled in the village because it offers excellent schooling and social facilities. Indeed, these were key promotional factors by the building developers, who have built houses to attract young families. If the school closure is sanctioned, the properly researched figure of around £100,000 is far more likely to be the real cost of transporting the pupils. This</p>	<p>See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.</p>

	includes the increased number of future pupils, and those pupils who currently go to other primary schools, who will also be entitled to have their travel paid for as there will no longer be a local school. Powys County Council, I implore you to use accurate data and qualified researchers in your efforts to balance your books!	
10.2.21	Research suggests a figure of a £100,000 approximately to transport the children out of the village for education, which would wipe out any savings	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.
10.2.22	The transport cost that you have estimated will be more like £100,000 because there are more pupils than you have estimated and also with 2 pupils with SEN statements they will need private taxis. Also by closing the school all the children in the village that don't go to Churchstoke for different reasons would then be eligible for transport as the nearest school would then be closed.	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.
10.2.23	The additional transport costs need to be properly and fully costed out. I have been advised by a school transport provider that as a guide a figure of between £10 and £15 per pupil per day is a reasonable estimate of school transport costs. Based on 77 pupils (52 + 25) at £10 per day, transport costs would be £146,300 per annum. This completely wipes out any expected revenue saving through the funding formula of closing Churchstoke CP School and would result in significantly higher costs per annum to the Council than continuing to keep the school open.	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.
10.2.24	The cost to transport all our children to other schools has been massively under-estimated in your proposal. There will be no savings made once you correctly cost this additional transport.	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.

10.2.25	It would make economic sense to keep the school open rather than pay high costs for transporting the children to other schools far away.	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.
10.2.26	What if parents cannot afford the transport costs?	If parents choose their nearest school and live more than 2 miles from it then their child/children would be eligible for free home to school transport.
10.2.27	What will be the cost of transporting these children to other schools? Are parents expected to foot the bill for this also?	See 10.2.26.
10.2.28	Who is going to pay the costs of getting children transported? Many parents cannot afford extra costs.	See 10.2.26.
10.2.29	Transporting our children to other schools will not be cost effective, and probably in a few years free transport will be withdrawn again to save costs...	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3, 10.2.17 and 10.2.26.
10.2.30	By expecting small children to travel on buses to school is both unfair and not as cost effective as you believe. Your estimated costs are not correct and more likely to be £100,000 when fully calculated as you have not considered the additional children who will be requiring transport when you make our closest school England, for our large catchment area and for the different school locations. Seems backward that you feel a cheaper option is to bus children across different schools, across different countries, clearly highlights you have not considered the location of our border school.	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.
10.2.31	Powys CC has also underestimated the transport costs for transporting the pupils who will be in the school in Sept 2022 to their new schools. The assumption seems to be that all pupils will travel to the same school, but they have not accepted the fact that there are at least 3 different nearest available schools which could receive the pupils from different parts of a wide	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.

	<p>Churchstoke catchment. Furthermore, there would be the need for designated taxi provision for some pupils with ALN who could not use normal school transport. CCC understands there are at least 21 children resident in the community who already travel into Shropshire for their primary school education, and, if Churchstoke were to close, Powys County Council policy provides that it would have to provide free transport for them as their current school would become the nearest available school to their home. Thus, Powys CC will need to provide free transport to as many as 73 children to 3 different schools in September 2022, including 2 in Shropshire. CCC questions whether this could be done for the figure quoted in the consultation document (an additional £19,000 above current costs) and believes the real figure would be at least £76,000 extra, not including the ALN costs. The costs involved with transport would therefore wipe out the indicated savings and there would be no revenue savings to the council. CCC believes the opposite is the case, and that the costs will increase as pupil numbers rise.</p>	
10.2.32	<p>No account is taken of the fact that there are 20 children in the village who are currently attending a primary school in Shropshire and have to pay for their own transport. If Churchstoke school closes, then their nearest school is the one they are attending and Powys will then be liable to have to pay for their transport too.</p>	See 10.2.3.
10.2.33	<p>There are the 52 children that we know about who will be in the school as of September 2020. This is set to rise to at least 58 by September 2025 and does not include any from new housing developments. There are another 30 or so children in the village who already go to school out of catchment and if Churchstoke closes PCC will also have to provide free transport for them to</p>	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.

	<p>their current school as it will become the nearest available school. In the east of the catchment the nearest available school is bishop's Castle Primary School, and some families will choose this. Some residents with out of county schooling already go there and Powys would have to provide free transport for them at. For most of the catchment Chirbury CinW Primary School is the nearest available school and many families will choose this. Some residents with out of county schooling already go there and Powys would have to provide free transport for them as well. In the far West of the catchment there is the odd property where St Michael's CinW Primary School is the nearest available school. Powys would have to provide free transport from these properties. There are some families around Bluebell and Bachelde where Montgomery CinW Primary School would be the nearest available school. Powys Would have to provide free transport for them, and for any other pupils from the catchment who want to go there. Once Montgomery is full, they would need to provide transport for any further pupils to the next nearest alternative Powys school.</p>	
10.2.34	<p>Powys have also said that if they closed the school then they would provide free transport for our children to the nearest school. I am aware that Powys have said that this transport would cost 319,000 a year, where in fact the actual transport costs would be closer to 376,000. Powys stated that with closing the school and the transport costs being 319,000 they would be saving money. If the actual costs come up to around 376,000 then there will not be a lot of saving going on!! And the 376,000 doesn't include the cost of paying for pupils requiring a taxi service and ALN pupils.</p>	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.
10.2.35	<p>Consideration has not been taken into account that there are at least 3 different schools to get pupils to from Churchstoke</p>	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.

	<p>catchment; not to mention additional transport (taxis) for children with ALN. There are also at least 21 children currently living in Churchstoke who choose to send their children to Shropshire schools; if Churchstoke were to close this school would automatically become their nearest meaning they would automatically become eligible for free transport. From September 2022 there could be as many as 73 children requiring transport to school from the area, which will completely wipe out the estimated costs of £19,000, looking at a figure closer to £76,000 (this does not include the cost of taxi). No revenue saving to the council whatsoever!</p>	
10.2.36	<p>Transport costs for pupils have been underestimated; they are based on the assumption that all pupils in the school as of September 2022 will travel to the same school.</p>	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.
10.2.37	<p>The breakdown that they provided said the assumption was that it was to one Powys school only and no cross border. That assumption is fatally flawed, and we need to stress that this will just not be the case, and that Powys, under their transport policy, are required to transport some pupils from different areas of the catchment to both Chirbury and Bishop's Castle as these are the nearest alternative schools, as well as to Montgomery and beyond in Powys when Montgomery is full or individual year groups reach their admissions number.)</p>	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.
10.2.38	<p>There are 4 pupils who travel from Churchstoke to Forden and if Montgomery is full, and you have to provide free transport to Forden from Churchstoke, will you include these 4 pupils?</p>	Powys County Council's current Home to School Transport Policy provides for free home to school transport to a pupil's nearest available school where the pupil lives more than 2 miles from that school.
10.2.39	<p>From proposals seen, the extra cost in transporting these children is much higher than anticipated, more than would be saved from not shutting the Churchstoke school. Sending our</p>	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.

	children to English Schools (the closest alternative) means less cost to PCC, unless your going to pay Shropshire to educate our children.	
10.2.40	There could be as many as three buses running out of the village each morning, how is this cost effective?	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.
10.2.41	It will never save money, year on year this transport will cost money or do you hope everyone will go to Shropshire?	See 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.
10.2.42	Children with special needs would need to be transported separately from the other children at a additional cost to the additional cost of transportation to another school.	See 10.2.17.

### 10.3 Concern about the impact on the environment

10.3.1	What about the environment?	The Council has recognised in the draft Impact Assessment that there would be an environmental impact from additional travel. This will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.
10.3.2	You will cause extra pollution to our environment.	As above.
10.3.3	The closure of Churchstoke school would lead to increased air pollution due to the increase of density of traffic on the road	As above.
10.3.4	There would be more buses on the road which again increase carbon emissions and increase costs that Powys are aiming to cut.	As above.
10.3.5	If the school were to close people would have to travel to another school, which would increase air pollution.	As above.
10.3.6	The extra pollution this will cause is unacceptable.	As above.
10.3.6	The proposal will increase carbon footprints	As above.

10.3.7	What about the carbon footprint for all this relocation?	As above.
10.3.8	This will add to the carbon emissions for the county which I believe has declared a climate emergency	As above.
10.3.9	Concern about the added pollution to the environment as it increases families carbon foot print.	As above.
10.3.10	Transporting pupils to other schools is a negative impact on the environment.	As above.
10.3.11	Less CO2 emissions – from longer transport miles – Powys CC has a commitment to reducing CO2 emissions and meeting sustainability goals. The measure of local school closure would be counter to that.	As above.
10.3.12	The negative environmental impact of transporting pupils by bus should also be considered, as this goes directly against the Government’s aim to reduce our carbon footprint.	As above.
10.3.13	The environmental impact on the transporting of children to schools in other villages is what should be considered more fully.	As above.
10.3.14	Transportation of children whether it be buses or by car or taxi is going to increase emissions, additional traffic on roads, not economical when we are encouraged and advised to live smarter and greener lives for our future!!	As above.
10.3.15	Have you thought about the consequences it will have with carbon footprint, emissions due to more parents having to travel	As above.
10.3.16	It’s not environmentally friendly running buses miles when services can be on the doorstep.	As above.
10.3.17	Bus travel around the countryside is not very “green” compared to walking a few 100 yards.	As above.

10.3.18	The green issue- children having to be transported elsewhere is not only costly and time consuming, but the diesel fuel buses are environmentally unfriendly.	As above.
10.3.19	Pupils would all have to be taken to school by transport making more carbon monoxide into the air, which everyone is trying to reduce it.	As above.
10.3.20	Should you be encouraging more environmentally damaging transport in these times when there is so much in the press from the Welsh assembly and the UK government about doing what we all can to protect the environment and guard against climate change.	As above.
10.3.21	With climate change we are asked to travel less, this does not seem to apply to you.	As above.
10.3.22	With ever growing arguments regarding climate change, removing the option to reduce traffic and carbon emissions seems very stupid.	As above.
10.3.23	What about the environment? All children would have to be driven to school	As above.
10.3.24	I am really worried about the impact of climate change on my generation. Your proposal to bus all of the children in Churchstoke and its catchment area to other schools when currently they can walk makes me very angry. Why is the impact on the environment not a priority to you? My generation will have to pay for your lack of consideration.	As above.
10.3.25	I feel that if you were to close Churchstoke school, the parents of those children would then have to travel to other near by schools to drop them off, which goes against the councils idea of lowering carbon footprint. Less walking and cycling to school and more emissions into the atmosphere.	As above.

10.3.26	The Council should be encouraging families to stay local to ease stress on the local transport which is very poor anyway, to ease the environmental impact of the extra mileage.	As above.
---------	--	-----------

#### 10.4 Children would be unable to walk to school

10.4.1	A lot of the children walk to school, which is better for the environment.	<p>The Council has recognised that pupils who currently walk to school in Churchstoke would no longer be able to do so. Free home-to-school transport would be provided for eligible pupils to their nearest alternative school in Powys. If a parent chooses a school in England for their child(ren) and that school is their nearest alternative school, then the pupils would be eligible for free home-to-school transport provided by Powys County Council.</p> <p>The Council also recognises that for 76% of pupils, Churchstoke C.P. School is their nearest school and they live within walking distance to the school.</p>
10.4.2	Our children walk to school. It saves pollution, the cost of transport and is good exercise for the children.	Comment noted.
10.4.3	The school is in a great location to walk to school for village children. I help with pick-ups of my granddaughter and regularly walk and call at the park after school promoting an active lifestyle while being kind on the environment which is so important for our future generations.	Comment noted.
10.4.4	Children are currently able to walk to school. But if it closes they will be forced to use transport adding to the carbon footprint.	Comment noted.

10.4.5	Children can walk to this school - therefore saving vehicle use - better for environment too.	Comment noted.
10.4.6	If your children can walk to school it is better for the environment as well as their health and well being	Comment noted.
10.4.7	The majority of children in Churchstoke currently walk or cycle to school every day. If the school closes every child will have to be transported by bus or car to an alternative school outside of the village.	Comment noted.
10.4.8	How is shipping kids to another school when there's a perfectly good one in walking distance any good for the environment?	Comment noted.
10.4.9	Being able to walk to school is both healthy for our environment and us and also essential for low-income parents and like myself those who rely on grandparents for childcare who can access the school easily.	Comment noted.
10.4.10	Children will no longer be able to walk to school, which will also increase the rates of childhood obesity.	Comment noted.
10.4.11	Children would not be able to enjoy the benefits of walking to school.	Comment noted.
10.4.12	Why do you think it is a good idea for pupils to go on a bus to school rather than walk?	The aim of the proposal is to improve learner entitlement and experience for all learners and to improve equity across the system.
10.4.13	We are taught by our parents and school that walking and cycling is really good for our health and well-being. If you close Churchstoke school all of the children will have to go to another school by bus or car this is not good for the children's health or for the environment with all the extra pollution from the vehicles. Why would you want this to happen?	As above.

10.4.14	Primary schools should be situated close to the community they serve. Children need to walk to school, not be dropped off by their parents or a bus. Exercise and fresh air is an important part of the school day.	Comment noted.
10.4.15	It may not see a massive issue but actually walking back and forth to school is more than just a walk, it teaches our children many skills and how to look after their planet. It also provides them with exercise and a chance to let of any excess energy before needing to sit and learn throughout their school day. THIS has a huge impact on how children can learn and evidence e tells us that excessive is so important for our health and wellbeing and allows us to focus and concentrate more effectively. You are willing to take that option away from children and families which will I inevitably have a huge impact on how children learn and perform within the classroom.	Comment noted.

### 10.5 Comments about the impact of additional travel on low income families / families without access to a car

10.5.1	Closing the school will mean more families will be struggling financially with having to take their children by car. Where at the moment a lot of children walk to school.	Should Churchstoke C.P. School close, free home-to-school transport would be provided to eligible pupils to their nearest alternative school in Powys i.e. if a pupil lives 2 miles or more from their nearest school.
10.5.2	Almost 30% of pupils currently at the school are eligible for free school meals. Transport costs will disproportionately impact the parents of these children. Sending a child to a distant school would severely limit the ability of families to engage with a school outside of the village and would increase social inequality.	The Council recognises that this is an area of concern. This will be included in the updated impact assessments.
10.5.3	I know there are a number of children from low-income families. It would worry that these children would become more vulnerable if the school was to close. And they would have to attend an	As above.

	alternative school. The impact and cost of travel would greatly adversely these children especially under such times where families are economically stretched with the number of lockdowns.	
10.5.4	Transportation costs to these other schools is massive issue also for the parents in Churchstoke since we are not in the most affluent of areas and public transport is almost non existent	As above.
10.5.5	Social integration - poor families would be isolated in another school where their reliance on public transport	As above.
10.5.6	I live in social housing and will not be able to afford to put my pre-school age children on a bus elsewhere, <b>nor would I want to!</b> And I cannot afford to run a car twice a day so how am I going to manage this?	Free home-to-school transport would be provided for eligible pupils to their nearest alternative school in Powys.
10.5.7	Lack of transport would mean the alternative out of village provision would not be available to low income families or to families that don't drive.	As above.

### 10.6 Concern that it would be more difficult for parents to get to school if there was an emergency

10.6.1	I live in the community of Churchstoke and very much enjoy living here as it has everything I need without the use of the car. This alone is one reason why having a school within walking distance is important for large village. It does not isolate those who cannot drive and prevents stressing out parents when there are situations when their child needs collecting urgently.	If a child becomes ill at school, and parents don't have access to a car to collect the child, the school would need to make alternative arrangements to get the child home. This is an issue that many parents face especially if they are working and if their work is located at a distance from the school.
10.6.2	What happens if a child becomes ill during school and needs collecting	As above.

10.6.3	Most of our families walk to school... some families don't have transport of their own, so how are they to collect children if poorly??	As above.
10.6.4	Another important fact is at any chance of illness or other problems in school the parents can currently get to the school in a very short time.	As above.
10.6.5	Parents who are unable to drive will not be able to collect their children if they become ill or have medical appointments. Will Powys County Council pay for a taxi to collect her and bring her home to ensure she is safe?	As above.
10.6.6	I would imagine a school bus would be put on but what if there is an accident or pupils becomes ill how would they get home?	As above.
10.6.7	It would be difficult in emergency situations to get the children from another school, particularly in families where no / only one parent drives.	As above.

### 10.7 Concern about traffic congestion

10.7.1	If the school shuts it will mean increase in traffic as families have to drive to get their kids to school, more 4x4s clogging up the roads in the morning, brilliant.	<p>Should Churchstoke C.P. School close, free home-to-school transport would be provided for eligible pupils to their nearest alternative school in Powys. It is not expected that there would be more private transport needed, as pupils would be transported on a bus.</p> <p>However, if parents chose a school in England for their child(ren) and this was their nearest alternative school, they would be eligible for free home-to-school transport as well. It is recognised that this would increase the number of home-to-school transport on the roads.</p>
--------	--	---

10.7.2	The proposal would lead to cluttering up the narrow country roads.	As above.
10.7.3	There will be more traffic on the road i.e. school busses, taxis for the vulnerable also some children might be forced to English schools across the border.	As above.
10.7.4	Transporting children to other schools either in Wales or in England will increase traffic on roads that already suffer from too much traffic.	As above.
10.7.5	If each family has two children in the school, that's another 50 cars making 2 journeys each for the 'school drop off' journey - something the local roads are already ill-equipped to deal with, and hardly ticks any 'green' boxes.	As above.
10.7.6	Increasing traffic with multiple transport is a step backwards.	As above.
10.7.7	New housing developments being built will increase traffic on the roads due to the need to drive to other schools.	The Council recognises that new housing developments would lead to increased traffic.
10.7.8	Concern about parking problems at the proposed alternative schools	Comment noted.
10.7.9	Parents may turn to using private vehicles instead of public transport, which will make parking at the other schools more dangerous.	Comment noted.

### 10.8 Concern about impact on pupils' access to after school activities

10.8.1	After school activities will not be available to children who use school transport.	The Council has recognised in the draft Impact Assessments that there would be an impact on some pupils' ability to access after-school clubs if reliant on home-to-school transport – these will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.
--------	---	---

		<p>Closure of Churchstoke C.P. School would result in additional travel to school for pupils for whom Churchstoke is currently their closest school. Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, it is also acknowledged that there could be an impact on some pupils' ability to access after school activities, and this could impact on the ability of parents to take part in school events, meetings etc. This would also mean that pupils who are currently able to walk to school would be unable to do so.</p> <p>However, the alternative schools also have pupils that rely on home-to-school transport and they are experienced in ensuring that all pupils are able to take part in a range of extra-curricular activities to enrich their experiences at those schools.</p> <p>It must also be noted that extra-curricular activities are also available in the area which are provided by other organisations, and children would also be able to continue to access these, if Churchstoke C.P. School closed.</p>
10.8.2	Pupils would have to leave school at the end of the day and would be unable to join in after school activities.	As above.
10.8.3	Children are unlikely to be able to access after school clubs as they will need to go home on the bus.	As above.

10.8.4	Children that are being taken to alternative schools cannot go to after school activities.	As above.
10.8.5	Children will miss out on after school activities because of transport problems.	As above.
10.8.6	Most children walk to school at present and are able to make use of 'out of school' activities, not so if they go to a school some miles away.	As above.
10.8.7	If they have a bus to catch at the end of the day, this naturally excludes all age children from any after school clubs which is not good as it stops them from interacting with their peers.	As above.
10.8.8	The proposal will increase social division, only the ones who can afford for their parents to go and collect them at the end of the day will be able to access extracurricular activities etc.	As above. This concern is noted.

### 10.9 Comments about the suitability / safety of school transport

10.9.1	The road access to Montgomery primary is not suitable for coaches and so minibuses would be needed. Is there sufficient minibus capacity in the area for all of the transport routes that would be needed?	In accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy, the appropriate type of transport would be provided.
10.9.2	The secondary transport vehicles, in either direction, are completely unsuitable for younger pupils. In the case of Bishop's Castle the primary and secondary school are on completely different sites, and there is no coach access to the primary school. There is no safe walking route between the two, even if chaperones were provided.	Secondary school transport is appropriate for primary-aged pupils and shared transport is standard practice across the county.
10.9.3	Putting youngsters on buses opens up the time for bullying, harassment and threats.	This Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy is aligned with the All Wales Travel Behaviour Code and

		as such, by applying for free / discretionary school transport learners will be expected to follow the Code.
10.9.4	Concern that pupils would feel scared because there would be strangers on the bus.	Comment noted.
10.9.5	Parents are rightfully worried about sending 5 year old kids on a bus full of grown kids.	Comment noted. However, secondary school transport is appropriate for primary-aged pupils and shared transport is standard practice across the county.
10.9.6	School buses are dangerous for young and other protected groups without supervision	Many pupils in Powys rely on safe home-to-school transport throughout their time at primary and secondary school.
10.9.7	Safeguarding of young children being forced to use school transport is a major concern to those who may qualify for the service and I certainly wouldn't like my grandchild travelling 10 miles on a school bus with older children with only a driver to supervise in this day and age.	As above.
10.9.8	If Churchstoke CP School closes and I have no choice but to travel to school by bus, will Powys County Council be employing someone everyday to supervise all of the primary aged children while travelling to school on the bus for Health & Safety reasons, for example ensuring children do not remove seat belts, do not get up and walk around the bus etc.	The Council does not provide supervision on home-to-school transport.
10.9.9	There would be more risk of traffic accidents should the children have to travel to a school further afield	The transport operators are required to carry out a safety risk assessment of every route.
10.9.10	The additional travel will risk the lives of these children, especially during bad weather etc.	There is no evidence that home-to-school travel risks the lives of children.
10.9.11	This would also increase the risk factor of accidents to children and parents and create more wear and tear to under-serviced highways.	As above.

		Roads are continually used and are subject to wear and tear.
10.9.12	The worst aspect of this policy shift is the certainty of injuring and road tragedy of forcing Churchstoke folks to risk themselves.	As above.
10.9.13	Worst still is the known extra risk to life + limb of having to travel further for parents and children. Over years deaths and injury will occur more due to this policy shift.	As above.
10.9.14	Transporting children to other schools either in Wales or in England will put children at risk from injury or worse due to the ever-increasing volume of very large HGVs travelling at speeds of 60mph plus on roads not suited to such traffic.	As above.

#### 10.10 Comments about flooding in Churchstoke

10.10.1	Flooding in Churchstoke village is also becoming a frequent event in winter, this will prevent any children leaving the village to attend a school outside of the village every time there is flooding, resulting in the children losing out on a lot of education.	The Council notes this comment.
10.10.2	There are risks of flooding where the children couldn't get to schools further afield	As above.

### 11. COMMENTS ABOUT IMPACT ON THE WELSH LANGUAGE

#### 11.1 Comments about the use of Welsh at Churchstoke School

11.1.1	Churchstoke has always provided a large amount of opportunity to engage with the Welsh language. Specifically, it's location on the border means it is one of the few local schools for children to begin and develop their speaking of the Welsh language.	The Council notes these comments about the teaching of Welsh and Welsh culture in Churchstoke C.P. School.
11.1.2	We work hard at learning Welsh in Churchstoke School, a Welsh teacher comes in every week and the children love it.	As above.  All schools in Powys are required to make provision for Welsh skills and standards: this should not depend on weekly sessions from the Swyddogion y Gymraeg team but rather, be part of every school day.
11.1.3	The Welsh language and culture was a key part of my education at Churchstoke School.	As above.
11.1.4	Churchstoke School encourages the use of the Welsh language and culture.	As above.
11.1.5	Churchstoke, being in Wales, teaches and supports the Welsh language which is a declining language and therefore vital that we retain schools in Wales to help our children learn Welsh.	As above.
11.1.6	Churchstoke delivers in English medium but provides a core Welsh curriculum offering as do all Powys schools.	As above.
11.1.7	Children get great Welsh provision at Churchstoke School. This language is then shared with the community during concerts and community events.	As above.
11.1.8	The school encourages local families to learn their Welsh cultural heritage.	As above.
11.1.9	Pupils learn about Welsh culture and heritage in school through Welsh language lessons or competitions like the Eisteddfod.	As above.
11.1.10	The school provided us all with a deeper understanding of the Welsh culture we were born into, I learnt to speak and write basic	As above.

	Welsh, I competed annually in the school Eisteddfod competition, participated in area sport competitions with other Welsh schools and I was even part of the Urdd Club which allowed me to go on a residential school trip and meet other children from around the County, children of my parents' friends.	
11.1.11	The school teaches the Welsh curriculum and is the only body in the village that promotes Welshness as well as teaching the Welsh language.	As above.
11.1.12	Churchstoke School offers learning through the medium of Welsh.	Churchstoke C.P. School is categorised as an English-medium school but teaches Welsh as a second language.

## 11.2 General concerns about the proposal's impact on Welsh

11.2.1	It would have a huge adverse effect.	<p>The Council is committed to improving access to Welsh-medium provision in order to increase the number of children who are fully bilingual. The proposal is to close Churchstoke C.P. School and for children to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys. This is to ensure that they have the opportunity to access the Curriculum for Wales. Pupils would therefore continue to learn Welsh at the alternative schools.</p> <p>The Council recognises, however, that should Churchstoke C.P. School close and parents choose a school in England for their child(ren), then they would no longer have the opportunity to learn Welsh at those schools, and that this would have a negative impact on the Welsh language in the area, where it is not widely</p>
--------	--------------------------------------	---

		used currently in any case. The Council will update the draft Impact Assessment to include information gathered during consultation, such as the impact on Welsh.
11.2.2	Closing the school can only have a negative effect on Welsh language learning and use.	As above.
11.2.3	I believe closing Churchstoke school would have an adverse effect on the Welsh language, this should be given great consideration.	As above.
11.2.4	The Welsh Language will die in Churchstoke.	As above.
11.2.5	The proposal would have a devastating effect on the Welsh language and identity of Churchstoke village. In effect it would cease to be a Welsh community in anything but name.	As above.
11.2.6	The Welsh language here will disappear with us being so close to the border.	As above.
11.2.7	Welsh language use will decline even further.	As above.
11.2.8	This is a very English part of Wales with a very low % of Welsh speakers. Losing this school can only entrench that position.	As above.
11.2.9	Churchstoke has the 3 <sup>rd</sup> lowest Welsh speaking community in Wales. If you remove the school and many of the children relocate to English ones, the language in this village will die off.	As above.
11.2.10	If you close the school we will lose the Welsh language.	As above.
11.2.11	Closing the school is the most unWelsh thing I think a Welsh council could possibly do.	As above.

11.2.12	Depending on the lottery of where pupils are re-located the effects will be, at best, neutral and, at worst, the total loss of the use of the Welsh language.	As above.
11.2.13	I am yet to be convinced by the council how the school closing will in any way positively affect the opportunities for the children to use the Welsh language. I believe it has been completely disregarded and forgotten about and only mentioned now by the council because it has been highlighted as a major concern for parents.	As above.
11.2.14	Welsh language in the area would die out! In a country where the Welsh Government are proposing 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050 why would you be actively encouraging the closure of small rural Welsh schools that are so close to the English border? These children will be pushed to English education and the Welsh language will be lost. It is proven that learning the Welsh language helps children later on in life to learn other languages. Do not take our Welsh identity away from us!	As above.
11.2.15	As a border area of Wales, the degradation of the Welsh language, as well as other aspects of Welsh culture, is plain to see. This is a great loss for the Welsh cultural identity. Having small schools which not only teach the Welsh language but other key events of Welsh history, which form a vital part of the rich tapestry of Welsh culture, is pivotal at maintaining Welsh identity. The closing of Churchstoke would mean that many of the local pupils would be forced to go to English schools. This would only add to the loss of Welsh cultural identity on the border, further exacerbating it's decline at a time when it should be encouraged and nurtured to help maintain one of the oldest languages and cultures on the European continent.	As above.

### 11.3 Concerns that the proposal would mean that Churchstoke pupils would not have the opportunity to learn Welsh

11.3.1	It would remove the opportunity to learn and speak Welsh for a number of children.	<p>The Council is committed to improving access to Welsh-medium provision in order to increase the number of children who are fully bilingual. The proposal is to close Churchstoke C.P. School and for children to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys. This is to ensure that they have the opportunity to access the Curriculum for Wales. Pupils would therefore continue to learn Welsh at the alternative schools.</p> <p>The Council recognises, however, that should Churchstoke C.P. School close and parents choose a school in England for their child(ren), then they would no longer have the opportunity to learn Welsh at those schools, and that this would have a negative impact on the Welsh language in the area, where it is not widely used currently in any case. The Council will update the draft Impact Assessment to include information gathered during consultation, such as the impact on Welsh.</p>
11.3.2	The majority of pupils would be lost to English schools so will lose the Welsh language.	As above.
11.3.3	Any pupils transferring to English schools would obviously have less opportunity to learn Welsh.	As above.
11.3.4	Pupils transferring to Shropshire Primary Schools will be deprived of the opportunity to learn the Welsh language and experience Welsh culture through education, contributing to the decline in Welsh language and culture.	As above.

11.3.5	Pupils attending schools in England would be deprived of the opportunity to learn Welsh and to be immersed in the culture of the country they live in.	As above.
11.3.6	Welsh children should be entitled to go to a Welsh school.	As above.
11.3.7	Welsh pupils will have limited options to go to a Welsh school.	As above.
11.3.8	Following the implementation of this decision, there will be a number of current and future pupils who will be restricted from learning the Welsh language.	As above.
11.3.9	By moving children to schools in Shropshire they will not have the opportunity to learn Welsh as it is an English school. This goes directly against what the Welsh assembly have said in regards to Welsh children having the right to learn Welsh.	As above.
11.3.10	Welsh children living on the border have as much claim to being Welsh as any other children in Wales, they should not be excluded from accessing the same opportunities or curriculum.	As above.
11.3.11	Pupils attending primary school in England but then attend a secondary school in Powys would be disadvantaged as they wouldn't have studied any Welsh – they would be way behind those who studied Welsh in a primary school in Wales.	As above.
11.3.12	Pupils may be sent to border schools in England where there will be no opportunities for them to learn Welsh or foster their Welsh identity. This may impact adversely for them upon transition to High School, where currently Welsh is compulsory to GCSE at Welshpool High School, the nearest secondary provider to the village.	As above.
11.3.13	Less children will choose Welshpool High School as they won't have learnt any Welsh in primary school – you will be pushing kids into England.	As above.

11.3.14	By losing children to English schools the opportunity to learn Welsh in primary and secondary will be lost to pupils, which will affect their employment opportunities in Wales in the future. Also cultural events eg Eisteddfod, Urdd, St David's Day.	As above.
11.3.15	If a child wishes to move onto a Welsh secondary school they won't have the confidence in speaking Welsh or have lost all learning of that as it will not be taught in English schools and a lot of jobs in Wales require Welsh speaking candidates so this could affect their job career in the future.	As above.
11.3.16	Welsh children are entitled to receive Welsh language studies – many jobs especially in the public sector require Welsh to be spoken	As above.
11.3.17	Welsh language is very important in Wales, it's needed for jobs, that's why we need to teach our children Welsh for the careers in further future.	As above.
11.3.18	The Welsh language is now a pre-requisite for being able to apply for many jobs. If the parents of these children, Welsh residents, are forced to send them to schools located in England, those schools will not have Welsh on the curriculum. Without having been taught the Welsh language the children will be at a disadvantage when seeking work.	As above.
11.3.19	Sending children to Shropshire schools is suicide for their future careers. Any job funded by the Welsh Government requires the ability to be a Welsh speaker. Welsh residents have the right to be educated in Wales.	As above.
11.3.20	As a border authority, any transfer of children from the LA to England would impact on the promotion of the Welsh language, and from the child's perspective, create a situation where the exciting developments the new Welsh curriculum has to offer will	As above.

	be missed through parental choices of transferring children to a closer school in Shropshire.	
11.3.21	Those pupils being moved to primary schools in Shropshire will no longer benefit from their entitlement to the Welsh language curriculum, which has a direct impact on the learning and promotion of the Welsh language and culture. I cannot stress enough how valuable this is for primary children living in Churchstoke, who will benefit greatly from learning Welsh at such a young age, especially when they start to learn other European languages at secondary school.	As above.
11.3.22	Powys's own goal after the Estyn inspection is to increase opportunities for children to learn Welsh. Even though we live in an English speaking area and do not have access to Welsh language education you are now even taking away the basic Welsh lessons from our children.	As above.
11.3.23	As part of Curriculum Cymreig, children should be given the opportunity to learn about characteristics of their locality. Children would be denied this opportunity if the school closed as they would have to learn about the historical and geographical features of other places such as Montgomery or Chirbury.	As above.  During the consultation meeting held with pupils, it was noted that members of the School Council had very limited knowledge of the history of their locality.

#### 11.4 The proposal would not impact on the Welsh language

11.4.1	Welsh is not commonly used in Churchstoke so the impact on using the Welsh language would be minimal.	The Council is committed to improving access to Welsh-medium provision in order to increase the number of children who are fully bilingual. The proposal is to close Churchstoke C.P. School and for children to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys. This is to ensure that they have the opportunity to access the Curriculum for Wales. Pupils would
--------	---	--

		<p>therefore continue to learn Welsh at the alternative schools.</p> <p>The Council recognises, however, that should Churchstoke C.P. School close and parents choose a school in England for their child(ren), then they would no longer have the opportunity to learn Welsh at those schools, and that this would have a negative impact on the Welsh language in the area, where it is not widely used currently in any case. The Council will update the draft Impact Assessment to include information gathered during consultation, such as the impact on Welsh.</p>
11.4.2	Those wanting to learn Welsh can go to Kerry only a couple of minutes drive away or Montgomery. Churchstoke is not a Welsh speaking community	As above.
11.4.3	Churchstoke is not a Welsh speaking area. If parents want their children to learn through the medium of Welsh they would live somewhere where this facility is available. Learning a small amount of Welsh in the primary is useful for going to a Welsh Secondary but not an English one or an English Primary where some of the pupils would have to go to if their school was closed.	As above.
11.4.4	The Welsh language is of less benefit socially and economically in the wider world than the English language, the emphasis should be on providing pupils with the social, educational and personal wherewithal to develop in the global environment in which we currently live.	The Council does not agree with this comment. The Welsh language is of significant social and economic importance as more workplaces recognise the benefits of bilingualism.
11.4.5	Welsh can be taught to English speaking children as easily anywhere else. Teach them to read and do maths.	As above.

## 11.5 Comments about Welsh Government policy

11.5.1	<p>The government is seeking to have 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050 in accordance with Section 78 of the Government of Wales Act 2006. The document “Cymraeg 2050 a million Welsh Speakers” states “Education is central to our vision, but we must ensure our young people come out of the education system ready and proud to use the language in all contexts”.</p>	<p>The Council is committed to improving access to Welsh-medium provision in order to increase the number of children who are fully bilingual. The proposal is to close Churchstoke C.P. School and for children to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys. This is to ensure that they have the opportunity to access the Curriculum for Wales. Pupils would therefore continue to learn Welsh at the alternative schools.</p> <p>The Council recognises, however, that should Churchstoke C.P. School close and parents choose a school in England for their child(ren), then they would no longer have the opportunity to learn Welsh at those schools, and that this would have a negative impact on the Welsh language in the area, where it is not widely used currently in any case. The Council will update the draft Impact Assessment to include information gathered during consultation, such as the impact on Welsh.</p>
11.5.2	<p>The proposal is anti-Welsh and against all recognised policies from Welsh government.</p>	<p>As above.</p>
11.5.3	<p>The Welsh Government have been promoting the development of Welsh speaking communities since the 2013 “Increasing the number of communities where Welsh is the main language Report” of the Task and Finish Group. It called upon the education system to be progressive across the higher percentage areas so that all young (and older) people can become fluent and confident</p>	<p>As above.</p>

	in using Welsh and English. How is closing a local community primary school achieving this?	
--	---	--

## 11.6 Suggestions for how the Council could improve Welsh

11.6.1	Provide incidental Welsh in English option schools	<p>As all schools need to deliver the Welsh context as part of the new curriculum, there should be no differential between schools.</p> <p>One of the key characteristics of the four purposes in the Curriculum for Wales is to develop ambitious, capable learners who can communicate effectively in different forms and settings, using both Welsh and English. All learners should have appropriate pathways for learning Welsh and English to enable them to develop the confidence to use both languages in everyday life. All Powys schools are well supported with excellent resources from the Athrawon Bro Team to enable teachers to teach Welsh. Staff from nearby schools have attended the sabbatical Welsh language course with further staff attending the sabbatical course in Newtown in September 2021. Opportunities to use Welsh within and beyond the classroom (including on digital platforms) support learners to use Welsh confidently and appreciate its usefulness to communication in a bilingual Wales and again all Powys schools are effectively supported with rich resources from the Athrawon Bro Team. Schools, through effective pupil voice fora, known as the 'Criw Cymraeg' plan a range of activities to increase the use of Welsh outside the classroom. Facilitating the use of</p>
--------	--	---

		Welsh, through planned linguistic progression in every phase of education from ages 3 to16, and as part of a whole-school approach, offers opportunities for all learners to develop bilingually and this is a key priority for all schools in Wales.
11.6.2	Provide more Welsh lessons, make it more accessible for parents to attend Welsh classes such as a clwb Cwtch.	As above.
11.6.3	Offer staff more opportunities to learn the language so they can all engage with the children in Welsh	As above.

### 11.7 Other comments

11.7.1	The indications in the consultation document are that Powys County Council (a Welsh County) are happy to have Welsh children taught in England. That cannot be right!	<p>The Council is committed to improving access to Welsh-medium provision in order to increase the number of children who are fully bilingual. The proposal is to close Churchstoke C.P. School and for children to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys. This is to ensure that they have the opportunity to access the Curriculum for Wales. Pupils would therefore continue to learn Welsh at the alternative schools.</p> <p>The Council recognises, however, that should Churchstoke C.P. School close and parents choose a school in England for their child(ren), then they would no longer have the opportunity to learn Welsh at those schools, and that this would have a negative impact on the Welsh language in the area, where it is not widely used currently in any case. The Council will update the draft Impact Assessment to include information</p>
--------	---	--

		gathered during consultation, such as the impact on Welsh.
11.7.2	Parents living in Wales should have the right for their children to learn the language just as other countries provide children access to their native language and heritage. By taking away this opportunity you are discriminating against the Welsh language.	The Council is not discriminating against the Welsh language as the proposal is for pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys.

## 12. COMMENTS ABOUT IMPACT ON STAFF

12.1	The loyal staff would lose their jobs, teachers, cooks, playground assistants etc, many who have been there many years.	Should the school close, Staff currently employed at Churchstoke C.P. School would be subject to a management of change process and be supported fully throughout the process.
12.2	Concern about a loss of jobs of the great teachers and support staff!	As above.
12.3	Teachers and staff would lose their jobs.	As above.
12.4	Will the teachers be given new jobs?	As above.
12.5	We don't want our loyal staff, teachers, cook, cook assistants, cleaners, etc to also lose their jobs.	As above.
12.6	There are people who work at school who do not drive and are slightly older, therefore to find other employment would be difficult.	As above.
12.7	Closure of our preschool setting could result in the loss of 4 jobs of young women from Powys, with a further knock on affect of them having to relocate along with their young families further potentiating the problem of an ageing and diminishing population	The Council is not proposing to close Churchstoke Little Explorers, but has recognised that there may be an impact on the setting should the school close,

	in Powys. Exacerbating the problem of low income for the area and low population growth. Is this not discriminating women who are also mothers in equal opportunities for work and financial security in Powys?	particularly as the setting is on the school grounds and shares some facilities.
12.8	CSRA and the school have a close working relationship, including in the employment of staff to clean and caretake the Community Hall. The proposed closure puts these jobs under threat.	The responsibility for staff at the Community Centre lies with the Centre's Management Committee.
12.9	On the page 22 of the Consultation Document it says that "it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would impact on professional learning opportunities." How is this the case when the majority of the staff, if not all, will be losing their jobs? How can there be no impact on their professional learning opportunities when the staff are made redundant? Similarly, how is the impact on salary arrangement of current staff neutral (as suggested by the Impact Assessment), when they will in all likelihood be made redundant?	The document is referring specifically to whether any staff would be affected by differential in pay if they were to move to another role. Due to the terms and conditions of employment, this would not be the case – staff would be able to move across to new roles on their current teaching point or on a similar increment point if a support member of staff. The point around professional learning opportunities indicates that staff would still be able to access professional learning from other employment rather than also arranged through their current school e.g. national, regional or Powys wide development.

### 13. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

#### 13.1 Comments relating to the estimated saving from closing the school

13.1.1	There is often no advantage financially to close a school in a rural location.	The driver for the Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys is equity of educational provision across the authority, to improve learner entitlement and improve
--------	--	---

		<p>best learning outcomes/education, not solely to save money. However, reducing the range of funding per pupil will allow for reinvestment across the authority.</p> <p>Although relatively small, savings estimates are based on the best information available at the time they are calculated and are subject to change for example due to changes in pupil numbers, parental choice, staff changes etc. The calculations are reviewed by a range of officers and sensitivity analysis is also carried out.</p>
13.1.2	The costs thought to be 'saved' will often not be realised – the new teachers, transport will be the same often	See 13.1.1.
13.1.3	And I think you are completely off with your figures for how much that is going to cost.	See 13.1.1.
13.1.4	I am also concerned as the payer of Council Tax that the closure of the school is going to end up being considerably more expensive than keeping it open. The financial analysis in the document is based on totally incorrect figures, both in the number of pupils, the growth of the village and the cost of transportation.	<p>Powys County Council always strives to provide value for money in the delivery of its services, constantly seeking out cost savings and efficiencies, including service transformation across all service areas.</p> <p>As stated above the driver for change is based on improving educational provision across the county not solely financial and savings estimates are based on the best information available at the time they are calculated.</p>
13.1.5	Money saved by closing the school (a dubious calculation) will soon be wiped out by the negative effects it will bring.	See 13.1.1.
13.1.6	When a more realistic figure for additional transport costs is considered, I see no financial saving to be made from the closure	See 13.1.1.

	of the School so there is no benefit to closure when compared to status quo.	
13.1.7	Powys council know the price of everything but the value of nothing. Their decision is so short sighted, yet when the economics are scrutinised, it doesn't even save money.	See 13.1.1.
13.1.8	It's saddening to see that the council are only thinking of the costs they would save if the school closed rather than the children and the lives that could be damaged as a result. I think the council should take into consideration the future potential costs, rather than just the financial implications of the present.	See 13.1.1.
13.1.9	The idea of closing the school is obviously purely being made on financial terms and not what is best for the local community.	See 13.1.1.
13.1.10	It is incredibly clear that the main purpose of this proposal is to save revenue for the council and to create revenue through the lump sum they expect to receive from the sale of the site.	As stated above the driver for change is based on improving educational provision across the county not solely financial and savings estimates are based on the best information available at the time they are calculated.  While the consultation document mentions the potential for a capital receipt, it is not quantified and is not the driver for this proposal.
13.1.11	Let's not kid ourselves this is not about improving the pupils' education it's about saving money and the cost to transport all these children to other schools would surely cost more long term.	See 13.1.1.
13.1.12	To destroy a community for purely economic reason cannot be right.	The aim of the proposal is to improve learner entitlement and experience and to ensure equity across the system. The Council has recognised, in the draft Community Impact Assessment, that there could be a detrimental impact on the community should there

		be no school in Churchstoke. This will be updated to take account of information gathered during consultation.
13.1.13	Child welfare and education should be the prime concern NOT MONEY SAVING.	The aim of the proposal is to improve learner entitlement and experience and to ensure equity across the system, not solely to save money. However, reducing the range of funding per pupil will allow for reinvestment across the authority.
13.1.14	A totally flawed proposal that appears to be following a script rather than backed up by evidence..... A money saving exercise????	<p>The case for change is clearly set out in the consultation document. The Council is facing the combined challenges of a high proportion of small schools, decreasing pupil numbers, high numbers of surplus places, issues with building condition of some schools and ongoing financial pressure combined with inequity of provision. The Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-2030 sets out the Council's priorities in addressing these challenges which includes the aim to "improve learner entitlement and experience' and this aim includes an objective to 'rationalise primary provision'. The decision to consult on the closure of Churchstoke CP School is in line with these priorities.</p> <p>As stated above, the aim of the proposal is to improve learner entitlement and experience and to ensure equity across the system, not solely financial and savings estimates are based on the best information available at the time they are calculated.</p>
13.1.15	Obviously, closing the school has the potential to save some money in the short term. By the same token, no longer collecting	Comment noted.

	<p>rubbish, running trains or buses, repairing roads or requiring developments to obtain permission before going ahead would also save money. I don't see that having a local school is any less of an essential, especially when the demand for it is set to grow as all the new build in Churchstoke become occupied.</p>	
--	---	--

### 13.2 Comments relating to the budget share per pupil / funding formula

13.2.1	<p>Increasing numbers of pupils would reduce the high cost per pupil, which Powys County Council figures have been based on outdated numbers of 25 pupils, and not the correct figure of 38. Within four years the cost per pupil is expected to reduce to approximately £4600 per pupil, close to the powers average figure.</p>	<p>One of the drivers for the Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys is equity of educational provision across the authority and reducing the range of funding per pupil at different schools will contribute to this.</p> <p>The budgeted cost per pupil is based on the actual pupil numbers on the pupil count date prior to the start of the financial year, on which their funding for the financial year is based.</p> <p>The budget share per pupil during 2020-21 was £7,475 which was based on 27 pupils, which was the most up-to-date information available at the time that the consultation document was compiled.</p> <p>The 2021-22 budget share per pupil is £6,932 and is based on 36 pupils (actual pupil numbers in November 2020). Current pupil numbers are 39, and the school is predicting that pupil numbers will rise over the next few years, but it is unclear how the £4,600 per pupil figure has been arrived at.</p> <p><b>Powys Primary Cost per pupil</b></p>
--------	---	---

		<p><u>2021-2021</u> Average: £4,384 Lowest: £3,276 Highest: £11,912</p> <p><u>2021-2022</u> Average: £4,617 Lowest: £3,473 Highest: £8,412</p> <p>Details of budgets per pupil for all schools can be found here: <a href="https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Local-Government/Finance/Revenue/Delegated-School-Budgets/delegatedschoolbudgetsperpupil-by-school">https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Local-Government/Finance/Revenue/Delegated-School-Budgets/delegatedschoolbudgetsperpupil-by-school</a></p>
13.2.2	The cost of “per” pupil figures quoted by PCC are historic and based on old pupil numbers. The predicted number for September 2022 is £4600, very close to the Powys average.	See 13.2.1.
13.2.3	This decision appears to be for short-term economic gain. The local school does currently incur higher average costs per pupil, however, based on estimated calculations from accurate data, the likely impact will be of pupil numbers increasing to 52 by September 2022, which will lower the average cost to around £4,600 per pupil, very close to the national average, and subsequently reducing the surplus placed in the school.	See 13.2.1.
13.2.4	Pupil numbers are growing and will likely continue to grow due to the housing developments. As pupil numbers grow, the cost pupil will decrease.	Comment noted.
13.2.5	The Consultation Document gives details of the funding per pupil for our neighbouring Shropshire and Powys schools. It is quite clear that Shropshire schools enjoy far greater funding per pupil	The Council recognises that there is difference in the quantum and distribution of funding between Powys and Shropshire.

	when schools of a similar size are compared. This has already been commented on by parents.	
13.2.6	I was saddened to hear at the Cabinet meeting on 9 February a Cabinet member state that they had to address the inequality of funding per pupil across schools. In such a rural authority it is inevitable there will be variances in funding per pupil across schools unless the aim is to have one very large super school in the middle of Powys. Surely the focus should be on equality of opportunities for children in Powys. Children in rural communities deserve the opportunities a local school gives them in the same way that children in larger towns do.	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>The driver for the Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys is equity of educational provision, to improve learner entitlement and best learning outcomes/education, not solely to save money. However, reducing the range of funding per pupil will allow for reinvestment across the authority.</p>
13.2.7	This is a short-sighted cost cutting idea that will have long term impacts	See 13.2.1.

### 13.3 Comments about capital funding

13.3.1	There was also an article at the top of page 7 of County Times 5 <sup>th</sup> February - Doubts over financial viability of schools programme. In this article it talks about the Welsh Government would pick up 65 percent of the tab, leaving Powys County Council to fund the remaining 35 percent. It says that future waves of school buildings would cost about £300 million. Then in the County Times, 19 <sup>th</sup> February the figure rises again and is now “£550 Million to £600 Million will be need to make the council’s school transformation vision a reality”. Surely it would be a lot better to improve some of the schools that already exist.	<p>The Council’s ambition is to implement a major capital investment programme that will ensure that schools in Powys have inspiring, environmentally sustainable buildings that can provide opportunities for wider community activity, including where possible childcare services, early years, ALN, multi-agency support and community and leisure facilities. This will also include developing a reliable, high quality digital infrastructure.</p> <p>The Council’s current 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Programme is approximately £200m, with funding split between the Welsh Government and the Council.</p>
13.3.2	There will be a cost to the council to build bigger schools.	Comment noted.

## 13.4 Other comments

13.4.1	Small schools run very lean financially.	<p>The Council's ambition is to implement a major capital investment programme that will ensure that schools in Powys have inspiring, environmentally sustainable buildings that can provide opportunities for wider community activity, including where possible childcare services, early years, ALN, multi-agency support and community and leisure facilities. This will also include developing a reliable, high quality digital infrastructure.</p> <p>The Council's current 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Programme is approximately £200m, with funding split between the Welsh Government and the Council.</p>
13.4.2	It's so disappointing that the Council's reasoning is based on cost equality and comparisons with other schools and villages. The reasoning should be based on equal opportunities for all children.	<p>The driver for the Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys is equity of educational provision, to improve learner entitlement and best learning outcomes/education, not solely to save money. However, reducing the range of funding per pupil will allow for reinvestment across the authority.</p>
13.4.3	I do think you have probably factored in the sale of the school site into your cash provisions, but the school site was given to you for the school so morally it should come back to the village if you were to close the school and keep our pre school so that our villagers can benefit from early years childcare.	<p>While the consultation document mentions the potential for a capital receipt, it is not quantified. All surplus assets are subject to the process of disposal as outlined in the Council's Asset Management Policy. Some schools that have closed have been transferred to other service areas e.g. housing or to a community. In other case they have been sold to third parties. This provides the Council with a capital receipt that is then re-invested in the Council's corporate budget, which in turn supports education.</p>

13.4.4	It would be useful to know the financial impact of payments to Shropshire for additional Powys pupils.	Powys County Council would not make payments to Shropshire Council for Powys pupils that attend mainstream schools in Shropshire.
13.4.5	<p>The School Forum wishes to comment on the financial implications of these proposals for the overall schools' delegated budget. At our last meeting we agreed on the importance of making sure that any savings accruing from transformation proposals are retained within the overall schools' delegated budget. This is fundamental to the overall transformation programme being taken forward by the Council. One of the main tenets of the overall programme is to reduce the overall number of schools so that the existing level of funding could be shared more equitably and resolve the existing problem of some schools having insufficient resources. There is a common sentence in each of the reports which says "Any savings would be reinvested in the Council's corporate budget and any reinvestment in the schools' system would be agreed as part of the annual budget planning cycle". This falls a long way short of guaranteeing that the savings will be retained within the overall schools' delegated budget. Essentially this means that it will be up to the Council each year to decide on whether the funding should be retained for schools or not. This approach is very worrying as it could lead to the overall schools' delegated budget being reduced as a result of the Council deciding that savings should be reinvested elsewhere. That runs very much against the overall plan to share the existing resources amongst a smaller number of schools and could result in the same problem we have now – not enough funding to run all the schools. Against this background can you please, when reporting back to the Cabinet on the results of the consultations for each of these schools, report the concerns of the Schools' Forum as set out above and change the approach to how savings</p>	The Council notes the comment of the School Forum.

	are to be treated, i.e. that they are ring fenced for use within the schools' delegated budget.	
--	---	--

## 14. COMMENTS ABOUT COUNCIL STRATEGIES

### 14.1 Vision 2025

14.1.1	Powys County Council has a Strategic Vision 2025, which sets out their aims and objectives for the future. These aims and objectives focus on developing a vibrant economy, leading the way in providing effective, integrated health and care in a rural environment, strengthening learning and skills, and supporting residents and communities. CCC is of the view that closure of Churchstoke School would have a negative effect on all of these and as such would be contrary to Powys' declared strategic plan. Closure may damage the local economy as families would not want to move to a village without a school, and it would leave local businesses struggling to recruit staff, and parents relying on after school and breakfast clubs would be left without support and unable to work.	The Council has identified the detrimental impact on the community of Churchstoke in the draft Community Impact Assessment which will be updated to take account of issues raised during consultation.
14.1.2	Powys County Council have a policy called vision 2025, setting out their objectives for the future. These objectives focus on developing a vibrant economy, leading the way in providing effective, integrated health and care in a rural environment, strengthening learning and skills, and supporting residents and communities. Closing Churchstoke CP school would have a negative effect on all of these, and as such would be contrary to Powys' declared policies. It will damage the local economy as house prices will be driven down as people with families will not	As above.

	<p>want to move to a village with no school. It will leave businesses struggling to recruit staff as parents rely on after school and breakfast clubs, leaving parents with no support and unable to work. It will reduce health and care advice as school staff are trained to provide advice on a wide range of council and national services, and this would be lost to the local area. Far from strengthening learning and skills, the disruption and separation from the neighbours, plus the loss of focused close support, would it damage learning, skills, and pupil well-being. It obviously completely fails to support local residents and the community in which we live. Powys have already recognised the catastrophic effect on the local community with the division of the community, the loss of Welsh identity, and increased socio-economic divisions.</p>	
14.1.3	<p>Powys Vision 2025 Policy includes an objective of supporting residents and communities. How does the decision to close the school support the community of Churchstoke?</p>	<p>The aim of the proposal is to improve learner entitlement and experience and to provide equity across the whole system.</p>
14.1.4	<p>How does it fit with the vision 2025 objective of supporting residents and communities? How does this fit with the Sustainable Development Principles of Collaboration (working with others in a collaborative way to find shared sustainable solutions), involvement (involving a diversity of the population in the decisions that affect them) or integration (taking an integrated approach so that public bodies</p>	<p>The aim of the proposal is to improve learner entitlement and experience and to provide equity across the whole system.</p> <p>The Council has consulted with all stakeholders in order to hear their views about the proposal. Cabinet will be required to consider this Consultation Report before making any further decisions about the future of the school and will consider a number of impact assessments which considers the impact of the proposal on a range of themes.</p>
14.1.5	<p>How does the local authority think the fragmentation of the community will affect the well-being of the children and the</p>	<p>The Council has recognised the detrimental impact that this proposal would have on the community of</p>

	community as a whole? Does this fit in with the Powys Vision 2025 community aims?	Churchstoke in its draft Community Impact Assessment, which will be updated to take account of information gathered during consultation.
--	---	--

## 14.2 Transforming Education Strategy

14.2.1	<p>Regarding the comments by Councillor Phyl Davies, cabinet member for Education and Property, who states “We are committed to transforming the learner experience and entitlement for our learners and will achieve this by delivering our Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-2030”, three out of the four proposed alternative schools are in England. I ask you, how does transferring pupils to a primary school in Shropshire, England, support the Powys education strategy? Furthermore, in what way does transporting young pupils several miles by bus, rather than enabling them to experience walking to a local school with their parents be “in the best interest of the learners” and give them “the best possible start they deserve”? I would also suggest that closing a local Welsh school and bussing the children to alternative schools in Shropshire gives the message to our young villagers that Welsh schools are sub-standard to those in England.</p>	<p>The proposal is to close Churchstoke C.P. School and for pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys. This is to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to access the Curriculum for Wales.</p> <p>The named alternative schools in the document recognise the fact that these are the nearest schools to Churchstoke. If a parent chose to attend their nearest school and that was in England, the Council would be responsible for providing free home-to-school transport for those pupils.</p> <p>The Council has recognised that pupils who currently walk to school would no longer be able to do so.</p>
14.2.2	<p>I strongly disagree that the closure of Churchstoke school will ensure, as per The Vision Statement: 'All children..will experience a high-quality, inspiring education...' or 'better learner entitlement and experience'. This is a worthy aim - and one I wholeheartedly support - but this closure is not going to achieve it. The nearest primary school to Churchstoke is Chirbury, part of the Shropshire Hills Federation. I am aware the decision was taken there to protect the future of each school.</p>	<p>The aim of the proposal is to improve learner entitlement and experience and to provide equity across the whole system.</p>

14.2.3	<p>Having read the Estyn report of July 2019 we are struggling to understand the link between this report which focuses mainly on secondary education and post 16 education and the mass closure of Powys primary schools.</p>	<p>Following Estyn's criticism of the Council's education services in its 2019 inspection, the Council's new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-30 was developed following an extensive engagement exercise with schools and other stakeholders. One of the challenges facing Powys, as identified in that engagement exercise, was the fact that the county has too many small schools:</p> <p><b>i) High proportion of small schools</b></p> <p>Based on PLASC 2019 figures, there were 33 small primary schools in Powys – this is approximately 40% of the primary provision in the county. 21 schools had fewer than 50 pupils, and for those schools the budget share per pupil is generally higher than the Powys average for primary schools.</p> <p>The aim of the proposal is to improve learner entitlement and experience and to provide equity across the system.</p> <p>The strategy sets out several aims and objectives to transform the Powys education system over the next few years with the aim of providing the best possible opportunities for Powys learners, now and in the future. Two of the objectives included in the strategy are to 'improve learner entitlement and experience' and 'rationalise primary provision'. This proposal is in line with these objectives.</p>
--------	--	---

14.2.4	Estyn's report published last year, does not mention anywhere the closure of lots of small rural primary schools, but that the provision for post 16 year education in Powys needed addressing.	As above.
14.2.5	We believe that the recommendations made by Estyn have been taken out of context. A letter and email that we have from Estyn agree with us. Nowhere is there a recommendation to close small rural primary schools in fact there should be a presumption to keep rural schools open!	<p>As above.</p> <p>The Welsh Government's School Organisation Policy 2018 includes a section entitled:</p> <p>1.8 Presumption against the closure of rural schools.</p> <p>This outlines the additional considerations that local authorities/proposers need to carry out when formulating and consulting on proposals related to rural schools.</p>
14.2.6	Your Education Transformation Plan for wanting to provide a better education system provides me with little confidence that you are thinking about what is best for these children when you are willing to close a school that has more positive Estyn reports than proposed schools you will send these children to. Not to mention the traffic light system you award schools with in Powys.	<p>The Council does not have any concerns over the quality of education provided at any of the alternative schools and believe that pupils will not be disadvantaged.</p> <p>All the alternative schools are regarded as 'self-improving' schools, according to the latest National Categorisation in 2019.</p> <p>Estyn, in its response to this consultation, has concluded that 'It is Estyn's opinion that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards of education in the area.'</p>
14.2.7	The Transformation Strategy 2020-2030 has great plans for education but is short sighted and lacks individuality, something	See 4.1.2.

	that should be a core part of education. Some children need smaller friendly schools to achieve best outcomes. Big school, big classes do not work for everyone and children will get lost in the system. I note your new initiatives and I question how closing our school will help when you are actually making your targets less achievable.	
14.2.8	One aim is to 'Improve access to Welsh-medium provision across all key stages' By closing Churchstoke school which sits on the boarder you will be forcing Powys children for an education in England where no Welsh language will be provided! This will then force pupils to follow to an education in England and consequently diminish the Welsh language further and remove choice for jobs.	See 11.2.1.
14.2.9	Powys are restructuring sixth form provision but keeping all sixth forms open, in a bid to stop students from being lost to England. This undoubtedly has links to our case, and if it is reasonable for the local authority to undertake the whole restructuring of sixth form provision in order to achieve that aim, then keeping border schools open for the same reason, must be reasonable	Comment noted.
14.2.10	Losing pupils across the border should not be an option for a Powys schools transformation project.	Comment noted.
14.2.11	Where did the figure of 91 come from? This I believe was meant for city schools NOT rural	The figure of 91 is defined by the Welsh Government in The Education (Small Schools) (Wales) Order 2014: 'A small maintained school is a school that contains fewer than 91 registered pupils on the third Tuesday in the January'.
14.2.12	You said that a school with below 91 pupils is too small, that's a lot of schools that will have to close in North Montgomeryshire. Will there no longer be any schools in villages?	As above.

		The Council's Strategy for Transforming Education identifies the large number of small schools in Powys as a challenge, however that does not mean that all small schools will close.
--	--	---

### 14.3 Active Travel Plan

14.3.1	There seems to be little if any acknowledgement of the Powys CC Active Travel Plan. The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 aims to make Wales a walking and cycling nation. Its purpose is to enable more people to undertake active travel for short journeys instead of using motorised vehicles where it is suitable for them to do so. The Act requires the county council to produce active travel maps and deliver year on year improvements in active travel routes and facilities and requires it to promote active travel journeys in exercising their functions under this Act. CCC is of the view that the business case for closure fails to take into account the obligations of the county council under the Act, and that closure will result in less, not more, active travel within the community.	The Council has recognised that pupils who currently walk to school in Churchstoke would no longer be able to do so, and appreciates that this does not promote active travel. Whilst the Council recognises the importance of active travel, the aim of the proposal is to improve learner entitlement and experience and to provide equity across the system.
--------	---	---

### 14.4 Climate Emergency Declaration

14.4.1	Powys County Council declared a climate emergency on 24th September 2020. This included an ambition to reduce its carbon emissions to net zero, in line with the Welsh public sector target of 2030. CCC is of the view that the business case for closure fails to take into account its own declaration and the public, and moral, obligations that come with it. It would seem to be at odds with	The Council has recognised in the draft Impact Assessment that there would potentially be a negative impact on the environment due to additional travel.
--------	--	--

	Powys Public Service Board (of which the county council is part) preparation of a county wide Carbon Positive Strategy.	
14.4.2	Taking children away from their home village for school is contrary to PCC's stated agenda to cut carbon emissions, prevents children walking or cycling to school, and increases traffic on rural roads.	As above.

#### 14.5 The Powys Well-being Plan: Towards 2040

14.5.1	The plan, launched by the Public Service Board in July 2018, contains 4 local objectives and 12 well-being steps to achieve those objectives. It sets out what the Public Service Board wants Powys to look like in 2040 and has been developed to provide a long-term vision of well-being in Powys. The community council maintains that the impact of closure on community life will be severe. As a simple, and obvious, example of closure being a designed 'failure of future' is the impact on the Preschool Playgroup which is thriving at full capacity. There appears to be no proposals to cope with the adverse impact on this vital part of community life and no accompanying proposals to cope with transport to alternative setting. CCC is of the view that the business case for closure fails to take into account the Plan or the 4 Local Objectives or the 12 steps, and that it is hard to see how Well-being could be delivered successfully if the focal points of life of a growing community of Churchstoke which the school supports is removed.	Comment noted. The Council has considered the impact of the proposal on the wellbeing goals in the draft impact assessment which will be updated to take account of information gathered during consultation.
--------	---	---

#### 15. COMMENTS ABOUT WELSH GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

## 15.1 Well-being of Future Generations Act

15.1.1	<p>The Welsh Government has a series of wellbeing goals and ways of working which it required by law (Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) to be followed by local government. These cover goals of ‘A Prosperous Wales’, ‘A Resilient Wales’, ‘A Healthier Wales’, ‘A Wales of Cohesive Communities’, ‘A Globally Responsible Wales’, ‘A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language’, and ‘A More Equal Wales’. The proposal to close the school damages every one of these. CCC believes that closure would - with the additional transport (many pupils currently walk to school but would be unable to do so if the local school closed) – have a negative effect on carbon footprint and sustainability, exacerbated by a reduction in local employment opportunities and income which would drive the economy out of the area into England. It also believes there would be a reduction in social resilience, with the less well-off families not able to access the full range of support which is currently on offer in the area. CCC is of the view that there would be a negative impact on equality, an increase in social division and decreased community cohesion as children all from the same community attend different schools and those with lower socio-economic backgrounds become unable to access the additional activities and support from school. CCC believes closure will have a negative impact on healthy and active lifestyles as children would no longer walk to school. It is also of the view that there will be a loss of Welsh identity and, as the school is an important body in the area which actively promotes and uses the Welsh language, there would be a devastating impact on the Welsh identity and language in the area.</p>	<p>The Council has considered the impact of the proposal on the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in its draft Impact Assessments which will be updated to take account of information gathered during consultation.</p>
--------	--	---

15.1.2	The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 also requires Welsh administration to 'improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales' and specifically mentions the role that places of education have in meeting this objective. Public bodies have an obligation to set, and meet, their published well-being goals	As above.
15.1.3	Under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, public bodies must demonstrate that they are using the sustainable development principle to shape their work. The proposal to close Churchstoke CP school breaches this. With the change from most pupils walking to school to being driven to school would have a negative impact on sustainability due to additional travel arrangements, with a greatly increased carbon footprint. There would be a negative impact on community involvement and engagement with residents being remote from provision, both physically and emotionally. Lack of local knowledge would have a damaging effect on safeguarding, particularly in view of the cross border split of the community. There would be a drastic reduction in the integration of services into the local community, with the removal of the only Powys service based in the village, Powys County Council involvement with the local community would cease	As above.
15.1.4	The wellbeing of future generations act 2015, requires all levels of Welsh administration to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well being of Wales. To do this they must set and publish well-being objectives. These objectives will show how each public body will work to achieve the vision for Wales set out in the wellbeing goals. Public bodies must then take action to make sure they meet the objectives they set.	As above.

15.1.5	The proposal impedes on the Welsh Government wellbeing goals as additional transport will have a negative effect on sustainability with a vastly increased carbon footprint and a reduction in local green spaces; not to mention a negative impact on healthy and active lifestyles.	As above.
15.1.6	The proposal is contrary to Sustainable Development Principles Under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – Public bodies must demonstrate that they are using the sustainable development principle to 6 shape their work. CCC believes that the proposal to close the school goes contrary to this principle: A change from many pupils walking to school to being driven to school would have a negative impact on sustainability due to additional travel arrangements, with a increased carbon footprint; There would be a negative impact on community involvement and engagement with residents being remote from local service provision, both physically and emotionally; Lack of local knowledge would have a damaging effect on safeguarding, particularly in view of the cross-border division of the community; There would be a reduction in the integration of services into the local community, with the removal of a key Powys service based there, and Powys County Council direct involvement and engagement with the local community would cease.	As above.
15.1.7	Transporting children in multiple directions from the village would be detrimental to the local environment, it would increase the carbon footprint of our children as well as impact the feeling of community in the village as the children will lose the opportunity to connect with residents or learn about their local heritage. Under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, public bodies must demonstrate that they are using the sustainable development principle to shape their work. The proposal to close	As above.

	Churchstoke school breaches this. The negative effects it will have on the community outweigh any positive effects by a mile!!!	
--	---	--

## 15.2 Other

15.2.1	PCC would be going against Welsh government's aim for all Welsh children to be educated to the Welsh standards (by closing the school).	The proposal is to close Churchstoke C.P. School and for pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative primary schools in Powys. This is to ensure that they have the opportunity to access the Curriculum for Wales.
15.2.2	Quite apart from the local considerations, the announced closure seems to fly in the face of Wales's nation development framework, which sets out the strategic plan for Wales over the next 20 years.	As above.
15.2.3	The consultation document focuses on the Education Strategy, but fails to address or refer to the broader National Development Framework for Wales. This framework focuses on supporting rural areas, and states that Wales needs to attract and retain younger people through supporting job opportunities and community services in these areas. It is concerned with ensuring that communities are age balanced and any depopulation is reversed thus equalising any social imbalances.	The Council has recognised in its draft Community Impact Assessment that there would be a detrimental impact on the community of Churchstoke should the school closed. This will be updated to include issues raised during consultation.
15.2.4	The Welsh government wants vibrant rural areas where services to meet the needs of those living there in a sustainable way. Strategic and local development plans must develop policies that support rural areas.	The Council recognises that Powys is a largely rural county with a sparse population, and access to services is challenging depending on where people live. However, in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, the planning and development of effective school organisation proposals is crucial to the Welsh Government's goal of transforming education in Wales and providing better educational outcomes. The Council has a duty to

		manage its schools infrastructure to ensure equity across the whole system and to ensure that learner entitlement and experience is improved.
15.2.5	The Welsh Government's definition of a 'small school' as one with less than 91 pupils is completely unrealistic in very rural areas. This number may be fine in the cities and small towns across Wales but in these very rural parts, of which Powys covers 1/3 of the land mass and is almost entirely VERY rural this has to be challenged.	Comment noted.

## 16. CRITICISM OF POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

16.1	I've witnessed so many inefficiencies in PCC, look at these before selling granny's sliver. If this school closes you will be liable for neglect.	The Council practises sound financial management. Powys County Council always strives to provide value for money in the delivery of its services, constantly seeking out cost savings and efficiencies, including service transformation across all service areas. Audit Wales reviews the Council's financial reporting and sustainability each year and also undertakes value for money reviews. The Auditor General gave an unqualified true and fair opinion on the Council's financial statements for 2019-20 (the latest available currently). Audit Wales also reviewed transformation at Powys County Council during 2019-20 and concluded that overall the Council is well placed to deliver its transformation programme while acknowledging that Covid-19 presents new challenges and risks to the programme.
------	---	--

16.2	Why should we be expected to pay increasing council tax payments when all you are doing is removing more and more from us.	The aim of the proposal is to improve learner entitlement and experience for all learners and to provide equity across the authority.
16.3	How will people be expected to pay the forever-increasing council tax when you remove essential parts of the community?	As above.
16.4	We pay enough Council Tax – if the Council cut down on the waste there would be plenty of money to finance education – Education is essential.	As above.
16.5	I would not be prepared to continue to pay high council tax if you keep removing such services from an already rural area.	As above.
16.6	From a parent point of view I would hate to think so many children will be thrown out of their routine, I would feel let down by the council for making this decision as being a member of the community paying taxes/council tax in the area to be told our children no longer have a local school where they felt safe and settled at because the council refuse to fund it anymore.	As above.
16.7	I pay my council tax to Powys County Council, not Shropshire, so our children's education should be received in Powys.	The proposal is to close Churchstoke C.P School and for pupils to transfer to alternative schools within Powys.  All parents have the right to choose the school in which their children are educated.
16.8	There seems to be no joined up thinking between the departments within Powys County Council with the use of incorrect/outdated information employed to justify the closure plans.	All data was correct at the time of writing and the sources are referenced. The Council recognises that there are housing developments in the area as outlined in the Consultation Document.
16.9	I'm not a statistician but liaising with the environmental department within the Council may throw up conflicting strategies	As above.

	here, I think. Joined up thinking within the strategic arm of any County Council would be useful.	
16.10	There seems to be no cooperative thinking within Powys, why build family homes and then take away a school?	As above.
16.11	The decision of the County Council to seek to close Churchstoke CP school points to a lack of joined up thinking as if each department within the council was instructed to come up with plans to reduce its budget. So the education department thinks that it can cut costs by closing a number of primary schools without consideration of the fact that the planning department has approved the construction of in excess of 60 new homes in the village, which will doubtless bring in children of primary school age.	As above.
16.12	On one hand you encourage more housing, reduction in car journeys, supporting local community, physical activity and the preservation of the Welsh language. By closing the school you make it that people can't walk to school from the new homes you permit which encourages exercise, reduces car journeys and promotes a local community atmosphere.	Comment noted.
16.13	I'm not aware of any political candidates prior to recent election including within its stated objectives the closure of thriving local schools. If the proponents of the suggestion to close the schools truly believe in the correctness of their proposals, they should stand down and invite re election to endorse the plan. If they then retain their position on the council, I think they would then have far more moral justification to see their plans through. Until then, I hope they reconsider their misguided attempts to condemn yet another small community to an unnecessary decline.	Comment noted.

16.14	IT IS UTTER MADNESS - It is time some of these people sitting in offices and who don't even know the area around Churchstoke can make decisions that change the WHOLE COMMUNITY - KNOCK THIS ON THE HEAD NOW AND USE SOME COMMON SENSE	The aim of the proposal is to improve learner entitlement and experience for all learners and to provide equity across the system.
-------	--	--

## 17. COMMENTS ABOUT THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

### 17.1 Comments about consultation taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic

17.1.1	The school has been working hard over the last few months to interpret different guidelines to ensure continued safety and high teaching standards, even in the virtual world. I can speak for the entire committee when I express how shocked and disappointed we were that a consultation to close our school has come during a global pandemic, when the wider community cannot get involved in a meaningful way. Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and Welsh Language released a statement in October 2020 acknowledging the 'mental health impact of coronavirus' and committing that they 'will support people and communities' during these difficult times, however I fail to see how the mental health of our staff, children, parents or wider community has been considered at all. The continuation of the transformation plans for education regardless of the Covid-19 pandemic simply allows the Council to plough through with closures without properly engaging with the community.	The Council recognises that any school reorganisation proposal creates a period of uncertainty and concern for local stakeholders. However, in order to address the issues raised by Estyn regarding the organisation of its schools, it is necessary to continue with the development and consultation on proposals during the current pandemic. The Welsh Government provided non-statutory guidance for local authorities to manage consultations during periods of lockdown. The level and detail of responses received to all recent consultations outlines that stakeholders have engaged fully in the consultations, even though there have been restrictions in place.
17.1.2	The promotion of Children's Mental Health week the day after the announcement of our school closing highlighted the fact that we are still experiencing a global pandemic and children, families,	As above.

	teachers, and the wider community are finding it extremely tough right now let alone trying to find a way to actively consult when we are in lockdown for a fair process of openness and transparency.	
17.1.3	This is not the time to be closing schools in the middle of a pandemic.	As above.
17.1.4	What a time to try and close such a brilliant, hardworking school during a pandemic.	As above.
17.1.5	Why has this all been started in the middle of a pandemic? This consultation should not be taking place now. This should be taking place once life returns to something like normal.	As above.
17.1.6	We are in the middle of a pandemic and the children and families have had so much uncertainty and stress and change to deal with over the last year already, and now to propose this closure within the middle of all this, is frankly, absolutely disgusting.	As above.
17.1.7	How can you even contemplate starting this ridiculous proposal when we are in the middle of a Pandemic? It seems to me that this is why you have decided to do it now.	As above.
17.1.8	The announcement of the intended closure of Churchstoke and the three other schools involved, while the country is in a lockdown due to COVID, smacks a cynical attempt to get an unpopular move through while people are at least able to oppose it.	As above.
17.1.9	The proposed closure is coming at the wrong time. In the middle of a pandemic is not the time to be expecting people to see clearly and make informed decisions.	As above.
17.1.10	I am a concerned mum that feels anger and disappointment that you can take the heart from this community during a Global	As above.

	<p>pandemic. During this process you promised a fair consultation. Well if you believe this to be fair it is no wonder you are making such poor decisions regarding education.</p>	
17.1.11	<p>The timing of this proposal could not have come at a worse time. After the upheaval of home learning during lockdown and the stress that pupils, parents and teachers have experienced over the last 12 months. To now be faced with the school closure is truly shocking.</p>	As above.
17.1.12	<p>This is all happening within the middle of a pandemic, where children and families have been affected more than enough already – this will and is massively impacting on the mental health of all within the village.</p>	As above.
17.1.13	<p>In the Covid situation primaries will have supported children and families as they did in the Foot and Mouth epidemic. This is hardly the time to face parents and children with the trauma of school closure.</p>	As above.
17.1.14	<p>After a very tough year this is the last thing parents want to worry about!</p>	As above.
17.1.15	<p>I am concerned that consultations are taking place during the pandemic when public face-to-face meetings can't take place and some people are unable to use the internet and so may not have been able to feed into this consultation.</p>	As above.
17.1.16	<p>I do not think these consultation should take place in the middle of a pandemic. Our whole village needs to engage in this and as things are there can be no meetings where things can be discussed other than remote meetings. The children of this village have been through one of the most unsettling times of their young lives.</p>	As above.

17.1.17	In order to achieve a fair process it is essential we get our say and can ask questions, despite you continuing to consultation during a global pandemic and government restrictions.	As above.
17.1.18	It is certainly not a good time to even be considering school closure as we are in a pandemic when face to face public consultation is forbidden. Parents and children have undergone huge hardship and difficulties during the past year, with home schooling techniques told on the mental wellbeing of everyone. This added worry is something which the whole community could do without	As above.
17.1.19	I find it cruel that Phil Davies says and can I quote 'Staff at our schools have been through a big change as the council responds to the Covid-19 pandemic and I would like to thank them for their commitment during this extremely difficult period' Then retract that by threatening to close the school and leave these remarkable hardworking staff without a job. Its shameful to consider a school closure at this time and I among many have lost a lot of respect for the Powys council if the decision is made that the school is no longer needed.	As above.
17.1.20	This proposed action should have been postponed for at least 12 months. Likewise for the other schools involved. I have been reliably informed that there will be no consultation with parents, other than through this written process. I do not know why but is completely unacceptable as the parents and children of the school must have first say and their views must be respected. Have we lost sight of The Children Act 1989 – 'the needs of the child are paramount'? The views of the community also should have been able to be heard prior to this more formal consultation process.	As above. There is no requirement within the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code to hold public consultation meetings, and, in fact, the Council had moved away from this approach during the last round of school consultations.  A consultation meeting was held with the governors, staff and School Council. A children's version of the consultation document was also available for pupils. Minutes of the meeting with the School Council can be found on page 9.

17.1.21	We have had problems getting any response from Powys County Council due to the fact that staff are working from home due to COVID restrictions.	Comment noted. All Council staff are contactable even though they are working from home.
17.1.22	We were told at the start of the process that undertaking consultation during a pandemic would not affect the ability of the community to engage.	This is correct – the community has made its views known as can be seen in this Consultation Report.

## 17.2 Comments about consultation meetings

17.2.1	I find it hard to believe that you are not holding a meeting with all involved to discuss the reasons further for the closure of Churchstoke school.	<p>Covid regulations were in place during the consultation period, making it difficult to hold meetings with all stakeholders, and this is not a requirement of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code.</p> <p>However, consultation meetings were held with governors, staff and the School Council during the consultation on Microsoft Teams.</p>
17.2.2	I think you owe staff, parents but mainly the children a chance to discuss this with a meeting. The effect it is having on the pupils is devastating.	As above.
17.2.3	I put it to you that we have a meeting (via zoom/teams) to discuss these points further as I feel it is only fair so as to be able to hold a fair and transparent consultation period.	All stakeholders have been given the opportunity to express their views in this consultation, as evidenced in this Consultation Report.
17.2.4	Why couldn't PCC do a zoom or Microsoft teams call so that people could give their say if they weren't allowed face to face because of the virus.	There is no requirement within the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code to hold public consultation meetings, and, in fact, the Council had moved away from this approach during the last round of school consultations.

		A consultation meeting was held with the governors, staff and School Council. A children's version of the consultation document was also available for pupils. Minutes of the meeting with the School Council can be found on page 9.
17.2.5	We have not been given the chance of a public meeting, even via Zoom. This has caused so much upset and stress within our community, our families and our children, and to be honest I think you should be ashamed of yourselves.	As above.
17.2.6	Why have Powys County Council consistently refused to hold a public meeting, even virtually?	As above.
17.2.7	I am writing to request the date please for the prospective parent/ community meeting in regards to the closure of Churchstoke school?	As above.
17.2.8	I'm writing to ask when a meeting will be held for parents and the community to discuss the potential closure of the school and the catastrophic affect it will have on the school, the children and the community?	As above.
17.2.9	I was wondering when you are going to hold a public meeting (assuming via teams or zoom) for our community to enable a fair & transparent process?	As above.
17.2.10	In regards to the consultation process that has started to close Churchstoke school, I am wondering when there will be an open meeting to discuss this with the parents?	As above.
17.2.11	I am writing to you as a parent of two children currently attending Churchstoke County Primary School, which is currently under consultation to close, to enquire when the meeting between yourselves and the parents of the affected school children and community that was promised will actually be taking place?	As above.

17.2.12	I am writing to you as a parent of 2 children who currently attend Churchstoke school and another child who is due to start there this September. I'm writing to find out when the meeting will be between yourselves and parents.	As above.
17.2.13	Please can you let me know when a public meeting will be held for parents and members of the community regarding the consultation to close Churchstoke Primary School. Obviously I understand that during these unprecedented times this is difficult to do face to face but can something face to face virtually be set up with you so a public and transparent engagement can occur. We were assured this would happen even though the consultation is being held during a global pandemic, as it would in times pre COVID-19.	As above.
17.2.14	Please could you let me know when you will be holding a public meeting for the parents regarding the consultation to close Churchstoke Primary School. I understand a face to face meeting can't go ahead but will something virtually be set up? We were told this would happen even though consultation is being held during a global pandemic, as it would in times pre COVID-19.	As above.
17.2.15	This response [saying there will not be a meeting arranged for parents and the community to ask questions about the consultation] has left me in shock! We were promised a fair consultation and this in my eyes is completely unfair! We are at risk of our school closing and our community being ripped apart, yet you feel it's acceptable for us to be able to just respond! What about all the questions we have? Is our voice not important? It seems you just want to hear us but not actually listen. This hurts as we are just parents and community members wanting to do best by our community, our loved ones and our home.	As above.

17.2.16	I believe if times were different and covid was not making this battle harder then you would be considering a meeting.	As above.
17.2.17	And how about a community meeting like other schools under "consultation" had?	As above.
17.2.18	Powys are also supposed to do a public meeting so they can hear the concerns of the parents and local community regarding closing the school Powys have refused to facilitate any form of meeting.	As above.
17.2.19	You have not given us a fair proposal and prevented us from speaking out in meetings.	As above.
17.2.20	Parents not being able to attend a public meeting (teams or zoom) A limited conversation with teachers and staff and governors and no consideration for making the community aware of the situation who do not contain access to internet.	As above.
17.2.21	I would urge the Local Authority to arrange a meeting with the School's Governing Body and Community Leaders before any final decision is made regarding the school's future.	As above.
17.2.22	My worries have been proved correct after the 1 ½ hour teams meeting we were allowed with the transformation team, where we couldn't even ask all of the questions we had. Also, the lack of engagement with our playgroup (Churchstoke Little Explorers), parents and community. The community have questions that need answering to make informed decisions about the future impact. What came across in the meeting is that you simply do not have time as the transformation team are dealing with so many proposed changes in Powys which is clearly NOT engaging fully with communities affected as you stated when you started.	<p>The consultation meetings held with staff and governors included all relevant officers and wasn't a meeting with the Schools Transformation Team.</p> <p>A meeting took place with Churchstoke Little Explorers but this wasn't a formal consultation meeting.</p>

### 17.3 Comments about consultation with parents

17.3.1	Parent consultation is essential.	Consultation with parents was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code. Parents have responded to the consultation and have made their views known.
17.3.2	No consultation with parents WHY? Covid cannot be blamed, if so then present proposal to close the school should also be postponed until covid is over and people can meet and obtain more up to date review. Makes sense.	As above.
17.3.3	I am disgusted that parents have not had a say. I really don't think the people who decided to close the school have any thought of how this has and will affect our young pupils, who have had the pandemic to deal with and the threat of moving to a new school. Powys "super" schools are not the answer - parents do not want this.	As above.
17.3.4	Under the RISKS section of the document it states that 'Engagement with parents to take place throughout the process'. This is not happening and I refer to my earlier statement where parents understand there will be no consultation process with them. How can this be the correct or indeed moral way to proceed. Surely the children and the parents are the most important people in this process. If the Council believes this is the correct solution for Churchstoke (rather than the best solution for the Council) then it must give valid reasons to gain the support of the parents and children. Without direct consultation this is not possible and leaves parents, in particular, with the view that the decision has been made and this is purely an exercise which the Council are required to go through.	As above.

17.3.5	On page 13 the Consultation Document says as a mitigating action "engagement with parents to take place throughout the process." Why is this not happening? Some other staff feel that peoples Human Rights are being infringed by Powys County Councils refusal to fully engage with the community over the decisions which affect them.	As above.
17.3.6	Why have Powys County Council consistently refused to engage with the wider community, including those directly affected by the proposed changes, such as parents and playgroup? The Consultation Document (p13) says that there will be engagement with parents throughout the process. Why then have you refused to meet with them as part of the consultation process?	As above.
17.3.7	How do our parents get answers to the questions which they have?	The Council is required to provide responses to issues raised during the consultation within this Consultation Report.

#### 17.4 Comments about consultation with pupils

17.4.1	Why have the children have been treated as an afterthought in the process? They barely get a mention in the document, except as data and the offer of a meeting with the School Council only right at the end of the consultation. Shows that their views are not as valuable. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child gives them the right to be treated fairly, how is this fair to leave them as the last in the process?	<p>A meeting with School Council's is a requirement of any school reorganisation proposal, and is not an afterthought. The Consultation Document and draft impact assessments include sections considering the impact on pupils.</p> <p>A children's version of the consultation document was also available for pupils, and the responses provided by pupils are noted on page 9.</p>
17.4.2	You should ask our children what they want for future of their school	As above.

## 17.5 Comments about consultation with the early years setting

17.5.1	PCC did not have the decency to inform the pre-school setting of the school entering a process to possibly close as they believe it won't be impacted.	The consultation document was sent to Churchstoke Little Explorers on 21 <sup>st</sup> April 2021. A response was received from the setting as part of this consultation.
17.5.2	You have not informed the pre-school of the consultation.	As above.
17.5.3	Have Little Explorers been consulted during this process?	As above.
17.5.4	You have also overlooked Churchstoke Little Explorers	As above.
17.5.5	As a setting that leases our building from you and also provide early years education on your behalf as a Local Authority we have been very dismayed to have no formal individual correspondence or personal communication regarding the closure of the school and how this affects us as a setting working on your behalf. What a shame we haven't been recognised as an important part in the transformation of education in Powys. We would very much welcome you to visit our setting and discuss your future plans for early years education and childcare in the Churchstoke area.	As above.
17.5.6	Churchstoke little explorers pre-school that rents a building of the school has had no communication of u at all.	As above.
17.5.7	Why have the County Council refused to hold a meeting with play group? Why have you not included Little Explorers in the consultation?	A meeting was held with Churchstoke Little Explorers however this wasn't a formal consultation meeting.
17.5.8	Why were Little Explorers not included in the consultation, and why will no one at Powys County Council answer the questions which they have?	As above.

17.5.9	I find it disgusting that you haven't spoken to Churchstoke Little Explorers, you say that it won't effect them but how can it not when they are on the same site???	As above.
17.5.10	We feel it is very important that our views and concerns at Churchstoke Little Explorers are heard.	As above.

### 17.6 Suggestion that people didn't know about the consultation

17.6.1	It's a good job that the campaign group has spread the word about what's happening I would have thought PCC would have things on social media and posters or leaflets or something but I haven't seen anything and it seems its been down to the community to give people information, especially those like my nan who wouldn't know how to work social media, the community have been amazing.	The Council publicised the consultation in the local press, on social media, posters were also put up in the village and an information video was also made. All stakeholders outlined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code were notified and sent a link to the consultation documentation.
17.6.2	I believe that the consultation process for or school has been a farce from the beginning. Powys, inline with their procedures for the consultation where supposed to inform members of the Churchstoke community. But as of yet they have not done this. Any information that has been handed out has been through the efforts of our Save the School campaign group. We have made signs, banners, leaflets and notice boards highlighting the plans that Powys have. The children have even recorded a song along with a video which has been viewed a lot on both facebook and Youtube.	As above.
17.6.3	All the parents like myself are confused to why Churchstoke primary hasn't been added to the consultation PCC website it seems really unfair that with the time given for the consultation that a lot of people wouldn't see it to have there say could you find out why this as happened.	As above. The consultation documents were published on the Council's webpage ( <a href="https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/10567/Churchstoke-C.P.-School">https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/10567/Churchstoke-C.P.-School</a> ) on 21 <sup>st</sup> April 2021.

17.6.4	Another concern I would like to address is Churchstoke CP school has not been added to the current consultation on at Powys County Council website even though the consultation started 5 days ago this is unfair as people in the community not directly linked to the school will be unaware of the consultation has begun, and we are limited to the number of days to respond to this consultation it is very unfair.	As above.
--------	---	-----------

### 17.7 Comments about visiting the school

17.7.1	No one has visited our school since a brief visit from Lynette Lovell in early March 2020. The school's current Challenge Advisor has never visited, and the most recent appropriate evidence is from Challenge Advisor visits in the 2018 to 2019 academic year (which found much in the way of good practise).	The present School Improvement Advisor has been linked to the school since September 2020, during which time, all support visits have been virtual. The Portfolio Holder for Education and Property visited the governing body at the school.
17.7.2	Have you ever visited Churchstoke? Have you seen the school and the new housing? Why not?	Officers of the Council have visited the school over many years.
17.7.3	Visit Churchstoke to see new houses & proposals.	Comment noted.
17.7.4	The council should visit the school to see the improvement that have been made to the school and pre school.	Comment noted.
17.7.5	Our children and community deserve better treatment than this from Powys CC. You cannot make these life changing decisions about a whole community from your Offices in Llandrindod Wells, without seeing first hand what is on offer in the school and the wider community.	Comment noted.
17.7.6	County Councillors should visit this school on a school day and see how busy, thriving and successful it is. You don't have to be an educator to see the obvious.	Comment noted.

17.7.7	Have they looked at planning records or visited the village during the preparation of the proposal?	Information about housing developments was considered in the development of this proposal, as outlined in the Consultation Document.
--------	---	--

### 17.8 Comments about the presumption against closing rural schools

17.8.1	The school organisation code clearly states: The code has a presumption for the non-closure of small schools and small schools are to remain open if at all possible. Therefore, you <b>MUST</b> adhere to the guidance given in the School Organisation Code! Keep Churchstoke school open.	<p>The Welsh Government's School Organisation Policy 2018 includes a section entitled: 1.8 Presumption against the closure of rural schools.</p> <p>This outlines the additional considerations that local authorities/proposers need to carry out when formulating and consulting on proposals related to rural schools.</p>
17.8.2	The School Organisation Code includes a presumption against closure of rural schools. Whilst I appreciate this does not mean a rural school cannot be closed, it does require that proposers must show they have considered federation as an alternative with a clear assessment undertaken of its merits and viability. However, the proposal to close Churchstoke CP School consultation document just says that this option has been discounted for us with no detailed analysis of this option. This, again, leaves the proposal to close our school open to judicial review.	The Council's approach is to consider options for federations/mergers within the local geographic vicinity. The nearest Powys school to Churchstoke is Montgomery C. in W. Primary School and, as it is not possible to federate a denominational school with a community school, this option was discounted.
17.8.3	Under the school organisation code, the council have to provide a very strong case for the closure of a small rural school, this document is not such one. It has been written using old data, inaccurate numbers and insufficient evidence.	The Council has complied with the legal process outlined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code.

### 17.9 Other comments about the process

17.9.1	Is this even legal?	The Council has complied with the legal process outlined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code.
17.9.2	The proposal to close Churchstoke CP School from 31 August 2022 as presented to Cabinet on 9 February is based on out of date data, incorrect data and completely misleading information which leaves it wide open to judicial review.	The data in the Churchstoke C.P School Consultation Document was correct at the time of writing and the data sources are referenced.
17.9.3	It feels like this has all been decided already behind closed doors without a chance for local people who will be affected to have a say.	No decisions have been made. Cabinet will consider this consultation report before making a further decision on the proposal.
17.9.4	It is felt that your decision has already been made.	As above.
17.9.5	My first comment is that from reading the consultation document it would appear the decision to close the school has already been made and this is purely a legal exercise.	As above.
17.9.6	The timing of the announcement of the plans and the consultation period (during Covid), the possible vested interests of the proponents of the suggestion (i.e. ownership of coach company with schools contracts) and the fact that annual savings through the closure will not be directly ploughed back into education all raise significant questions re motivations for the proposals.	The aim of the proposal is to improve learner entitlement and experience for all learners, and to provide equity across the system.  The Council confirms that there are no vested interest in this proposal.
17.9.7	As there seems to be an unfortunate overlap, between the start of this process and the planning permission/building works now happening in the village, further consideration is surely needed.	The Council is aware of the housing developments in the area.
17.9.8	I really hope that time will be taken to read each and every response you receive.	All responses are read.
17.9.9	Did the Council inform the developers, occupiers and proposed occupiers of the new houses? Did the planning officers take this proposal into consideration when granting planning permission?	All stakeholders that are listed in the Consultation Document received information about the consultation.

		If planning permissions for housing developments were granted prior to February 2021, then planning officers would not have been aware of this proposal.
17.9.10	The way you have approached this consultation has not treated us fairly as members of our community, you allow us to respond to the consultation but give us no opportunity to really engage. Letting us speak but not really be heard!	All issues raised during the consultation are included within this consultation report.

## 18. COMMENTS ABOUT THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENTATION

### 18.1 Data

18.1.1	Pupil numbers stated in the document are incorrect, they're not set to decrease over the next 5 years as stated. In fact by September 2022 we are due to have 52 children on roll.	The data in the Churchstoke C.P. School Consultation Document was correct at the time of writing and the data sources are referenced.
18.1.2	Pupil numbers stated in the consultation document are incorrect; they're not set to decrease over the next 5 years as stated. In fact, by September 2022 the school is due to have 52 children on roll not the 21 stated in the document. Numbers are set to continue to rise to at least 58 by 2025. This figure does not take into account possible increase in pupil numbers due to the new housing developments currently taking place in the village.	As above.
18.1.3	The predictions for future pupil numbers are incorrect, it was stated that there would be 22 pupils in the school in January 2021, there are in fact 38 pupils on role. Accurate predictions, taking into account birth rates from all surgeries used by the residents and current population numbers should be in the region of 53 pupils on role by September 2022 and rising. For	As above.

	information this does not include the potential for additional pupils from new housing development.	
18.1.4	The figures you are using for the consultation are for less pupils than we actually have in school and are not for the 52 pupils which we know would be coming to the school in September 2022. This is very misleading for people looking at the consultation papers, if it wasn't for the community sifting through and giving the correct figures would they be considered at all?	As above.
18.1.5	My first comment is that the authors of the report that was published in February had not bothered to check with the headmaster to check on numbers before submitting the report. The school numbers have increased by at least 10 so figures given were inaccurate.	The data in the Churchstoke C.P. School Consultation Document was correct at the time of writing and the data sources are referenced.  There are currently 39 pupils on roll at the school.
18.1.6	Powys say in the consultation document that we have 36 pupils attending the school, where in fact we have 38 pupils. We also have 19 children in preschool who will also attend Churchstoke school.... Our School is growing!	As above.
18.1.7	The proposal to close Churchstoke CP School consultation document states that the number of pupils at the school is currently 36 and that 'they are not expected to increase significantly for the foreseeable future'. I strongly challenge this statement.	The Council acknowledges that pupil numbers are increasing, but this is not a significant increase according to the finance projections in the Consultation Document.
18.1.8	Create an updated and more accurate forecast of pupil numbers over the next five years with more houses in the village being built.	The data in the Consultation Document was correct at the time of writing and the data sources are referenced.  Whilst Powys' projections do not include housing developments, the Council notes the comments about

		the current and planned housing developments, not only in Churchstoke but also in the wider area.
18.1.9	The pre-school (run on the site of the school) has 22 children currently attending, we are able to provide accurate figures for the next at least 3 upcoming years of intake for the school.	Comment noted.
18.1.10	The surplus capacity of the school will automatically decrease with the increase in pupil numbers; surplus capacity at the school is currently 47% not 50% as stated in the consultation document. This will reduce again to 27 % by September 2022 and below 19% by 2025.	The Council recognises that surplus places at the school will decrease as pupil numbers increase.
18.1.11	The cost per pupil figures quoted in the consultation document are historic, based on old pupil numbers. The predicted figure for Sept 22 is £4600, very close to the Powys average.	<p>The cost per pupil at Churchstoke C.P. School according to the Council's Section 52 Budget Statement is as follows:</p> <p><u>2020/2021</u> Churchstoke C.P. School - £7,475 Powys Average: £4,264</p> <p><u>2021/2022</u> Churchstoke C.P. School - £6,932 Powys Average: £4,617</p> <p>It is not clear how the predicted figure of £4,600 has been calculated.</p>
18.1.12	As our pupil numbers are rising again it is estimated that our cost per pupil will be around £4600 per pupil which is close to the Powys average figure.	As above.

18.1.13	Churchstoke CP School's funding per pupil of £7,475 quoted in the consultation document based on a number on roll of 25 (January 2020) is also out of date. Churchstoke delegated budget share per pupil for 2021/22 based on a number on roll of 36 (November 2020), is £6,666 with a Powys average (Primary) of £4,641. Data for other Powys primary schools shows that a school of 49 on roll receives £5,244 per pupil, and a school of 71 on roll receives £4,369 per pupil (this is lower than the Powys average). Whilst I appreciate the funding formula is not wholly driven by numbers on roll, it is reasonable to expect similar per pupil funding for Churchstoke CP School in the future as our numbers grow.	<p>The cost per pupil at Churchstoke C.P. School according to the Council's Section 52 Budget Statement is as follows:</p> <p><u>2020/2021</u> Churchstoke C.P. School - £7,475 Powys Average: £4,264</p> <p><u>2021/2022</u> Churchstoke C.P. School - £6,932 Powys Average: £4,617</p> <p>As pupil numbers grow the cost per pupil tends to reduce.</p>
18.1.14	FSM at Churchstoke is underestimated in the consultation document and has actually increased dramatically since the completion of 23 social houses in the area. The percentage of FSM now stands at 29% a huge increase to the figures given in the document. Not only this but there has been a great increase in children with ALN also, 29% again a huge increase to their figures stated in the document.	The latest information from Teachers Centre (23/09/21) shows that 26.3% of pupils are eligible for FSM at Churchstoke C.P School and this has increased significantly since January 2020.
18.1.15	The figures for Free School Meals that they have used are wrong, being based on the PLASC data from January 2020. They have 8% (3 pupils) but our actual current FSM is 29%.	As above.
18.1.16	The Consultation Document, on page 48, says that Montgomery school currently has 0% FSM. Churchstoke has 29%. Is this figure for Montgomery correct, and if so what experience does Montgomery school have a meeting the needs of these vulnerable children? We have 29%, not 8% as stated in the consultation document.	The latest information from Teacher Centre (23/09/21) shows that there are no children eligible for free school meals at Montgomery Church in Wales Primary School. This school is able to meet the needs of other vulnerable groups of learners, therefore the council

		has no concern that the school would not be able to support these pupils.
18.1.17	On add page 40 of the proposal document it states that the admission number for Montgomery school is 21, but when applying for a school place on page 26 it shows the admission number for Montgomery is 17, meaning there is no room in every year group for our children.	<p>The Council accepts that there is an error on page 40 of the Consultation Document – the correct admission number for Montgomery C. in W. School is 17.</p> <p>The school has a capacity of 119 and there are currently 88 pupils on roll, meaning that there are 31 places available at the school.</p>
18.1.18	Why have you stated in the CD that Montgomery school has an admission number of 21 when your Admissions 2021/22 document referred to (Powys County Council Admission Arrangements and Information 2021/22] states that it is 17?	As above.
18.1.19	In the consultation document (p41) Projected pupil numbers for Shropshire schools include 'with housing' projections. Why have you not used 'with housing' projections for Churchstoke and Montgomery pupil projections? Similarly, on p42 why have you used current capacity data and not forecast capacity with new housing data? The inclusion of housing is obviously a key point for us PCC have not acknowledged the level of housing development, both in construction and planned. It is essential that any decision taken now must be fit for purpose in the longer term. Churchstoke is designated a large village in the LDP and is therefore prioritised for housing and economic development. In view of the significant housing developments in the area, why have Housing and Community Development not been engaged in the proposal? The fact that PCC have failed to engage Housing and Community Development is a failing in the document as they will have the plans to develop social housing across the county and therefore in Churchstoke (and	<p>Powys' projections do not include housing developments.</p> <p>The Council is aware of the current and planned housing developments in the area and information was supplied by the Housing Department and from the LDP.</p> <p>The Council acknowledges that a period of informal engagement with the school would have provided more local information.</p>

	Montgomery). That said, a simple query to planning would reveal both the fact that as a designated large village and with the current level of development / planning both community and therefore school are set to grow. Why did no one even talk to the school before drafting the proposal so that a lot of the inaccuracies and out of date information could have been corrected before issuing the documents? The process has been conducted as a remote paper exercise when local knowledge could have been obtained at the start.	
18.1.20	In the CD p25 why do Pupil numbers for some schools differ to those available via reference 8, despite at most a month difference in stated dates.	The information listed on the 'Get information about schools' service from GOV.UK is updated in line with Pupil Census requirements in England and will change at different viewpoints. All data was correct at the time of writing.
18.1.21	Why are some of the Shropshire data including income and cost per pupil figures incorrect when compared to the references?	As above.
18.1.22	Most of the Data used in this Consultation is either incorrect or out of date.	All data was correct at the time of writing and the sources are referenced.
18.1.23	Trying to close a school based on inaccurate and historical data is foolish.	As above.
18.1.24	Officers in the Council have access to current data but chose not to include it in the consultation document, opting instead to include out of date data to make their case for closure. This is underhand at best.	As above.
18.1.25	Why does the report have out of date information in it? With something this important you should do a better job. Did you cut and paste it – it's rubbish.	As above.
18.1.26	Why are the pupil numbers, the predictions of future numbers and the numbers for Additional Learning Needs and Free School	As above.

	Meals so out of date and inaccurate? The paper was produced this spring, so up to date numbers and details were easily available via Teacher Centre.	
18.1.27	Why have the transformation team continued to use out-of-date data in the Consultation Document in relation to Number on Roll, Free School Meals, funding per pupil, surplus places despite the fact they were quite clearly informed that the data has dramatically changed in the past year? Why have you chosen not to use current data? Why have data from sometimes Jan 2020, sometimes Nov 2020, but nothing up to date. We informed the Transformation Team of the deficiencies in their data at the initial meeting, but this has been completely ignored. The deficiencies in the data mean that the cabinet had been misled when they approved going forward with the proposal. There is no consistency in the data used (sometimes schools that have already been closed are included in cumulative data, but at other times they are excluded.)	As above.

## 18.2 Costings

18.2.1	In the Consultation Document (p27 / 28) - Is the funding formula saving of £61,000 based on 52 Churchstoke pupils at September 2022? If not then on how many? How many alternative schools for our children have been included in the formula calculations? We have repeatedly asked for details on how the calculation has been made but have not received the information requested. How much has the consultation process cost and, although it is a one off cost, why is this not included in the finance calculation? Does this include the cost of engaging lawyers and barristers if there is a legal challenge to any of the outcomes via Judicial Review?	<p>The formula funding saving included in the consultation document was based on the 39 funded pupils moving from Churchstoke CP School to Montgomery CinW school, as used in the 2020-21 funding formula. Had 52 pupils been used in the calculations, transferring from one school to another as above, the funding formula saving figure would not change.</p> <p>The pupil numbers projected by the school for September 2021 was 41 but actual pupil numbers were 38. The school's pupil number projections for</p>
--------	--	--

		<p>September 2022 as per the submitted and approved budget is 51 but these are yet to be confirmed.</p> <p>It was assumed that all pupils would go to Montgomery C. in W. Primary School. It is recognised that there isn't sufficient capacity for all the pupils from Churchstoke C.P. School at Montgomery C. in W. Primary School. However, it is highly likely that not all parents would choose Montgomery C. in W. Primary School if Churchstoke C.P. School closed.</p> <p>The costings do not include any legal costs. Savings estimates are based on the best information available at the time they are calculated and are subject to change for example due to changes in pupil numbers, parental choice, staff changes etc. The calculations are reviewed by a range of officers and sensitivity analysis is also carried out.</p> <p>The consultation process costs are minimal and are related to printing hard copies on request and postage.</p>
18.2.2	Your estimated transport costs are £19,000; our estimated transport costs are £76,000+.	<p>Free home-to-school transport is only provided to a pupils' nearest school if further than 2 miles away, therefore if a parent was to choose for their child(ren) to attend a school that isn't their nearest school, then the parent is responsible for getting the child(ren) to and from school.</p> <p>It was estimated that it would cost an additional £100 per day to transport the children that required the home</p>

		to school transport to Montgomery C. in W. Primary School on top of the current transport arrangements.  See also 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.
18.2.3	The transport costs used in the consultation document to calculate the £50,000 savings from closure of the school seem to be wildly underestimated. Under the proposal, the cost of transport for pupils has been factored in at an additional £19000 which is essentially an additional mini bus to the one already used by the school. However, if the proposal were to go ahead, pupils could reasonably decide to be educated at either Montgomery, Chirbury or Bishops Castle which are in three different directions. To utilize 2 mini bus to transport 30-50 pupils in three different directions does not seem feasible. Add to this the few pupils who currently attend Churchstoke CP School that would require specific transport requirements due to special needs and the possibility that some pupils may opt for other schools than the 3 listed above the additional (and more realistic) costs due to transport will wipe out the calculated savings from the closure.	See 18.2.3, 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.
18.2.4	The school transport costs are also grossly underestimated at £19000; after consulting a bus company, they quoted a cost of around £10 per pupil per day. 190 days of school attendance. £1900 per pupil per year 38 pupils=£72200 also not in the document is the cost of transport of the 20 pupils travelling to Shropshire schools, which PCC will have to pay transport for as their schools will become the closest schools if Churchstoke closes. 20 pupils at 1900=£3800 transport being nearer £110000 all going against PCC active transport policy and low carbon policy Churchstoke is a fast-developing village with 26 houses just built with 16 school children living there.	See 18.2.3, 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.

18.2.5	<p>Powys have also vastly underestimated the transport costs for getting the pupils who will be in the school in September 2022 to their new schools. Their assumption is that all pupils will travel to the same school but they have not accepted the fact there are at least three different nearest available schools to get the pupils too from different parts of the church stoke catchment. On top of this there would be the need for designated taxi provision for some pupils with ALN who could not use normal school transport. In addition, there are at least 21 children resident in the village who already travel to Shropshire for their primary school education, and, if Churchstoke word to close, Powys County Council would have to provide free transport for them as their current school would become the nearest available school to their home. Powys Are in fact looking at having to provide free transport to as many as 73 children to three different schools in September 2022, including two in Shropshire. This simply cannot be done for the figure quoted in the consultation document (an additional £19,000 above current costs). the real figure would be at least £76,000 extra, not including the ALN costs, and would probably be higher. The costs involved with transport would wipe out the indicated savings and there would be no revenue savings to the council. Quite the opposite, it would cost the council a considerable amount of money every year if they closed the school and the amount is only going to increase as pupil numbers rise.</p>	See 18.2.3, 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.
18.2.6	<p>The additional costs of transport if Churchstoke School closed are quoted in the consultation document as being £19,000 per annum. Powys' Finance Officer has confirmed this is based on 25 pupils being transported to Montgomery Primary School. This figure has been hugely underestimated. In September 2022 (the point the school would close) transport would be required for 52 pupils from Churchstoke CP School to several alternative schools</p>	See 18.2.3, 10.2.1, 10.2.3 and 10.2.17.

	(as there is not enough capacity in Montgomery for all of our children) PLUS around 25 primary age children who currently live in the Churchstoke catchment but for reasons such as parents' work and family support choose to take their child to neighbouring schools (mainly Bishop's Castle Primary and Chirbury Primary schools in England). If Churchstoke CP School closes, in many cases these neighbouring schools become the child's closest school and so the Council would be responsible for picking up the transport costs for these pupils too.	
18.2.7	By September 2022 there will be 52 pupils (these a 'named children' as they are in the village now!) All of these will have to be transported to their schools at no cost by PCC in addition to those residing in the catchment who choose other schools at present (Circa 20) PCC indicate a cost of £100 per pupil per day so this transport would cost over £1m per school year.	The number of pupils predicted for September 2022 as per the budget approved by the Governing Body and submitted to the authority is 41.  See 18.2.3.
18.2.8	The Council will save the cost of running costs the school but there will be redundancy costs to factor in and all the administrative costs.	Comment noted.

### 18.3 Comments about the Strategic Context

18.3.1	The 2019 Powys LA Estyn inspection report is being quoted as the source of closure issues, but the only recommendations around organisation of provision is non maintained, post 16, Welsh medium education and secondary education. Not maintained by primary schools. The report talks about rationalisation, but not wholesale closure, and the focus is secondary schools, not primary. The closure of rural primary schools is not an Estyn recommendation.	The Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys was developed as a response to Estyn's criticism of the Council. However, it was also shaped by a significant engagement exercise which developed the Case for Change. This concluded that the Council has too many small schools with concern about inequity across the sector.
--------	--	---

#### 18.4 Comments about ‘Why change is needed in Churchstoke?’

18.4.1	Leadership of the school is challenged by implication, and that it is stated that in the alternative school the head teacher would have more non-contact time and suggested that the school would be better managed as a result. What evidence do you have that this reduces the workload (as there are more pupils and staff to manage therefore more heads to deal with and higher workload) and what evidence do they have that there is a problem with leadership and management at Churchstoke.	The School Improvement Team works with a range of schools across Powys. The schools where the headteacher has dedicated leadership time and a limited teaching commitment have more time to focus on leadership and management issues in their school.
18.4.2	If the building is in poor condition this is the responsibility of the Council since it owns the building and would benefit from the closure and subsequent sale. On reading through the Consultation Document none of the proposed alternative schools are in better condition than Churchstoke	The Council recognises that the quality of accommodation at the alternative schools named in the document are the same standard as Churchstoke C.P. School.
18.4.3	In the consultation document on page 9 it states that the building of Churchstoke County primary school is band C which is poor, and yet the alternative is to send the children to another school which is also in the same building condition? How is this improving learner entitlement and provision?	The Council recognises that the condition grading of Montgomery C. in W. Primary School is the same as that for Churchstoke C.P. School. However, improving learner entitlement and provision refers to the fact that pupils would transfer to a larger school and the benefits of a larger school are described elsewhere in this report.
18.4.4	To enable pupils to attend schools with better quality accommodation. CCC believes this is simply not the case, as the school identified to receive Churchstoke pupils is in the same category as Churchstoke School as regards building condition. These alternative schools have accommodation the rated as the same as Churchstoke School.	The Council recognises that the quality of accommodation at the alternative schools named in the document are the same standard as Churchstoke C.P. School.

#### 18.5 Comments about the reasons for the proposal

18.5.1	<p>To specify the first reason to close Churchstoke as ‘would address the low numbers’ is no reason at all. Whilst I appreciate the need for every school to do its best to be financially viable, cost alone cannot be the reason.</p>	<p>Low pupil numbers has been identified as a challenge for Churchstoke C.P. School and, if the school closed, then the issue of low pupil numbers would be addressed.</p> <p>The aim of the proposal is to improve entitlement and experience for all learners. As stated in the Council’s Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-30, the Council faces a challenge due to the high proportion of small schools in the county and the lack of equity amongst schools. Churchstoke C.P. School teaches children in two classes of mixed aged groups. With such low pupil numbers the teacher-pupil ratio is notably different to many other schools in the area, and due to the Council’s funding formula, the school’s funding per pupil is higher than the Council’s average. This does not provide equity across the education system – teachers in larger schools are required to provide the same education as smaller schools for less funding per pupil. Powys’ Strategy is intended to improve equity across the education system and to ensure an improvement for every pupil’s learning entitlement and experience.</p>
18.5.2	<p>To reduce the Council’s overall surplus capacity in primary schools - You must maintain some surplus capacity for any new pupils and anyway, the primary importance is to maintain a local presence, to maintain local schools as a part of the community. We are seeing the gradual destruction of local villages. The Post Offices are closing, churches are being closed (for the same reason as being “unviable”)</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>

18.5.3	To provide a revenue saving to the Council I suggest this is what it is all about. I understand the need for councils to control an ever shrinking budget but education is critical. The need to maintain our local communities is critical otherwise you will only be left with a homogeneous region with no identity.	The driver for the Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys is equity of educational provision across the authority, to improve learner entitlement and improve best learning outcomes/education, not solely to save money.  Closing the school would provide a revenue saving to the Council in terms of the overall schools budget.
18.5.4	To enable pupils to be taught in classes with peers of similar ages - This is not a problem (the teachers are perhaps better qualified to comment on that) mixing classes stretch the younger pupils	The Council's view is that there are challenges in delivering education in very small schools, as noted in 4.1.2.
18.5.5	To enable pupils to attend schools with better quality accommodation. I doubt if they see it like that. Has anyone asked them where they would like to go to school?	The Council recognises that the quality of accommodation at the alternative schools named in the document are the same standard as Churchstoke C.P. School.  The Council has consulted with pupils and their views have been recorded in this consultation report.
18.5.6	The Consultation Document on p11 states 'pupils would attend schools with better quality accommodation' but Montgomery School's building condition is also rated as 'Poor'. Can you explain how it is better accommodation than Churchstoke's building? Both Churchstoke and Montgomery have identical building ratings for condition (C) and suitability (B/C). The report used so outdated that we have had had our new disabled entrance and disabled facilities built.	As above.  The Council commissioned a new condition survey in 2020 which concluded that the school's overall condition was a C-. This survey did not consider suitability therefore was not included in the Consultation Document. Other schools named in the document have not yet received an updated condition assessment, therefore the 2009 data was used for all schools, including Churchstoke C.P. School.
18.5.7	Looking at the advantages and disadvantages table on page 12 of the consultation document, it has been stated that closure of the	Due to the low number of pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School, the Council's view is that the impact on other

<p>school would have a minimal impact on any other school, where is the evidence for this? Churchstoke County Primary school has 32% FSM (free school meals) the alternative school Montgomery has 0% FSM, how would this rise in FSM not impact other schools that are not, nor their community prepared and supported for this? It also states that there is a 'possible loss of early years provision on the Churchstoke School site' this is not a possible, this would be a definite. Little explores shares its facilities with the school, closing the school would mean that parents who do not drive would not be able to send their children to Pre school, and if Powys offers transport for pre school, this takes away from whatever estimates in savings (£50,000) Powys were hoping to make.</p>	<p>schools would be minimal. Montgomery C. in W. Primary School is able to meet the needs of other vulnerable groups of learners, therefore the Council has no concern that the school would not be able to support pupils eligible for free school meals.</p> <p>The Council recognises that there could be an impact on Churchstoke Little Explorers should the school close.</p>
---	---

## 18.6 Options considered

18.6.1	<p>The consultation document states that the federation option was discounted because there are no other CP schools in the vicinity. There are in fact 3 CP schools under 10 miles away from Churchstoke, and 6 more within 15. Whilst there are many examples of successful federations covering distances between schools greater than 10 miles in Shropshire, the Carno, Llanbrynmair and Glantwymyn federation is an example in Powys. The distance between Carno and Glantwymyn is greater than 10 miles. Do you not see this as a successful federation in Powys? Can we have evidence of why federation has been discounted as an option for us, as in our opinion, and that of others who are advising us, this is in contravention of the School Organisation Code?</p> <p>The 3 schools within 10 miles are Berriew, Leighton and Abermule. The 5 further are Guilsfield, Trewern, Maesyrrhandir,</p>	<p>When considering options for schools, the Council considers schools in close geographic proximity, and the closest Powys school to Churchstoke is Montgomery C. in W. School. It is not legally possible to federate a denominational school and a community school and therefore federation options were not considered.</p> <p>Carno, Llanbrynmair and Glantwymyn federation was proposed by the schools themselves following a review of schools in the catchment area, although the Council was supportive. These three schools are neighbouring schools within the same geographic locality.</p>
--------	---	--

	Hafren, treowen, Pengloddfa. The School Organisation Code states both that there must be a strong reason for closure and that all other options, including federation, must be properly considered. We have no evidence that this has been done.	Whilst there would be some benefits to federating Churchstoke C.P. School and another C.P School, this alone would not address all the challenges facing the school, as outlined in the Consultation Document. The school would continue to have low pupil numbers, a high cost per pupil, building condition issues. Federation may improve leadership at the school, but the headteacher arrangements would be a decision for the federation's governing body.
18.6.2	The School Organisation Code says that federation with local schools must be considered. This appears to have been blatantly overlooked as it has been said that there are no schools to which Churchstoke could federate with. Quite the contrary, Leighton, Berriew, and Abermule are all within 10 miles so would be ideal for federation	As above.

## 18.7 SWOTs

18.7.1	In the consultation document (p50) why does the SWOT analysis say that Option 1 - continue as we are - would not reduce surplus places? It stands to reason that as our numbers grow our surplus places reduce. Why does the same table also state that Option 1 would not address the high budget per pupil? Again, it stands to reason that as our numbers grow our funding per pupil reduces. Can you explain your statements? How many surplus places are there in the new Welshpool C in W school and in the planned Ysgoll Gymraeg y Trallwng, and how does this fit in with the aim of reducing surplus places in Powys primary schools?	The SWOT analysis was based on the birth rate pupil projections which shows that pupil numbers are projected to decrease therefore the reasoning was that the status quo would not address surplus places or high budget per pupil.  The new schools in Welshpool have a high number of surplus places in order to ensure space for future growth.
18.7.2	In the consultation document, on page 50, both Option 3 and Option 4 state as a weakness that Churchstoke pupils would still	'Churchstoke pupils would still be taught separately' refers to the fact that with Option 3 and Option 4, pupils

	be taught separately. Can you explain why this is a weakness? Is there any problem with teaching and provision at Churchstoke, and if so why have we not been told about it?	would continue to be taught in 2 mixed age classes of four years. The Council's view about the challenge that gives teachers is outlined in previous sections of this document.  Section 1.2 of this report outlines the Council's views about the quality of education at Churchstoke C.P. School.
18.7.3	In the Consultation Document, on page 52 option five states as its strengths 'pupils would be taught in classes with similar ages'. pupils are taught in classes with similar ages in Churchstoke and we teach on ability rather than just age, which we argue is easier to deal with mixed ages. Can you explain how alternative Powys schools, teaching in age groups, provides a better education for our children and what evidence do you have for the statement.	As above.
18.7.4	In the Consultation Document, on p52 - Can you explain why you have not included in Option 5 weaknesses "there would be no access to CP locally? You mentioned it in Option 4.	The Council accepts that 'there would be no access to CP locally' should have been included as a weakness in Option 5 as well as Option 4.
18.7.5	There appears to be selectivity when the strengths and weaknesses have been selected, one which suits the picture PCC want to paint.	The SWOTs have been developed in a completely objective manner.

## 18.8 Risks

18.8.1	The risk table on pg 13 of the consultation document identifies the risk of insufficient capacity in nearest schools as medium however the likelihood is actually closer to high as there is documented development and planning permission in both Montgomery,	Comment noted.
--------	---	----------------

	Chirbury and Bishops Castle which has not been factored into the capacity numbers of the table on pg 24/ 25.	
18.8.2	The document states that there is a medium risk of insufficient capacity at local alternative provision, so children would be transported to several schools. What kind of scattergun approach is this? How does that support learner entitlement and experience? How does that ensure 'high-quality, inspiring education'? Are siblings going to end up at different schools? If children are unhappy at school, they will not learn.	The proposal is to close Churchstoke C.P. School and for pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys. For the majority of pupils in Churchstoke, the nearest school in Powys would be Montgomery C. in W. Primary School.
18.8.3	The second risk of parents wanting to take their children to Shropshire instead of Powys is again medium, when it should actually be high, as the majority of parents surveyed have stated that they would take their children to Shropshire, a very small portion would go to Powys, this would impact significantly on the transportation costs, estimates of one bus would not be accurate and Powys would be needing at least 3 buses to transport children out of county, not including the SEN children at the school who require one to one support. This would also impact heavily on the experience of the Welsh language and culture in the area.	Comment noted.

### 18.9 Other comments suggesting there are inaccuracies in the document

18.9.1	It's completely outrageous that you have been able to produce such a document that does not even contain factual and truthful information. I am aware these areas have been brought to your attention however you have chosen not to amend your document are therefore this cannot be classed as a FAIR consultation.	The Consultation Document complies fully with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code. All data was correct at the time of writing and the sources are referenced.
--------	---	--

	Welsh Government and Powys promise to attempt every possible alternative before even considering closure however this has been dismissed and your possible options drawn up within this document that is based on fiction not FACTS	
--	---	--

### 18.10 Other comments about the consultation document

18.10.1	In the consultation document, it states that closure of the school "would not directly affect the early years provision" I'm afraid I would have to disagree with you there! have you visited our site? do you know our set up? I would suggest not, as we currently are open 5 days a week and we share facilities with the school such as: Going to school each day for dinner (this gives children the chance to be provided with a hot, freshly cooked meal); Have access to their disabled toilets; Share the Schools 'staff toilets'; We also use the school grounds to be able to carry out forest school activities.	The Council has recognised in the draft Community Impact Assessment that there could be an impact on early years provision in Churchstoke should Churchstoke C.P. School close. This will be updated to include information gathered during consultation.
18.10.2	The proposal to close Churchstoke CP School consultation document states that the closure of the school 'would not directly affect the early years' provision'. This is completely untrue. Little Explorers is currently at capacity with 22 children attending. It is situated on the school grounds and shares dining facilities and staff toilets with the school as well as outdoor space. Closing the school will result in the inevitable closure of the pre-school which has developed significantly over recent years to be the high quality, much valued provision that it is today.	As above.
18.10.3	I also note that the consultation documents highlight 'implementation of the proposal to close the school would not directly affect the early years provision which is available on site, it is possible that this could impact on the provision's viability in	As above.

	the longer term.' As there is no local equivalent space for the childcare setting and that a proposed benefit to Powys is the capital derived from the sale of the school estate, it does seem inevitable that there will be a direct impact on the early years setting at some point.	
18.10.4	You state "if the school was to close pupils would be attending schools better equipped to meet the requirements of the national curriculum", although your consultation document confirms that the schools proposed for our children to transfer to, are no better equipped in this regard.	Teachers with no or low teaching commitments have more dedicated leadership time than that available to the headteacher of Churchstoke C.P. School, who has a high teaching commitment. Therefore, they are able to plan for changes, such as Curriculum for Wales, the ALN Act and organise monitoring processes for the school around their leadership time. They are also able to release other staff to conduct monitoring and take part in professional learning, in line with their leadership responsibilities. This is much more difficult for a headteacher with a high teaching commitment.
18.10.5	The Consultation Document states (p6) that closing our school will improve learner entitlement and experience. Could you please detail what improvements we would see and provide evidence of better outcomes for our children? Without evidence this is just opinion. Do those writing the proposal or making the decision have evidence or any understanding of standards in Churchstoke, and to what depth. Even our challenge adviser has never visited the school. What input has there been to the consultation document from Challenge Advisors? Who provided the information which informed this statement, and where did they get their information from?	As above.  All school reorganisation proposals, including this one, are developed with significant input from the Challenge Advisors and using evidence from the termly reports.
18.10.6	On page 8 of the Consultation Document it states that closing our school will improve learner entitlement and experience. Can	Teachers with no, or low, teaching commitments have more dedicated leadership time than that available to

	<p>you detail what improvements we will see and provide evidence of better outcomes for our children? What evidence for provision or standards in Churchstoke are they using? What schools are they comparing this to, and how was that evidence obtained? What for instance, is Montgomery offering above and beyond what we detailed in the impact assessment questionnaire? Or is this just a sweeping opinion statement, based on no evidence whatsoever? When we produce self evaluation documentation, we have to back up all of our statements with evidence. Why is this not the same for the closure proposals?</p>	<p>the Headteacher of Churchstoke C.P. School, who has a high teaching commitment. Therefore, they are able to plan for changes, such as Curriculum for Wales and the ALN Act, and organise monitoring processes for the school around their leadership time. They are also able to release other staff to conduct monitoring and take part in professional learning, in line with their leadership responsibilities. This is much more difficult for a Headteacher with a high teaching commitment.</p>
18.10.7	<p>On page 10 of the consultation document states “because pupil numbers in each year group are small, it is more difficult to ensure pupils are appropriately challenged.” Can you explain the evidence behind this statement? Or is this just a sweeping opinion statement, based on no evidence whatsoever? When we produce self evaluation documentation, we have to back up all of our statements with evidence. Why is this not the same for the closure proposals?</p>	<p>Non-teaching headteachers have more dedicated leadership time due to their not having a class responsibility. Therefore, they are able to organise monitoring processes for the school around their leadership time. They are also able to release other staff to conduct monitoring, in line with their leadership responsibilities. This is much more difficult for a headteacher with a high teaching commitment such as the headteacher at Churchstoke C.P. School.</p>
18.10.8	<p>The Consultation Document (p18] states ‘alternative CP provision is available within 10 miles’. Will you provide free transport to these schools bearing in mind you are depriving parents of any choice closer than this. The Powys Transport policy says no! If these CP schools are too far away for us to federate with, why are you saying that it is appropriate for our children to travel to these schools on a daily basis?</p>	<p>It is factually correct that alternative C.P. provision is available within ten miles of Churchstoke C.P. School. However, free home-to-school transport would only be provided to the child’s nearest alternative school in Powys, and in the case of the majority of Churchstoke pupils, this would be Montgomery C. in W. Primary School.</p>
18.10.9	<p>On page 18 of the consultation document states that larger schools ‘have an improved ability to monitor pupil progress.’ Can you explain why this is and what evidence you have for that statement? Or is this just a sweeping opinion statement, based</p>	<p>Non-teaching headteachers have more dedicated leadership time due to their not having a class responsibility. Therefore, they are able to organise monitoring processes for the school around their</p>

	on no evidence whatsoever? When we produce self evaluation documentation, we have to back up all of our statements with evidence. Why is this not the same for the closure proposals?	leadership time. They are also able to release other staff to conduct monitoring, in line with their leadership responsibilities. This is much more difficult for a headteacher with a high teaching commitment such as the headteacher at Churchstoke C.P. School.
18.10.10	On page 20 the consultation document states that Montgomery school would be better placed to develop provision which meets the requirements of the new curriculum. Can you explain why and what evidence you have for that statement? Or is this just a sweeping opinion statement, based on no evidence whatsoever? When we produce self evaluation documentation, we have to back up all of our statements with evidence. Why is this not the same for the closure proposals?	See above.  Revisiting the four purposes and forming a vision for Curriculum for Wales remain a priority for the school (June 2021).
18.10.11	It is stated that the total number of pupils attending Churchstoke is relatively small, and transfer would not have a significant impact on nearby primary schools in Powys. What about if the pupils moving in fill all available spaces in a year group up to the admissions number in Montgomery, then further families arrive in Montgomery? How would those pupils be accommodated?	Should Churchstoke C.P. close and Montgomery C. in W. Primary School becomes the nearest Powys school for Churchstoke pupils, then they would automatically be included within the catchment area of Montgomery C. in W. Primary School. All applications for places at the school would be treated equally. If the school becomes over-subscribed, then the Council would consider applications based on the over-subscription criteria in the Council's Admissions Policy.
18.10.12	The Consultation Document, on page 22 says that the children will have access to additional resources at the alternative schools. What are the additional resources that our children will have access to at alternative schools that they don't have access to at Churchstoke School? Again, another sweeping statement backed by absolutely no evidence. What is it that we are lacking in Churchstoke? Can they guarantee additional	As 18.10.4

	resources, regardless of which Powys school the children end up in?	
18.10.13	On p23 regarding vulnerable groups the Consultation Document states that 'in the short term these pupils would need to transfer to alternative schools'. What is meant by this? Exactly what is meant by "in the short term"? How long is "the short term"? How many alternative schools? All these alternative schools to their peers, or the same alternative schools that their peers would be attending? Are the alternative schools suitable to meet their needs?	<p>The reference to short-term in the context of the impact on vulnerable groups is meant to express that the impact would be short-term as pupils would be supported in their transition to alternative schools, therefore it is not expected that the impact of change would be long-term.</p> <p>The term 'alternative schools' refers to those schools outlined in the Consultation Document and reflects that parents have the right to choose any school for their child(ren).</p> <p>The Council does not have any concern that any of the alternative schools would be able to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with ALN.</p>
18.10.14	Regarding vulnerable groups, the consultation document states on page 23 that 'in the short term these pupils would need to transfer to alternative schools'. Do you mean that they would not go to the same school as their peers? I suspect that this is just badly worded, and means that just like their peers they would have to go to alternatives to Churchstoke.	As above.
18.10.15	Why is the section on future need / demand in the area for additional places on p26 of the Consultation Document (section iv) so inadequate? Quote: "Pupil numbers in Churchstoke CP School are low, however it is acknowledged that some increases had been seen in pupil numbers recently, as a result of new housing developments in the village. The Council's latest projected pupil figures for the school suggests that pupil	The Council recognises that there are significant housing developments in the area and accepts that this could impact on pupil numbers.

	<p>numbers at the school are not expected to increase significantly over the coming years, however it is possible that further housing developments planned for the village will lead to an increase in the demand for places in the area". Where is the analysis of housing development in the area and surrounding areas? The "some increase" is in fact a 52% increase, from 22 to 38. The housing developments are not yet finished. On top of the "some increase" they allow, there are at least another 100 houses to come (that's just Chalky's, the County Council site and Delves' opposite, and at the bottom and top of Hall Bank. There are others.) in other words nearly 4 times as many as we have seen so far. In view of the planning allowed PCC must be aware that the statement about pupil numbers not being expected to increase significantly is simply not true.</p>	
18.10.16	<p>When it comes to the Equality Act 2010 why have you not answered the question 17 (v) on p26, which states "will the proposal improve access for disabled pupils in accordance with the Equality Act 2010"? Is it because the simple answer is no? The statement made does not answer the question "will it improve access." Which schools are fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and which partially? Specifically is Montgomery fully or partially compliant? Will Montgomery be able to properly accommodate our disabled pupils? What about the Shropshire schools, which are not included in this section at all. Was any inquiry made to Shropshire County Council to check on this?</p> <p>Why is the impact on those with disabilities assessed as neutral in the impact assessment, when the Consultation Document states that some of the other schools are only partially compliant with the Equality Act? What about the impact of additional travel</p>	<p>Montgomery C. in W. School is partially compliant with the Equality Act 2010.</p>

	on those with disabilities? This has to be a negative impact, not neutral.	
18.10.17	The following question is included in the consultation document 'Will the proposals Improve access for disabled pupils in accordance with requirements under the Equality Act 2010?', given Churchstoke is compliant, and the consultation document has stated that the alternative schools are 'either compliant, or partially compliant', why has this question not been answered? Is it because the answer is 'No, the proposals will not improve access but potentially inhibit access.'?	As above.
18.10.18	The majority of our children currently walk or cycle to school. Is it better for children to walk to school, or is it better for them to go by bus? On page 29 of the consultation document you state that it is unlikely that walking or cycling to alternative schools would be possible. How is it 'unlikely'? How much research has been done on safe routes to alternative schools (on foot, by bike, or by vehicle), as even the slightest local knowledge would tell you that there are no safe routes possible on foot or bike, and access to Montgomery is poor. How does closing our school and transporting 52 plus children by bus or other vehicle to school every day fit with the Council sustainable environment plans? How does the proposal contribute to fighting climate change? What sort of transport would be provided to safely take a lot of 4-5 year olds to school every day? Would they have a chaperone? What about booster seats?	<p>The Council has used the term 'unlikely' to reflect the fact that the majority of children currently walk or cycle to school, and not <b>all</b> pupils currently walk or cycle to school.</p> <p>Officers have discussed travel and transport issues with the Council's Transport Unit, who have supplied information about routes.</p> <p>The Council has recognised in the draft Impact Assessments that there would be a potential negative impact on the environment due to the additional travel.</p> <p>Pupils would be accommodated on appropriate transport in line with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy. There is no requirement for booster seats on coaches. The Council does not provide supervision on Home-to-School Transport.</p>
18.10.18	It is also stated that pupil well being is better in larger schools. What evidence do you have for this?	The wellbeing of pupils is not dictated by the size of the school, rather than by the systems and processes

		in place to support pupils' wellbeing. Larger schools generally have greater capacity for professional development to train staff in specific wellbeing programmes, and also, to monitor and track pupil wellbeing.
18.10.19	The map provided in the consultation document omits most of the catchment, including important border areas. Why does it not show the location of all the nearest alternative schools? Bishops Castle is not shown at all yet is the closest to the east side of the catchment, nor are the other neighbouring CP schools named in the impact assessment.	The Council accepts that the map does not show all the schools in the vicinity.
18.10.20	The map in the Consultation Document omits most of the school catchment and most of the named possible receiving schools.	As above.
18.10.21	The consultation paper contradicts itself in many cases e.g. nothing to do about saving money it states, yet money saving is main concern, regarding pupil costs and selling off the school site will save money	<p>The Council is proposing to close Churchstoke C.P. School for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To address the issue of low pupil numbers</li> <li>• To reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools</li> <li>• To provide a revenue saving to the Council</li> <li>• To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities</li> <li>• To enable pupils to be taught in classes with peers of similar ages</li> <li>• To enable pupils to attend schools with better quality accommodation</li> <li>• To enable pupils to continue to access provision in Powys</li> </ul>

18.10.22	The Consultation Document states “Churchstoke CP School is not currently forecasting a cumulative deficit budget”. Could you not think of a more negative way to say “The school has a balanced budget”?	Comment noted.
18.10.23	There are two major flaws in the reasoning given in the consultation document: 1) it acknowledges the current growth in housing in Churchstoke, but then ignores the possibility of a resulting growth in pupil numbers, 2) it states that there are no other local CP schools with which Churchstoke could federate, but then says there ARE local CP school options which would not be too far for Churchstoke pupils to travel to.	<p>The Consultation Document states the following:</p> <p>Pupil numbers in Churchstoke C.P. School are low, however it is acknowledged that some increase has been seen in pupil numbers recently, as a result of new housing developments in the village. The Council’s latest projected pupil figures for the school suggest that pupil numbers at the school are not expected to increase <b>significantly</b> over the coming years. However, it is possible that further housing developments planned for the village will lead to an increase in the demand for places in the area.</p> <p>The Council does not currently include potential housing developments in its pupil projections.</p> <p>The Council’s approach to merger or federations is to consider schools that are within a close geographic vicinity.</p>
18.10.24	The consultation document does not consider the development of the houses around the village, which even if half of those houses supplied one child, would see pupil numbers rise significantly over the next few years. The consultation document also does not take into account the development that is happening around Montgomery and Chirbury, so predicted places at alternative schools cannot be guaranteed.	<p>The Consultation Document states the following:</p> <p>Pupil numbers in Churchstoke C.P. School are low. However, it is acknowledged that some increase has been seen in pupil numbers recently, as a result of new housing developments in the village. The Council’s latest projected pupil figures for the school suggest that pupil numbers at the school are not</p>

		<p>expected to increase significantly over the coming years. However, it is possible that further housing developments planned for the village will lead to an increase in the demand for places in the area.</p>
18.10.25	<p>With little regard given for the education of the pupils, the Consultation Document states that regarding the sending of pupils to alternative schools (the option currently being pursued) 'it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact' on the progress of students and the quality of teaching. It provides no educational positives behind sending pupils to alternative schools, nor does it align with the change needed in Powys according to the Consultation Document. The consultation document states 'significant changes are needed to the Welsh-medium offer in Powys 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'. Yet the very same Consultation document acknowledges 'a number of pupils live closer to alternative provision in Shropshire, and therefore it is possible that they would transfer to this provision'. The Consultation Document raises the issues of the low number of pupils and surplus capacity as reasoning for the closure, but with 120 new homes in Churchstoke these problems will certainly be addressed. Pupil number forecasts suggest at least 52 pupils by September 2022, reducing the predicted per pupil cost to £4600. The immediate discounting of a federation is ironic when one of the alternative schools offered, Chirbury, has formed a successful federation with Norbury considering the distance between Churchstoke and Chirbury is 10.3 miles and the distance between Chirbury and Norbury is 10.8 miles.</p>	<p>The proposal is to close Churchstoke C.P. School and for pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys, but also, for the majority of pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School, the nearest school in Powys would be Montgomery C. in W. Primary School and the view of the Council's primary experts, and Estyn as shown in its response to this consultation, is that implementation of the preferred option is not anticipated to have a negative impact on progress of students or the quality of teaching.</p> <p>The proposal is for pupils to transfer to their nearest school in Powys to ensure that they have access to the Curriculum for Wales and access to the Welsh language. However, the Council recognises parental preference which could mean that some parents choose a Shropshire school for their child(ren) which means that they would not have access to the Welsh language in these schools.</p> <p>The Council recognises that there are significant housing developments in the area that could impact on pupil numbers.</p>

		The Council's approach to merger or federations is to consider schools that are within a close geographic vicinity.
18.10.26	The Welsh language is not mentioned in the proposal document which is extremely disappointing.	Section 18 (v) of the Consultation Document considers the impact on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and the impact assessments considers the impact on the Welsh language as well.
18.10.27	Why has the hugely detrimental impact of splitting our children up from their friends and neighbours by placing them into bits of spare capacity and other schools not been acknowledged in the Consultation Document?	The nearest alternative school in Powys for the majority of pupils at Churchstoke is Montgomery C. in W. Primary School. Therefore, it is expected that most pupils would transfer to this school.
18.10.28	You have not considered the impact of the school closing on the village hall, pre-school, or the village/community.	The Council has recognised that there could be a detrimental impact on the community in the draft Community Impact Assessment which will be updated to take account of information gathered during consultation.
18.10.29	I am concerned that the individual decision to close each of the ten schools in the local area has not been made with reference to the closures of the rest and that we will be left with inadequate provision and overflowing classrooms. Each consultation so far has said the ideal result for PCC would be closure with children travelling to the nearest alternative. Figures have been given for the numbers of children attending each alternative but not taking into account the influx from all of the other school closures. In addition, no allowances have been made for the current boom in residential construction or the local development plan, in particular the high number of affordable	There are no other proposals relating to schools in the vicinity of Churchstoke.
18.10.30	I am absolutely stunned to read this 63 page document produced by the County. I have never seen such a weak	Comment noted.

	document produced by any education authority. The argument for closure is extremely weak. It is full of poor unsubstantiated data and assumptions. Had this proposal come out 6 years ago it would probably have been a fair proposition. However, we are talking about a village that has seen an unprecedented growth in the last 3 years with more to come.	
--	--	--

### 18.11 Comments about the impact assessments

18.11.1	Why does the aim or purpose in the Impact Assessment simply restate the proposal? Is the aim simply to close the school, because that is what is stated.	The impact assessment documentation outlines the proposal because that is what is being assessed.
18.11.2	When the proposal removes local support, including Dangos train staff who support the whole community, why does the impact assessment suggest no impact on health and care? Dangos training equips frontline staff to support the community with advice on benefits etc.	The impact assessments are published as draft during the consultation process. They are then updated to include information gathered during consultation.
18.11.3	The impact assessment states that it is “not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on standards” and this is identified as a good impact? It is neutral. There would have to be a positive impact on standards if it were to be a good impact.	Comment noted.
18.11.4	Why does the offer of home to school transport for pupils living in Churchstoke to their nearest school in Powys change a poor impact to neutral? The transport offer also applies to local Shropshire schools so it is no more likely that pupils will choose to stay in Powys.	The provision of free home-to-school transport to Powys schools improves the impact judgement for the Wellbeing Goal of Opportunities for persons to use and promote the Welsh language because, without this provision, the nearest schools are in England and therefore the impact would be worse.

18.11.5	Both goals listed on page 10 of the impact assessment relate to the use of the Welsh language and are assessed as Impact 'Poor'. The mitigation for both states transport will be provided to nearest school in Powys to ensure access to a Welsh education, which is shown to mitigate both options to 'Neutral'. Given the proximity of Shropshire schools, and the fact the offer of free transport surely applies to the nearest Shropshire schools should the parent/pupil decide to go across the border for education, how does this mitigation make it any less likely that pupils will be lost to Shropshire schools and therefore miss out on the opportunity of a Welsh education?	As above.
18.11.6	The impact on the protected characteristic of faith or belief is assessed as neutral, but if Powys do not fund transport to a CP school there is a definite negative impact for the families who do not wish their children to attend C in W school.	Comment noted.
18.11.7	In the Impact Assessment document on page 11 reviewing the goal of 'A more equal Wales - Disability', given the above, how has the impact on disability been assessed as 'Neutral' if some of the alternative options are less compliant with the Equality Act 2010 than Churchstoke?	Comment noted. This will be included in the updated impact assessments.  Churchstoke C.P. School and Montgomery C. in W. School are both partially compliant with the Equality Act 2010.
18.11.8	Similarly in the Impact Assessment Corporate Relevance section, p21, why does the statement not reflect the fact that within the Vision 2025 table the impacts are recorded as more negative than positive?	The 'corporate relevance' section on page 21 asks 'How does this proposal relate to Vision 2025' and the response is factual and outlines the commitment to 'improve our schools infrastructure'.
18.11.9	The risks to service delivery are high, with sufficient local capacity for the number of pupils involved, particularly in view of housing developments not just in Churchstoke but also in Montgomery (at least 34 homes at the planning stage), Chirbury (at least 40 homes in planning), Forden (32 at outline planning	Comment noted. This will be included in the updated impact assessments.

	stage and beyond directly by the school) and Kerry (62 close to completion).	
18.11.10	Some of the judgments made in the Impact Assessment are bizarre, and we would like to know how they have been arrived at.	The impact assessments are developed through discussion with a number of officers from different departments.
18.11.11	On p25 of the Impact Assessment, question 7 has the first option ticked. (The proposal does not present any adverse impact on equality.) The instruction given is Proceed to question 10. Where is question 10? Despite the fact that no adverse effect has been found (incorrectly), areas for improvement have been identified, but none of these are actually areas for improvement but instead are simply inaccurate statements (the number of FSM pupils being out of date and inaccurate, and an assumption that because we are an English medium school no Welsh speakers in the school (which is incorrect.)	There is an error in the formatting of the impact assessment template document.  The impact assessment are published as draft and will be updated to take account of information gathered during consultation.

## 19. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

### 19.1 Status Quo

19.1.1	Keep the school open	Comment noted.
19.1.2	Do not close Churchstoke C.P. School	Comment noted.
19.1.3	Do not close the school, think again, please do not destroy our village and community	Comment noted.
19.1.4	Do not close this growing community school.	Comment noted.
19.1.5	Don't close it!! Help it to continue to thrive!	Comment noted.
19.1.6	Don't close the School! Don't close the pre-school!	Comment noted.

19.1.7	I don't think the school should close because it is the only school in the village.	Comment noted.
19.1.8	It's not a good idea however you look at it to close the school.	Comment noted.
19.1.9	I think the most obvious option is for Churchstoke CP School to continue as a standalone school.	Comment noted.
19.1.10	Keep Churchstoke CP school open to keep the community thriving.	Comment noted.
19.1.11	Leave it open, accept that some schools will have smaller numbers and that is why parents choose them!	Comment noted.
19.1.12	Please keep this school open for the local children.	Comment noted.
19.1.13	There is only one other option to consider - let pupil numbers grow by keeping the school open.	Comment noted.
19.1.14	Keep the school open as an independent school.	Comment noted.
19.1.15	To keep the school open, as there will be huge demand for places for children, as Churchstoke continues to develop, with many new young families evident in the village.	Comment noted.
19.1.16	Simply look at the real facts and plan for the future. There is significant current and planned increase in housing stock and inevitably there will be a significant increase in children in the village. There is no sense in closing a school to transport 80-100 children to multiple other schools, most of which will be in another country. The main option that the council should be considering is to scrap the proposal.	Comment noted.
19.1.17	As there are enough local children to fill the school with more houses being built, please keep this school which mostly keeps itself. Churchstoke has always looked after their village as you can obviously see. Please leave it alone!	Comment noted.

19.1.18	Don't close it! Save money moving all our children and transporting them elsewhere to help support our wonderful school instead!	Comment noted.
19.1.19	Following the pandemic lockdowns and the recent year that the pupils and staff have worked hard to endure, we do not believe that further upheaval is timely or appropriate. Funding to recover from the pandemic in a familiar setting should be the council's priority. Not cost saving exercises for the benefit of larger school sites.	Comment noted.
19.1.20	The fact that our circumstances have changed significantly in the last year and for the future, we have a strong case to remain open as all other local schools. There is no strong case to close our school anymore. It will have more negative than positive effects for the council and the community.	Comment noted.
19.1.21	I appreciate that the numbers of children currently attending the school are low but I believe that the council should consider ways for the school to 'breathe in' before 'breathing out' and expanding once more. Is there more that the council could do by way of providing data-rich projections of the number of children coming through pre and primary school in the locality? Is there more that the council could do to support and promote the current position rather than to simply close it?	Comment noted.

## 19.2 Delay the proposal

19.2.1	Postpone proposal for a set period to allow to see changes in number of pupils from extra homes	Comment noted.
--------	---	----------------

19.2.2	Delay the closure to enable to school to prove that its viable, by delaying closure for 3-5years it will give the new housing time to build and for families to show an interest in the local school.	Comment noted.
19.2.3	The Council must postpone this process for at least 12 months. Hopefully the recovery from the pandemic will be over then and true face to face consultation will be able to take place. It will also give a truer reflection of the number of children attending, following the expansion of new family homes in the village. Many people move to villages because of the school. If there is no school then the village becomes a transit area and/or with an elderly population needing support from other areas of the Council. If we have a mixed age range within the village then all ages support each other effectively.	Comment noted.
19.2.4	As the area has recently had a lot of new houses built and as a nation we have only just started recovery from the on going pandemic I feel its only fair the school is given time to see how the numbers fair in the coming years as well as keeping the school open as a stable part of the local children's lives that have already lost so much normality over recent times.	Comment noted.
19.2.5	Now is not the time to close a school. Now is the time to look again at the needs of children, parents, and teachers.	Comment noted.
19.2.6	With the existing circumstances caused by the pandemic restricting the council's ability to follow due process, surely any decision needs to be postponed until the proper and due process can be carried out. Rather than trying to force through a decision during a time where the large and vocal opposition cannot put forward their case. This would also give the council time to explore all options and the prospective pupil numbers are likely to look vastly different by that point.	Comment noted.

### 19.3 Encourage more pupils to attend the school

19.3.1	I think the council should encourage more parents to send children to Churchstoke school.	Comment noted.
19.3.2	Boosting numbers by making the school a place people want to send their children to	Comment noted.
19.3.3	The council could help further support the school in highlighting Churchstoke as space for young families to locate and have their children grow.	Comment noted.
19.3.4	It needs to be highlighted more on the good that they do and not have this negativity on proposed closure to gain pupil numbers to encourage potential new people to the area	Comment noted.
19.3.5	Use of school and village hall premises to raise the profile of the school. The school to engage in community projects?	Comment noted.
19.3.6	Make improvements to the school and address why parents in the catchment area of the village have been choosing to educate their children elsewhere	Comment noted.
19.3.7	PCC seem concerned about the lack or reducing number of working people and children in the county. Perhaps they should consider keeping the schools open to attract the demographic rather than closing them down and putting people off living in the county. Perhaps concentrate your efforts on other ways to draw people to the area rather than spending time on this.	Comment noted.
19.3.8	Churchstoke school would have far more pupils going to it if school holidays for Shropshire and Powys were the same as many go to Bishops Castle high school. Also, Shropshire spend more on pupils than Powys, again invest in the children.	Comment noted.

19.3.9	Revise current holiday/public holiday to be organised on a national level on par with Shropshire schools. It makes childcare/year planning more suitable for parents who have children in senior Shropshire schools and Churchstoke primary. Numbers would increase for children attending the school who live locally.	Comment noted.
19.3.10	After reading about the transformation of sixth forms within Powys to allow all sixth forms to remain open so that students are not lost to England, surely this same principle applies to border primary schools too and you should be doing all you can to keep them open and make them attractive to parents.	Comment noted.

#### 19.4 Improve the provision at Churchstoke

19.4.1	Replace the headteacher	Comment noted.
19.4.2	Get rid of the headteacher	Comment noted.
19.4.3	A better headmaster.	Comment noted.
19.4.5	Reflect on the school's leadership i.e. headteacher	Comment noted.
19.4.6	Review how the school is being managed	Comment noted.
19.4.7	Is there a problem maybe with the running / staffing of Churchstoke school?	Comment noted.
19.4.8	Please have a think about reshuffling the leadership team. If after a couple of years under new leadership, numbers have not greatly improved, then close the school, but at least give someone else a chance to make a difference.	Comment noted.

19.4.9	If there are problems at the school, these should be sorted not just brushed under the carpet of another school. Please reconsider the proposed closure and save rural schools.	Comment noted.
19.4.10	Have a look at the teachers, make sure all teachers are actually qualified to teach.	Comment noted.
19.4.11	Rather than simply closings the school ways in which the school can be improved is a much better idea. For example the nursery and reception class being linked to make the progression between nursery and school easier for the children. Maybe someone that can lead the school with new ideas.	Comment noted.
19.4.12	Consider the reasons why the school roll has fallen over recent years - a number of families have already opted to send their children to neighbouring border schools for example Chirbury. Why is this? If it is to do with the quality of education provided by the school in Churchstoke, then address those issues directly. If it is to do with the management and leadership of the school, and its governing body, address those issues. Budget recovery plans can be drawn up to condense classes until the village has the natural demographic with which to expand provision.	Comment noted.
19.4.13	It should maybe be looked into why people in the area don't use Churchstoke primary school. If all the local families in the surrounding village's used it then it would be full.	Comment noted.
19.4.14	Maybe if you focussed on improving instead of shutting.	Comment noted.
19.4.15	Improving the school they have here in Churchstoke. The numbers have already increased in the last twelve months and will increase more in the near future.	Comment noted.
19.4.16	A wider curriculum expansion e.g. more Welsh language classes, horticultural growing flowers and vegetables. New teacher often brings more ideas to stimulate the children	Comment noted.

19.4.17	The Council should be offering this wonderful school the support it deserves not threatening it with closure	Comment noted.
---------	--	----------------

## 19.5 Expand the school

19.5.1	Use Churchstoke school site to build a larger school for the area.	Comment noted.
19.5.2	Expand and develop the school	Comment noted.
19.5.3	I would consider expanding the school, not demolishing it.	Comment noted.
19.5.4	Consider extending Churchstoke school. More houses mean more families.	Comment noted.
19.5.5	Extend and invest in Churchstoke School to encourage more children to use this school.	Comment noted.
19.5.6	The school has the room to extend with lots of safe parking and is a prime space for a Super School.	Comment noted.
19.5.7	The School site has the potential to be developed further and would then be able to accommodate more pupils from other local schools.	Comment noted.
19.5.8	Perhaps the school should be expanded, due to the increasing size of the community and to keep pace with this expansion, this may reduce the polarisation that is sure to follow closure of local schools.	Comment noted.
19.5.9	Due to the substantial development of Churchstoke, the Council should be upgrading the school rather than closing it.	Comment noted.
19.5.10	If anything provide funding to do up school provide extra buildings for the extra pupils it will get due to new builds in the future.	Comment noted.
19.5.11	The school could do with upgrading and possibly expanding given the rising number of children in the village.	Comment noted.

19.5.12	I see no other option but to expand education in Churchstoke as the village is growing in size. Other local villages are expanding too e.g. Sarn and Kerry! Where are the children to go – home education?!	Comment noted.
19.5.13	The Council should be making Churchstoke CP School larger as there will be an imminent needs for places for pupils from Chirbury with all the building going on here and in surrounding villages of Sarn and Kerry. Montgomery is growing also, so where do we send all these children? Please consider the long term impact.	Comment noted.
19.5.14	Stop thinking about closing it and enlarge it. Perhaps you could turn the village hall in two classrooms and use all the facilities within it enhance social skills with in the younger generation eg cookery lessons/ craft session/ drama/ board games/ specialist corners for pupils who need extra help/ personal hygiene/ breakfast club./ after school activities/ public speaking skills - all of these things will help the pupils in the future. Add onto the existing hall and extend it enough to allow indoor sports like table tennis/outdoor cricket/football/netball,table tennis. Yes please think outside the box and get the community involved to raise money.	Comment noted.
19.5.15	With at least 50 new houses being currently built and many more at planning stage, it would make perfect sense to make Churchstoke school into a new super school, it has plenty of land around it and is in a quiet position for children to be dropped off away from main roads. I know that the new Ridgeway site on Castle road with the exception of one property all have children of primary school age who would be attending the school.	Comment noted.
19.5.16	Maybe develop the site where possible to ensure that it's offering maximum benefit to the community.	Comment noted.

19.5.17	The school site is also a large site that is prime for expansion should you wish to expand the pre-school for the feed into the school – we would certainly be very interested in this to develop our business strategy.	Comment noted.
---------	--	----------------

### 19.6 More community use of the school / site

19.6.1	Use it for local community groups	Comment noted.
19.6.2	Use it for clubs, after hours slimmers world etc	Comment noted.
19.6.3	With thought, planning and efficiency rather than unnecessary bureaucracy the building could be used for more local benefit. Entertainment, library use, adult education, local food markets, physical exercise, general community gatherings	Comment noted.
19.6.4	If the number of children really are that low, the maintenance costs for the property becomes disproportionate to the value, in which case are there alternatives uses for the rooms that would support the school, (e.g. community groups, evening classes), etc.?	Comment noted.
19.6.5	The community hall is struggling, or so I am lead to believe. The school hall could be combined to accommodate all the extra children coming to reside in the village. The Guides Scouts, WI, and other groups could all benefit from retaining the existing facilities this complex could provide.	Comment noted.
19.6.6	Perhaps a place for intergenerational activities as you look for alternatives to day centre provision for older people, a place for organisations to hold drop in and outreach sessions with people to reduce the need and costs of travel for locals.	Comment noted.

19.6.7	The school could be used during holiday times rather than sitting empty.	Comment noted.
19.6.8	The school building could be better used, before and after school, with voluntary and paid members of the community offering their time for breakfast and after school care; keeping children safe and offering a breadth of experience, while parents find their way through the minefield of work options as we emerge from this crisis.	Comment noted.

### 19.7 Invest in the school

19.7.1	Put proper investment in.	Comment noted.
19.7.2	Give the school sufficient funding to stay open.	Comment noted.
19.7.3	Investment in before and after school provision.	Comment noted.
19.7.4	Investing in the Welsh scheme to enhance to culture of the country, and provide a further desire for others to send from out of area to this school.	Comment noted.
19.7.5	I really think you should be investing in the school and community, rather than trying to pull it apart.	Comment noted.
19.7.6	Invest in the school as it is the children's education at stake.	Comment noted.
19.7.7	The grounds are lovely and big at Churchstoke - why not invest in that school	Comment noted.
19.7.8	It should have money spent on it to improve the facilities, or is it already in the pipeline to build something else there?	Comment noted.
19.7.9	I think the council should have had more foresight and kept the school in a decent condition! That's what I think you should do is to improve the condition and let us give our children the school	Comment noted.

	they deserve. I think your £100,000 for transport [to alternative schools] would help maintain the school!	
19.7.10	Powys already don't invest in much at all. Why not invest in the future? Invest in children and the Welsh education that they deserve.	Comment noted.
19.7.11	Help to develop the area around the school site and also Churchstoke Little Explorers, this would mean more spaces for children in an ever growing village.	Comment noted.
19.7.12	The council should properly plan the future numbers for Churchstoke school and properly plan the investment to ensure it thrives.	Comment noted.
19.7.13	Keep the school open, make it greener with solar panels and other alternative energy supply. Encourage parents to walk/bike to school with their children, less traffic and congestion.	Comment noted.
19.7.14	Another option for the bureaucrats in Powys CC is to send someone round with a pot of paint. Spend a few pounds so the building doesn't decay. You are the same as the Glazers are to Manchester United. The roof leaks at Old Trafford Too!!	Comment noted.
19.7.15	Surely it would make more sense to invest money into the buildings that already exist, rather than going over budget by millions of tax payers money on wooden cladded primaries like the new Welshpool Church in Wales Primary.	Comment noted.

### 19.8 Shared headteacher

19.8.1	I think that if they need to cut costs then they can share a headteacher with another local school.	Comment noted.
--------	---	----------------

19.8.2	Could a combined head teacher with a neighbouring school be considered?	Comment noted.
19.8.3	Cluster with another nearby primary school, share a headteacher & cut out a massive salary by employing a standard teacher.	Comment noted.
19.8.4	Sharing head teachers to save money but keep these schools open	Comment noted.
19.8.5	Share a headteacher with another local primary to reduce costs	Comment noted.
19.8.6	Do as many areas in Shropshire do, share Headteachers and you would save thousands.	Comment noted.
19.8.7	In Shropshire several schools share a head teacher which cuts down the costs and also guarantees the budgets per school go further. Surely you could do the same in Powys.	Comment noted.
19.8.8	Perhaps instead of the children travelling to another school the teachers could move between schools only having one Headmaster.	Comment noted.
19.8.9	I think that you should look at a different business model to promote children into Churchstoke school. Shared management would be good for the school to have different ideas and save wage costs across a few schools. By doing this you will save our community from being fragmented and money being spent across the border instead of in our local businesses.	Comment noted.
19.8.10	To save the Welsh language from the village I think you do have to consider a better business model with shared management. We need to keep the school base in the village due to the very real possibility of losing children to Shropshire and to keep our pre-school open.	Comment noted.
19.8.11	One of the issues affecting small schools is how to ensure the clear leadership needed. Maybe there is benefit to the suggestion	Comment noted.

	<p>of merging schools under one headteacher whilst children continue in the same building. Has this been fully researched? I'm aware of the complexities of Montgomery as a C in W school, but it appears that other authorities in Wales have found an answer to this.</p>	
--	---	--

### 19.9 Federation

19.9.1	Federating with another primary to share resources but keep both sites open.	Comment noted.
19.9.2	Look at a federation? Other smaller schools are succeeding with a federation and meeting the needs of village children.	Comment noted.
19.9.3	How about making a federation/partnership or leaving it as it is? Bussing little kids to England is not the answer here, people!	Comment noted.
19.9.4	Federating with another Welsh school in the area.	Comment noted.
19.9.5	A Federation of local community primary schools would benefit all those schools without losing the huge benefits of having a community based school in Churchstoke.	Comment noted.
19.9.6	Federation could be a real opportunity for Churchstoke CP School and I would be really interested in exploring this option further with the local authority. We have to be allowed this opportunity as an alternative to closure.	Comment noted.
19.9.7	Federating with other schools in the area, sharing resources etc. This has worked in some schools locally.	Comment noted.
19.9.8	A federation of local primary schools would keep a school in the village and could enrich the learning experiment for pupils giving security to all schools involved.	Comment noted.

19.9.9	Federation with a nearby primary school to share budgeting/resources/have executive leadership.	Comment noted.
19.9.10	Federate with another or several Welsh Rural Primary Schools so the may work together to provide access to Welsh language learning by pulling together resources financially and educationally so there is a chance for the Welsh language to remain in even border communities of Wales.	Comment noted.
19.9.11	You are happy to try and squeeze our children into these schools why not Federate with them instead?	Comment noted.
19.9.12	A federation would be best. More shared funding resources, staffing. It would reduce costs and enable the school to stay open. The Council should be putting this option forward.	Comment noted.
19.9.13	Federation but keep sites open. Back office operation streamlining and cost saving. I don't know about their books to know what sort of a state they are in but there are always options! Listen to the senior leadership team and governors. Work with them to find the right solution.	Comment noted.
19.9.14	I think the council should be considering a federation. This would be the best step forward. Join with another local school, share a head teacher, share resources. This would reduce funding costs and breathe new life into the school. There is so much to gain from a federation.	Comment noted.
19.9.15	If the school becoming part of a federation with other schools in the area this would still allow Churchstoke school to remain open if the funding is an issue there would be only need to employ one head teacher for the federation.	Comment noted.
19.9.16	Allowing Churchstoke to Federate with other schools in the area would be a beneficial option.	Comment noted.

19.9.17	Don't close it, consider school federation to save money as basically that's what PCC bottom line is	Comment noted.
19.9.18	As an alternative to closing the school site in Churchstoke, the local authority should fully explore the option of retaining a primary school provision in Churchstoke by including the school site as part of a federation of primary schools in the area.	Comment noted.
19.9.19	Although we would prefer Churchstoke CP School to stay open as a stand-alone school we as the Governing body would be very happy forming a Federation with a neighbouring school and we can't understand why it has been completely discounted?	Comment noted.
19.9.20	A federation option has been discounted by Powys without proper consideration, this should be reviewed again.	Comment noted.
19.9.21	Powys gave a variety of options for what could happen to the school as a result of it closing. A federation was one of them. But Powys no have rejected the idea of the school being federated with others. I want to know why????	Comment noted.
19.9.22	The Federation option has been discounted without proper consideration, it is suggested that other CP schools are too far for a federation and yet our children are expected to travel to other schools.	Comment noted.
19.9.23	We don't agree with the Powys CC statement that Federation is discounted and are of the view that Federation is possible with other nearby schools at Leighton, Abermule and/or Berriew.	Comment noted.
19.9.24	Far more appropriate would be a federation with other schools. I understand that's not possible with a Church in Wales school such as Montgomery, but there are others near enough to federate with such as Abermule and Berriew. This has worked very successfully in other areas in Wales - even in Powys. This	Comment noted.

	is the preferred option in Shropshire which also has a large number of small schools and has proved to work very well.	
19.9.25	There are at least 3 CP schools under 10 miles away and 5 more within 15 miles which the school could Federate with.	Comment noted.
19.9.26	A possible other option that had previously been discounted but should be reconsidered is Federation. The consultation document states 'This is not a viable option as there are no other C.P Schools in the vicinity which Churchstoke C.P. School could federate with...'. However, the consultation document also states '...alternative C.P provision is available within 10 miles of Churchstoke, ensuring that non-Church in wales provision would continue to be available to those pupils who wished to access it.' These statements appear to contradict each other. How can the alternative schools be too far away to federate with but not too far away to transport pupils too as an alternative if Churchstoke were to close. There are examples of federation working over greater distances than would be required here, so I think this option should be reconsidered.	Comment noted.
	Federation, that will be an option to consider. The Council suggests that pupils could travel to the nearest community primary school but the federation with them would not be possible/ Why? Will it be cheaper for the Council to transport via buss children all around the county, is it mor beneficial for children to spend hours a day in buss instead of walking to school in the fresh air.	Comment noted.
19.9.27	Consider federating with one or more other local CP schools. This option was discounted on the basis of not being "a viable option as there are no other C.P. Schools in the vicinity which Churchstoke C.P. School could federate with". However, the consultation document states elsewhere: "alternative community	Comment noted.

	primary provision is available within 10 miles of Churchstoke C.P. School at Abermule C.P. School, Forden C.P. School and Berriew C.P. School, as well as at Bishops Castle Primary School in Shropshire, therefore community primary provision is available in the local area for any pupils not wanting to attend a Church in Wales school."	
19.9.28	However, Federation has also been dismissed, when it is a viable alternative. There are three County Primary Schools within 10 miles of the school. Federations of other schools are in this sort of range so why has this not been considered? This definitely has to be considered before closure. It seems the most obvious answer to 'rationalise primary provision' by federating them all over the county to me. It keeps communities together and thriving and helps schools to work together to 'improve learner entitlement and experience'.	Comment noted.
19.9.29	The federation option has been discontinued by Powys without proper consideration. They suggest that pupils could travel to the nearest community primary school but that federation with them would not be possible.	Comment noted.
19.9.30	However, there has been no reason given as to why federation was not considered.	Comment noted.
19.9.31	I question why you will not consider a federation? This option seems so viable it keeps a school in our village, it keeps or friendships and communities and would open doors of opportunity without removing any and would imagine save you money.	Comment noted.
19.9.32	Why has PCC dismissed federation Shropshire schools have federated and it works Chirbury, Norbury and Stipperstones	Comment noted.

	Schools and Clunbury Bucknell and Newcastle Schools some are over 10 miles apart	
19.9.33	A federation with other Welsh schools, there are viable options in the area which have not been properly addressed. Considering the vastly underestimated costs of transport for the children to new schools as well as the opportunity costs of educational quality for the children (as outlined extensively in my points above), a federation would be an appropriate way to both maintain the community by providing essential services, as well as cut costs for the Council.	Comment noted.
19.9.34	We believe that we are allowed to form a Federation with a C in W school if required. There are many examples of very successful federations in Powys and neighbouring Shropshire.	Comment noted.
19.3.35	Federation with another school should be considered. Although the nearest Powys school is a Church in Wales school I do not think such an arrangement is out of the question. Churchstoke could become part of a church school. If that is not possible the school could federate with another CP school. Proximity is not important as it has worked in other areas eg Carno gp and in Shropshire	Comment noted.
19.3.36	Can Churchstoke school not remain open and instead be federated with Montgomery or another school to share a headteacher?	Comment noted.
19.3.37	The Council should considered join together to form a federation ie: Churchstoke and Montgomery saving costs of staffing.	Comment noted.
19.3.38	Federation with local schools, other than Montgomery Church in Wales school. This has worked really well in other areas. The	Comment noted.

	consultation document seems to have just dismissed this with little thought and justification.	
19.3.39	If funding is low why not federate like Chirbury and Stiperstones have done or Newcastle on Clun and Bucknell.	Comment noted.
19.3.40	There are many very successful examples of federations in Shropshire – a rural authority like Powys with many small rural schools, and the Carno, Llanbrynmair and Ysgol Glantwymyn federation in Powys is, as far as I'm aware, working very successfully.	Comment noted.
19.3.41	The benefits of federating have been tremendous and I do not understand why it has been discounted here. There is a parity of distance between Chirbury and Norbury schools and there would be between, for example, Churchstoke and a Welshpool primary. In an age of technology, it clearly is possible to successfully manage two schools, even when the physical distance between is considerable.	Comment noted.
19.3.42	Federation is an obvious opportunity, although as the Head has a high teaching load the saving may not be high. There are examples of schools working together in other regions of Powys that are over 10 miles, the internet bring us all closer together, distance learning too. Remaining open with the known increase in pupils.	Comment noted.
19.3.43	Federation with another rural primary school. Staffing can always be altered/improved on to ensure sustainability, progression and success at a school. By federating with another rural primary school or two I feel this could be achieved providing an even better future for Churchstoke Primary School and Churchstoke Little Explorers whilst still cutting costs for the council. If the school should close it will be gone forever whereas if federation	Comment noted.

	was considered this rural school in a thriving village and community could go from strength to strength and improve on its low numbers enabling rural children to attend their local school whilst still reducing costs for the council.	
19.3.44	Federation with other schools. This would cost cut staffing costs, i.e. only one headmaster required, and there would be other benefits: richer education due to diversity, consistent standards applied across all schools in the federation, buildings utilised and not being left to dereliction, cost savings associated with central admin function.	Comment noted.
19.3.45	I do hope you reconsider the federation model as with shared management it would be an extremely effective school given that you are not going to make the savings from the travel that you have highlighted in your consultation document	Comment noted.
19.3.46	To save our pre-school setting I hope you re-consider a Federation idea of shared management which will bring new ideas to our school and ultimately our playgroup which we would welcome. It will also save costs across a collection of schools using shared resources.	Comment noted.
19.3.47	Federation with other nearby schools would mitigate the adverse effects on the Welsh language.	Comment noted.

### 19.10 Merge with another school

19.10.1	A merger with another school.	Comment noted.
19.10.2	Merger - this is not considered but should be looked into.	Comment noted.
19.10.3	Joining schools together.	Comment noted.
19.10.4	Join up schools but don't close them.	Comment noted.

19.10.5	Could the school not amalgamate with Abermule school?	Comment noted.
19.10.6	In view of the significant number of new houses being built, considered whether to pair Churchstoke and Montgomery schools with one weighted towards Welsh and the other to English.	Comment noted.
19.10.7	They could run smaller schools as one with different buildings so the teachers move round the schools so you would only need one of each subject teacher and better time table planning so a better use of staff, this would also benefit the children by getting them used to different people in their school.	Comment noted.

### 19.11 Clustering

19.11.1	More should be done to support and encourage clusters of schools. This has worked with multi academy trusts in England, and although the academy model does not exist in Wales, it has been proven that grouping schools together has enabled economies of scale to be generated by sharing resources.	Comment noted.
19.11.2	In order to address the need for a broader curriculum and a wider expertise of teaching staff, PCC should consider that more can be made of school cluster groups / amalgamating small schools in a locality - to maintain individual identities and sites but to share staff. I think the council should consider grouping small primaries under one head teacher with assistant heads who are Heads of centre... expertise and staff can be shared to ensure a manageable Workload and increase pupil curriculum offer - with staff seconded from one school to another for full/ half days... class shares for example. In this way a KS1 teacher with an expertise in literacy and expressive arts and a KS1 teacher with expertise in maths, science and technology could share their time	Comment noted.

	and skills for planning across two classes in two different schools. Staff across 2,3or 4 small schools can take responsibilities for different aspects and for wcho improvement. The covid19 pandemic has taught us that teachers can teach across m'soft teams and that professionals in different locations can effectively meet up on Teams... this makes skill-sharing across different school sites practical, accessible and realistic. In this way children and families SHOULD in our modern world be able to have the best of both worlds - benefitting from small, local community schools whilst also benefitting from a larger and broader-based staff team. PCC SHOULD be thinking creatively for alternative solutions to school closures ... technology enables cost effective team working and creative solutions	
19.11.3	Keeping the school open and combining other schools to join with our school.	Comment noted.

### 19.12 Make changes to other schools

19.12.1	Close Chirbury School and Montgomery and expand Churchstoke. The others have no space to expand, no parking available and Churchstoke could accommodate this with plenty of parking and space.	Comment noted.
19.12.2	Closing other schools and keeping Churchstoke open. Churchstoke has car parking facilities, community hall and pre-school and has room to expand.	Comment noted.
19.12.3	If you need to fill the superschools, close a school closer not ours.	Comment noted.

### 19.13 Invest in small / rural schools

19.13.1	Invest in small schools, look at the many pros of a small school rather than the very few cons.	Comment noted.
19.13.2	Invest in the small schools, bring them up to standard again. Parents do now want to send their children to big schools.	Comment noted.
19.13.3	Get Powys/Senedd to fund small rural schools.	Comment noted.
19.13.4	PCC should appeal to the Welsh Assembly government to protect and champion our rural communities. This should include protecting rural schools such as Churchstoke for current and future generations.	Comment noted.

#### 19.14 Make other changes in order to save money

19.14.1	Make savings in other areas.	Comment noted.
19.14.2	Take money from other Powys projects	Comment noted.
19.14.3	The Council should rethink the way they spend their money instead of shutting schools which we need.	Comment noted.
19.14.4	Restructure to save money	Comment noted.
19.14.5	Cutting the fat cats pay amongst the council to subsidise the school which is something the community wants.	Comment noted.
19.14.6	Would you and all the councillors at Powys accept a pay cut? Can you advise whether the number of councillors in Powys are too many?	Comment noted.
19.14.7	Stop spending on stupid things then you wouldn't have to close schools to make your money back. That's always your easy resort to things.	Comment noted.
19.14.8	You could spend the money you intend to pay for transport and put towards keeping the school going. If you have money spare	Comment noted.

	at the end of your financial year put that towards keeping the school going. Make the money savings in your offices by cutting down on the number of bosses and managers and spend that money on the schools instead. Put more money into education budget.	
19.14.9	Perhaps cut back on council allowances. I work for Powys county council in some capacity and it is run appallingly in my experience. Obviously I can only comment on what I have seen and know from personal experience. There are many other areas that would survive with cost cuts that would be as detrimental as you closing a school that supports and involves itself in the whole community.	Comment noted.
19.14.10	If the school is being closed because of costs, surely the council can find money elsewhere to avoid such action that has long-term impacts for a future generation – selling off assets; further raising of council tax on 2nd homes; reduce costs of verge and hedge cutting across Powys to also help improve biodiversity and wildlife	Comment noted.
19.14.11	Could fundraising efforts by the local community also be considered to help finance the school?	Comment noted.
19.14.12	Generating an income from promotion of the site for other uses alongside schooling.	Comment noted.

### 19.15 Other

19.15.1	In fact all schools in the cluster should have been looked at together	Comment noted.
19.15.2	Make it compulsory to transfer to a Welsh school	Comment noted.

19.15.3	Making sure there are sufficient places for our children in alternative schools close by but in Wales!	Comment noted.
19.15.4	Perhaps the freedom of parents being able to send their children wherever they choose should be stopped. Support your local school and community.	Comment noted.
19.15.5	Set up a trust or such and get a will giving leaflet and you would be surprised how much money you could get in	Comment noted.
19.15.6	The council should offer more support to the existing staff who are doing a great job in a challenging environment.	Comment noted.
19.15.7	Speaking to your other departments and working together. If you make planning permission for housing you have to consider access and parking. Why do you not also have to consider where all these family's can educate their children? You make an application to the council for a festival: event licence you have to make provision for off road stacking vehicles to queue off the highway so not to cause disruption. Toilet facilities etc yet encourage growth of the village with homes and take away education facilities.	Comment noted.
19.15.8	Use Churchstoke as a template for tolerance and availability to all protected characteristics. Churchstoke CP school is a prime location in rural Wales to implement this!	Comment noted.

## 20. OTHER COMMENTS

20.1	A petition has been set up by the parents and community of church stoke which currently has almost 1500 signatures, a clear message that Churchstoke school is needed and should not be closed. The children of Churchstoke school have also	The Council notes the petition and also the video from the pupils of Churchstoke C.P. School.
------	--	---

	voiced their views through a video with all of them singing that they do not want their school to close. Their views must also be considered by Powys County Council and this clearly expresses their views that they do not want to attend any other school apart from Churchstoke school.	
20.2	According to the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, our children have many rights to be protected and safe, and the interests of a child must be top priority in all decisions and actions that affect them. Article 12 also states every child has the right to express their views and their views should be considered and taken seriously. I hope all of their rights will be taken into consideration.	The Council has a duty to listen to the views of children in any school reorganisation process.
20.3	How will the proposal improve safeguarding, particularly in view of cross border issues? We often have problems engaging with Children's Service and other statutory bodies in England. Local knowledge and information will be lost.	The Council's safeguarding team would need to ensure that there are strong links with services outside of the county.

## 21. COMMENTS IN FAVOUR OF THE PROPOSAL

21.1	Closure is the only option	Comment noted.
21.2	The school has been underperforming for a number of years with local parents choosing to use Bishop's Castle and Kerry due to the lack of quality and diversity the staff have in their ability to deliver a high standard of education. Closing this school will allow the children who attend there to have a better education at better performing schools with a more varied child mix and to not be taught by second rate farmers wives with little or no idea about life skills and a diverse world that our children face.	Comment noted.

21.3	I agree with the proposal. The school's budget share per pupil during 2020-21 was £7,475. This is significantly higher than the Powys average of £4,264. This level of disparity is unjustified and unfair to all other learners in Powys.	Comment noted.
------	--	----------------

## 7. FURTHER ASESMENT AND CONCLUSION

The School Organisation Code includes some additional steps to be undertaken in respect of the consultation report for proposals relating to the closure of rural schools. This section addresses these requirements.

### 7.1 Further assessment of the proposal and alternatives

Following consultation, the Council has carried out a further assessment of the proposal and the alternatives identified in the proposal paper on the likely impact on quality and standards in education, the likely impact on the community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements.

The revised assessments, which take account of further information that has come forward through the consultation or otherwise, are provided in the table below:

Option	Likely impact on quality and standards	Likely impact on the community	Likely impact of different travelling arrangements
<b>Option 1: Status Quo – continue as a standalone school</b>	There would be no impact on quality and standards – pupils would continue to attend the current provision at Churchstoke.	There would be no impact on the community – provision would continue to be available in Churchstoke.	There would be no impact on travel arrangements – pupils would continue to attend Churchstoke C.P. School.
<b>Option 2: Federation with another school</b>	Discounted – N/A	Discounted – N/A	Discounted – N/A
<b>Option 3: Merge with Montgomery C. in W. School to establish a</b>	It is anticipated that this option would have a positive impact on quality and standards through the	The impact on the community would be minimal – provision would	Pupils would continue to attend school on the current site of Churchstoke C.P. School.

<p><b>new school on two sites</b></p>	<p>establishment of one larger school, with a larger number of pupils and a larger team of staff.</p> <p>However, this option does not address the challenge of teaching mixed-aged classes, as pupils would continue to be taught in two classes of four year groups on the Churchstoke site, but it would provide additional opportunities for staff expertise and resources to be shared across both sites.</p> <p>.</p>	<p>continue to be available in Churchstoke.</p> <p>However, one new governing body would be responsible for both sites, therefore there could be a perceived reduction in community involvement in management of the school, depending on the make up of the federated governing body.</p> <p>In addition, it is possible that joint school activities would take place on the Montgomery site as more pupils attend this site, which could lead to a reduction in activity on the Churchstoke site.</p> <p>Comments have been made about the impact on Churchstoke Little Explorers should there be no school in Churchstoke, due to the setting being on the school site and sharing resources with the school. As this option keeps a school in Churchstoke, there would be no impact on the setting. Many comments were made about the importance of the setting for working families in providing childcare and wraparound provision, and therefore this option</p>	<p>However, some additional travel may be required between schools in order to access activities and events.</p>
---------------------------------------	---	--	--

		enables that provision to continue in Churchstoke.	
<b>Option 4: Close Churchstoke C.P. School, but retain the site as part of Montgomery C. in W. School</b>	<p>Implementation of this option would result in closure of Churchstoke C.P. School, however provision would continue on the current site. Churchstoke C.P. School are both in the yellow support category based on the 2019 categorisations, therefore it is not anticipated that the impact on quality and standards would be negative.</p> <p>The school would be a larger school, with a larger number of pupils and a larger team of staff, which could have a positive impact on the opportunities available for pupils and staff.</p> <p>However, this option does not address the challenge of teaching mixed-aged classes, as pupils would continue to be taught in two classes of four year groups on the Churchstoke site, but it would provide additional opportunities for staff expertise and resources to be shared across both sites.</p>	<p>Provision would continue to be available in Churchstoke. However, the site would be managed by the current governing body of Montgomery C. in W. School, therefore there could be a perceived reduction in community involvement in management of the school.</p> <p>In addition, it is possible that joint school activities would take place on the Montgomery site as more pupils attend this site, which could lead to a reduction in activity on the Churchstoke site.</p> <p>Comments have been made about the impact on Churchstoke Little Explorers should there be no school in Churchstoke, due to the setting being on the school site and sharing resources with the school. As this option keeps a school in Churchstoke, there would be no impact on the setting. Many comments were made about the importance of the setting for</p>	<p>Pupils would continue to attend school on the current site of Churchstoke C.P. School.</p> <p>However, some additional travel may be required between schools in order to access activities and events.</p>

		<p>working families in providing childcare and wraparound provision, and therefore this option enables that provision to continue in Churchstoke.</p>	
<p><b>Option 5: Close Churchstoke C.P. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools in Powys</b></p>	<p>Implementation of this option would mean that pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School would transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative Powys school would be Montgomery C. in W. School.</p> <p>Based on the latest categorisations carried out in 2019, both Churchstoke C.P. School and Montgomery C. in W. School are categorised as Yellow schools. The Council’s view is that quality and standards at Montgomery C. in W. School would be at least as good as the provision at Churchstoke.</p> <p>Pupils would also be able to benefit from being taught in age-appropriate classes, and although this may be in mixed aged groups, there wouldn’t be more than 2 years in any class.</p>	<p>There would be a significant impact on the community of Churchstoke as there would be no provision in Churchstoke.</p> <p>It is clear that a wide range of extra-curricular activities are available to pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School. Should there be no school in Churchstoke, pupils would transfer to alternative schools. These would be larger schools, and the expectation is that at least a similar range of activities would be available for pupils. However, it is acknowledged that pupils would need to travel to the alternative schools, which could impact on their ability to access activities, particularly where these take place after school.</p> <p>The information received by the school also suggests that there are extensive links between the</p>	<p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Churchstoke School. For the majority of pupils, Churchstoke C.P. School is their closest school, and most walk to school.</p> <p>Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council’s Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities / events.</p> <p>It has been noted that pupils reliant on home-to-school transport would be unable to participate in Breakfast Club or after-school activities.</p> <p>Concerns have been raised about the impact on low income families or those without access to their own transport, and that it would be more</p>

	<p>This option also enables pupils to transfer to schools in Powys where they would be able to benefit from the new Curriculum for Wales, and to develop their Welsh language skills.</p>	<p>school and the local community, and that many community activities are arranged in the school which are accessed by the community. It is therefore acknowledged that closure of the school could have an impact on the community in terms of the services and activities available.</p> <p>An area of concern has been on the potential impact on Churchstoke Little Explorers, the pre-school setting that provides early years education and childcare provision, due to the setting being co-located in a building at the school and use of shared facilities. There was concern that this setting provides full day support for working parents who may be impacted if this provision was no longer available. However, the closure of the setting due to closure of the school is not a given, and the setting could continue to operate if there was demand in the area. Further discussions would be required with the setting if the Council was to proceed with an asset transfer or sale of the site, should the school close.</p>	<p>difficult for them to pick up children from after-school clubs or to attend the school for other activities.</p>
--	---	---	---

		<p>Should there be no school in Churchstoke, any school facilities used by the community would no longer be available. There is a Community Hall in Churchstoke which would continue to be available, therefore community events and activities could take place here. However, it is acknowledged that the Hall relies on the support of the school, and that closure of the school could also impact on the viability of the hall in the longer term.</p> <p>Should the school close, the Council would need to determine the future use of the building. Should the Council declare the building to be surplus to requirements and seek to sell the building, this would mean that the school's facilities would no longer be available to the community in Churchstoke.</p>	
<p><b>Option 6: Close Churchstoke C.P. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools</b></p>	<p>Implementation of this option would mean that pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School would transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys. For the majority</p>	<p>There would be a significant impact on the community of Churchstoke as there would be no provision in Churchstoke.</p>	<p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Churchstoke School. For the majority of pupils, Churchstoke C.P.</p>

	<p>of pupils, the closest alternative schools would be Chirbury C. of E. School which is located in Shropshire.</p> <p>Chirbury C. of E. School was last inspected by Ofsted in December 2019, when the school's overall effectiveness was judged to be Good. It is likely therefore that the quality and standards at the school would be comparable to that available in Churchstoke C.P. School.</p> <p>If parents chose schools in Shropshire for their child(ren), it must be noted that they would not have the opportunity to access the new Curriculum for Wales or to develop their Welsh language skills.</p>	<p>It is clear that a wide range of extra-curricular activities are available to pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School. Should there be no school in Churchstoke, pupils would transfer to alternative schools. These would be larger schools, and the expectation is that at least a similar range of activities would be available for pupils. However, it is acknowledged that pupils would need to travel to the alternative schools, which could impact on their ability to access activities, particularly where these take place after school.</p> <p>The information received by the school also suggests that there are extensive links between the school and the local community, and that many community activities are arranged in the school which are accessed by the community. It is therefore acknowledged that closure of the school could have an impact on the community in terms of the services and activities available.</p> <p>An area of concern has been on the potential impact on Churchstoke Little Explorers, the pre-school</p>	<p>School is their closest school, and most walk to school.</p> <p>Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities / events.</p> <p>It has been noted that pupils reliant on home-to-school transport would be unable to participate in Breakfast Club or after-school activities.</p> <p>Concerns have been raised about the impact on low income families or those without access to their own transport, and that it would be more difficult for them to pick up children from after-school clubs or to attend the school for other activities.</p>
--	---	---	--

		<p>setting that provides early years education and childcare provision, due to the setting being co-located in a building at the school and use of shared facilities. There was concern that this setting provides full day support for working parents who may be impacted if this provision was no longer available. However, the closure of the setting due to closure of the school is not a given, and the setting could continue to operate if there was demand in the area. Further discussions would be required with the setting if the Council was to proceed with an asset transfer or sale of the site, should the school close.</p> <p>Should there be no school in Churchstoke, any school facilities used by the community would no longer be available. There is a Community Hall in Churchstoke which would continue to be available, therefore community events and activities could take place here. However, it is acknowledged that the Hall relies on the support of the school, and that closure of the school could also</p>	
--	--	--	--

		<p>impact on the viability of the hall in the longer term.</p> <p>Should the school close, the Council would need to determine the future use of the building. Should the Council declare the building to be surplus to requirements and seek to sell the building, this would mean that the school's facilities would no longer be available to the community in Churchstoke.</p>	
--	--	--	--

## 7.2 Further reasonable alternatives

The other alternatives which were suggested in the consultation responses received are outlined in section 18 of the 'issues raised in the consultation period' section of this report, including the Council's response to these alternatives. These are as follows:

- 19.1 Retain the status quo
- 19.2 Delay the process
- 19.3 Encourage more pupils to attend the school.
- 19.4 Improve provision at Churchstoke C.P. School
- 19.5 Expand the school
- 19.6 More community use of the school/site
- 19.7 Invest in the school
- 19.8 Shared head
- 19.9 Federate with another school

- 19.10 Merge with another school**
- 19.11 Clustering**
- 19.12 Make changes to other schools**
- 19.13 Invest in small/rural schools**
- 19.15 Other**

The assessment of 19.1,19.2,19.3, 19.4, 19.6, 19.7, 19.8, 19.12 and 19.13 are included within the assessment for Option 1 ‘Status Quo’ in the table above and are not subject to further assessment as ‘reasonable alternatives’.

19.5 ‘expand the school’ and 19.7 ‘invest in the school’ will not be subject to further assessment as a ‘reasonable alternative’ because the school currently has a number of surplus places, therefore there is no requirement to expand the school, and this will not meet the challenges faced by the school as outlined in the Consultation Document.

19.6 ‘more community use of the school/site’ will not be subject to further assessment as a ‘reasonable alternative’ as this would not address the challenges faced by the school as outlined in the Consultation Document, and it is noted that the school already has links with the community, with Churchstoke Little Explorers being co-located with the school.

19.11 ‘clustering’ will not be subject to further assessment as a ‘reasonable alternative’. Schools in Powys already operate on a ‘cluster’ basis with significant collaboration happening on all levels (e.g.). The Council is planning the implementation of cluster business managers to provide additional business and administrative support to schools. Therefore, on this basis, this alternative option won’t be evaluated further.

**19.10 ‘merge with another school’ has been re-assessed in the table above.**

**Therefore, the only ‘reasonable alternative’ option taken forward for further assessment 19.9 ‘federate with another school’. Please note that this would need to be a community primary school in Powys, and therefore discounts all Church-in-Wales schools, as it is not possible to legally federate denominational and community primary schools.**

Alternative Option	Likely impact on quality and standards	Likely impact on the community	Likely impact of different travelling arrangements

<p><b>Option 19.9 Federate with another school.</b></p>	<p>Implementation of this option would result in Churchstoke C.P. School formally federating with another community primary school in Powys. The nearest community primary schools to Churchstoke are Abermule C.P. School, Berriew C.P. School, and Leighton C.P. School.</p> <p>The Council has no concerns about the quality and standards of education at these three schools and therefore it is likely that standards would remain as good as the current provision.</p> <p>The school would be a larger school, with a larger number of pupils and a larger team of staff, which could have a positive impact on the opportunities available for pupils and staff.</p> <p>However, this option does not address the challenge of teaching mixed-aged classes, as pupils would continue to be taught in two classes of four-year groups at Churchstoke C.P. School, but it would provide additional opportunities for staff expertise and</p>	<p>Provision would continue to be available in Churchstoke.</p> <p>Comments have been made about the impact on Churchstoke Little Explorers should there be no school in Churchstoke, due to the setting being on the school site and sharing resources with the school. As this option keeps a school in Churchstoke, there would be no impact on the setting. Many comments were made about the importance of the setting for working families in providing childcare and wraparound provision, and therefore this option enables that provision to continue in Churchstoke.</p>	<p>Pupils would continue to attend school on the current site of Churchstoke C.P. School.</p> <p>However, some additional travel may be required between schools in order to access activities and events.</p>
---	---	--	--

	resources to be shared across both sites.		
--	---	--	--

### 7.3 Conclusion

The Council has considered the issues raised in the consultation exercise and has also carried out a further assessment of the proposal, the original options and alternative options identified during the consultation with consideration of the likely impact on quality and standards in education, the likely impact on the community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements.

A significant issue that has been highlighted throughout the consultation is the amount pupils from the area who are choosing to attend schools in Shropshire – this suggests that the number on roll at Churchstoke C.P. School should be much higher than the current position. It is also noted that the level of housing developments completed and planned, not only in Churchstoke itself but in the surrounding areas, both in Powys and in Shropshire could lead to an increase in the number of children living in these areas in future, and it is essential that the Council ensures that there are sufficient places for these children in its schools. Another concern that has been highlighted is the potential loss of pupils across the border to Shropshire schools, and that this proposal could potentially disadvantage pupils from accessing the new Curriculum for Wales or developing their Welsh language skills.

Therefore the conclusion of this consultation exercise is that this proposal should not proceed further but that further consideration of options takes place to address the issues identified at the school and outlined above.

## Appendix C – Minutes of meetings with Staff, Governors and School Council

### Contents

Consultation meeting with Staff of Churchstoke C.P. School .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Consultation meeting with Governors of Churchstoke C.P. School.....	21
A meeting with the School Council of Churchstoke C.P. School .....	43

## **Consultation meeting with Staff of Churchstoke School**

**10<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

### **Present**

#### **Staff:**

Ian Roberts, Headteacher  
Staff of Churchstoke C.P. School

#### **Officers:**

Emma Palmer, Head of Transformation and Communications  
Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer  
Marianne Evans, Service Manager Schools Transformation  
Eurig Towns, Service Manager for School Improvement  
Mari Thomas, Interim Schools Finance Manager  
Sarah Jones, HR Business Partner (Schools)  
Sarah Astley, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education

Emma Palmer welcomed all to the meeting. The Headteacher asked for a transcription of the meeting for a member of staff who was unable to attend. Emma Palmer also offered for the member of staff to have a separate meeting with officers to go through the briefing if wanted. Emma Palmer welcomed all to the meeting and introduced the Powys County Council officers that were in attendance.

Emma Palmer noted that the only decision by Cabinet at this stage is to go out to consultation in respect of Churchstoke School. No decision has been made at this stage. This is an opportunity for staff to contribute to the consultation and to put forward their views as part of the consultation process.

Marianne Evans gave a Powerpoint presentation and explained that in February 2021, Powys Cabinet gave approval to proceed with consultation on a proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School. The consultation started on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April and will end on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June.

The proposal is as follows:

- To close Churchstoke C.P. School from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools in Powys.

Emma Palmer then invited question and comments on the proposal.

**Member of staff:** Firstly, why are the predictions for pupils' numbers, the additional learning needs, and the free school meal numbers so out of date?

**Marianne Evans:** The data is based on PLASC 2020 data as PLASC 2021 data is not available. Obviously when we move onto publishing the consultation report, if we have any updated data, we will be publishing the updated data then, but the basis of the data is PLASC 2020 unless it is stated elsewhere.

**Member of Staff:** That updated data already exists. We have a current situation that could have been used. The paper was published in February 2021 and the data has changed considerably since then and we informed the transformation team at the meeting with the governors that there was a considerable change. It seems bizarre just to continue using what the local authority knows to be outdated data.

**Marianne Evans:** That is the data that we have used and if there is any additional data from verified sources then we would update them at the next stage.

**Lynette Lovell:** This is a valid point and as you say is taken from a point in time. Just to note that is the data that Welsh Government currently use for everything in terms of grant funding coming in or anything like that is the 2020 PLASC data. As Marianne has said as the 2021 data comes in and is verified that is what we will use.

**Marianne Evans:** In terms of the projections, we have used two sets of data, one is the PLASC 2020, and the second is based on finance figures that were taken in November 2020. We do know that your numbers are higher now than what is published in this document and we know your admissions in 2021 is slightly higher as well.

**Member of Staff:** I think the concern is how misleading the data is bearing how much the village has changed. It gives a very misleading picture of the school and of the situation that we have and for that to be published as part of a closure consultation, it guides people into a decision that they might make with regard to consultation and when the local authority know that the data is inaccurate, perhaps that should have been stated in the document as well as that the data is considerably out of date.

**Emma Palmer:** Can I ask, in respect of the consultation response, that you provide the figures that you believe are the accurate ones and the reason I say that is in terms of a consultation response, the consultation report has to respond to each of the responses made and that document has to go before Cabinet at the time that they are making any further decisions. There must be a response against each of those consultation points that are raised on behalf of the organization, so those things will be taken into account.

**Member of staff:** Yes, you will certainly have those figures from us.

**Member of staff:** Are the transformation team aware of the housing developments, not just in Churchstoke but also in Montgomery, Chirbury, Forden, Kerry and another surrounding catchments?

**Marianne Evans:** Yes, and we have included that in the consultation document as well. We have detailed information about the housing developments. There is a lot going on in the Churchstoke area but in terms of taking that into account in terms of pupil projections, until those houses are built, and we know how many pupils come from those housing developments, we are unable to even put an estimated projection on pupils, but yes, we are aware.

**Member of staff:** It's not just our village but also the likes of Montgomery's housing developments as well. I would disagree with you that there is a detailed analysis in the document. I think that there is very superficial analysis in the document, but the concern is will there be space for all our children in the other local schools. Will they go to one school? Will they be expected to move on because that school is full? They would certainly fill year groups up to the admissions number in some of the schools. The concern is how much it is going to fragment the village when children are being moved into one school and then find there is not room there and then have to go to a different school. The other concern is regarding siblings, where there may be room in one year group for one child but not for the other. We're concerned about families and all siblings should be in the same school.

**Marianne Evans:** One of the risks that is clearly identified in the consultation document is potentially the lack of capacity at Montgomery school in particular. It will be the closest school to a number of pupils currently attending Churchstoke. If the decision is made to close Churchstoke school, we do not know which pupils will go to which schools. However, if a lot of pupils do choose to go to Montgomery school, part of the council's overall management of its school estate is to continually review its school places on an annual basis or even more frequent than that. We would then address the needs of any school that is full and that would be looked at going forward. However, until we have a decision about Churchstoke, as remember, this is still a consultation, we do not know where parents would choose to go, and we would not know the impact on whichever schools those pupils go to.

**Member of staff:** It is not offering any certainty to anybody. That lack of reassurance, that uncertainty is very unsettling for parents and is likely to lead them to send their children elsewhere.

**Emma Palmer:** One of the issues for ourselves is that we cannot mandate where those children go, and that is down to parental choice. But I do fully respect the points that you are raising in respect of wanting to keep children together and also wanting to keep sibling groups together. I understand that point completely.

**Member of Staff:** But you cannot guarantee to do it.

**Emma Palmer:** You cannot guarantee because it is parental choice in respect of where they send their children to school.

**Member of staff:** If a lot of parents choose to send their children to Montgomery, could you even guarantee that siblings will be kept together there?

**Marianne Evans:** It is all about pupil numbers again. If a child is in Montgomery year 4 and then a sibling follows on, that parent would apply for a place at Montgomery in the same way as any parent would apply for a place at Montgomery. If any school is oversubscribed, then the admissions policy for over subscription criteria kicks in, that will then be managed through the admissions policy. But as I say, you know, there is no guarantee, they would have to go through the policy.

**Member of staff:** You are looking to close our school and move the children off to somewhere where there is no room for them, that's the concern.

**Member of staff:** And you cannot guarantee that either. You know, you cannot say that they have a place in Montgomery School.

**Marianne Evans:** Until we know where parents will choose.....

**Member of staff:** It will be too late then. The school would be closed and there would be no room at Montgomery where they want to go. The concern is that once parents have chosen, and the school will be closed it will be too late to realise how needed we are in the area. That's the concern.

**Marianne Evans:** In previous consultations around school closures, we know that parents have not all applied en masse to go to the same school. Parents take different views so I think it is reasonable for us to expect that parents in Churchstoke will maybe make different decisions at the point of closure if the school would close. Until then, it is difficult to say about guaranteeing school places.

**Member of staff:** Surely part of the decision that must be made is whether and where children are going to go, and you do not know that? How can that then impact on the decision Powys County Council is going to make regarding school closure?

**Marianne Evans:** Our preference is for pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative school in Powys. We haven't named a receiving school, but our preference is for them to stay in Powys.

**Member of staff:** The parental preference is overwhelmingly Churchstoke. As you say the nearest alternative school is not necessarily in Powys and it is not necessarily Montgomery but because you have not named either and the uncertainty is extremely unsettling for the whole community.

**Member of staff:** Powys are passing the buck as you expect them to go to their nearest school in Powys, which is Montgomery, which will not take all the pupils which means some of them will be going to Shropshire.

**Marianne Evans:** Our preference would be for pupils to stay in Powys and have a Welsh education.

**Member of Staff:** I think what we are trying to say is that people are saying the place they want to stay in is Churchstoke.

**Lynette Lovell:** I am aware that when I was a Challenge Advisor at the school that many of the parents that you have are in Wales and at the moment from the PLASC data that only about three or four are living in Shropshire. Our preference as per the consultation, is that they do remain in Wales for their education if they are Powys pupils and with the changes to the curriculum it is really important for us to retain those learners. There have been cross-border transitions over the past few years, but it is our preference that the children do remain in Powys and go to the nearest school, but please note this is still a consultation and all points you have brought up are valid for consideration in the consultation process. Our preferred option is that these learners remain in Powys for the Welsh curriculum.

**Member of Staff:** Thank you. If it is important to Powys, they really have got to provide more security and more information to parents because at the moment there is nothing there to give any security that Powys is the place to send their children as they are not getting enough information.

**Lynette Lovell:** Thanks, that is helpful.

**Member of Staff:** In the consultation document, page 8, it states that closing the school will improve learner entitlement and experience. Can you detail what improvements we will see and provide evidence as to the better outcomes for the children?

**Lynette Lovell:** You will be well aware of our vision for learner entitlement and as Marianne started the presentation, looking at our recommendation from Estyn, looking at what we have to do to transform education in Powys. We've been through the transformation document, we have worked with headteachers and governors to produce a document for our 10-year transformation programme, and as part of that we are looking at learning experience and entitlement. We have also looked at the opportunities for our learners across Powys and there are various examples in that document of what we think in the future, learners in Powys should experience as part of the four core purposes and ensuring that they have those extended opportunities. We have looked at cluster working during the period of the pandemic and that's been good.

**Member of Staff:** Apologies but you are not answering anything about the actual evidence that by closing Churchstoke School they would get better provision elsewhere.

**Lynette Lovell:** Okay, I will come to that if you do not mind not interrupting. That is where we are in terms of looking at the learner entitlement going forward. Looking more specifically at Churchstoke then, rather than the wider concept of improving learner entitlement, you know we can have a look at what are the schools that are around you and how the learner entitlement going forward in those schools is a situation where those schools would probably be providing good opportunities. Eurig, do you want to come in there with some more specifics about provision at the schools around the area?

**Eurig Towns:** In Churchstoke, you have a key stage two class and the foundation phase class, so we understand how difficult it is to have all those year groups in the same classes. Looking at other schools they are able to have one or two year groups per class whereas you are providing it within four. This is part of the evidence that we would use to say that there is an opportunity there to improve that entitlement.

**Member of Staff:** Thank you, I still hear no evidence. I am hearing a lot of opinion. As you are aware, if we produce a self-evaluation, we have to back it up with concrete evidence and there are a lot of sweeping statements throughout this document that presents a statement with no evidence to back it. This is just one of them. There is another statement that says people numbers in each year group are small, it is more difficult to ensure peoples are appropriately challenged. We feel that is not true, but you have not presented any evidence for that statement. For the statement that larger schools have improved ability to monitor pupil progress, again, we feel that is not true. In our small classes, in our family classes we monitor our progress very well. There is a statement saying pupil well-being is better in larger schools, we say that is not true. There is no evidence presented in any documentation we have seen. No evidence for these statements says this will be better in Montgomery. There are an awful lot of sweeping statements throughout. It says Montgomery School would be a better place to develop provision which meets the requirements of the new curriculum, without evidence. Now, that would not be acceptable from a school presenting something to Estyn or presenting its self-evaluation report to the local authority. And yet this document throughout it has sweeping statements that are opinion, not backed by the evidence, or not backed by clear and transparent evidence that everyone can sit down and look at.

**Emma Palmer:** I think one of the components that that we are looking at is the wider range of educational extracurricular opportunities that can be provided in those alternative schools, and also in respect of the pupils being taught in classes with peers of similar ages. What we cannot get away from in respect of the size of Churchstoke School is that it is deemed as a small school and that definition is not a small school definition determined by Powys County Council. That is a definition

determined by Welsh Government. So, any schools with pupil numbers below 91 are identified as a small school.

I just want to give some broader context, noting that this is not answering the specific question that was just asked. I am not a teacher by trade and I, therefore, do not feel equipped to answer specific questions on teaching and learning, but in terms of the wider requirement for us to transform education in Powys, we were clearly challenged by Estyn in respect to the recommendations that they provided us with. We know that we have the financial envelope, so the money that is available to the local authority is sufficient for education in Powys. When you compare us with the rest of Wales, we are able to fund each child the average, so the same as other children across Wales.

However, we have got too many schools in Powys. Too many schools for the number of children. Overall, the numbers have decreased from 20,000 to 16,500 and they are going to further reduce to around 15,000 or 15,500. I do not know the exact figures out of my head, but I have got the data surrounding that elsewhere, and what we are seeing across the infrastructure are significant numbers of surplus places.

What is happening is in the primary schools, children are getting a really good education as determined by our challenge advisors, and previously Estyn when they were undertaking the national classification, etc. I appreciate through the pandemic that this has not been able to take place and they will be moving to other mechanisms. But what we are not able to do is provide the same level of education that people become accustomed to in primary schools in our secondary schools, and that is not because there is not sufficient funding. What is happening is the money is going into the infrastructure rather than the education, and what we need to do is re-configure the infrastructure in Powys. We need less schools, but we need to make sure they are accessible across the county. Then we need to make sure that the financial envelope remains on a par with the rest of Wales so that we can fund the education of children.

On a strategic level, you cannot really challenge that, and no one can really challenge that. It makes sense, and through the engagement that we did back in 2019 it came through very strongly from the teaching profession, from governors and the wider communities that we needed less schools. What is unfortunate, and I do appreciate from an emotional perspective, the position that you find yourselves in is that one of those schools affected is now Churchstoke. I do recognize that, and I do realize that this is a challenge for yourselves, but I must remind you that this proposal is only at consultation at this stage and no final decision has been made.

**Member of staff:** OK, thank you for that overview, but it is a generalization and that is not what we are about. What we are looking for is specifics. Now you have said that surplus places need to be addressed. Our surplus places are decreasing because our pupil numbers are rising rapidly, so we are already addressing that here. The only evidence I have had mentioned still, is an inspection report from

2015, that is already six years out of date and core visits from a Challenge Advisor who has never actually visited the school at all. That does not seem to me to be up to date with current evidence and the kind of thing that should be used in a matter that is this important.

**Emma Palmer:** With regard to the Estyn inspection report, within the School Organisation Code, we have to use the last inspection report, even if it is 10- 15 years old. Whether it is two years old, one year old we can all challenge that, about how relative it is in terms of context. But that again is something that we must do by law in respect of meeting the requirements of the School Organisation Code. It is a standard approach that we must comply with.

**Member of staff:** Even though it has nothing relevant to say about the school?

**Marianne Evans:** Just to go back to your comment about lack of evidence and sweeping statements. In terms of the likely impact of the proposal, we must address the factors in the School Organisation Code, and then we have to state in the consultation document what we think the likely impact on the proposal is. Even though there is no hard evidence, as you say, the judgment that we have come to, have come about by engagement and discussion with the Challenge Advisor team, HR team, with the Finance team - professional officers within the Council. So, it is the collective view of the Challenge Advisors and other professionals within the Council.

**Member of staff:** As you say, no hard evidence. How is Montgomery better equipped to meet children's needs?

**Eurig Towns:** Just to respond to the comment about the Challenge Adviser not actually attending the school or visiting the school, which we understand at the moment is not possible because of the pandemic. However, during all of the support visits, the evidence that you will have produced and shown to the Challenge Adviser will have been represented in the report. It is not that the Challenge Adviser is not representing what is actually happening at the school. So, I acknowledge that we cannot visit but I would say that everything that is in there is a true reflection of what is happening at the school because you are producing the evidence which we are using in the reports.

**Member of staff:** You said about the number being below 91 as being too small. That is an awful lot of schools you are going to have to close in North Montgomeryshire.

**Emma Palmer:** Yes, you are right. The Welsh Government has a definition of those schools below 91 and what we are doing is a process whereby we are working through each of those schools.

**Member of staff:** So, will we have a village school in any villages or is it going to be just an amalgamation outside Llanidloes, outside Newtown, outside Machynlleth, outside Welshpool and a village school will no longer be a thing because there is not a school in a village anymore?

**Emma Palmer:** There will be schools within villages, but we do not anticipate seeing small schools within villages.

**Member of staff:** Such as?

**Marianne Evans:** Every school and every area is looked at on a case-by-case basis and in certain areas there may be specific reasons why schools would not close. What we must do is make sure that every school that we propose to look at or review would have to go through the exact same process as we are going through with you with the exact same documentation and approach to possible options.

**Member of staff:** So, for the likes of Trefeglwys, Caersws, Llanbryn-mair, Llandinam, Llangurig you would close all of them and move them to Llanidloes or Newtown.

**Marianne Evans:** We would not close all the schools but we must look at all the schools and review them. For Trefeglwys it is in the middle of a proposal currently to change the language category. We are looking at schools throughout Powys and there are a number of proposals currently ongoing, but that is not to say that any of them will close. They must go through the process.

**Emma Palmer:** Every area of the county over the period of the 10-year programme will be looked at and then proposals will come forward for consultation in the same process, and proposals differ depending on the context and the circumstances surrounding them.

**Member of staff:** It is a follow on from the previous question there, that one of the concerns we have is that we have not been included in any review of an area that we have been targeted. When you look at the document, the current people numbers in Montgomery are 90. In other words, they are a small school. Forden with 68 is a small school, Abermule with 64 equals a small school, Leighton with 71 is a small school and Berriew with 85 pupils, a small school. So, all of the schools that are potentially receiving schools for our pupils are small schools themselves. One of our concerns is that the children who move from us to Montgomery will very soon have another review and have to go through the whole process again, which would be completely unfair. As you have identified, all of these schools are small schools and therefore you should be looking at reorganisation in those areas. Why us and why is the area not looked at all together?

**Emma Palmer:** In some proposals over the years, some areas have been looked at in totality and in others they have not, and it is really around the change that we need to see across the County. In some instances, you have to do things in a certain order

to unlock the ability to make a change within the area. If, for instance, based on what you were saying earlier that most families wanted to take their children to Montgomery Church in Wales school, then actually the consequences of that would be that it would no longer be a small school for example.

**Member of Staff:** If they have the room to expand. Montgomery is in a better condition than us, but they do not have the room to expand. There is a need for something in this area, but our pupils would move into a situation where they are going to have all this disruption again, or they have that choice of either staying with the uncertainty within Powys or to move to a stable situation in Shropshire.

**Marianne Evans:** If you feel that there are options that we have not considered or should be considered further as part of this conversation please put them forward. We would need to look at all alternative options when we bring the consultation report back before Cabinet and assess those options. If your view is that Churchstoke should be looked at as a wider area review, then put that forward as a case and we can have a look at that.

**Member of staff:** Even options you have already discarded?

**Marianne Evans:** If you feel we have discarded an option and you feel that we should not have discarded, then make that known to us.

**Emma Palmer:** Essentially, it is about making your case, because we cannot assume that we have all the answers. Hence the consultation is so important and it may be that you are aware of something completely obvious that we have not recognised. It might be that you come up with an idea that we had not been considering at all, that makes perfect sense. The consultation element is to make sure that we have that understanding and then we can absolutely consider those views and that will shape what we do next.

**Member of staff:** I wish we had the confidence that you were listening, but I think that is lacking.

**Emma Palmer:** It has happened in other circumstances and we can give a recent example of where we worked with the Diocese in another area where we have consulted with them and actually having done our initial consultation with them, we have reconsidered the proposals and then gone back out to consult with them again, before moving to the next step. That was in recent months.

**Marianne Evans:** We have also had previous proposals at this stage in a process, that when we have taken the consultation report back to Cabinet for a decision those proposals have not proceeded. Quite recent ones as well. It is really important that give us your local views so we can inform Cabinet.

**Member of staff:** I have no doubt that we will share those views. The consultation document says in terms of mitigating action, engagement with parents will happen throughout the process. So why is that not happening? Some of the staff feel that this is a human rights issue there as you are not properly engaging with the community and refusing to have a public meeting, with Churchstoke Explorers as well who are on this site. The document says they will not be affected which is patently absurd. Why is it that Powys County Council refuses to properly engage with the community?

**Marianne Evans:** I think we are engaging with the community. Everybody has a chance to be part of this consultation and provide their views. We have not had public meetings in school consultations for quite a long time before this pandemic. We have relied on meetings with the governors, with the staff, with school councils etc. to bring that information forward, and that has worked.

So, in terms of that statement around mitigating action being to engage with parents throughout the process, what we mean by that is that there is an opportunity now for parents to engage in the process by supplying us with their views. There is also an opportunity should the proposal go forward - we will continue to engage with the parents. Should the school close then we would still continue to engage with the parents. That is what that statement is all about.

**Emma Palmer:** Just to confirm there and in respect of the parents being able to put forward their views, they can put forward their views as per the one slide that was shown in respect of responding to the consultation either with the form online, either in written form or through email. Our experience of undertaking the consultation in this way is that we are having far greater responses through this process in this way than ever before. Also, with those written responses that you obtain, we referred to the consultation report earlier. They will see the responses from the organization in that consultation report.

**Member of staff:** Thank you, I do not think that the ability to respond is an issue. Parents are finding a way to do that. The community is finding a way to do that, it has more to do with engagement and how do they get their questions answered, surely a public meeting where you have direct engagement is better.

**Emma Palmer:** Any questions that the parents have, please do encourage them to submit them with their responses.

**Member of staff:** But they need the answers to the questions in order to respond, for clarification and so on.

**Emma Palmer:** There will not be any public meetings going forward. That is the process that we have adopted and which has been taken since 2016.

**Marianne Evans:** I think with public meetings in the past, the value to the public and the Council is limited because, in the time you have, there are only about 10 questions that can be asked and I am not sure it helps at all in disseminating wider information, so we have moved away from that and relying on this approach.

**Member of Staff:** What about the playgroup, engaging with other professionals that will be directly affected?

**Marianne Evans:** In terms of the play group, they are a non-maintained setting, I know the request came for setting staff to join this meeting, but we felt that this this meeting was purely for school staff because we are not responsible for the early years setting. The setting is responsible for the setting staff.

But one of the key things I wanted to ask you anyway is whether there is an early years issue. I know we have recognized it in the in the consultation document about the potential impact of not having a school in Churchstoke on the early years setting, however I wanted to have a conversation with you about that to see how badly affected the setting may be.

**Member of Staff:** At present, the setting meet in one of our buildings. They have developed an area outside with grants from Powys County Council. They use the disabled toilet facilities and our staff toilets. They have their dinners in the school as well, so in the absence of the school, it is beyond anyone's comprehension how they could not to be affected. We have also got the fact that parents who are able to, would be more likely to take their children to the early year setting that their children would be going to school in. Their numbers would fall and would not be viable. No one here has any doubt that losing the school will be the end of the play group as well. The difficulty being the impact on the community. Those who could afford it or who are able to do so will transport their children. A third of the community that we have got are on free school meals, who do not have transport, and who cannot afford it and would be deprived of pre-school education.

**Emma Palmer:** Thank you, those comments are important so that we can reflect in terms of the impact assessment.

**Member of staff:** If they are really, really important, I would urge you to engage with the Playgroup Little Explorers because they give you far more detail, so if these facts really are important, then you really need to have a meeting with Explorers.

**Marianne Evans:** We will take that on board.

**Member of staff:** Plans for the site is the next question. Are there plans to replace the wildlife, environmental and amenity value of the site, if it should be developed following the closure of the school?

**Marianne Evans:** If there isn't a school in Churchstoke, then as the site is in Council ownership, it does provide an opportunity for us to sell it and receive capital receipts which would then be ploughed back into the Council's budget to be spent on education provision.

However, until that time, we will not know what the options are for the site. That is something we would work through once a decision has been made, and we know where we are headed.

**Member of staff:** Is it part of the critical path and that certain things must happen before other things can happen in the area? Is the sale of our school site part of that critical path to possibly do something in the area?

**Emma Palmer:** No, the sale of the school is not in the critical path. There has been no decision about the future of that site to my knowledge. What would happen as I said, first and foremost, is we need to go through the consultation and due process in line with the School Organisation Code. Say we have gone through the process and we have gone through a number of decision points and the outcome is that the Cabinet decides to close the school, it is at that point that we would then have the discussions with our corporate property colleagues, who would then determine whether or not the site is surplus. They would then look at what the options are for the site. Those conversations have not started because we are not, we are nowhere near down the process basically in respect of that. The local authority has not made any decisions around that because first and foremost is the consultation and decision around the school's future.

**Member of staff:** There is a concern over the community hall as well because the school make a substantial contribution to the community hall funds for the use of sports facilities. Recreation and association are quite certain that without that contribution the hall will no longer viable. That is another issue that really needs to be highlighted, losing not just the play group but the community hall as well.

**Marianne Evans:** I would like to thank you, first of all for the information that you gave for the Community Impact Assessment, which is something we will build on as we take this forward into the next stage, so you know anything around the impact of that on the community is really essential now for the next Cabinet decision.

**Member of staff:** Again, engagement with the community more fully would probably help inform you. There's a couple of points in the consultation documents along the lines of "it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would impact on professional learning opportunities for staff", and there is also one that says "it is not expected that it would impact on the salary arrangements of staff". I do not understand how you can say that when the majority of staff will be made redundant?

**Lynette Lovell:** We are aware of how difficult the situation is for the staff. I do not know if Sarah Jones wants to come in and talk through the HR process? Sarah

Chrisoforou has already been to meet you to talk through some of that and what it could actually mean in practise in terms of staffing arrangements going forward. Of course, this is all if the consultation goes through.

**Sarah Jones:** Yes, I am afraid I do not know the answer to your initial question, but I have made a note of it and I will ask Sarah Christoforou to respond. In terms of the staff consultation which would take place, again if a decision was made by the Cabinet to close, a staff consultation would take place with you and that would be for a period of a minimum 30 days where we would go through with you all of your options and what the possibilities are of different roles within the Council, and we would sit and meet with you individually to go through all of that.

**Member of staff:** We shall leave that to get an answer from Sarah Christoforou with regards to specifics.

**Emma Palmer:** If we can ask for Sarah Christoforou to respond by the end of the week, that would be helpful to the staff.

**Sarah Jones:** Yes of course.

**Member of staff:** We have another sweeping statement that says “the children will have access to additional resources at the alternative schools”. What additional resources will they have access to an alternative school that they do not have access to here?

**Lynette Lovell:** In terms of resources, we are looking at human resources as well. In terms of the teaching groups that you have. We know that have got full key stages in classes at the moment. However, in a larger school there would be less of that full key stage teaching. Also in terms of resource you have got leadership capacity which is strengthened, as in larger schools there is more time for leadership activity for monitoring, quality assurance etc.

**Emma Palmer:** The other side that we are looking at was those extracurricular activities. Naturally, if you have got larger schools the children could be afforded the opportunity of football teams, netball teams and those components. So, the resource is not just necessarily around the financial resource. It is in its broader case of the number of factors that fall within the resource.

**Member of staff:** Okay, a couple of points there. In terms of the leadership and monitoring, I mean I have got two classes to monitor. A larger school has more classes. I do not necessarily agree that the benefits are as great as they are stated in terms of the ability to provide better leadership within a school and better management of the school. By implication, the leadership and management in this school is being criticised simply because it is a small school, I think that is being overstated.

When it comes to the extracurricular benefits that is all very well, provided the children can access them, and the paper itself admits that children who have to rely on free school transport cannot necessarily access the benefits of these supposed additional extracurricular activities.

The concern is that it is going to greatly increase social division as well, in that the ones who can afford for their parents to go and collect them at the end of the day will be able to access the extracurricular activities, or for that matter things like concerts, parents evenings and those kinds of things, those who must rely on free school transport will not be able to. Contrary to what the document says, we have got 29% of children on free school meals here. That is a full 1/3 of the school community that we would be looking at being disadvantaged not advantaged by the transfer. The whole argument over extracurricular activities and increased extracurricular activities, is very decisive and not true.

**Lynette Lovell:** I appreciate that comment about after school extracurricular activities, but I know from my own experience that many extracurricular activities take place during the lunchtime. So, netball practice football practice, and choir practice. I have spent many a lunch time doing those, so there are those extracurricular activities that the children in a larger school perhaps have more access to that can take place during the school day, so that those children that you talk about are able to take part in those extracurricular activities.

**Member of staff:** The difficulty is that what we are asking Montgomery to do is change what they're doing for the sake of the pupils that are coming in. It's been stated that so few pupils are coming in that the local schools won't be greatly affected by taking the pupils in and now we appear to be saying actually they're going to change what they're doing in order to accommodate the fact that some pupils will be coming to them. It is one of the contradictions in the report. I think that the concern is that you are saying that the school will not have to change what it is doing, and it won't be greatly affected, but it will have to change what it's doing.

**Member of staff:** How do you know that we are not providing extracurricular activities such as lunchtime clubs, after school clubs, because you have not asked us, you do not know that we do not provide those already.

**Member of staff:** It was actually in the Community Impact Assessment, and I think someone has commented on the considerable amount of extracurricular activity that we do here. I must admit I do not know what Montgomery have, but I do not think it will necessarily be greater.

**Marianne Evans:** I think the issue is that we do recognise that those pupils who are reliant on home to school transport would potentially not be able to take part in after schools' extracurricular activities if they were reliant on home to school transport. We do recognise in the consultation document that is a weakness of the proposal. But then again, we have many rural schools across the county and pupils rely on

home to school transport all the time. I think schools across the county and across Wales and any rural area would have the same problem and they work through it, so those children are not disadvantaged.

**Lynette Lovell:** I was just going to come in with the question brought up there about how do we know? Just to say that when we visit schools – and that is the Challenge Advisor team – it is part of the Estyn inspection framework to look at what clubs or what opportunities there are. So, we do have that information on Churchstoke School. I know we have been in a very different year now with the pandemic, but we do have that information from your schools as we have got detailed Challenge Advisor reports on the school over a period of time and considering some of that broad and balanced curriculum that is provided at schools as well. We do have that information and as you know, up-to-date information has been a challenge over this year in some cases, but we have carried out Challenge Advisor visits and we have asked those questions around the blended learning provision that the school has provided over this time as well, so we do have that information.

**Member of Staff:** You discussed previously about masses of buses taking children to school. That is not environmentally friendly especially when Wales is trying to reduce its carbon footprint.

**Marianne Evans:** It is a problem for a county the size of Powys and being so rural. It is just a fact that we have a massive school transport bill and a massive school transport infrastructure. Going forward the Council have signed up for a zero carbon future. However, we would need to look at whether there are more environmentally friendly methods of transporting pupils such as electric buses.

**Member of Staff:** Surely if you need more transport, that is going to be detrimental, and it is better to keep the children in the village where they can walk to school. Most of our children walk to school.

One of the many concerns is that Powys have declared a climate emergency. They have policies and procedures that have supposed to be directed towards improving the carbon footprint and improving the environmental sustainability of the local authority. And yet we have proposals such as the one that is being made that actually acts against it, and that will put far more vehicles on the road and whatever we think about getting electric buses, we will not have enough electric buses to take all these children to school.

**Emma Palmer:** The transport element is a real challenge for the county – it is quarter the size of Wales. However, you are making the assumption that there will be more buses on the road. Instead of more buses on the road, you put a different size bus on the road. That does not reduce the carbon footprint, I appreciate that, but less buildings will reduce CO2 emissions as well.

**Member of Staff:** Putting one bus on the road will not be a solution for us when the children have to go to at least three different schools. We are not talking about putting one more vehicle on the road. We are talking about putting lots more vehicles on the road.

**Emma Palmer:** I am afraid I do not agree with that statement and the reason I do not agree with that statement is because there will be buses already travelling to other schools across the whole of the estate that we have across Powys and working with our transport colleagues there are spaces on certain buses. I cannot speak specifically for Churchstoke right now because I have not got the facts in front of me.

**Member of Staff:** There are no buses running from Churchstoke to Chirbury or Montgomery. The only bus that runs from Churchstoke to Bishops Castle is the secondary transport from Churchstoke to Bishops Castle which does not go to the same site and it is full anyway. It will mean a considerable increase of buses on the road. Also, for the ALN transport as well, you would need 2 or 3 taxis. We are not talking about just putting one more bus on the road.

**Marianne Evans:** Okay, we will take your comments there and respond to them accordingly in the consultation report.

**Member of staff:** The numbers of children is an issue. If you go on Powys estimates, its 22 children to transport in September 2025, but the actual numbers are 52 plus. There are also a number of children within the community who already go to school in Shropshire. In the absence of this school, their closest school will become the school that they are going to, and Powys will be liable for transporting them as well, providing free transport. We have come up easily with 30 names. You are looking at transporting 80 children, not 20 odd, which is why I am saying the idea of one bus on the road, is nowhere near being close to accurate.

**Marianne Evans:** Can you confirm your statement regarding the 30 pupils travelling?

**Member of staff:** They are living within the catchment of the school, but are already attending Primary schools in Shropshire. If Churchstoke closes, then their nearest alternative school will be in Shropshire and therefore Powys would be liable to pay for their transport.

**Member of Staff:** Just a query on the consultation document, it says that Montgomery school currently has 0% of free school meals, we have 29%. The question is, is the figure for Montgomery correct and what experience have Montgomery got in meeting the needs of vulnerable children.

**Lynette Lovell:** Currently there's 0% there, but, looking at the teaching and learning at that school currently and obviously from their Estyn report, they can deal with groups of learners. Although there may not be free school meal learners there, we

are not saying that all free school meal learners are vulnerable. There are vulnerable groups within the school, and the school successfully deals with those vulnerable groups.

**Member of staff:** I am just coming back to that. I have a concern about social economic status and a divide, if our free school meal children were going to Montgomery school and if it is correct that they have zero free school meals children or disadvantaged children, they are probably not going to be happy about a massive wave of Churchstoke children coming to their school anyway. I am worried that there would be even more of a divide. With children that are maybe more disadvantaged anyway with those things such as new school uniform, new shoes etc. I worry for our children.

**Member of Staff:** Picking up on that, I think it was polling day and I was sat there giving out the forms and both Chirbury and Montgomery parents were willing to fill these forms in because they did not want our children at their schools. I was devastated by the fact that these parents from other schools are willing to fill in these forms to keep our school open as they did not want our children at their school and so many people did not know they had to fill in the consultation form. They all thought they had to sign the petition but did not know they had to fill in a consultation form. People do not know that they have to fill the consultation form.

**Marianne Evans:** We can reiterate the message for the need to complete the consultation form.

**Emma Palmer:** Firstly, I am sorry that you have had to experience that.

**Lynette Lovell:** Can I just say that there is nobody more passionate about vulnerable groups than myself. In terms of that, it would be our expectation that all schools are truly inclusive in Powys and if there is any hint of that kind of behaviour in schools towards children who are less well off or who are vulnerable in any other way, that would be dealt with. We are not having schools that do not include everyone. Every learner is equal in Powys and I am very strong on that.

**Member of Staff:** There is a commitment within the document to support pupils with the transition process and I can see that working within Powys schools. However my concern is with the Shropshire schools and how well Powys can engage with them, because like it or not there are going to be large number of families who choose to send their children to an English school because there'll be free transport there because it's their closest school. It will cut down journey times for the younger pupils, the funding in Shropshire school is better and there is that bit of distrust towards Powys at the moment.

The way we can support their transition into Shropshire is a concern if parents make that decision. Also is the fact that it will deny children access to the Welsh curriculum and to the Welsh language and the Welsh ethos. I know that it is a concern right

across the wider community and the Welsh Language Commissioner has been in touch about it. How does it fit in with the local authority and the Welsh Assembly's plan to increase the use of Welsh language when so many of our pupils are being pushed across the border into England?

**Marianne Evans:** I do not think that they are being pushed across the border. Our preference is for them to have a Powys education and the opportunity with the Welsh language. We do not know what parents will decide but from the local authority point of view the that is fundamental to us.

**Member of Staff:** That said, I think better engagement with the community would have helped from the start. There will be a drastic effect on the Welsh ethos and the Welsh identity in the village and that is a concern to everyone who thinks that the Welsh curriculum is getting it right and that learning Welsh is the right thing to do. I do not think you would see Churchstoke as a Welsh village in anything other than name if the closure goes ahead.

**Member of staff:** There is a feeling that the consultation has all been operated at too much of an arm's length, too remotely and not being able to have face to face meetings doesn't help. But within the community, staff, and people from Little Explorers there is a feeling of the remoteness of Powys which we feel a lot of the time anyway I think and the outlying areas of Powys are just being knocked off and far from creating an outstanding rural education system, what's being imposed is an urban rural education system on a rural area.

**Emma Palmer:** We'll note your comments.

**Marianne Evans:** This is a very anxious and uncertain time for staff in school and if you want to contact Sarah Christoforou to discuss anything please do so.

Emma Palmer thanked the staff for attending the meeting and contributing, and reminded them that they could still respond to the consultation in writing.

## **Consultation Meeting with Governors of Churchstoke School 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

### **Present**

#### **Governors:**

**Charlotte Swanson**, Chair of Governors

**Ian Roberts**, Headteacher

**Cllr Michael Jones**

**B Evans**

**Louise Tilsley**

**Neil Yapp**

**'Pandn'**

**Gwyneth Evans**

**H Morris**

**J Hilliard**

#### **Officers:**

**Emma Palmer**, Head of Transformation and Communications

**Lynette Lovell**, Interim Chief Education Officer

**Hayley Smith**, Service Manager, Inclusion and Youth Services

**Marianne Evans**, Service Manager Schools Transformation

**Sarah Christoforou**, HR Business Manager (Schools)

**Mari Thomas**, Finance Manager for Schools Transformation

**Sarah Astley**, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education

#### **Other:**

**Cllr Phyl Davies**, Portfolio Holder for Education (observing)

Emma Palmer welcomed all to the meeting and the headteacher asked for a transcription of the meeting for a member of staff who was unable to attend who is also a governor. Emma Palmer welcomed all governors and introduced the Powys County Council officers attending the meeting. It was explained that the meeting would be recorded for the purposes of preparing a transcript, and the recording then deleted.

Emma Palmer explained that she would be chairing the meeting and would give all members opportunities to raise questions.

Marianne Evans gave a Powerpoint presentation and explained that in February 2021, Powys Cabinet gave approval to proceed with consultation on a proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School. The consultation started on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April and will end on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June.

The proposal is as follows:

- To close Churchstoke C.P. School from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools in Powys.

Emma Palmer emphasised that the only decision that Cabinet have made so far in respect of the school is to consult on the proposal. No decision has been made. Emma Palmer then invited questions.

**Chair of Governors:** I'd like to read a little statement, then I'm going to ask some questions and when I ask the questions, I may also include a bit of background knowledge or background information as to why I'm asking them. If you need me to repeat the question again, I'll be very happy to do that.

What I hope we can start to achieve with discussions at this meeting is to prove to you that Churchstoke school should not be closed, particularly when you're using a flawed and contradictory consultation document with inaccurate figures and facts, and without there being a presumption by you to keep rural schools open. Your actions, if you go ahead will rip the heart out of the community of Churchstoke and have a massive knock-on effect. More importantly, we intend to prove to you that you will make no financial saving. In fact, it's going to cost you more. Thank you very much.

So, for my first question. The consultation document states on Page 6 that closing our school will improve learner entitlement and experience. I know this has really upset our staff. Could you please detail what improvements we would see and provide evidence of better outcomes for our children? Having had four children go through Churchstoke, I feel that without evidence, this is just the opinion of those writing the proposal or making the decision, without any evidence or any understanding of standards in Churchstoke and to what depth? Even our current Challenge Advisor has never visited the school. What input has there been to the consultation document from Challenge Advisors who provided the information which informed this statement and where did they get their information from?

**Lynette Lovell:** Yes, I'm happy to come in on that one. In terms of the input into the statements there, the Challenge Advisors are fully involved in all of the analysis and the meetings as all of this comes together. You mentioned there that your Challenge Advisor this year hasn't been to the school, but in Powys we have carried out a virtual visit and had evidence and you've had your report back around that. We've also got Hayley online tonight who, prior to that was your Challenge Advisor. Prior to that, I was the Challenge Advisor at the school. I know that we have to go back in time as well, because the report that we have to talk about in terms of the Consultation Document is the 2015 inspection report. I think that I was working with you as a school then. But all of that is considered and they do have full input. Eurig Towns as the Senior Challenge Advisor and the Challenge Advisor team input into

all of this information, and we have our reports from not just this year, but we have the report, the categorisation report and all of that going back.

The bigger picture is around the sort of learner entitlement and experience around the transformation document. And looking at that issue whereby you have schools that are larger, you have year groups that are not a full key stage, whereas in smaller schools you have a full key stage. You also very often have a teaching head in a smaller school and that has its own complexities in terms of trying to manage and balance the teaching and learning, the leadership, expectations, etc of the school. Where you've got a larger school, that teacher often has less teaching commitment and is able to look at the broader and more strategic picture at the school. Those are the kinds of evidence that that go into those statements, and I can just assure you that the Challenge Advisor team are fully involved in all those discussions now.

Hayley is here to talk about it more specifically, but I think she is having difficulty connecting. She has more recent first-hand knowledge of the school. As I say, we realize this last year that with the pandemic we have not done face to face visits between yourselves and your Challenge Advisor at school, but certainly Hayley's reports over the years before would have been crucial to the evidence base for that.

**Emma Palmer:** We can bring Hayley in as soon as she's able to join this. There was just something that Lynette said that I wanted to make clear to everybody. Lynette referred to the 2015 Estyn inspection report. Just so that everybody is aware, the School Organisation Code which is the process and the policy that we have to adhere to from a Welsh Government perspective requires the latest Estyn inspection report to be mentioned in the consultation documents, whether that's 2015 or whether it was 2001, we have to legally make reference to it. I just wanted that to be clear.

**Chair of Governors:** Some would argue that you have a better educational process in a much smaller school because problems you have can be identified.

**Emma Palmer:** We note your statement there.

**Headteacher:** I think as the Chair of Governors has said, there are pros and cons in both situations. I think it irritates us who work in small schools to see that small schools are constantly put down and denigrated by Powys County Council. We work very hard. We are very passionate about what we do and actually in many ways having children in family groups is better than having them in single year groups. But that just is not recognized in the report it all. Just the negatives on small schools and the positives of large schools.

**Emma Palmer:** Thank you, we will take that as a statement.

**Chair of Governors:** Why have the transformation team continued to use out of date data in the consultation document in relation to number on roll, free school

meals, funding per pupil, surplus places, despite the fact they were quite clearly informed that the data has dramatically changed in the past year. Why have you chosen not to use current data? Because I feel the deficiencies in the data mean that the Cabinet have been misled when they approved going forward with the proposal.

**Marianne Evans:** The data as we stated in the document is mostly based on PLASC 2020 which is our standard data set. We have not received the PLASC 2021 data yet. If we had not had the pandemic, I am sure we would be in a position now where we would have had updated data. When we go forward into the next stage in the consultation report, if the data is updated then we would make sure that is reflected in the consultation report. For our purposes the data is based on PLASC 2020 unless stated otherwise. In terms of projections, we have two sets of projections that you'll see. So, Powys finance projections were taken in November 2020, which is more up to date, but we do know that at the moment you have more pupils on roll and we know what your intake is going to be in September as well, so that will all come out in the next report.

**Chair of Governors:** It's annoying when we inform you of the deficiencies of the data, and nothing happened. But I appreciate you're saying you have to use a certain set of data.

**Emma Palmer:** If we had the 2021 verified data it would be the 2021 information that was included. But this is the consultation element, and if we go to the next stage, we can look at the figures during that time. Just so that all governors know, I explained this to staff as well, the definition by Welsh Government for a small school is anything under 91. That is not a Powys County Council definition of a small school. So even with a difference of 10 based on the numbers that you are looking at, you would still be defined as a small school in the context of the Welsh Government definition.

**Headteacher:** As we said in the staff meeting, all our surrounding schools are small schools by that definition as well. Every single one of them are also small schools under the Welsh Government definition.

**Emma Palmer:** As I explained in the staff meeting, the programme that we have is a 10-year programme in respect of delivering the strategy and all small schools in every area of the County is being looked at, not just small schools, but also ALN, Welsh-medium and secondary provision. So, there will be no stone left unturned. We are working our way through.

**Chair of Governors:** It's just frustrating when there's no consistency in the data, but we'll move on, or we will never get anywhere. What birth rate has been used in the consultation document? As you may be aware, because we are reasonably close to the border, our families are registered at both Montgomery and Bishops Castle medical practices. Does the source of your birth rate data reflect this? If not, why?

School health services have already informed us that you have not looked at the data properly.

**Marianne Evans:** The data has come from our school's statistician. We will have a look at that.

**Headteacher:** Just to say the school health service have given us sort of definite information that whereas they have access to the Powys statistics on birth dates, they don't have access to the Shropshire ones. In fact, a good half of our pupils won't be recorded on there. That is something that I think the transformation team need to take into account, not just for Churchstoke but all the way up and down the border as it will be happening elsewhere as well.

**Emma Palmer:** Thanks. We do have a statistician corporately also and as you know the recent ONS has been undertaken, so we're constantly looking at that and the border issues, but we'll go back and double check that point so that we can clarify.

**Chair of Governors:** Why close the school to address the issue of low pupil numbers as stated in the consultation document, at a time when pupil numbers are growing significantly? We are forecast to have 52 pupils on roll in September 2022. This is an increase of 108% since January 2020 and it is based on current known children in the school and preschool plus those that are already known to be moving into the area who have asked for admission, so these are real people and we do have names for all of them. Playgroup is currently at capacity with 22 pre-school children on the books and this does not take into account any of the additional housing developments in progress. Why does the consultation document say that our pupil numbers are not expected to increase for the foreseeable future? Powys forecasts are demonstrably inaccurate. A projection of 22 in January 21, when actual pupil numbers were 38.

**Marianne Evans:** In terms of pupil projections, the consultation document does say that there may be a potential from the housing developments that would increase pupil numbers, so we do recognize that. However, as stated in the meeting with staff, we need to probably take more account of that so we will do that.

**Chair of Governors:** There are still 100 houses to be built.

**Marianne Evans:** Yes, so in terms of the reason for the case for change still being low pupil numbers, I think that recognizes that you need quite a lot of pupils to reach that number of 91 Welsh Government classifies as being small and that is the reason why.

**Chair of Governors:** Our capacity is 72.

**Marianne Evans:** Yes, but what I'm saying is you're still classified as a small school.

**Chair of Governors:** I appreciate that. We cannot get to 91 even if we wanted to.

**Marianne Evans:** I understand that.

**Headteacher:** We feel that the section on future need and demand in the area for additional places, page 26 of the consultation document is completely inadequate. There has not been a proper consideration of the housing developments. It has been brushed under the carpet and ignored. There is the potential for us to reach our capacity and beyond. There just has not been a proper analysis of Powys housing development, even though the planning is all being passed by Powys, not just in Churchstoke but in the surrounding communities as well. There's some increase that's allowed within the document. But it's another hundred houses. That is not some increase. That is a major increase and to say that people numbers at the school are not expected to increase significantly is not correct. They have done and they will continue to do so.

**Marianne Evans:** OK, this is the purpose of the consultation. So, if you want to point these things out, if you think our projections and estimates are incorrect, then please say so and we will respond then in our consultation report.

**Chair of Governors:** The slightly crazy thing is some of the houses are being built by Powys as affordable housing, so perhaps the Planning Department and the Schools Department should talk to each other a little bit?

**Marianne Evans:** Yes, we do. The difficult thing is to estimate how many pupils will come from these housing developments. It is not an easy estimate to do. We note your comments around this, and we will make sure that the consultation report is clear about your point on this.

**Chair of Governors:** Yes, I have insider knowledge on one of them so I can assure you that parents of school age children have bought quite a lot of the houses.

**Marianne Evans:** It's good to know, that's why local knowledge can be very important.

**Emma Palmer:** I can't remember the figure off the top my head and I'll try and look for it as the meeting is going on, but there is a ratio where in terms of planning purposes you calculate the number of children anticipated, but I can't remember the exact figure.

**Marianne Evans:** It is just below 0.5.

**Headteacher:** So, 100 is another 50 pupils?

**Marianne Evans:** Yes, potentially on that criteria. It's still only an estimate.

**Headteacher:** In terms of forward planning, surely that's all we've got anyway. We have to look at what the potential is there for it. So, it's already all well and good to say it's just an estimate, but we have to use it. We cannot ignore it.

**Marianne Evans:** By raising it we will take account of it. And then we will look at it in the consultation report.

**Headteacher:** Sorry it would have helped if housing and community development had actually been included in the engagement proposal. But the impact assessment actually says that they were not. Why were housing and community development not included in the impact assessment?

**Emma Palmer:** Just to confirm that the Head of Housing and Community Development actually sits on the Programme Board for Transforming Education.

**Headteacher:** So, the fact that it says in the impact assessment that they weren't included is wrong?

**Emma Palmer:** I am not sure of the context within the impact assessment right now.

**Marianne Evans:** We do engage with them around housing developments, so we have looked at this.

**Headteacher:** So just an error in the impact assessment?

**Emma Palmer:** We will make that amendment. If I can ask other governors if we can remain respectful through this in terms of behaviours, as we are trying to answer the questions so if we can refrain from laughing when people are speaking, that would be just respectful for those that are that are engaging. Thank you very much.

**Chair of Governors:** On the same sort of wavelength, in the consultation document projected pupil numbers for Shropshire schools include housing projections. Why have you not used housing projections for Churchstoke? You have partly answered this question, but I just want to emphasize it. Similarly on page 42, why have you used current capacity data and not forecast capacity with the housing data?

**Marianne Evans:** We use the current capacity figures because that is known and when we know what your intake is going to be for next September, then in the consultation report we will update the capacity figures.

**Chair of Governors:** OK, so in the consultation document, page 50, why does the SWOT analysis say that option one, continue as we are, would not reduce surplus places? It stands to reason that as our numbers grow, our surplus places reduce. Why does the same table also state that option one would not address the high

budget per pupil? Again, it stands to reason that as our numbers grow, our funding per pupil reduces. Can you explain your statements?

**Marianne Evans:** Yes, it is based on the status quo and the current numbers that we have, that's why when we looked at that, pupil numbers in Churchstoke would continue to be lower based on the projections. Until we know the exact number of pupils on the roll, it's difficult to say whether we'd be reducing surplus places or not.

**Chair of Governors:** But I mean from the predictions we've got, and the houses coming to Churchstoke, it is going to go down isn't it.

**Emma Palmer:** If I can just interject, there is a comment in the chat 'impact on other services section, page three of the impact assessment shows housing and Community development as no impact', so we'll need to revisit that based on the conversation.

**Governor:** It's not a finance related question, this is just a comment. Marianne has mentioned a couple of times about how we're using current data. It's not current, but it's your latest current data if you like from reports that you have and that you will update things when you know what actual numbers are come this September. Actually, we're making a decision here. That is, a decision that impacts on our community forever. So actually, if in 2-3 years' time, given all the 100 extra houses, we potentially have 70, 80, 90 pupils on our roll, we surely need to be making a decision today that reflects that, not just what's currently in place. Otherwise, it's not going to be fit for purpose in the future, is it? I just think it's very short sighted to say that you will use current data to decide whether to close your school. It just worries me.

**Marianne Evans:** We will take account of updated projections. We will take account of the housing issues that you raise, and you know, as I said before, this is the purpose of consultation, to look at this.

At the moment we're using PLASC 2020 data as our benchmark, but when we get to the next round of whatever we publish, consultation reports, then we will have probably had PLASC 21 data, and we'll update accordingly then.

**Governor:** But we also need to be looking at our numbers and I appreciate they are just estimates, but we need to be really mindful of those estimates because we can't make a decision now that impacts the community and the children and the young families in this community in 2-3 years down the line. We've got to look forward.

**Marianne Evans:** It's an important point. We will take that into account. So, thank you.

**Emma Palmer:** Yes, thank you very much, absolutely. And in terms of future generations and sustainability, we need those factors.

**Chair of Governors:** Can I just add to that, Churchstoke is designated a large village and it is therefore prioritized for housing and economic development.

So, the consultation document states that the federation option was discounted because there are no other CP schools in the vicinity. There are in fact three CP schools under 10 miles away from Churchstoke and six more within 15 miles. There are many examples of successful federations covering distances between schools greater than 10 miles in Shropshire, and the Carno, Llanbryn-mair and Glantwymyn federation for example in Powys. The distance between those schools is greater than 10 miles. Do you not see this as a successful federation in Powys?

**Marianne Evans:** In Powys, in the federations that we have, we generally tend to federate schools that are neighbouring schools. Because of that we considered the federation of Montgomery and Churchstoke, but obviously Montgomery is a Church in Wales school and Churchstoke is a CP School. However, if you feel that we need to consider a federation with another school or schools, you could put that forward as an alternative option as part of the consultation. As part of it all we have to assess those alternative options coming through. So, if you feel as a body that is something we need to look at, then please by all means put that in. But that's the reason why we didn't consider any other school.

**Chair of Governors:** Yes, because of course the School Organisation Code states that there must be a strong reason for closure and that all other options, including federation, must be properly considered. We have no evidence that this has been done at all.

**Marianne Evans:** OK, well I'll just say that we had to discount the option to federate with Montgomery on the basis that it is a Church in Wales school. In terms of federation as a model, Lynette do you want to come in?

**Chair of Governors:** I can't see why it has been discounted.

**Lynette Lovell:** I'm not going to go over what Marianne said, because obviously the schools local to you are Montgomery, St Michaels, Forden, and those schools are all Church in Wales and looking at where you are in terms of geography there, the schools that are within 10 miles of you there that wouldn't be Church schools are probably in Shropshire.

I think in terms of federation as a model it can work, and it does work. It is effective with Carno, Llanbryn-mair and Glantwymyn, and there are options around various federations. We've also got split sites, Newtown High School for example. That's gone on quite a while as you know. So, there are options that we do consider, and they can work. It does offer up some instances for shared working etc. It is considered and, in this instance here, it was considered by the team, the Challenge Advisors and the Transformation Team who look at all these options and the

situation you're in there is that the schools that are closest to you, are Church in Wales schools so there is another issue there. We do have examples where Church in Wales schools have a soft federation or an acting head from a Church in Wales school, but certainly not something that is an agreed formal federation.

**Chair of Governors:** There are three schools within 10 miles; Berriew, Leighton and Abermule.

**Headteacher:** Yes, there are three schools within the 10 miles; Berriew, Leighton and Abermule. They have actually been suggested as alternative schools. If parents don't want their children to go to a Church in Wales school, then there is alternative CP provision for the pupils. If that's the case and the pupils can be expected to travel that distance, we really fail to see why it could not be considered for federation purposes. If the children can do it, then it's perfectly viable as a federation option.

**Marianne Evans:** Yes, just to clarify, we usually consider the closest schools, the neighbouring schools as part of any federation. The fact that it is discounted is based on the fact that we can't federate community primary schools and Church in Wales schools, but we have considered the merger option for Churchstoke and Montgomery.

**Headteacher:** Just to come back on that. I mean merger is of course an option as well, and that's still within the proposal. The problem with that is it takes away CP provision in the area. As you said yourself, the surrounding schools are all Church in Wales. If parents want their children to have a CP education, their only option is to take their children into Shropshire. That's not something that we want to see. So, the idea of keeping CP provision within Churchstoke, allowing parents that option I think is a very powerful one and federation with one of our neighbouring CP schools. I don't see anything wrong with that.

**Chair of Governors:** The consultation document states alternative CP provision is available within 10 miles, which we've just established. Will you provide free transport to these schools, bearing in mind you're depriving parents of any choice closer than this? If the CP schools are too far away for us to federate with, why are you saying that it is appropriate for our children to travel to these schools on a daily basis?

**Marianne Evans:** In terms of transport, we would provide transport to a pupil's closest school if they were eligible, if they lived more than two miles from the school. In terms of transport to specifically a CP or to a Church in Wales School, the policy doesn't include transport for students to denominational schools, purely to the closest school.

**Chair of Governors:** The impact on protected characteristics of faith or belief is assessed as neutral. But if Powys do not fund transport to a CP school, there is a

definite negative impact for families who do not wish their children to attend a Church in Wales School.

**Marianne Evans:** I take your point there and just to say in terms of the impact assessment they are published as draft at the moment so they will be updated to take account of anything we hear through consultation.

**Lynette Lovell.** It doesn't form part of the transport policy as it stands, but certainly the comments that you've made can be taken back, but it is the fact that it is the nearest school, regardless of whether it's CP or a Church in Wales school. That's across the board in Powys.

**Emma Palmer:** A requirement in terms of Welsh Government legislation, I understand.

**Chair of Governors:** We're on to transport now. In the Consultation Document, page 27-28, is the funding formula saving of £61,000 based on 52 Churchstoke pupils in September 2022? If not, then how many? I suspect your answer is no.

**Mari Thomas:** I'm just checking the actual details of the calculations. They are based on the pupil numbers that we had at the time that we were doing it. I think it's based on 25 pupils as needing school transport to their nearest school.

**Marianne Evans:** Just in terms of estimating the transport costs and estimating how many pupils we would expect to transport, we base that on the known pupils within the school, so we haven't taken account of any future projections. Again, that comes down to until there's a decision made on whether Churchstoke closes or not, and until we know when parents may decide which school pupils are to go to, it is very much an estimate at this point in time.

**Headteacher:** Just basing these proposals on 25 pupils just makes the whole thing fatally flawed. And to be honest, Powys are looking at running into serious financial difficulties if they take it forward on the basis of 25 pupils because there just will not be 25 pupils in September 2022.

**Emma Palmer:** Thank you again, the beauty of the work that Mari does is that it can be based on the updated information that you're providing us, and we're able to rerun those calculations, but of course with any proposals we have to do them at a point in time and with the best information we have at the time. So, you're giving us more information in between us originally coming out for consultation and then before we go back to Cabinet, which allows us to use any updated intelligence to rerun that so that we have factually correct information before the Cabinet at the time they make their decision, but we recognize that some things will materialize. But it's important that we do that, hence why we always reference any data at that point in time.

**Governor:** Thank you, it was an issue about funding. When you've managed to model the funding formula savings, and the transport savings when we get onto transport. When you've managed to model those based on better pupil data, would it be possible for us to see those calculations? I appreciate and you mentioned Marianne in your email that it's confidential what funding other schools get, but we actually see every school's funding formula anyway, don't we? So, would it just be possible at least to know how many pupils in how many different schools? Because I know that a big concern for parents is how many different schools our children will be squeezed into? So what will be really key is how many schools you've modelled that funding formula calculation on, and how many children are going to each of those schools, so that we can understand the financial impact of this. Because that's got to be key to any decision made. What we're really concerned about is that a decision could be taken that increases the costs of Powys County Council greatly, rather than making any savings so it would be useful if we could see that detail if that's possible.

**Emma Palmer:** This didn't come up in the staff meeting and my apologies, but we have been having recent discussions with Cabinet because we're not only looking at revenue, but also at capital and how we fund the requirements going forward. There has been a commitment from Cabinet to continue to fund Powys education on a par with the rest of Wales in terms of average cost per pupil. So, when I work with other services in respect of transformation quite often as a result of making a change, you would expect to make a saving that reduces the revenue spend. That is not the requirement around education. The commitment from the Cabinet is that we will continue to fund education on a par with the rest of Wales to that average. So, what that means is if on any proposals that we're taking forward we've identified any potential savings, then in essence that would be used within education, to bring other schools up so that everyone's to the average, or alternatively to bring down the cost of borrowing for capital to invest back into schools, if that makes sense. I just felt that was an important point for me to make, but I completely understand the points that have been made and we take those on board.

**Chair of Governors:** How many alternative schools for our children have been included in the formula calculations? We have asked for details on how the calculations are being made but have not received the information requested.

**Emma Palmer:** OK, thank you.

**Chair of Governors:** How much does the consultation process cost? And although it's a one-off cost, why is it not being included in the finance calculation? Does this include the cost of engaging lawyers and barristers, if there is a legal challenge to any of the outcomes of a judicial review?

**Emma Palmer.** We were quite lucky in respect of the 21st Century Schools funding which Marianne and Mari will be very close to having worked on this over the years, and were able to charge the cost of the transformation to that fund. At the moment,

based on the way that Welsh Government fund us it's a 65%-35% split. Therefore, Welsh Government pick up 65% of all of the costs that are attributed there. That includes the costs in terms of Legal and also Barrister cost, but we don't factor in going to judicial review because we want to get the process correct and actually do not want to go to judicial review. But we have already engaged with a lawyer and Barrister through the process.

**Marianne Evans:** Just in terms of the officers' time etc., we're dealing with a huge range of proposals and a big transformation programme, so the Churchstoke proposal is only one component and then there are no additional staff costs, it's a day job for the Council officers.

**Chair of Governors:** This is about the transport costs, which we believe have been horrifically underestimated. We've been told that the additional transport costs of the proposal will be £19,000 per year based on £100 per day. What is the basis for £100 a day? How many buses to how many different schools? Is it based on each day and for how many pupils? I believe at the moment you thought it would just be one minibus to one school. You're going to need a minimum of five minibuses. You're also going to need two taxis for the ALN statemented pupils who can't travel on public transport. If children decide to go to Chirbury or Bishops Castle, you're also going to have to pay for the transport there. We also have about 30 children within the catchment area that, for whatever reason, have decided to be educated in Shropshire. It may be that they don't want to learn Welsh or other reasons. If you close Churchstoke school, their nearest school will be closed so you will then have to transport all of those pupils as well, so that will be about 80 pupils at an absolute minimum. How are the young children going to be transported? They can't go on a Secondary school bus because the buses are full and a year seven and year eight pupils that don't want to go on Secondary school buses. We just need to know why you have woefully underestimated your transport costs.

**Emma Palmer:** Thanks. I'll bring Marianne and Mari in. We haven't got a transport lead here. They work in another Department of the Council, namely Highways. It's very interesting that that 30 children are already going out of County and not being educated in their nearest school.

**Marianne Evans:** Mari will come in from the financial perspective, but what I will say is until the time that we know where pupils would go, should the decision be to close Churchstoke, it is difficult to estimate accurately. So, it is an estimate, and I will continue to say that.

**Mari Thomas:** As you say, it is an estimate based on the best information that we had at the time. We do work with the head of school transport as well around what those predicted costs per day would be, and that is based on 25 pupils needing transport to their nearest school. Now obviously, through this afternoon's meeting and this evening's meeting, there's been additional information coming to us, particularly around those 30 pupils that are currently going to Chirbury. We know, if

that would be their nearest school, then that will impact on transportation costs as well. So, we will need to update those costs.

**Emma Palmer:** I think we will need to have a closer look at it because it's interesting they're not accessing the council's transport now, because actually if we're already funding them then that cost is already accounted for. If we're not funding them and they're choosing to use their own transport, why would we assume that all of a sudden, they want to use Council transport, so I think we need to have a bit of a closer look on this based on the intelligence that that we're hearing and that is coming to light, so we'll take that action away.

**Headteacher:** Just to clarify that you are not funding them because at the moment they're not going to their nearest school. We are their nearest school. They are choosing to take them a little bit further. Parents are choosing to send them a little bit further. However, if Churchstoke closes then the school they're going to will then become their nearest school, therefore Powys, then become liable for costs.

**Emma Palmer:** I see. OK, thank you again.

**Chair of Governors:** You made a small comment before. I think you were trying to say why these children are not at Churchstoke because they're in the catchment area. What you have to understand is that the border weaves in and out and pupils that would be considered as being in the catchment area may actually be just in Shropshire, so they then go to a Shropshire school perhaps due to the choice of their parents. It may be easier for people when they work. It may be because they went to a Busy Bee's play group. It does not mean that we are a bad school which I think was sort of a suggestion coming there, some of them go to Welsh schools, some go to Forden for example.

**Emma Palmer:** This is nothing in terms of the proposal or my comment or any comments made that that would state that Churchstoke is a bad school.

**Chair of Governors:** Some of them may go to Bishops Castle because there is actually longer childcare in Bishops Castle, and if you work you have no choice. We have pretty good wraparound care, but they have much longer childcare there so it just may be a necessity. And of course, some people may not want the Welsh education.

**Emma Palmer:** There are a number of variables as you've set out there and I think what's been interesting when we look all across the county is that many children don't necessarily go to their nearest school. It's not just in Churchstoke, it would be elsewhere as well, and there would be different factors. It might be grandparents, it might be people's work as you say, but actually one of the things that came through that was really important was not just about the school day, but there were the other components because of people working as an example where they wanted to see the transition right the way from early years through, but to have that wrap around

care as you're referring to that came through, and that the schools become more than just the school.

**Governor:** Yes, I just wanted to add to that the other big factor, of course, is the significantly additional funding that Shropshire schools get compared to Powys schools. So extra funding for pupil deprivation grants, etc. ALN funding. All of their per pupil funding through the core formula budget is significantly higher and hence they can sometimes offer smaller classes or increased resources. I firmly believe it doesn't mean you necessarily get a better education that way, but some parents will believe that actually they can access more at a school that is significantly better funded which we know Shropshire is.

**Chair of Governors:** Why does the map in the consultation document not show all of the Churchstoke catchment area? It appears to be centred on Chirbury village. Where I live is not shown and that really annoyed me. It omits most of the catchment including important border areas. Why does it not show the location of all the nearest schools? Bishops Castle is not shown on it, yet it is the closest to the east side of the catchment. Nor are the neighbouring CP schools named in the Impact Assessment. Now I appreciate it can be difficult with a map, but I would have thought you could have done a bit better.

**Marianne Evans:** I take your point there really, and we'll have a look at the map.

**Chair of Governors:** The consultation document on page 11 states pupils would attend schools with better quality accommodation. But Montgomery school building condition is also rated as poor. Can you explain how it is better accommodation than the Churchstoke building as both Churchstoke and Montgomery have identical buildings ratings, condition C and suitability B/C, but the report on Churchstoke is outdated. Since the report you've used, we have had a new disabled entrance built, and I think that makes our building a lot better.

**Marianne Evans:** Yes, Montgomery and Churchstoke school have exactly the same rating, but in general, the other schools in the area have a slightly better rating, so that's why that statement is in there. So, you know, it's more of a general statement instead of a Montgomery versus Churchstoke comparison.

**Chair of Governors:** When it comes to the Equality Act 2010 why have you not answered question 17 Part 5 on page 26, which states will the proposal improve access for disabled pupils in accordance with the Equality Act 2010? Is it because the simple answer is, no? The statement made does not answer the question, will it improve access and which schools are fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and which partially? Specifically, is Montgomery fully or partially compliant? Will Montgomery be able to properly accommodate our disabled pupils? What about the Shropshire schools which are not included in this section at all? Was any inquiry made to Shropshire Council to check on this? Why is the impact on those disabilities assessed as neutral in the impact assessment, when the consultation document

states that some of the schools are only partially compliant with the Equality Act? What about the impact of additional travel on those with disabilities? This has to be a negative impact, not neutral.

**Lynette Lovell:** All schools have their Accessibility Plan and are compliant with the legislation. I know Hayley's here now as well and as you know she leads on ALN at the moment and I'm aware that both of the schools are compliant with the Equalities Act and the Accessibility Plan that they have.

**Hayley Smith:** We expect our schools to have Accessibility Plans, so it's really important that all schools have that and then have plans for the future as to how they're going to develop and adapt for the pupils they may or may not have. But if you have children and young people, with specific difficulties, obviously that's something we work with our schools on to make sure that we're meeting those needs.

**Chair of Governors:** Why have you stated in the consultation document that Montgomery school has an admission number of 21 when your admissions 21/22 document refers to Powys County Council admission arrangements and information stating that it's 17? Similarly, why are some of the Shropshire data, including income and cost per pupil figures incorrect when compared to the references?

**Marianne Evans:** We will take those away and have a look at them and any potential inaccuracies will be updated.

**Chair of Governors:** It's clear from the consultation document that there is insufficient capacity at Montgomery School for our children, which we are all agreed on. Do you intend to squeeze our children into other schools to fill the gaps, and how many other schools? Potentially we have as we've already said, 52 pupils needing to be accommodated. The premise of the consultation paper is that they all transfer to Montgomery. You said there are 29 spaces in Montgomery, but this number does not take into account their new development of 33 affordable homes at the bottom of the town.

Which other Powys schools would pupils have to travel to, and have both the cost and distance to these schools been factored into consideration bearing in mind the pupils furthest from Montgomery will be the last to get a place under the Powys Admissions arrangements? How long will it take to get for existence from Pentre or Snead to a receiving Powys school if it's not Montgomery? What would happen if there was room in one year group for a pupil but not in another for their sibling? Can Powys guarantee under their admission arrangements that siblings would be kept together?

**Marianne Evans:** In terms of siblings if there was an issue with the school and it was oversubscribed, but there was a sibling in a year group already, then the answer is that the admissions process would then kick in, in terms of the oversubscription

criteria. So, in terms of guaranteeing places, we cannot say we will guarantee places for siblings. It's something that would be picked up through the admissions process.

In terms of Montgomery, we have not named Montgomery as a receiving school. We do know that Montgomery is the closest school for a number of Churchstoke pupils. However, as we said, the proposal is for pupils to transfer to alternative Powys Schools. We know that there are capacity issues in Montgomery, but again, until the time that we know a decision is made in relation to Churchstoke and where parents have applied or are applying for places. Again, that's not something we can give guarantees on tonight.

**Chair of Governors:** What is going to happen in Montgomery if say our pupils go there and they fill the whole school, and then the 33 affordable houses are built by the fire station in Montgomery, which there is permission for. Where are all those children going to go?

**Marianne Evans:** The answer to that is as part of the Council's general management of school places and the schools' estates we would continually review pupil numbers and if schools are full then we need to address that issue and it would be the same for any school. For example, shall we say, theoretically, if Montgomery becomes full, then the authority would need to do something about that and we would need to see where and how we can accommodate additional pupils. It's all part of the general overall process of managing the school's estate and managing school places.

**Chair of Governors:** It's not forward thinking in my opinion. You need something that will go on into the future, not just now.

**Emma Palmer:** We have to look at the predicted growth, which is why annually we have to look at the figures because what we're talking about is sustainable provision for the future. Yes, that does have to be looked at.

**Headteacher:** Just to make the point that under the admissions criteria our pupils are going to come bottom of the pile all the time. Because distance is one of the criteria, and the pupils closest to the school would get places before those further away. Churchstoke pupils are going to be at the bottom of the pile in every school along the line. If there is no room for them in Montgomery they are even further away from the next school. So, they're kind of being dropped to the bottom of the pile all the time.

**Marianne Evans:** All I can say to respond to that is, the admissions policy is there for a purpose, so you know we will adhere to the admissions policy, the same as for any other school in the county, but I take your point.

**Headteacher:** The point I'm making it is that it is a reason not to close the school. It disadvantages pupils from the village greatly in terms of admissions because if they

want to stay in Powys they are going to travel further and further into Powys. The further you expect them to travel, the more likely they are to take the Shropshire route.

**Marianne Evans:** OK, thank you.

**Chair of Governors:** When deprived of the school payment for use, and with the cuts in funding from Powys County Council, how do you think the Community Hall will make up the shortfall in order to survive? Does the local authority appreciate how tight the finances of the Recreation Association are, and I know about this because I've only just left this committee. Do they know how much the school contributes? Do they know what effect the closure of the Community Hall would have on the local community, such as the Football Club? Would they be prepared to, for instance, grant fund the Hall?

**Emma Palmer:** Could I come in there just in terms of my wider understanding of the organization? At the moment I don't know if you're aware, but organisations such as the Community Hall can apply for a grant from the local authority. It's the Community recovery grant. It's live now. It's something that you can apply for. I think it's up to the value of £20,000, and there are criteria set around it, but actually it takes on board the components around Covid. So just to make you aware of that, particularly if the Hall is so dependent on that funding, I just take the opportunity to let you know for other meetings that you're in.

Also there is the Community Impact Assessment, which you have helpfully completed, and that has been factored in in respect of the assessment. But actually, it's not too late to add to that because the impact assessments, we can add to through the process to make sure, again, that we've got the latest factual information in front of Cabinet at time of the making a decision.

**Headteacher:** Regarding the Community Recovery Grant, just to clarify, that's not ongoing. That is just the Covid recovery grant. It's not something that is going to solve the problem long term.

**Emma Palmer:** You wouldn't be looking at a grant for the next 20 years, no. It is certainly this year, and I believe from memory for the following year, but we need to double check if this year's elements that are open and obviously we need to watch closely what will happen in respect of the Senedd now and also, we've received levelling up funds or can bid for levelling up funds directly from Westminster within Powys, which not all Welsh authorities can do. There is a significant amount of funding available from the Government in respect of regeneration. That renewal element is different to 21st century schools funding.

**Chair of Governors:** Given that Little Explorers, which is the playgroup, use our site and that the consultation document states that closure of the school would not directly affect the early years provision, what are your plans for our site and

buildings? Why were the Little Explorers not included in the consultation? And why will no one at Powys County Council answer the questions they have? Why were Little Explorers given £10,000 to enhance the outdoor space shared with the school at the same time as starting a consultation to close the school? Given that the Council is currently facing significant financial pressures, do you think that this was an effective budget management or forward thinking?

**Marianne Evans:** Let me just say that for Little Explorers, the consultation information was sent to them. We are aware of the issue around Little Explorers and we have highlighted it as a risk within the consultation document and that there could be an impact on the early years setting should there no longer be a school in Churchstoke.

We had grant funding from the Welsh Government to support early year settings, which we have invested in the provision in Little Explorers. I would say that we have a duty to maintain schools and we have a duty as the local authority to maintain schools and settings. And even though a school is going through a review or a reorganization, we would continue to fund the maintenance of that school because that is our duty. Even if a school is in the position of being closed, we would still ensure that the school is maintained until such a time it is closed.

Therefore in terms of the setting and using that grant, there are no decisions that have been made about Churchstoke school. The grant to support that setting as it rightly should. If the proposal to close the school were to go ahead, then there is an impact on the setting in terms of the fact that it's in a demountable on your school site. We know that they share facilities with the school so we would need to have a look at that again. There could also be an impact on the early years setting if the Council wanted to sell the site of Churchstoke school for instance. However, we would still need to look at whether there was still demand for a setting for places in Churchstoke and then we would need to see whether we could do something about that provision. But that is further down the line and dependent on so many decisions. The point is that the Early Years setting is an integral part of your overall school community and Churchstoke, and I think that's come out pretty strongly at the consultation meetings.

**Chair of Governors:** It's full to the rafters because it's so successful, the children eat their meals in the school so there's intertwined provision in Churchstoke. I think that if the school closes that we know pre-school provision will go. So not only would the school go, but the pre-school provision would also go, which comes on to my next question. How does the inevitable loss of the pre-school provision in Churchstoke, which currently shares the school site, fit into the Council's plans for early years provision?

**Marianne Evans:** We would need to look and see if the demand is there in Churchstoke.

**Emma Palmer:** I'm conscious that not everybody has spoken and there may be others wanting to speak. Is there anybody else that would like to speak in this meeting? I appreciate that the Chair of Governors has collected questions on behalf of the governing body, but just in case there is anybody that wants to speak, please raise your hand now and I can bring you in.

**Chair of Governors:** How would you ensure that the 29% of Churchstoke pupils on free school meals, can I repeat that please, 29% - your document says 8% - and those whose parents do not have transport, all of whom would rely on free school transport, are able to access extracurricular and after school activities or even breakfast club?

You should be aware that many parents are dependent on the wrap around care currently offered at the school, meaning that the work of the parents may no longer be viable or that they would be unable to take on jobs. We have letters to prove that from Saint Nick's House and Montgomery Spring Water to back this up. What effect do you feel this would have on social disadvantage and the local economy?

**Lynette Lovell:** I just wanted to come in on the aspect of the deprivation that was mentioned there. That is a crucial factor of learner entitlement, which is really what this meeting is all about tonight, that learner entitlement and experience is equal for all our learners with the new curriculum coming up, ensuring they have that broader curriculum, including extracurricular activities which do not necessarily have to be after school, it can be during lunchtime.

To ensure they have those broader opportunities, whether they're free school meals, whether they have ALN needs, whatever. That they can be part of a team, that they can be part of a school, and I know you've got that already. I'm not saying that you don't.

The inclusion of all our learners with all their needs, we talked about disability earlier, that learner entitlement and experience for all our learners is key. And that would need to be factored in. I know you talked about wrap around care there, and that's a key issue probably going forward. What we want to do in the transformation document is look at those opportunities for that and the investment that we can have going forward as well in the future, in terms of having that wrap around care in schools, etc. I just wanted to assure you that from my perspective and for officers, ensuring that equity and inclusion and learner entitlement for all our learners, no matter where they come from, no matter what background they've got is absolutely key for me going forward. That is something that would be at the heart of what we do.

**Emma Palmer:** I'm personally very passionate around the matter of equality and with the impact assessment that we've done around Covid-19 it is clear that we can expect to see an increase in free school meals across the county.

**Chair of Governors:** A lot of the parents of these children do not have their own transport, and that's the reason they go to Churchstoke so they can walk and then they are employed in places practically next to the school as well. I mean all that would go. You have to understand.

**Governor:** A question we skipped over which is important to me is why you have undertaken not to have a wider view of provision in our area?

**Emma Palmer:** We have approached this in various ways across the county and in some areas it's a wholesale area review and in others it's less so and focusing on certain schools. The Transforming Education Programme is so complex and the scale of it is so significant, I refer to it as a critical path. There are certain things that we need to do to unlock changes down the road.

We've got serious aspirations around wanting to improve that learner entitlement for children, and it was really clear when we were talking with the Cabinet right at the outset, don't chase the money, actually trace the entitlement, do the right thing and we'll do right by the children. The difficulty we have in the Council is the infrastructure that we have in place and that we just have too many schools. We've got too many schools across the county and what's happening is that the money is going into sustaining that infrastructure, rather than into the education of the children. We have to reduce the infrastructure, but make sure the infrastructure that we have in place is the best that it can be, which is why it's a 10-year programme with significant investment in terms of the capital side for that element. But actually, then we can invest the revenue component into education and into really harnessing that learner entitlement for the children.

So, for us to unlock that, depends on where we're looking across the county. We've looked at secondary provision where we're moving to all age. We've looked at reducing the English-medium and increasing the Welsh-medium offer because that needs to be a better offer across the county. We've looked at ALN because, again, that depends on where you are, and the provision you get is different.

The other thing that we looked at is small schools and rationalization of small schools. I'm not going to say it differently. That is part of the strategy and the work that we need to undertake, and I'm afraid Churchstoke has been identified as one of those schools, and there are others. We have not concluded our work around small schools at all. We're only at the start. We've got a significant number of proposals that we're consulting on now and we've got others that are imminent to go out to consultation on, and as soon as we've worked through this phase then we're moving straight onto others across the county.

**Governor:** Talking about this programme and if you close our school, our children only have the option to go to other small schools. What is the likelihood that our children would need to then go through this process all over again?

**Emma Palmer:** A lot of the conversation and questions from yourselves have indicated that children would go to Montgomery Primary School and if families chose Montgomery School because the Cabinet had made a decision to close Churchstoke, that would no longer be classed as a small school, because the numbers there would go over the threshold of what's determined as a small school by Welsh Government.

I want to say thank you to you for joining us this evening and to the Chair of Governor and Headteacher for doing a sterling job on behalf of the governing body because we wouldn't have got through as much otherwise. I would also like to thank you for being respectful and that we've been able to have the conversation. I appreciate that this is a very emotive subject for yourselves.

This is a consultation. The final decision has not been made, so please can I encourage you. to complete the consultation form online email or write to ourselves. The consultation report has to consider all of the responses that we receive and we then need to provide a written response to the comments in the form of a report to Cabinet report and that report has to be published. It will form part of the next set of papers that go before Cabinet. So, I give a commitment that we have to and will read absolutely everything that comes through. If there's anything in the responses that we receive that signposts us in a different direction or some of the factual information that you've been raising today, all of that is considered. Thank you very much.

**Chair of Governors:** One thing before you have your meeting with the school Council, the governing body know that I love a quote, usually Shakespeare. But tonight, it's going to be Anne Frank. A quote from her is "even if people are very young, they shouldn't be prevented from saying what they think". And I hope that will come out in the School Council consultation that you are doing next with our lovely pupils.

## **A meeting with the School Council of Churchstoke CP School**

20<sup>th</sup> May 2021 – Held virtually on Microsoft Teams

**Present:** Marianne Evans, Sarah Astley, Nia Vaughan, Huw Rowlands – Powys County Council  
Ian Roberts, Headteacher – Churchstoke CP School

Officers from Powys County Council met virtually via Microsoft Teams with representatives from the School Council of Churchstoke CP School to discuss the consultation to close Churchstoke CP School with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools in Powys.

The School Council group consisted of 9 pupils, two of year 2, one of year 3, two of year 4, one of year 5 and three of year 6.

Officers explained that Powys County Council was reviewing the future of schools in Powys, including Churchstoke CP School and is wondering whether or not to close the school. It was explained that there was now a period of consultation where people were being asked what they thought about the idea to close Churchstoke school. It was emphasised that this was only an idea at this time, and no final decision had been made. The views of pupils at Churchstoke CP School are a very important part of the process, and pupils were welcome to ask any questions regarding the proposal.

The pupils were asked several questions and their responses are summarised below:

### **Do you understand why we are here?**

- Yes

### **What do you like about Churchstoke school?**

- The staff, because they focus on each child
- The cooks and the food
- Everyone is very friendly
- Lots of help
- The learning. I'm from a Welsh-medium school in South Wales and came here with no knowledge of Maths in English, and in my previous school there were 300 people. The staff there didn't focus on each child independently as Churchstoke does.

### **You've seen a difference then since you've come to Churchstoke?**

- Yes

**Do you like the school building?**

- Yes
- The big field the equipment there
- My friends
- We can do lots of sports and sport competitions

**What kind of sports do you do?**

- Rounders, sports day events, swimming and tennis
- Also the Community Hall, we go there in winter to do PE

**Do many of you live in Churchstoke?**

- Yes

**Do you all walk to school?**

- Not all but some do

**Is there anything you don't like or could be better about the school?**

- Heating in our classroom
- The size of the school building could be bigger

**What's good about your learning in the school?**

- Teachers give support to each individual child, and will work at their level
- We are challenged appropriately, for example one year 5 pupil is doing year 6 and 7 work.

**What else do you like about your learning?**

- Everything

**If you could change anything what would you change?**

- Maths and have Welsh maths instead
- We do Spanish and Welsh but I would like to focus on one and then learn more languages – a different one each term
- More history

**Have you learnt a lot about the history of your local area? What can you tell me about Churchstoke?**

- There used to be a war in Churchstoke

- The border has changed back to England and back to Wales a number of times

**If you were going shopping to a big place, where would you go?**

- Welshpool, Tuffins, Birmingham, Shrewsbury, Hereford, Newtown

**If the school was to close, and there was no school in Churchstoke, what would be different for you?**

- We would make a lot of friends
- It would be weird because I have lived my whole life in Churchstoke school and it would be weird seeing Churchstoke without a school,
- Houses are being built and there's no point building houses if there is no school in the village
- School is the main attraction to the village

**What would no school in the village mean for the village?**

- Nobody would want to move here, especially if people had children as they would have to take children to a different school
- The community will break apart. People would not talk to each other any more. Parents talk and meet when taking children to school. School is a very important part of Churchstoke
- Would we get to our new school in time?

**Does the school get used for different things in the community?**

- Brownies Guides and Rainbows use the school field
- After school club

**Is the after school club very important to you and your families?**

- Yes
- After school club is very important because parents are working and can pick you up later

**How many go to breakfast club?**

- Only 2 or 3 don't go to breakfast club
- There is a breakfast club which most go to, and that is very handy. We go because our parents are having to go to work. It's important to our families

**If there was no school in Churchstoke and you went to other school do you think it would be helpful to you and your parents to go to other after school clubs?**

- No, because there would be more stress on parents
- We would not be able to walk to school
- Also going on a bus to a different school, there would be no after school activities as we would have to leave when school bus leaves

**Have you got younger brothers and sisters that go to Little Explorers. If there was no school in Churchstoke what would the effect be on Little Explorers?**

- If there was no school you would destroy Little Explorers

**How do you think that would impact on families and parents?**

- I don't think the toddlers will have as many friends
- It's harder for people to make friends as a toddler. They can make friends in Little Explorers, but they would find it difficult if there was no Little Explorers
- Also Little Explorers has dinners at the school, and if there was no school they wouldn't be able to have dinners

**So there would be quite an impact on Little Explorers if there was no school in Churchstoke?**

- Yes

**Where would you go if there was no school in Churchstoke?**

- Montgomery, Montgomery, Bishops Castle, Welshpool, Welshpool, Bishops Castle, Bishops Castle, don't know, Bishops Castle

**Which high school do you usually go to?**

- Bishops Castle mostly. Some people go to Welshpool

**If there was no school in Churchstoke, the Council is keen that children from Churchstoke have an education in Wales. Is that important for you?**

- Yes, because it keeps Welsh education

**Do you like learning Welsh? Ydych chi'n hoffi dysgu Cymraeg?**

- Yes
- 'Os fyddech chi yn chi yn cau yr ysgol bydd plant yn mynd i ysgolion Saesneg a bydd hynny yn golygu colli Cymraeg yn ein pentref. Bydd hynny yn golygu llai yn siarad Cymraeg.' (*Translation: If you close the school, children will go to English schools and that would mean losing Welsh from the village. That would mean that less would speak Welsh.*)

**Do you know that you follow a different curriculum in Wales? How would that affect you if you moved to a school in England**

- All pupils would probably find the English curriculum much harder than the Welsh curriculum. Because we don't have Welsh spellings, we have English spellings, so the spellings are a lot harder, and a lot of stuff in England will be different to Wales and it would be all new.

**What else would you lose?**

- It would affect how we speak Welsh.

**Anything else you would lose if you went to a school in England?**

- Spanish

**Is there anything else you could think of that would be worse for you if Churchstoke school closed and you went to a different school?**

- One of my youngest siblings has speech problems and if going to a different school it would affect his speech and he probably would not have as many friends as he does now
- We would lose contact with some friends, but also if you made new friends in a new school, they would live further away and therefore you wouldn't be able to see them after school, only at school
- My younger sibling has no one to one by Powys, so if the school closes she would go to Bishops Castle.

**Do you think that your younger sibling gets more support in Churchstoke school? Do you think that would be lost if she went to Bishops Castle?**

- No, she gets more support in Churchstoke school, but Shropshire provide more one to one in Bishops Castle than Powys does
- I might be split up from my siblings
- My siblings might have to go to different schools

**A lot of questions have been asked as to why the Council is doing this. One reasons is because Churchstoke is a small school. Can you tell me what do you think is good about Churchstoke because it is a small school?**

- In a bigger school you probably would not get as much help from teachers as you have in a smaller school. Here teachers and staff pay more attention to you

- In a bigger school you are in a class with pupils of the same year, but here classes are mixed ages, so year 6 can help year 3 so you don't always have to go to the teachers. Teachers are busy
- I have been to a 300 pupil school and it is not better. There are fights every day
- In a bigger school we would have to work more independently without any help if you really need it. That is bad, as your education would not be as good
- Some teachers will be working with lots of different children rather than helping children that actually need the help

**Is there anything which you think might be better if you went to a different school?**

- More friends

**Are any of you the only pupil or one of only two in your year group?**

- Yes, I have been for two years, until someone else joined

**Did being the only pupil in your year group make a difference?**

- It did make a difference, but a good difference. As I was the only person in my year group, there was no point in me doing just abacus so I got to a stage higher than I was. I did maths with a year group above me and that definitely helped me.

**Would you be going to the same secondary school as the pupil in same year group as you?**

- Yes. I would be happy to go to high school with a friend I know.

**When there wasn't somebody in the same year group as you, were you worried?**

- It did worry me a tiny bit that I would be going to high school with nobody I knew
- I have been on my own most years. I was worried in going to high school because I had no friends, until another girl joined my class

### **Questions from pupils**

Pupils asked the following questions. The responses provided are summarised beneath each question:

- Why do you want to close the school?

The Council need to look at the 90 primary schools it has in Powys, and from time to time we have to look at schools which are very small such as Churchstoke. The Council has to make sure it has enough schools and in the right places for the amount of pupils it has.

- Have you ever visited Churchstoke?

Yes, but not to the school.

- Have you seen the school and the new houses?

I haven't been to the school but I am hoping to visit the school in the next few weeks if we're allowed to.

- Why do you think that a school with more children will help us learn better?

It won't be just because it is a larger school. We're looking at the whole experience of school, how the learning is organised, the friendship groups. It doesn't necessarily mean you would learn better just because a school is larger, but that's what we're looking at the moment. We're looking at giving you just as good an experience that you have now, if the school closes. It's important that your learning and needs are considered, so that's why we are here today and giving you the opportunity to say what you think.

It doesn't always mean that little schools are bad, and that big schools are good. We look at the learning you have curriculum, whether your school is well equipped to provide the curriculum, your wellbeing, that you're having good learning experiences, that you can learn what you want to not just what school decides, making sure there are good social groups and good opportunities to mix with other children. We want to make sure that nobody is losing out. We don't necessarily think a bigger school is better than a small school, but we have to look at all schools in Powys and make sure that the opportunities are there for all the pupils in Powys.

- What will happen to the school site?

If the school closes, the Council would talk to community to see if the community would want to use the school building. If that's not possible, the Council would then sell the site and the money gained from the sale would go to the Council education budget and used for schools and education across Powys.

- Will the money from the sale go towards our education or would it go to any education?

It would go to the education pot for the whole County, so to everybody.

- What happens to the Community Hall?

What do you think would happen?

- I don't think that the Community Hall could still continue as the school gives it money and without that money the school would be unable to run

Is the hall attached to school building?

- It's next door on the school field

Is the Community Hall used a lot by the community?

- Yes

You think if the school closes there would be an impact on the Community Hall? Do you think it would survive without the school?

- I don't think it could survive without the school.

Is it just used by the school during the school day?

- Yes, just the school uses it during the school day. We use it for PE and activities, we don't have lunch there
- Have you considered the environmental impact on the school and the wildlife on the school site?

If there was no school there, we would have to make sure that the ecology is protected as much as we can. It's an important factor. In terms of considering any environmental impact we have one of our documents in the consultation process which is an impact assessment and we consider the impact on the environment in that and if we get any more or different information about the environmental impact, we will update the document before the end of the consultation process.

- Why is it a good idea to go on a bus to school rather than walk?

We are looking at everything. If there would be no school in Churchstoke then you would have to travel further. But a lot of pupils across Powys already have to travel to school, because the County is so rural, and it is a natural part of everyday life across Powys.

- But so many buses are being used, how will that help with the environment?

It's one of the things we have to take into account. We have to look at a lot of things and balance them. If there is a need for any additional transport, we have to look at

how we can minimise the impact. We would have to look at what we could do, for example electric buses.

Educating children across the County in lots of different buildings also has an environmental impact. It's balancing the environmental cost at the moment and what that would be if you were transported. You have to look at the whole picture.

- If the school closes, we have free transport to the closest schools. Fuel would cost a lot, because we would need a lot more buses.

It would not necessarily be buses, it could be a taxi or a minibus. That's still a cost to the environment but it's not quite as bad as having a big bus.

- Have you considered how closing the school would affect children's mental health and wellbeing as we would be split from our friends?

It's a difficult time, as you have been in and out of school and in bubbles over the past year.

The impact on pupil's wellbeing is very very important to the Council. We are here today so that you can tell us exactly what you think about the proposal, and we can then take back your views which will then be considered by the Council's Cabinet. If you say there would be an impact on your wellbeing, you need to tell us that and we will feed that back.

- Have you thought that parents who have been through the school would want their children to come to the school as well?

We do need to consider how important the school is to the community and the emotional connection with the school which they might not have with the school down the road.

This might not happen, but if it does, we don't want you to worry. For example if you went to High School, the schools and the teachers talk to each other and find out about the pupils. The same would happen here, if you went to a different primary school. If you were to go to a new school we would ask you how we could help you make the move better. We would want to help you to settle in. Say what you think now but try not to worry as it might not happen, we don't know.

- What about resources like I pads and other equipment?

If the school was to close, we would look at the equipment there and see what equipment there is in the schools you are moving to. We would spread the resources to other schools.

- What if half the pupils went to for example Bishops Castle in England and half to Powys schools. Would you share them out?

No, we would only share them out to schools in Powys, not in England.

- Will teachers be given new jobs?

It depends where there are other available jobs. It could be if all pupils go to the same school that school would need an extra teacher, and it could be that one of your teachers would go there. But it's not guaranteed. In the past everyone's situation is different, and some teachers move to other schools, and some teachers decide that they want to do something else.

- How do our parents get answers to questions that they have?

During this consultation period anyone can let us know what they think. At the end of the consultation period we will have to prepare a report and the Council will have to respond to what's been said, so any questions we get during the consultation period, we will have to respond to in the consultation report which Cabinet will consider and then decide whether or not to carry on with the process.

The children were thanked for their comments and questions, and reminded again that if they or their friends thought about any further questions or comments after today, then they should send them in by 9 June when the consultation closes. Their teachers or parents would be able to help them send the information on if



## **Proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School**

### **Updated Impact Assessments**

**October 2021**

#### **Contents**

Proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School.....	1
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Integrated Impact Assessment .....	2
3. Equality Impact Assessment .....	27
4. Community Impact Assessment – Churchstoke C.P. School .....	35

# Proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School

## Impact Assessments

### 1. Introduction

Powys County Council is consulting on a proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School. The proposal is as follows:

- To close Churchstoke C.P. School from the 31st August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys

In line with the Council's policy, an Integrated Impact Assessment has been carried out which incorporates the Welsh Language, Equalities, Well-being of Future Generations Act, Sustainable Development Principles, Communication and Engagement, Safeguarding, Corporate Parenting, Community Cohesion and Risk Management.

In addition, the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2018) requires local authorities to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment and Community Impact Assessment in relation to all school reorganisation proposals. For proposals which affect teaching through the medium of Welsh, local authorities are also required to carry out a Welsh Language Impact Assessment.

**These impact assessments were provided in draft form during the consultation period and have been updated following the consultation.** The Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out based on the latest PLASC information available. The Community Impact Assessment has been carried out with input from the affected school.

## 2. Integrated Impact Assessment

The Impact Assessment (IA) below incorporates Welsh Language, Equalities, Well-being of Future Generations Act, Sustainable Development Principles, Communication and Engagement, Safeguarding, Corporate Parenting, Community Cohesion and Risk Management, supporting effective decision making and ensuring compliance with respective legislation.

<b>Service Area</b>	Schools Service	<b>Head of Service</b>	Emma Palmer/Lynette Lovell	<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Cllr Phyl Davies
---------------------	-----------------	------------------------	----------------------------	-------------------------	------------------

<b>Proposal</b>
To close Churchstoke C.P. School from the 31st August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools

<b>Outline Summary / Description of Proposal</b>
In February 2021, the Council's Cabinet approved carrying out consultation on the following proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To close Churchstoke C.P. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools</li> </ul>

1. Version Control (services should consider the impact assessment early in the development process and continually evaluate)

Version	Author	Date
1	Transforming Education Programme Officer	January 2021
2	Senior Manager Schools Transformation	January 2021
3	Transformation Team	October 2021

2. Profile of savings delivery (if applicable)

2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	TOTAL
£	£	£29,166.67	£20,833.33	£	£50,000

3. Consultation requirements

Consultation Requirement	Consultation deadline/or justification for no consultation
Public consultation required	Consultation in accordance with the School Organisation Code was carried out between the 14 <sup>th</sup> April and the 2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2021

4. Impact on Other Service Areas

<b>Does the proposal have potential to impact on another service area? (Have you considered the implications on Health &amp; Safety and Corporate Parenting?) PLEASE ENSURE YOU INFORM / ENGAGE ANY AFFECTED SERVICE AREAS AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY</b>	
Adult Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children's Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Commissioning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Digital Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Highways, Transportation and Recycling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Housing and Community Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Legal and Democratic Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Property, Planning and Public Protection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Transformation and Communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Workforce and OD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	
Will the proposal involve processing the personal details of individuals? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Is Powys County Council the data controller? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>  If you have answered yes to either of the above you will be required to complete, as a minimum, the screening questions on the data protection impact assessment. For further advice please contact the Data Compliance Team.	

4a Geographical Locations

<b>What geographical area(s) will be impacted by the proposal? (Chose all those applicable)</b>
---

Powys	<input type="checkbox"/>
North	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mid	<input type="checkbox"/>
South	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brecon	<input type="checkbox"/>
Builth and Llanwrtyd	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crickhowell	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hay and Talgarth	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knighton and Presteigne	<input type="checkbox"/>
Llandrindod and Rhayader	<input type="checkbox"/>
Llanfair Caereinion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Llanfyllin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Llanidloes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Machynlleth	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newtown	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welshpool and Montgomery	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ystradgynlais	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. How does your proposal impact on Vision 2025?

<b>Council's Well-being Objective</b>	<b>How does the proposal impact on this Well-being Objective?</b>	<b>IMPACT</b> Please select from drop down box below	<b>What will be done to better contribute to a more positive impact or to mitigate any negative impacts?</b>	<b>IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION</b> Please select from drop down box below
<b>The Economy</b>	Implementation of the proposal would have a potential impact on employment opportunities in	Poor		Poor

<p><b>We will develop a vibrant economy</b></p>	<p>Churchstoke as there would no longer be a school in the village.</p> <p>It is also possible that the loss of the school, and potentially loss of families from the area would have a negative impact on recruitment for lower paid key worker jobs in the area, and the ability of other employers in the area to recruit to roles. There could also be an impact on local businesses in the village and the surrounding communities. Concern has also been raised that the absence of a school in the village could lead to a reduction in house prices.</p> <p>Concerns were raised during consultation about the possible loss of early years provision in Churchstoke should the school close, as Churchstoke Little Explorers is co-located with the school and shares facilities. There was concern not only on the potential loss of employment for staff at the setting, but also the fact that the setting is the only provider of full day care in the area, and without this provision available locally, there could be an impact on parents working arrangements.</p>			
<p><b>Health and Care</b> <b>We will lead the way in providing effective, integrated health and care in a rural environment</b></p>	<p>Concerns were raised during consultation about the potential negative impact on the health and wellbeing of pupils who would no longer be able to walk to school – the majority of pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School walk to the school.</p>	Neutral	<p>Whilst the Council recognises that this is an issue, there would be opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activities at their alternative schools to ensure good health and wellbeing.</p>	Neutral
<p><b>Learning and skills</b> <b>We will strengthen learning and skills</b></p>	<p>As stated in the Council’s Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-30, the Council faces a challenge due to the high proportion of small schools in the county and the</p>	Good		

	<p>lack of equity amongst schools. Churchstoke C.P. School teaches children in two classes of mixed aged groups. With such low pupil numbers the teacher-pupil ratio is notably different to many other schools in the area, and due to the Council’s funding formula, the school’s funding per pupil is higher than the Council’s average. This does not provide equity across the education system – teachers in larger schools are required to provide the same education as smaller schools for less funding per pupil. Powys’ Strategy is intended to improve equity across the education system and to ensure an improvement for every pupil’s learning entitlement and experience.</p> <p>It is the Council’s view, as confirmed by its education specialists, that delivering the new curriculum will be significantly more challenging and place greater demands on teachers in very small 2 class schools. This does not mean that it would be impossible to deliver the curriculum in these schools, but it is clear that the skills required by teachers will need to be very wide ranging to support the full and effective fulfilment of the curriculum’s high ambitions.</p> <p>Should the Council proceed with implementation of the preferred option, Churchstoke C.P. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools in Powys. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative school in Powys would be Montgomery C. in W. School. Some pupils may also choose to attend schools in Shropshire, in particular Chirbury CofE School.</p>			
--	--	--	--	--

	<p>The Council's view is that Montgomery C. in W. School would provide education for pupils which is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Churchstoke C.P. School, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on standards and progress overall. The overall aim of the proposal is to improve learning opportunities for pupils.</p> <p>Whilst the Council does not have direct experience of the provision at Chirbury CofE School, the school's last Ofsted inspection which was carried out in December 2019 judged the schools overall effectiveness and quality of education to be Good, therefore it is likely that the provision is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Churchstoke C.P. School.</p>			
<p><b>Residents and Communities</b> <b>We will support our residents and communities</b></p>	<p>There would be a significant impact on the community of Churchstoke, as there would be no provision in the village, and therefore potential loss of any community facilities associated with the school.</p> <p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School. Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities / events.</p>	Very Poor	<p>Home to school transport to be provided for pupils living in Churchstoke to their nearest school in Powys to ensure that they continue to access a Welsh education.</p> <p>Community hall to continue to be available to the community for community activities.</p>	Very Poor

	<p>Numerous concerns about the proposal's impact on the community were raised during the consultation, these included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General concern about impact on the community/village</li> <li>• The school is the heart of the community</li> <li>• Closure of the school would mean that the community would lead to a loss of community cohesion</li> <li>• Concern about the impact on local businesses / the local economy</li> <li>• Concern about the impact on the community centre</li> <li>• Concern about the impact on other services</li> <li>• Concern about the impact on other community groups / activities</li> <li>• People would no longer want to live in Churchstoke</li> <li>• Comments about previous generations of families that have attended the school</li> <li>• Queries about what would happen to the school building / grounds</li> <li>• Comments about previous school closures</li> </ul> <p>Whilst the proposal is that pupils transfer to alternative Powys schools, it is possible that some pupils would transfer to alternative schools in Shropshire, and therefore would access education in England. This could impact on the Welsh identity of Churchstoke. Concerns were raised about this issue during the consultation.</p> <p>A separate draft community impact assessment has been carried out which includes input from</p>			
--	--	--	--	--

	the school. This has also been updated to reflect comments made during the consultation.			
--	--	--	--	--

<b>Source of Outline Evidence to support judgements</b>
Consultation report

6. How does your proposal impact on the Welsh Government’s well-being goals?

<b>Well-being Goal</b>	<b>How does proposal contribute to this goal?</b>	<b><u>IMPACT</u></b> Please select from drop down box below	<b>What will be done to better contribute to a more positive impact or to mitigate any negative impacts?</b>	<b><u>IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION</u></b> Please select from drop down box below
<p><b>A prosperous Wales:</b> An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.</p>	<p>The aim of the proposal to close the school is to ensure the best possible opportunities for learners in the area now and in the future, to ensure that resources are used efficiently and proportionately across Powys schools, ensuring better strategic management of the Powys schools estate.</p> <p>Should Churchstoke C.P. School close, it is proposed that pupils transfer to alternative schools in Powys in order to ensure that they can benefit from the new Curriculum for Wales, the new, innovative curriculum for Wales which will be implemented from September 2022. This should lead to developing a skilled and well-educated population.</p> <p>However, it is recognised that, due to Churchstoke’s location on the border of Powys and Shropshire it is possible that parents would choose a Shropshire school for their child(ren) if Churchstoke C.P. School close. This would mean</p>	Poor		

	that they would not be able to benefit from the new Curriculum for Wales.			
<p><b>A resilient Wales:</b> A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).</p>	<p>Implementation of the proposal would require additional travel for pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P School for whom this is their closest school. This would have a negative environmental impact as more home to school transport would need to be provided to transport pupils to alternative schools.</p> <p>Whilst the proposal is that pupils transfer to alternative Powys schools, it is possible that some pupils would transfer to alternative schools in Shropshire, and therefore would access education in England.</p> <p>Information gathered during consultation shows that a number of pupils from the Churchstoke area are already choosing to attend schools in Shropshire. If Churchstoke C.P. School was to close, then the Council would be required to provide transport to both their nearest alternative schools in Powys and also their nearest alternative schools. The nearest alternative schools for current Churchstoke C.P. School are in Shropshire. This would mean transporting more pupils on home-to-school transport.</p>	Poor		Poor
<p><b>A healthier Wales:</b> A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.</p> <p><b>Public Health (Wales) Act, 2017:</b> Part 6 of the Act requires for public bodies to undertake a health impact assessment to assess the likely effect of a proposed</p>	<p>Implementation of the proposal would result in closure of Churchstoke C.P School, with pupils transferring to alternative schools. It is acknowledged that this could have a negative impact on the mental well-being of pupils, staff and other stakeholders associated with the school during the transition period, however the</p>	Poor	An experienced member of staff from the Council is supporting school leaders effectively to help them manage possible changes for pupils. The Council would also expect pupils to be fully supported by their teachers and other staff at the school during any period of uncertainty, to minimise the impact on their well-being.	Neutral

<p>action or decision on the physical or mental health of the people of Wales.</p>	<p>long term aim is to provide improved learning opportunities for all learners.</p> <p>A significant number of comments were received during the consultation about the impact on pupil well-being due to the consultation taking place during the current pandemic, creating an additional pressure on their well-being during a difficult time.</p> <p>Whilst the proposal is that pupils transfer to alternative Powys schools, it is possible that some pupils would transfer to alternative schools in Shropshire, and therefore would access education in England. This could impact on their Welsh identity.</p>		<p>Support will be provided to pupils during the transition period to enable them to transfer effectively to their new schools. The receiving school would work closely with the closing school during the transition to identify and address areas of concern amongst pupils and families. The headteacher of the receiving school would be able to meet with families to discuss concerns, and there would be opportunities for families to visit the receiving schools and meet teachers and other pupils.</p> <p>Process to be concluded as quickly as possible to minimise the period of uncertainty for pupils, staff and other stakeholders.</p>	
<p><b>A Wales of cohesive communities:</b> Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected Communities.</p>	<p>There would be a significant impact on the community of Churchstoke as there would be no provision in the village, and therefore potential loss of any community facilities associated with the school.</p> <p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P School. Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities / events.</p> <p>Churchstoke C.P. School is located close to the community hall. Should the school close, the community hall would continue to be available for community activities. Whilst the proposal</p>	Very Poor	<p>Home to school transport to be provided for pupils living in Churchstoke to their nearest school in Powys to ensure that they continue to access a Welsh education.</p> <p>Community hall to continue to be available to the community for community activities.</p>	Very Poor

	<p>would not impact on the community hall, it is acknowledged that the potential loss of income to the hall from school activities no longer needing to take place could impact on the community hall.</p> <p>Numerous concerns about the proposal's impact on the community were raised during the consultation, these included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General concern about impact on the community/village</li> <li>• The school is the heart of the community</li> <li>• Closure of the school would mean that the community would lead to a loss of community cohesion</li> <li>• Concern about the impact on local businesses / the local economy</li> <li>• Concern about the impact on the community centre</li> <li>• Concern about the impact on other services</li> <li>• Concern about the impact on other community groups / activities</li> <li>• People would no longer want to live in Churchstoke</li> <li>• Comments about previous generations of families that have attended the school</li> <li>• Queries about what would happen to the school building / grounds</li> <li>• Comments about previous school closures</li> </ul> <p>Concerns were also raised about the potential impact of the school closure on Churchstoke Little Explorers, the pre-school setting that is co-located in a building at the school with shared facilities.</p>			
--	---	--	--	--

	<p>Whilst the proposal is that pupils transfer to alternative Powys schools, it is possible that some pupils would transfer to alternative schools in Shropshire, and therefore would access education in England. This could impact on the Welsh identity of Churchstoke.</p> <p>A separate draft community impact assessment has been carried out which includes input from the school. This has also been updated to reflect comments made during the consultation.</p>			
<p><b>A globally responsible Wales:</b> A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.</p> <p><b>Human Rights - is about being proactive (see guidance)</b></p> <p><b>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:</b> The Convention gives rights to everyone under the age of 18, which include the right to be treated fairly and to be protected from discrimination; that organisations act for the best interest of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and the right to be heard.</p>	<p>The aim of implementing the proposal is to provide the best possible opportunities to learners, enabling them to reach their full potential.</p> <p>The Council has carried out consultation on the proposal, which included consultation with pupils, ensuring that all affected by the plans have had the opportunity to give their views.</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		

**A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language:** A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.

*Incorporating requirements under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards*

Well-being Goal	How does proposal contribute to this goal?	<u>IMPACT</u> Please select from drop down box below	What will be done to better contribute to a more positive impact or to mitigate any negative impacts?	<u>IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION</u> Please select from
-----------------	--	---	---	--

				drop down box below
<i>Opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and treating the Welsh language no less favourable than the English language</i>	<p>Churchstoke C.P School is an English-medium school, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the proposal would impact on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, or on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language should pupils transfer to alternative schools in Powys.</p> <p>However, it is possible that some pupils could choose to attend alternative provision in Shropshire. This would mean that they would no longer access a Welsh curriculum, and Welsh would no longer be a part of the curriculum. This would mean that they would no longer have an opportunity to learn Welsh, and to use the Welsh language. Concern that pupils would transfer to alternative schools in Shropshire and therefore would no longer access a Welsh curriculum / have the opportunity to learn Welsh was raised in the consultation responses.</p>	Poor	The proposal is for pupils to transfer to their closest alternative schools in Powys – this is to ensure that they get an opportunity to access the Curriculum for Wales and to develop their Welsh language skills. Home to school transport to be provided for pupils living in Churchstoke to their nearest school in Powys to ensure that they continue to access a Welsh education.	Neutral
<i>Opportunities to promote the Welsh language</i>	<p>Churchstoke C.P School is an English-medium school, however as it is located on the Powys / Shropshire border. Should pupils transfer to alternative schools in Powys, they would continue to be exposed to the Welsh language.</p> <p>However, it is possible that some pupils could choose to attend alternative provision in Shropshire. This would mean that they would no longer access a Welsh curriculum, and Welsh would no longer be a part of the curriculum. This could also impact on the Welsh identify of Churchstoke and opportunities to promote the Welsh language in Churchstoke.</p>	Poor	The proposal is for pupils to transfer to their closest alternative schools in Powys – this is to ensure that they get an opportunity to access the Curriculum for Wales and to develop their Welsh language skills. Home to school transport to be provided for pupils living in Churchstoke to their nearest school in Powys to ensure that they continue to access a Welsh education.	Neutral

<p><i>People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation.</i></p>	<p>Implementation of the proposal would lead to the closure of Churchstoke C.P. School, with pupils transferring to their nearest alternative schools in Powys. The nearest Powys school for the majority of pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School is Montgomery C.i.W Primary School, which is a larger school than Churchstoke. It is anticipated that being part of a larger school would result in additional opportunities for pupils to take part in sport, art and other extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>The comments received during the consultation period suggest that there a number of extra-curricular activities happening at Churchstoke C.P. School. The comments received also suggest that due to the size of the school, pupils have more opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities and whole school activities than in larger schools. However, all the other alternative schools provide a range of extra-curricular activities that are teacher-led.</p> <p>Concerns were raised about the impact on poorer families, with the number of children eligible for free school meals having increased significantly at Churchstoke C.P. School between 2020 and 2021. Comments suggest that these families would be at an even greater disadvantage due to not having access to their own transport, and reliant on public transport.</p> <p>The Council acknowledges that it may be difficult for some pupils to access after school activities due to reliance on home to school transport.</p>	Neutral	<p>The alternative schools also have pupils that rely on home to school transport, and they are experienced in ensuring that all pupils are able to take part in activities.</p>	Neutral
--	---	---------	--	---------

**A more equal Wales:** A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).  
 Incorporating requirements under the *Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and the Social Economic duty (2020)*.

<b>Well-being Goal</b>	<b>How does proposal contribute to this goal?</b>	<b><u>IMPACT</u></b> Please select from drop down box below	<b>What will be done to better contribute to a more positive impact or to mitigate any negative impacts?</b>	<b><u>IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION</u></b> Please select from drop down box below
<i>Age</i>	The proposal would impact on primary aged pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P School. The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all affected pupils.	Neutral		
<i>Disability</i>	<p>The proposal would impact on any pupils with disabilities currently attending Churchstoke C.P School. The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all affected pupils, including any pupils with disabilities.</p> <p>Comments received during the consultation expressed concern about the impact on pupils with additional learning needs if they had to be taught in larger cohorts, with the view that small schools / classes enable more 1:1 support. The Council's view is that pupils with additional learning needs would be fully supported at any of the alternative schools.</p> <p>Concerns were also raised about Montgomery C.i.W School in terms of accessibility, noting that Churchstoke C.P. School had been adapted to improve its accessibility. The Council would need to ensure that any school building is accessible and meets the needs of learners with disabilities.</p>	Neutral		

<i>Gender reassignment</i>	No impact.	Neutral		
<i>Marriage or civil partnership</i>	No impact.	Neutral		
<i>Race</i>	The proposal would impact on all primary aged pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P School, including pupils belonging to protected characteristic groups due to their race. The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all affected pupils.	Neutral		
<i>Religion or belief</i>	The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P School, regardless of their religion or belief.  In the consultation period, comments were received which expressed concern that many of the alternative schools near to Churchstoke are Church-in-Wales school and that if Churchstoke C.P. School closed, the choice of a community primary school would not be available.	Neutral	There is no pressure on families attending a Church in Wales school to be Christian or to have any affiliation with the Church. If a parent wished for their child to attend a non-denominational school, they could apply for a place at any community primary school.	
<i>Sex</i>	The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all pupils currently attending Churchstoke .C.P School, regardless of their sex.	Neutral		
<i>Sexual Orientation</i>	The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P School, regardless of their sexual orientation.	Neutral		
<i>Pregnancy and Maternity</i>	No impact.	Neutral		
<i>Socio-economic duty</i>	The aim of the proposal is to provide improved educational opportunities for all pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P School, including any eligible for Free School Meals. The number of	Poor		

	<p>pupils attending Churchstoke C.P. School that are eligible for Free School Meals has increased over the last year or so – PLASC 2021 indicates that 28.9% of pupils at the school were eligible for Free School Meals. These pupils would continue to receive free school meals at any alternative school that they would transfer to.</p> <p>Should the proposal be implemented, there would be no school in Churchstoke. This would mean that pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School would need to travel to their nearest alternative provision. Whilst home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils, it is possible that this would impact on pupils’ ability to access extra-curricular / after school activities, and that this impact would be greater in respect of pupils from lower income households. There would also be an impact on the parents of these pupils in terms of accessing school activities. Concern was raised during the consultation period about the proposal’s impact on the ability of pupils from lower income households in particular to access after school activities, and that the proposal could cause a social divide.</p>			
--	--	--	--	--

<b>Source of Outline Evidence to support judgements</b>
Consultation report

7. How does your proposal impact on the council’s other key guiding principles?  
**Sustainable Development Principle (5 ways of working)**

Principle	How does the proposal impact on this principle?	<b>IMPACT</b> Please select from drop down box below	What will be done to better contribute to a more positive impact or to mitigate any negative impacts?	<b>IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION</b> Please select from drop down box below
<b>Long Term:</b> <i>Looking to the long term so that we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.</i>	<p>Whilst pupil numbers at Churchstoke C.P. School have decreased over the last few years, they are now increasing. There are a number of large housing developments in the area that may lead to an increase in pupil numbers in Churchstoke in the future. It is also noted that a number of pupils from the Churchstoke area are already travelling to other schools, particularly schools in Shropshire. Churchstoke Little Explorers is also a thriving pre-school setting, funded for 19 places. This suggests that Churchstoke C.P. School should have a higher roll than it currently has.</p> <p>The pressure on school places at alternative schools has also been noted and therefore the proposal as it currently stands has a negative impact on this principle.</p>	Very Poor		
<b>Collaboration:</b> <i>Working with others in a collaborative way to find shared sustainable solutions.</i>	Full consultation has been carried out, which has enabled all interested parties to give their views. This included an opportunity to suggest any alternative options for the school.	Good		
<b>Involvement (including Communication and Engagement):</b> <i>Involving a diversity of the population in the decisions that affect them including:</i>  <b>Unpaid Carers:</b>	Full consultation has been carried out in accordance with the School Organisation Code. This provided an opportunity for all interested parties to give their views on the proposal, including any unpaid carers. A Consultation Report has been prepared which outlines the issues raised in the consultation responses, and	Good		

<p><i>Ensuring that unpaid carers views are sought and taken into account</i></p>	<p>this will be considered by Cabinet Cabinet when determining how to proceed.</p> <p>Concerns were raised during the consultation period about the consultation taking place during the pandemic, and that this meant that some members of the community were unable to give their views. However, a significant number of responses were received to the consultation which does not support this view.</p>			
<p><b>Prevention:</b> <i>Understanding the root causes of issues to prevent them from occurring including:</i></p> <p><b>Safeguarding:</b> <i>Preventing and responding to abuse and neglect of children, young people and adults with health and social care needs who can't protect themselves.</i></p>	<p>The aim of the proposal to close the school is to ensure the best possible opportunities for learners in the area now and in the future, and to ensure better strategic management of the Powys schools' estate.</p> <p>Ensuring appropriate safeguarding arrangements is a key aspect of any school organisation proposal. The intention is that the proposal would maintain or improve the safeguarding arrangements for all pupils.</p>	Good		
<p><b>Integration:</b> <i>Taking an integrated approach so that public bodies look at all the well-being goals in deciding on their well-being objectives.</i></p>	<p>No impact.</p>	Neutral		
<p><b>Powys County Council Workforce:</b> What Impact will this change have on the Workforce?</p>	<p>Implementation of the proposal would impact on all current staff at Churchstoke C.P. School as there would no longer be a school in Churchstoke, therefore staff would be subject to a Management of Change process.</p> <p>Full consultation has been carried out in accordance with the School Organisation Code. This process was supported by relevant LA teams (e.g. HR), and included a consultation meeting</p>	Poor		

	with staff, which ensured that they had an opportunity to give their views.  A member of the HR team met with the staff informally at the start of the process.			
<b>Payroll:</b> How will this impact salary, any overtime/enhanced payments etc? Does this affect any particular group of employees? E.g. Male/Female dominated workforce. Does this proposal comply with the Councils Single Status Terms and Conditions?	Implementation of the preferred way forward could impact on salary arrangements for current staff at Churchstoke C.P. School.	Neutral		
<b>Welsh Language impact on staff</b>	Churchstoke C.P. School is an English-medium school, therefore it is not anticipated that there would be a Welsh language impact on staff	Neutral		
<b>Apprenticeships:</b> Has consideration been given to whether this change impacts negatively, or positively on Apprenticeships within the service?	No impact	Neutral		

<b>Source of Outline Evidence to support judgements</b>
Consultation report

8. What is the impact of this proposal on our communities?

<b>Communities</b>	<b>How does the proposal impact on residents and community?</b>	<b>IMPACT</b> See impact definitions in guidance document	<b>What will be done to better contribute to a more positive impact or to mitigate any negative impacts?</b>	<b>IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION</b> See impact definitions in guidance document	<b>Source of Outline Evidence to support judgement</b>
--------------------	---	--	--	---	--

<p>Churchstoke</p>	<p>There would be a significant impact on the community of Churchstoke as there would be no provision in the village, and therefore potential loss of any community facilities associated with the school.</p> <p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P School. Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities / events.</p> <p>Churchstoke C.P. School is located close to the community hall. Should the school close, the community hall would continue to be available for community activities. Whilst the proposal would not impact on the community hall, it is acknowledged that the potential loss of income to the hall from school activities no longer needing to take place could impact on the community hall.</p> <p>Numerous concerns about the proposal's impact on the community were raised during the consultation, these included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General concern about impact on the community/village</li> </ul>	<p>Major</p>	<p>Home to school transport to be provided for pupils living in Churchstoke to their nearest school in Powys to ensure that they continue to access a Welsh education.</p> <p>Community hall to continue to be available to the community for community activities.</p>	<p>Major</p>	
--------------------	---	--------------	---	--------------	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is the heart of the community</li> <li>• Closure of the school would mean that the community would lead to a loss of community cohesion</li> <li>• Concern about the impact on local businesses / the local economy</li> <li>• Concern about the impact on the community centre</li> <li>• Concern about the impact on other services</li> <li>• Concern about the impact on other community groups / activities</li> <li>• People would no longer want to live in Churchstoke</li> <li>• Comments about previous generations of families that have attended the school</li> <li>• Queries about what would happen to the school building / grounds</li> <li>• Comments about previous school closures</li> </ul> <p>Concerns were also raised about the potential impact of the school closure on Churchstoke Little Explorers, the pre-school setting that is co-located in a building at the school with shared facilities.</p> <p>Whilst the proposal is that pupils transfer to alternative Powys schools, it is possible that some pupils would transfer to</p>				
--	---	--	--	--	--

	<p>alternative schools in Shropshire, and therefore would access education in England. This could impact on the Welsh identity of Churchstoke.</p> <p>A separate draft community impact assessment has been carried out which includes input from the school. This has also been updated to reflect comments made during the consultation.</p>				
--	--	--	--	--	--

9. What are the risks to service delivery or the council following implementation of this proposal?

<b>Risk Identified</b>	<b>Inherent Risk Rating Impact X Likelihood (See Risk Matrix in guidance document)</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Residual Risk Rating Impact X Likelihood (See Risk Matrix in guidance document)</b>
Insufficient capacity at nearest Powys school to accommodate all pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School. The school has a capacity of 119 and there are currently 88 pupils on roll, meaning that there are 31 places available at the school. Due to the significant housing developments in both Churchstoke and Montgomery and the wider area, there is a strong possibility that pupil numbers in the area will increase over the next few years.	High	Review the current proposal.	Medium
Parents of pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School choose for their children to attend provision in Shropshire instead of transferring to alternative schools in Powys.	High	Engagement with parents to take place throughout the process on the benefits of the Curriculum for Wales.	Medium
Period of uncertainty for Churchstoke C.P. School if a statutory process is carried out and implemented which might have a negative effect on standards at the school.	Medium	The Council to provide advice and support to the school and governing body to ensure that standards and performance do not deteriorate during the transition period	Medium

Uncertainty for staff whilst the process is ongoing	Medium	Engagement with staff to take place throughout the process and staff to be kept informed of developments	Medium
Negative impact on pupils wellbeing which has already been affected due to the pandemic.	High	An experienced member of staff from the Council is supporting school leaders effectively to help them manage possible changes for pupils. The Council would also expect pupils to be fully supported by their teachers and other staff at the school during any period of uncertainty, to minimise the impact on their well-being.	Medium

#### 10. Overall Summary and Judgement of this Impact Assessment?

<p>The aim of the proposal is to improve the educational provision for learners. However, whilst this impact assessment has identified some positive aspects, in particular relating to learning and skills and ensuring the best strategic management of the Powys schools' estate, the assessment has also identified some negative aspects. These primarily relate to the pressure on school places at alternative schools should Churchstoke C.P. School close. This is due to the potential increase in pupil numbers due to significant number of housing developments in Churchstoke and the wider area, plus the fact that a number of pupils from Churchstoke are already choosing to attend Shropshire schools. This suggests that Churchstoke C.P. School should have a higher roll than it currently has.</p> <p>Other negative aspects include the impact on the community of Churchstoke due to loss of educational provision from the village, and the associated additional travel requirements for pupils. In addition, whilst the proposal is that pupils would transfer to alternative schools in Powys, it is possible that some pupils would transfer to provision in Shropshire, which would mean that they would no longer access a Welsh curriculum, and could impact on the Welsh identity of the village of Churchstoke. Another negative is the impact on general well-being, particularly due to the consultation having taken place during the pandemic.</p>
---

#### 11. Is there additional evidence to support the Impact Assessment (IA)?

<b>What additional evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?</b>
Full consultation has been carried out on the proposal. The impact assessment has been updated to reflect the feedback received.

#### 12. On-going monitoring arrangements?

<b>What arrangements will be put in place to monitor the impact over time?</b>
The Transforming Education Programme Board will continue to monitor impact over time.
<b>Please state when this Impact Assessment will be reviewed.</b>
This impact assessment will be reviewed at each stage of the process

#### 13. Sign Off

Position	Name	Signature	Date
----------	------	-----------	------

<b>Impact Assessment Lead:</b>	Sarah Astley		
<b>Head of Service:</b>	Lynette Lovell		
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Cllr Phyl Davies		

14. Governance

<b>Decision to be made by</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date required</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2021
-------------------------------	---------	----------------------	-----------------------------

### 3. Equality Impact Assessment

## Powys County Council

### Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)



<b>Proposal</b>	To close Churchstoke C.P. School from the 31st August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools
<b>Service Area</b>	Schools Service
<b>Date of Assessment</b>	October 2021
<b>Lead Person undertaking the assessment</b>	SA
<b>Relevant Head of Service who has agreed this assessment</b>	LL

The Equality Act 2010, requires that public sector organisations in the exercise of their functions, pay due regard to the following 'general duty':

- (a) Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;**
- (b) Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;**
- (c) Fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.**

*The protected characteristics include: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, sex and sexual orientation. This assessment also includes a consideration of impact upon people and communities whose language of choice is Welsh.*

The specific regulations for Wales [Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011] require public sector bodies to monitor relevant policy and practises and then assess and report on the impact based upon an analysis of relevant data and evidence.

#### 1. AIM or PURPOSE

In April 2020, the Leader approved a new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys, which sets a number of aims and objectives to transform the Powys education system over the next few years. One of the objectives is to 'Reconfigure and rationalise primary provision'.

Powys County Council is consulting on a proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School. The proposal is as follows:

- To close Churchstoke C.P. School from the 31st August 2022, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools in Powys

## 2. OBJECTIVES

**Please state the current business objectives of the change proposal.**

The Council is proposing to close Churchstoke C.P. School for the following reasons:

- To address the issue of low pupil numbers
- To reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- To provide a revenue saving to the Council
- To enable pupils to attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities
- To enable pupils to be taught in classes with peers of similar ages
- To enable pupils to attend schools with better quality accommodation
- To enable pupils to continue to access provision in Powys

## 3. BENEFITS and OUTCOMES

**i) What are the intended benefits or outcomes from the change proposal?**

The benefits of the proposal are:

- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers
- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- Revenue saving to the Council
- Pupils would attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular activities
- Pupils would be taught in classes with peers of similar ages

- Pupils would attend schools with better quality accommodation
- Minimal impact on any other schools
- Would enable pupils to continue to access provision in Powys

#### 4. CORPORATE RELEVANCE

##### How does this change proposal relate to Vision 2025?

Learning and Skills is one of the four priorities outlined in Corporate Improvement Plan 2020-25: Vision 2025. Within this priority, the Plan includes a commitment to 'Improve our schools infrastructure'.

#### 5. DATA USED

##### 5.1. What data has been used to conduct this assessment?

Tick/shade boxes as appropriate.

Profiling of service users, providing a breakdown of who uses the service by the protected characteristics.	✓
Service user satisfaction rates, broken down by the protected characteristics.	
Qualitative data (analysed against the protected characteristics) which provides evidence about current services users experience accessing the service.	
Qualitative data gathered from those that are not currently using the service.	
Complaints monitoring against the protected characteristics.	
Wider research reports and findings.	
Relevant service based Equality Impact Assessment.	

##### 5.2. Are there any gaps in the data?

Yes ✓

Please state the gaps:

- No qualitative data is currently available

How will the gaps be addressed going forward?

- Qualitative data will be collected as part of the forthcoming consultation process.

No

## 6. DATA ANALYSIS

### 6.1 Quantitative

**Summarise the key quantitative data analysis results, providing key headline statistics.**

Include data that relates to existing provision and also data relating to proposal. E.g. statistics generated from a consultation questionnaire.

**Key questions:**

- i) Are certain groups currently underrepresented in service user figures? Will a change affect this?
- ii) How do satisfaction levels compare across the protected characteristic groups? How will a change affect this?

### PLASC January 2021

Based on the information provided in the school's PLASC return in January 2021, the following pupils belong to the protected characteristic groups:

- Free school meals: 28.9% of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals
- ALN: 28.9% of pupils have special educational needs. Of these, 13.2% of pupils are on School Action, 13.2% of pupils are on School Action Plus and 2.6% of pupils have statements
- Disabilities: 28.9% of pupils have additional learning needs
- English as an Additional Language: 5.3% of pupils are identified as EAL pupils.
- Ethnicity: The ethnic group of 94.7% of pupils in the school is White British. 5.3% of pupils belong to ethnic groups other than White British.
- Looked after Children: 0.0% of pupils are looked after.

This information shows that a proportion of pupils that belong to the protected characteristic groups will be affected by this proposal. In particular:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 28.9% of pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School are eligible for Free School Meals. This is higher than the Powys average for primary schools (15.4%)</li> <li>- 28.9% of pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School have additional learning needs. This is higher than the Powys average for primary schools (20.0%)</li> </ul> <p>The proposal to close Churchstoke C.P. School would impact on all pupils currently attending the school, including those pupils belonging to protected characteristic groups.</p>
<p><b>6.2 Qualitative</b>  <b>Summarise the key qualitative data analysis, providing key themes or patterns.</b>  Include data that relates to existing provision and also data relating to proposal. E.g. protected characteristics focus group on the proposal.</p> <p><b>Key questions:</b></p> <p><b>i)</b> Do certain groups have a different service user experience? How will a change affect this?</p> <p><b>ii)</b> Have any areas for improvement been communicated by particular groups? Will a change have an impact upon these views?</p> <p><b>iii)</b> What are the reasons behind some groups not using the service? How will a change affect this position?</p> <p><b>iv)</b> What has consultation on your proposals revealed about impact on the protected characteristics?</p>	<p>Full consultation has been carried out on the proposal relating to Churchstoke C.P. School, which included consultation with pupils at the affected schools. This has provided qualitative data in respect of the proposal, and any additional impact on pupils that belong to protected characteristic groups.</p> <p>The following comments were raised about the proposal's impact on the protected characteristic groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is more beneficial for pupils belonging to protected characteristic groups to attend Churchstoke C.P. School / small schools</li> <li>- The proposal would impact on pupils with ALN / SEN that attend Churchstoke C.P. School</li> <li>- The proposal would impact on pupils with disabilities attending the school, particularly as the school has good disabled facilities which may not be available at alternative schools</li> <li>- Impact on low income families, particularly in respect of ability to access after school / extracurricular activities</li> <li>- Concern that most of the nearby schools are denominational schools, therefore it would be more difficult for pupils to access a C.P. school.</li> </ul>

## 7. EqIA RESULT

Based on an analysis of the available qualitative and quantitative data, please tick/shade the appropriate box opposite to provide the EqIA assessment result.

<b>The proposal does not present any adverse impact on equality.</b> [Proceed to question 10]	
<b>The proposal presents some adverse impact on equality.</b> [Proceed to question 8]	✓
<b>The proposal presents significant impact on equality</b> [Proceed to question 8]	

## 8. AREAS for IMPROVEMENT

<p><b>Please provide detail of weak or sensitive areas of the proposal identified by the assessment.</b></p> <p><b>i)</b> Which protected characteristic groups are particularly affected?</p> <p><b>ii)</b> Will people on low incomes be affected?</p> <p><b>iii)</b> Will Welsh speakers be affected?</p>	<p><b>i)</b> The protected characteristic group most affected by the proposal would be pupils with additional learning needs. 28.9% of pupils at the school have additional learning needs, this is higher than the Powys average for primary schools. Comments received during the consultation expressed concern about the impact on pupils with ALN if they had to be taught in larger cohorts, with the view that small schools / classes enable more 1:1 support.</p> <p>Comments were also received expressing concern about the impact on pupils with disabilities, particularly as Churchstoke School building has good disabled facilities, which may not be available at alternative schools.</p> <p>Concerns were also raised that most of the nearby schools are denominational schools, therefore should the Council proceed with the proposal, it would be more difficult for pupils to access a C.P. School.</p> <p><b>ii)</b> 28.9% of pupils attending Churchstoke C.P. School are eligible for Free School Meals. This is higher than the Powys average for primary schools and the percentage has increased significantly since 2020. Concerns were raised in the consultation about the proposal's impact on low income families, particularly in relation to access to after school / extra curricular activities.</p>
--	---

	<p>iii) Churchstoke C.P. School is an English medium school, therefore the proposal will not directly affect Welsh speakers. However, as a border school, concerns were raised in the consultation that parents would choose alternative schools in Shropshire instead of an alternative school in Powys, and that this would impact on pupils' ability to access the Curriculum for Wales and to have the opportunity to develop their Welsh language skills.</p>
--	--

## 9. EQUALITY IMPROVEMENT

<p><b>9.1 Having identified problematic aspects to the proposal, how will this now be addressed?</b></p> <p><i>i.e. Are you able to involve (in some capacity) people from protected characteristic groups, Welsh Speakers, people on low incomes, to assist you in this process?</i></p> <p>i) Can the impact be mitigated, and how will this be done?</p> <p>ii) Does the proposal require modification to reduce or remove this impact?</p> <p>iii) Should the proposal be considered for removal, owing to the degree of impact it is likely to have?</p>	<p>Should the proposal be implemented, Churchstoke C.P. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools. This would have a significant impact on pupils currently attending Churchstoke C.P. School, including any pupils belonging to the protected characteristic groups that attend the school, as some additional travel would be required in order to attend their nearest alternative school.</p> <p>Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal would impact on pupils belonging to the protected characteristic groups that attend the school, there is no reason to believe that the nearest alternative schools would be unable to meet the needs of pupils belonging to the protected characteristic groups that would be affected, including pupils with Additional Learning Needs and pupils eligible for Free School Meals.</p> <p>The protected characteristic group most affected by the proposal would be pupils with ALN. However, the Council's view is that pupils with additional learning needs would be fully supported at any of the alternative schools. Concern was also raised about the impact on disabled pupils as the Churchstoke building has good disabled facilities, which may not be available at alternative schools. Should the Council proceed with the proposal, there would be a need to ensure that any school building these pupils transfer to is accessible and meets the needs of the learners.</p> <p>There would be significant impact on pupils with protected characteristics, including those with additional learning needs, those eligible for free school meals and on opportunities to use the Welsh language. It is therefore proposed that the proposal be considered for removal.</p>
---	--

	The proposal does not require modification to reduce or remove the impact on protected characteristic groups.
--	---

**9.2 Will the management of the impact as outlined in 9.1, be included in the Service Improvement Plan?**

<p><b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Date added.....</p> <p>Reference.....</p>	<p><b>No</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If no, please explain why not:  <b>Need was not identified at time of writing Service Strategy</b></p>
---	--

#### 4. Draft Community Impact Assessment – Churchstoke C.P. School

i) **Information on the proportion of pupils from the catchment area that attend the school**

The closest providers for pupils attending Churchstoke C.P. in January 2020<sup>1</sup> was as follows:

School	% of Pupils
Churchstoke C.P. School	80.0%
Bishop's Castle Primary School	8.0%
Long Mountain CofE Primary School	4.0%
Montgomery C. in W. School	4.0%
Penygloddfa C.P. School	4.0%

This suggests that 80% of pupils attending the school were attending their closest primary school, whilst 20% of pupils attending the school live closer to other primary schools.

#### **Updated information – September 2021**

This information has been updated to reflect PLASC 2021 data which shows that the closest current school for pupils is as follows:

School	% of Pupils
Churchstoke C.P. School	76%
Bishop's Castle Primary School	8%
St Michael's C.i.W VA School	5%
Montgomery C.i.W Primary School	3%
Bishop's Castle School	3%
Long Mountain CofE Primary School	3%
Ysgol Gymraeg y Trallwng	2%

---

<sup>1</sup> PLASC 2020

If there was no school in Churchstoke, the nearest alternative schools for pupils would be as follows:

School	% of Pupils
Chirbury CofE Primary School	74%
Bishop's Castle Primary School	11%
St Michael's C. in W. School, Kerry	5%
Montgomery C. in W. Primary School	5%
Long Mountain CofE Primary School	3%
Welshpool C. in W. Primary School	2%

**ii) After-school clubs and extra-curricular activities provided by the school**

The school provides the following after-school clubs and extra-curricular activities:

- Cooking, coding, film club and Criw Cymraeg, guitar lessons, a series of enterprise activities
- Joint activities with the local Tennis Club and Churchstoke Bowling Club.
- Breakfast Club.
- After School Club which supports both the school and pre-school setting.
- Village Youth Club.
- Rainbows, Brownies and Guides, currently the only youth provision in the village outside school and pre-school.
- Charity fund raising is undertaken on an extracurricular basis, both for local and national appeals.
- The school have been involved in local history and environmental projects.
- Due to the school's location within the geographical landscape, it has been the only Powys/Welsh representation in Buzz in the Borders via The John Muir Trust and The Stiperstones and Corndon Living Landscape project. Without this participation there would be dramatically reduced opportunities for local community participation in cross border initiatives such as this.

**iii) Any other facilities or services the school accommodates or services the school provides**

The school accommodates or provides the following other facilities or services:

- The local playgroup, Churchstoke Little Explorers, and Churchstoke Parent and Toddler Group, which also use both an outdoor area and the

school field/forest school area. They have just received a £10,000 grant from Powys County Council Small Grants Scheme to develop the outdoor area and work is due to start during February half term.

- The school library which is also used by voluntary groups (e.g. Rainbows, Brownies and Guides)
- The school is a key holder for the Community Hall, which is on the school site.
- Heart defibrillator which belongs to the school but is available to all in the local area.

#### **iv) Other use by the community of the school building**

The school building is used by the community to provide the following activities:

- The school grounds are used as access to the Community Hall for all those using the hall.
- The school grounds are used by Churchstoke Football Club to access changing rooms.
- The school grounds are used by Rainbows, Brownies and Guides. It is also expected that a Scout Group will use the school grounds once the COVID-19 restrictions are over.
- The school field and forest school area is used for forest school activities for playgroup, toddlers and voluntary groups.

The school grounds have been used for church and nursing home fetes, and for overflow parking for large funerals

#### **v) Other links between the school and the community**

- With the neighbouring residential and nursing home, St Nicholas House. This has included visits from the children to perform for the residents and is very important for the health and well-being of both the residents and the children.
- St Nicholas' Church, including joint fund raising and social activities, plus support for Sunday School. Church leaders, WI and Mother's Union provide input into school assemblies, lessons and extra-curricular activities.
- With the local Co-op and Churchstoke Shopping Centre, with children visiting to perform for the public and to gain first-hand experience of the world of work.
- A Clothing Bank for the recycling of unwanted clothes.
- The school lends equipment to Playgroup, Toddlers, Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and other voluntary bodies, and the school gymnastics equipment is available to the public.
- The school supports youth participation in the local tennis club lessons and at the local Bowling Club.
- School and Friends of School events are community gatherings, open to the whole community. Many residents of St Nicholas' House, other older residents, vulnerable members of the community and those with pre-school families rely on these events for social interaction. Little else brings the community together, younger with older, including secondary age ex-pupils.

- The school is the repository for local history after closure of the local history group several years ago. A regular part of school work is to ensure that both written and verbal local history is kept alive, including photographic records of changes within the community.
- Due to school location within the geographical landscape, the school provides the only Powys/Welsh representation in Buzz in the Borders via The John Muir Trust and The Stiperstones and Corndon Living Landscape project. Without this both projects would lack any Welsh perspective.
- Close links to education and training on both sides of the border, particularly with feeder secondary schools, crucially The Community College, Bishop's Castle (which is the closest secondary school and therefore the main feeder secondary), ensuring continuity of learning, wellbeing and safeguarding on transfer.

**vi) If accommodation, facilities or services are provided by a school, where would they be provided in the event of closure?**

Should the proposal be implemented, then the intention is that all existing Churchstoke pupils would transfer to their nearest alternative school, and Churchstoke C.P. School would close. It is acknowledged that this would mean that there would be no school in Churchstoke, meaning that any community facilities provided by the school would no longer be available.

However, there is a Community Centre in Churchstoke, which would continue to be available to the community, and which could be used for community events. It is possible that closure of the school could impact on the Community Centre, due to the loss of any financial contributions by the school, however it is also possible that there would be increased use of the Community Centre should there be no school in the village.

**vii) Distance and travelling time involved in attending an alternative school of the same language category**

Should the proposal be implemented, then the intention is that all existing Churchstoke pupils would transfer to their nearest alternative school in Powys. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative Powys schools would be Montgomery C. in W. School, Forden C. in W. School, Abermule C.P. School, Leighton C.P. School, Berriew C.P. School and St Michael's C. in W. VA School.

An analysis of pupils attending Churchstoke School in January 2020 suggests that the furthest distance to their nearest alternative school in Powys for pupils for whom Churchstoke School is currently the closest school would be 8.8 miles. The furthest distance to their nearest school regardless of location would be 4.6 miles.

Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, it is also

acknowledged that there could be an impact on some pupils' ability to access after school activities, and could impact on the ability of parents to take part in school events, meetings etc.

**viii) How parents' and pupils' engagement with the alternative school and any facilities it may offer could be supported**

Should the Council proceed with the statutory process and eventually implementation of the preferred option, support would be provided to pupils and their parents as part of the transition process, to ensure full engagement with their closest alternative schools.

**ix) Any wider implications e.g. impact on public transport provision, wider community safety issues**

- Concern about the impact on the local pre-school and toddler groups would not be viable if there was no school in the village – a number of families do not have transport to access the nearest alternatives and there is little public transport.
- Local knowledge is important in order to safeguard families.
- Monitoring of local safeguarding issues, including specific identification and preventative teaching work on local community issues (the danger spots on the main road play areas, areas where children congregate, the community field etc.) would be more difficult if the school was closed.
- On-going development of 60+ social and affordable houses within the village.
- Many of the pupils currently walk to school – this would not be possible if there was no school in Churchstoke.
- Impact on the Welsh language and Welsh identity in the village, particularly as a high proportion of families would be likely to choose alternative provision in Shropshire.
- Concern about community division due to pupils attending provision in a number of different locations.
- Flooding from the Camlad and Caebitra Rivers which occurs on an annual basis can prevent travel out of the village and would mean that pupils would not be able to access school outside the village

**x) Additional considerations for rural schools**

The School Organisation Code includes a number of additional considerations that are likely to be relevant when carrying out a community impact assessment for a rural school closure. As Churchstoke School is identified as a rural school, these factors are considered below.

- **Whether closure would encourage families with school-age children to leave the community or discourage young families from moving to the community**

Information received from the school suggests that a range of services and activities are provided by the school which could be attractive to families and which increase the attractiveness of the community to potential young families, such as the pre-school and toddler groups which are held on the site.

Should there be no school in Churchstoke, it is likely that there would be an impact on facilities associated with the school, which could have an impact on families with school-age children, and which could encourage these families to leave the community or discourage young families from moving to the community.

- **What impact closure might have on other services provided locally, for instance if the school is the only remaining public building in a community**

Information received from the school suggests that a wide range of services are provided in the school, and that the playgroup and the parents and toddler group would be particularly vulnerable should there be no school in Churchstoke.

Whilst there is a Community Hall in Churchstoke which would continue to be available should there be no school in the village, therefore community activities, events and other services could be provided here. However, it is acknowledged that the Hall relies on the support of the school, and that closure of the school could also impact on the viability of the hall in the longer term.

- **Whether, or not, the school is a real hub of community life, used for other purpose – such as public meetings, local events, fetes surgeries, and other get togethers – which would either cease or be diminished by being required to move elsewhere**

Information received from the school suggests that a wide range of events and activities take place in the school, and that there are many links between the school and the community. School events and Friends of the School events are whole community events, which bring the whole community together. There is a Community Hall in Churchstoke which would continue to be available should there be no school in the village, therefore community activities, events and other services could be provided here. However, it is acknowledged that without the school, it is possible that there would be a reduction in the number of events and activities available.

- **Whether or not the loss of the school, and potentially families, will have a detrimental effect on the wider economy of the community**

It is possible that the loss of the school, and potentially families would have a negative impact on recruitment for lower paid key worker jobs in the area, and on the ability of other employers to recruit to roles, including residential and care staff, shop staff and agricultural work.

In addition, should closure of the school lead to fewer young families moving to the village, this could also impact on businesses in the village and surrounding

communities, such as the three pubs, the shops at Churchstoke Shopping Centre, local tradesmen etc.

Concern has also been expressed that the absence of a school in the village would lead to a reduction in house prices.

- **How parents' and pupils' engagement with the alternative school and any facilities it may offer could be supported (e.g. how pupils, (particularly any less advantaged pupils) will be helped to participate in after school activities)**

Should the Council proceed with the statutory process and eventually implementation of the preferred option, support would be provided to pupils and their parents as part of the transition process, to ensure full engagement with their new schools. The nature of this support would depend on the needs of the parents / pupils, however this could include provision for effective transition to the receiving school by headteacher and class teachers.

It is acknowledged that there would be an impact on pupils' ability to participate in after school activities as there would be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities/events.

- **The overall effect of closure on the local community (including the loss of school based facilities which are used by the local community)**

The information received from the school indicates that the school currently plays an important role in the community, and that there are extensive links between the school and the community. Concern has been expressed that closure of the school would lead to social problems and isolation, and would impact on the Welsh identity of Churchstoke as it is possible that families would look to schools in Shropshire for alternative provision rather than schools in Powys.

Whilst there is a Community Centre in Churchstoke, information received from the school suggests that closure of the school would mean that the Community Centre was not viable, which would impact on community groups in the village, with the loss of activities for children and young people, the elderly and families.

#### **xi) Issues raised during the consultation period**

A number of comments were received during the consultation period which related to the proposal's impact on the community.

These comments are listed in full in the consultation report produced in respect of this proposal along with the Council's response to the points raised, and are also summarised below:

- **Travel implications**
  - o The proposal would lead to additional travel
  - o Comments about additional transport costs

- Concern about the impact on the environment
- Children would be unable to walk to school
- Concern that it would be more difficult for parents to get to school if there was an emergency
- Concern about traffic congestion
- Concern about impact on pupils' access to after schools activities
- Comments about the suitability / safety of school transport
- Comments about flooding in Churchstoke

- **Impact on the community**

- General concern about impact on the community/village
- The school is the heart of the community
- Closure of the school would mean that the community would lead to a loss of community cohesion
- Concern about the impact on local businesses / the local economy
- Concern about the impact on the community centre
- Concern about the impact on other services
- Concern about the impact on other community groups / activities
- People would no longer want to live in Churchstoke
- Comments about previous generations of families that have attended the school
- Queries about what would happen to the school building / grounds
- Comments about previous school closures

- **Comments about early years provision**

- Comments relating to the Early Years Provision at Churchstoke
- Concern about the future of the Early Years Provision at Churchstoke
- Comments about alternative early years provision

- **Comments about impact on Welsh language/identity**

- Comments about the use of Welsh at Churchstoke School
- General concerns about the proposal's impact on Welsh
- Concerns that the proposal would mean that Churchstoke pupils would not have the opportunity to learn Welsh
- The proposal would not impact on the Welsh language
- Comments about Welsh Government policy

**xii) Conclusion**

It is clear that a wide range of extra-curricular activities are available to pupils at Churchstoke C.P. School. Should there be no school in Churchstoke, pupils would transfer to alternative schools. These would be larger schools, and the expectation is that at least a similar range of activities would be available for pupils. However, it is acknowledged that pupils would need to travel to the alternative schools, which could impact on their ability to access activities, particularly where these take place after school.

The information received by the school also suggests that there are extensive links between the school and the local community, and that many community activities are arranged in the school which are accessed by the community. It is therefore acknowledged that closure of the school could have an impact on the community in terms of the services and activities available.

An area of concern has been on the potential impact on Churchstoke Little Explorers, the pre-school setting that provides early years education and childcare provision, due to the setting being co-located in a building at the school and use of shared facilities. There was concern that this setting provides full day support for working parents who may be impacted if this provision was no longer available. However, the closure of the setting due to closure of the school is not a given, and the setting could continue to operate if there was demand in the area. Further discussions would be required with the setting if the Council was to proceed with an asset transfer or sale of the site, should the school close.

Should there be no school in Churchstoke, any school facilities used by the community would no longer be available. There is a Community Hall in Churchstoke which would continue to be available, therefore community events and activities could take place here. However, it is acknowledged that the Hall relies on the support of the school, and that closure of the school could also impact on the viability of the hall in the longer term.

Closure of Churchstoke C.P. School would result in additional travel to school for pupils for whom Churchstoke is currently their closest school. Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, it is also acknowledged that there could be an impact on some pupils' ability to access after school activities, and this could impact on the ability of parents to take part in school events, meetings etc. This would also mean that pupils who are currently able to walk to school would be unable to do so.

## CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE  
Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Aled Davies  
Portfolio Holder for Finance

**REPORT TITLE:** Strategic Risk Register Report Quarter 2 2021/2022

---

**REPORT FOR:** Decision

---

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the Council's latest position on managing its key risks, contained in the Strategic Risk Register (SRR). It also outlines the arrangements put in place by the Council for managing the key risks relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Our Strategic Risk Register is key to safeguarding the organisation and building resilience into our services. At a time when the Council has faced and is still facing unprecedented challenges, the effective management of risk is needed more than ever. A risk-managed approach to decision making will help us to achieve the well-being objectives in Vision 2025, deliver services more efficiently and using innovative and cost-effective means, and help the Council manage its COVID-19 response and recovery.

**3. Advice**

- 3.1 To ensure a risk managed approach to decision making and good governance of the Council, it is proposed that Cabinet:
- Review progress to mitigate strategic risks
  - Review progress to mitigate COVID-19 risks

**Review of progress to mitigate Strategic Risks**

- 3.2 As at the end of quarter 2 2021-2022, there are 14 risks on the strategic risk register and all strategic risk owners have provided a short summary of progress since last quarter, to give assurance that mitigating actions are being actioned and monitored.
- 3.3 Please see appendix A for full details of the 14 strategic risks including the mitigating actions identified to control them and progress reviews.

- 3.4 Please see appendix B to view a heat map which presents the results of the quarter 2 risk assessment process visually. It highlights (for the residual risks) the following:

Two out of the fourteen risks have a probability of 'almost certain' with one placed within the 'moderate' impact category and other in 'major'.

One risk has a probability of 'likely' and an impact of 'major'.

Also, one risk has a probability of 'likely' and an impact of 'catastrophic'.

#### Escalation of risks and amendments to the Strategic Risk Register

- 3.5 Highway, Transport and Recycling Services would like to place the following risk on the Strategic Risk Register with an inherent and residual probability of 'almost certain' and impact of 'moderate':

HTR0016: Shortage of lorry and bus drivers

The potential consequences are as follows:

- Unable to deliver statutory service e.g. waste and recycling, domestic and commercial collections, school transport.
- knock on effect to delivering highways maintenance i.e. flooding and winter maintenance, hedge cutting, potholes, increase complaints.

- 3.6 Adults Services would like to place the following risk on the Strategic Risk Register with an inherent probability of 'almost certain' and impact of 'major' and a current residual probability of 'likely' and impact of 'major':

ASC0066: Risk of social care provider failure: Risk of care homes, domiciliary care providers, supported living providers and others becoming unsustainable due to human and financial resource challenges.

The potential consequences are as follows:

This is multifactorial with the main reason being the wider impact of the pandemic.

- The Welsh Government's Hardship Fund, which currently pays for 90% of vacancies in Care Homes has provided supportive mitigation. However, it is being reduced monthly until March 2022 and this will have a significant financial impact upon care providers.
- There is a risk of harm to residents in having to be moved or having care provider unavailability; financial risk to residents, Council and local economy; risk of reputational damage.

- 3.7 Adults Services would like to place the following risk on the Strategic Risk Register with an inherent probability of 'likely' and impact of 'catastrophic' and a current residual probability of 'likely' and impact of 'major':

ASC0067: Inability to provide care/support for children/adults who are assessed as requiring such support, due to the staffing shortages being experienced across the social care sector.

The potential consequences are as follows:

- Child/Adult at risk of harm.
- Council officers having to undertake roles for which they may not be trained or competent.
- Reputational damage.

- 3.8 The Strategic Risk HO0031: Increasing costs of building materials to new housing developments has evolved into a wider cross council risk as follows:

PROC008: Increased risks of price variations (an increase cause by a mix of current market conditions COVID-19 and Brexit) and labour & material shortage.

The potential consequences are as follows:

- Effect on capital and revenue budget but mainly effecting supplies of materials relating to any contract or project.
- Unable to deliver statutory and non-statutory services which could result in a backlog of work, reputational damaged, quality of buildings and knock-on consequences.
- Examples of a key consequence are, delayed or cancelled housing development, reduced capacity to address homelessness and other housing needs, delays or affordability of delivery of school's transformation etc

- 3.9 The Strategic Risk WO0021 has evolved into a wider cross council risk as follows with mitigating actions reviewed:

WO0021: The Council is unable to recruit, retain and commission the workforce it requires, in the short term due to increased staff absences and a challenging UK labour market, and in the longer term due to an anticipated long term decrease in the local working age population

The potential consequences are as follows:

- Council is unable to secure the services needed by the local population, including care and assessment provision, education, waste, highways, housing culture and support services.
- Services may not be able to respond to and fully meet increasing demand.

- Services also may not be able to deliver their normal / planned levels of service provision. Where this is acute or could lead to the inability of the Council to deliver statutorily required services, the Council may need to temporarily step-down elements of its non-business critical activities in order to deploy staff to business-critical work.

### De-escalation of risks and amendments to the Strategic Risk Register

- 3.10 Education Services would like to take the following risk off the Strategic Risk Register: COVID0058 Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) for Estyn - Coronavirus may impact on the ability of the service to maintain the level of progress against the PIAP.

Work to deliver the PIAP has continued at pace throughout the pandemic, with significant progress being made in the majority of areas, for example via the Transforming Education Programme which supports the delivery of Recommendations 2 and 4. Although the pandemic has impacted on Recommendation 1, this is mitigated by the Powys Secondary School Improvement Strategy, which has been developed in collaboration with all Powys Secondary Schools. Schools' response to the strategy has been very positive and places the LA and schools in a strong place to further improve standards across the ability range.

The service will continue to manage the risk on their own service risk register.

### COVID-19 risk register

- 3.11 In order to effectively identify and manage risks relating specifically to the COVID-19 pandemic, a separate risk register was created to provide clarity and oversight for Gold and Silver Command. These risks are reviewed and monitored regularly and have been separated into response and recovery risks, using a matrix developed specifically for assessing COVID-19 related risks.
- 3.12 The Council has been transitioning from business-critical activity to 'business as usual' and the 'new normal'. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2021 the Council concluded that all services apart from social services (both Adults and Children's Services), Human Resources and Housing could return to business as usual. As a result, services have already started incorporating ongoing risks into their own service registers and the numbers of risks on COVID-19 risk register have reduced. The intention is to eventually close the COVID-19 risk register and categorised them by risk nature in the services own risk register. Council will continue to monitor the situation carefully and response accordingly.
- 3.13 Currently there are 19 risks recorded on the COVID-19 risk register, a drop of 3 since last quarter. 2 of the 20 risks are placed within the 'major' impact category with a probability of 'likely' and 1 placed within the

'catastrophic' impact category with a probability of 'possible'. The register is still monitored by Gold and Silver Command on a weekly basis. Please see appendix C for full details of the 19 risks, and progress against the mitigating actions identified to control them.

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

- 4.1 There are no direct resource implications in relation to this report however all risk owners need to consider the resource implications of managing the risk and decide if the best course of action is to tolerate or treat.
- 4.2 The Strategic Risk Register outlines the key risks to the Council's activities, as well as risk to delivery of objectives contained within the Corporate Improvement Plan. There are no direct financial implications from the report although these may arise as new risks are identified on an on-going basis.

The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the comment above, financial implications are identified through the relevant service and are considered through the financial management processes in line with the authorities' financial regulations. All services are considering the financial impact of any risks that are expected to continue into 2022/23 and beyond in their Service Integrated Business Plans.

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

- 5.1 Legal: Been requested
- 5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) comment sought.

#### **6. Data Protection**

- 6.1 N/A

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

- 7.1 N/A

#### **8. Integrated Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 N/A. The Service Risk Register is not setting out any changes or proposals to service delivery.

#### **9. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that Cabinet notes the current Strategic Risk and COVID-19 Risk Registers and is satisfied with progress against mitigating actions for quarter 2, approves the escalation of proposed risks HTR0016, ASC0066 and ASC0067 (detailed under points 3.5, 3.6**

**& 3.7) to the Strategic Risk Register, the evolvment of HO0031 and WO0021 (detailed under 3.8 & 3.9) and the de-escalation of COVID0058 (detailed under 3.10) off the Strategic Risk Register.**

**The recommendation above will ensure:**

- **Appropriate understanding and management of strategic risks which could prevent us from achieving our objectives**
- **A risk managed approach to decision making and good governance of the Council**
- **The risk related to Powys residents, services and Council staff as a result of a COVID-19 (Coronavirus) epidemic is monitored and reviewed regularly.**

Contact Officer: Jane Thomas, Head of Finance

Tel: 01597 827789

Email: Jane.Thomas@powys.gov.uk

Head of Service: Jane Thomas, Head of Finance

Corporate Director: Dr. Caroline Turner, Chief Executive officer.

## Strategic Risk Register

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
ASC0064  Michael Gray  Escalated From :- Powys County Council  Page 643	WCCIS Unreliability - IF the unreliability of WCCIS is not resolved THEN	Veracity of decision making around adults and children in Powys will be compromised, leading to poor outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The safeguarding of children and adults in Powys will be compromised</li> <li>There will be significant delays in securing time critical packages of care               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our ability to manage transfers of people from hospital to the community will be compromised</li> <li>We will not be able to respond effectively to out of hours emergencies                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There will be delays in making decision and taking action to keep children safe</li> <li>Staff morale will be affected further, leading to increased sickness absence and staff leaving</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>29/09/2021</b> Qtr 2 21/22 Review Summary: Performance has become less unsatisfactory since last review.  Awaiting findings of independent review of current system to determine what future client management system will be used. <b>05/07/2021</b> 1st Qtr 2021/22 Review Summary: Reliability of Advanced remains unsatisfactory. Continued meetings with supplier to seek assurances on how they will address these issues. Serious loss of service experienced on 25th May resulting in lack of access to client records across Children's and Adults Services. Business case due to commence in ICT to explore what other client management database options can be pursued.	Cllr Myfanwy Alexander  Alison Bulman	20	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance issues raised to Welsh Government through SBAR</li> <li>Monthly Contract review meetings with Supplier</li> <li>Follow correct change management processes</li> </ul>	Action In Progress  Action In Progress  Control In Place

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
COVID0058  Lynette Lovell  <b>Escalated</b> From :- Powys County Council  Page 644	Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) for Estyn - Coronavirus may impact on the ability of the service to maintain the level of progress against the PIAP. In particular Recommendation 1 of the PIAP - 'Improve standards in secondary schools and more able learners' as schools are currently closed. Also, Recommendation 4 (the School Transformation / re-organisation programme) could be affected by the Council's ability to conduct strategy consultations relating to Schools Organisation.	Progress against the PIAP may be affected due to the Covid-19 pandemic.	<b>04/10/2021</b> Qtr 2 21/22. Review Summary: This risk was reviewed 04.10.21 and is up-to-date <b>06/09/2021</b> Review Summary: The risk was reviewed by SSMT on 06.09.21 and is up-to-date	Cllr Phyl Davies  Lynette Lovell	12	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to deliver service improvement</li> <li>September Update</li> <li>Ongoing progress / service improvement as specified in the PIAP</li> <li>Control</li> <li>January 2021</li> </ul>	Action In Progress  Withdrawn  Withdrawn  Withdrawn

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
			<p><b>03/06/2021</b> 1st Qtr 2021/22 Review Summary: Work to deliver the PIAP has continued alongside business critical support to schools, families and learners.</p> <p>R1: The Secondary School Improvement Strategy has been developed to deliver this recommendation.</p> <p>R2: This recommendation was completed during quarter 4, future improvements will be delivered via the ALN Strategy.</p> <p>R3: This recommendation is over 80% complete. Progress within quarter includes the implementation of the new staffing structure.</p> <p>R4: The Transforming Education in Powys programme is progressing at pace and to schedule.</p> <p>R5: Good progress continues to be made including recruitment of two new Cluster Business Managers in the Welshpool and Newtown clusters. Officers from the Schools Service and the Finance Team work closely alongside nearly all schools which has resulted in lower projected deficit positions for the schools delegated budget this financial year and beyond.</p> <p>Robust governance and monitoring processes are in place to oversee the progress against each of the recommendations and the PIAP as whole. This has included the Improvement and Assurance Board being stepped down due to appropriate progress being made in most of the recommendations.</p> <p>Quality assurance processes are also robust, which includes effective support and challenge from the Portfolio Holder for Education, through senior management team meetings and formal scrutiny.</p>					

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
			<p><b>03/03/2021</b> 4th Qtr 20/21 Review summary. Work to deliver the PIAP has continued alongside business critical support to schools, families and learners.</p> <p>Regarding R1: The Secondary School Improvement Strategy has been developed to deliver this recommendation. Regarding R2: This recommendation was completed during quarter 4, future improvements will be delivered via the ALN Strategy. Regarding R3: This recommendation is over 80% complete. Progress within quarter includes the implementation of the new staffing structure. Regarding R4: The Transforming Education in Powys programme is progressing at pace and to schedule. Regarding R5: Good progress continues to be made including recruitment of two new Cluster Business Managers in the Welshpool and Newtown clusters.</p>					

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
CS0081  <a href="#">Jan Coles</a>  <b>Escalated From</b> :- Powys County Council	BUDGET: If Children's Services are unable to manage within budget due to:  - Market sufficiency for children's placements - Reliance on agency social workers - Inflationary costs and management of pressures - Surge in demand due to COVID-19 - Ending of grant funding	Then this will have implications for the whole Council:  - Unable to meet statutory duties - Leaving service users at risk - Reputational damage to the Authority - Unable to manage within financial envelope	<b>20/10/2021</b> Qtr 2 21/22 Review Summary: Budget setting process in progress Pressures have been identified and included in the CS FRM Efficiencies have been identified to value of £2.7m which equates to 10.47% of the CS budget for 22-23 These Savings will mitigate some of the pressures Continue to maximise use of all available grants Continue to work closely with finance business partners Investment in Early Help and Intervention and Prevention Services has enabled the Service to manage the increased demand during the pandemic without seeing a corresponding increase in the most intense interventions for example, CLA numbers.  <b>07/07/2021</b> 1st Qtr 2021/22 Review Summary: Maximising use of all available grants Ensuring pressures in the service are known and mitigating action taken where possible Closer to home activity continues with HOCS oversight Bids to the council recovery fund made to enable early help and front door services can manage demand away from statutory services wherever possible Work to reduce the number of children brought into public care continues to be successful Number of children looked after has reduced	Cllr Rachel Powell    <b>Alison Bulman</b>	12	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure market within Powys is sufficient to meet demand</li> <li>Work to reduce reliance on agency social workers</li> <li>Ensure Continuing Care for Children and Young People protocol being applied correctly and consistently</li> <li>Make best use of Welsh Government COVID-19 Hardship Fund and other available resources</li> <li>Integrated budget planning</li> <li>Develop early intervention and prevention services in order to mitigate demand on longer term services</li> <li>Ability to meet the requirements of the MTFS / Retaining grant funding around posts within Children's Services</li> <li>Work with service providers to limit impact of supreme court legal judgement</li> </ul>	Action In Progress  Action In Progress  Action In Progress  Action In Progress  Control In Place  Control In Place  Withdrawn  Withdrawn

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
			<p><b>31/03/2021</b></p> <p>4th Qtr 2020/21 Review Summary: Controls and Actions Reviewed 31/3/21</p> <p>Children Services is 2 years into a long-term strategy to reduce our reliance on Agency Social Workers through our 'Grow Our Own' work.</p> <p>Grant funding for specific work is a feature of the way that Children Services is funded by WG and we work closely with WG to ensure we are able to maximise use of all grants made available and bid for additional grant funding.</p> <p>Children Services is also 2 years into a long-term strategy to rebalance the placement provision in County and reduce dependency on out of county providers.</p> <p>The pandemic has brought about uncertainty and an increase in demand which we are monitoring carefully. We are working with multi agency partners to ensure we are working together to support children and their families, guard against duplication of work and respond to need as early as possible, preventing escalation.</p>					



Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
Page 650			<p><b>06/07/2021</b> 1st Qtr 2021/22 Review Summary: Warning notices issued to four Powys schools due to financial concerns have now been removed.</p> <p>We have removed the warning notices for Crickhowell High School, Welshpool High School, Ysgol Bro Hyddgen and Ysgol Gymraeg Y Dyffryn Y Glowyr after reviewing the latest budget proposals submitted by the schools.</p> <p>Warning notices are in place for Ysgol Calon Cymru and Ysgol Maesydderwen and warning notices for Brecon High School and Ysgol Cedewain will be reviewed in the Autumn. The warning notices issued to these schools have been in place since July 2019.</p> <p>A warning notice was issued to Clyro Church in Wales School in December 2020 due to financial concerns. Financial delegation continues to be suspended at the school. No further warning issues are being issued by the council currently but will do so to schools if there is a cause for concern.</p> <p>Confirmation on the removal of the warning notices was reported in an information report on schools' financial position at the end of March 2021 as well as the budget plans for 2021-22, which were considered by Cabinet on Tuesday, July 13.</p> <p>Cabinet were also informed that at the end of March 2021, 81 schools were in a surplus position with a combined surplus balance of £6.9m.</p> <p>However, there are 14 schools in a deficit balance position with a combined cumulative deficit of £3.7m but this does compare favourably with the end of March 2020, where there were 23 schools with a combined deficit of £4.9m.</p> <p>80 schools were budgeting to be in a cumulative surplus position at the end of March 2022. These budgets meet the criteria to be approved under the Scheme</p>					

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
			<p>for Financing Schools.</p> <p>However, there are 11 schools that are budgeting to be in a cumulative deficit position at the end of March 2022. Four of these schools meet the criteria within the Scheme for Financing Schools to be a licensed deficit while seven schools did not meet the criteria and are unlicensed according to the scheme.</p>					

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
			<p><b>13/04/2021</b> 4th Qtr 20/21 Review Summary: 4th Quarter 2020-21. Review Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The provision of additional grants to support Covid-19 related spend during February and March 2021 will improve the overall financial positions of schools at year end and will allow schools to fund additional support for learners as they return to school.</li> <li>-All schools received their updated funding packs for 2021-22 and beyond and are currently working on their budgets for the new financial year. Once these are approved by the Governing Body they will be submitted by 1st May.</li> <li>-Some schools continue to be in a significant deficit position and causing some concern, although the vast majority are working well with the authority to manage reductions in their deficit. The authority has had to suspend financial delegation at one school following a refusal to submit a recovery plan.</li> <li>-Small group training and support has been provided on finance to individual schools and any new business managers / bursars and work is continuing with the Business Manager / Bursar Working Group. Two new cluster business managers took up their posts in January and have been supported as they settle into their new roles.</li> <li>-The schools funding formula has been updated for the ALN funding changes agreed as part of the funding formula review in 2020. The Schools' Budget Forum has agreed the Terms of Reference for the 2021 Formula Review Group which will be reviewing the whole formula to better meet the needs of the post-transformation schools estate. The group's work will take place over the summer term.</li> <li>-The benchmarking tool has been demonstrated to Headteachers and will be rolled out to schools early in the summer term.</li> </ul>					

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
			<p><b>13/01/2021</b></p> <p>3rd Qtr 2020-2021. Review Summary: A rolling programme of the review of the school budget funding formula has continued through 2020 despite the pandemic, although the scale of the review was limited to the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) funding element as this was needed urgently. A full review of the whole formula will begin in 2021 with the aim of ensuring that the formula will be suitable for the post-transformation configuration of schools. All schools in a deficit or significant surplus position in May 2020 were asked to submit Recovery Plans or Spend plans by mid October 2020. These were reviewed by the Interim Chief Education Officer and Head of Finance for any follow up actions which were addressed where needed.</p> <p>The Schools finance team have worked with schools to identify the financial impact of their response to the Covid-19 pandemic, including ensuring that additional expenditure / lost income is accurately recorded and claimed and that any savings / delayed savings are identified and captured. Autumn Term finance surgeries were undertaken with all schools. All opportunities were taken to reinforce the importance of good financial housekeeping (e.g. accuracy of coding etc.) and to keep schools updated on the latest economic / financial issues. Training and support has been provided to individual schools and any new business managers. Governor Finance training was provided in November 2020 and support has been provided for the Business Manager recruitment processes.</p> <p>The ALN element of the funding formula has been reviewed by a working group of authority officers, head teachers and governor representatives with the aim of ensuring that the budget is more closely targeted to learners with ALN. The revised funding methodology has been agreed by Schools' Budget Forum and Cabinet and the impact assessment and transitional arrangements are being prepared.</p>					



Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
			<p><b>14/01/2021</b></p> <p>3rd Qtr 2020-2021. Review Summary: The development of the budget has been completed by Cabinet following the receipt of the Provisional Settlement on the 22nd December providing the Council with an additional 4% in 'Aggregate External Finance' (AEF) funding for 2021/22. The additional settlement has helped bridge the remaining budget gap and Cabinet will propose a balanced budget for 2021/22. There is no indication of future funding levels, the Mid Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) has been updated to reflect the current economic climate and the 5 year Finance Resource Model (FRM) still shows significant budget gaps across the following 4 years based on a number of scenarios. The MTFS sets out the principles and approach that will be adopted to identify ways of bridging these gaps. The impact of the ongoing pandemic has been considered in the plans and we await confirmation of WG funding to support this.</p>					





Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
			<p><b>06/04/2021</b>            4th Qtr 20/21 Review Summary: Control activities continue to be developed, implemented and monitored. New IMAG plan 2021-2023 developed and agreed by CIGG March 2021, in order to further improve IG practices and compliance, taking into account work ongoing to support additional national Test, Trace and Protect work, SAR backlog is being addressed with those resources available to undertake such work. Personal data breach continue to occur, very often due to human error. The reporting of such breaches to the regulator (ICO) undertaken in line with obligations placed on the council. The more robust the Council's IG and security frameworks the better placed the council is to defend its practices to the ICO despite breaches of data protection legislation having occurred.</p> <p><b>24/12/2020</b>            3rd Qtr 2020-2021. Review Summary: Control activities continue such as Data Protection Impact Assessments, Data Processing Agreements etc. Information Security and personal data breach investigations continue to be managed and responded to. The Corporate Information Governance Group (CIGG) have considered and challenged elements of activity within the Council's Information Management Assurance and Governance plan (IMAG) to improve IG practices, taking into account work ongoing to support additional national Test, trace and Protect work, to ensure the lawful and fair use of personal data to deliver the Council's response to COVID 19. Subject Access Request (SAR) backlog is being addressed with those resources available to undertake such work.</p>					



Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyber Security Certification</li> <li>• Staff Training</li> <li>• Detection and Response Tools</li> </ul>	Control In Place Control In Place Control In Place

Page 660

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
PCC0002  Nigel Brinn	The impact on the Council as a result of Brexit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased service demand;</li> <li>- Relocation from the EU to Powys of families - estimated at 500;</li> <li>- Fuel shortages;</li> <li>- Loss of access to external (EU) funding programmes;</li> <li>- Reduced income to Powys County Council;</li> <li>- External market factors;</li> <li>- GDPR compliance;</li> <li>- Potential financial crash;</li> <li>- Unable to recruit/retain staff (EU Nationals);</li> <li>- Employee workload;</li> <li>- Delays/disruption to food and/or essential supplies.</li> </ul>	<p><b>15/10/2021</b> Qtr 2 21/22 Review Summary: We continue to monitor the situation through the Brexit Co-ordinator meetings and updates received from WLGA and WG directly. The Brexit risk register is regularly reviewed and risks are being moved into service risks where they are deemed an ongoing risk or are withdrawn if the risk is no longer a threat.</p> <p><b>09/07/2021</b> 1st Qtr 2021/22. Review Summary: Work continues on assessment of how this will impact PCC and local businesses. This will be ongoing as new legislation comes through from Welsh Government. Further funding has been agreed from WG for Brexit Co-ordinator role and the best use of this funding will be agreed with HOS as part of a Regeneration restructure.</p> <p><b>12/04/2021</b> Qtr 4 20/21 Review Summary: Work continues on assessment of how this will impact PCC and local businesses. This will be ongoing as new legislation comes through from Welsh Government. Further funding has been agreed from WG for Brexit Co-ordinator role and the best use of this funding will be agreed with HOS.</p> <p><b>13/01/2021</b> 3rd Qtr 2020-2021. Review Summary: The Brexit transition is now complete and a deal has been agreed. Work continues on assessment of how this will impact PCC and local businesses. This will be ongoing as new legislation comes through from Welsh Government.</p>	<p><i>Cllr Rosemaire Harris</i></p> <p><b>Nigel Brinn</b></p>	16	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close monitoring</li> <li>• Continue to monitor economic indicators</li> <li>• Ongoing dialogue with external advisers</li> <li>• Cabinet briefed</li> <li>• Advice from pension advisers</li> <li>• Continue to work with WEFO</li> <li>• Brexit Continuity Plan</li> <li>• Brexit Risk Register</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action In Progress</li> <li>Action In Progress</li> <li>Action In Progress</li> <li>Control In Place</li> </ul>

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
PCC0003  Caroline Turner	The council receives a negative regulatory / inspection report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting regulatory and legislative duties</li> <li>- Ability to provide a good quality of service to service users</li> <li>- Managing demand on the service</li> <li>- Recruitment and retention of staff</li> <li>- Staff morale</li> <li>- Reputational damage</li> </ul>	<p><b>21/10/2021</b> Review Summary: HIW / CIW will be undertaking an inspection of Mental Health services in December.</p> <p>Estyn Monitoring Visit was held in October and we are awaiting their report.</p> <p><b>09/07/2021</b> Qtr 1 2021/22. Review Summary: Education Service are preparing for the Estyn Improvement Conference in November 2021. Inspection of Youth Justice Board arrangements is due soon. In future, all Inspection Reports will be considered by Governance &amp; Audit Committee.</p> <p><b>15/04/2021</b> Qtr 4 2020/21. Review Summary: Social Services are no longer subject to enhanced monitoring by CIW. Estyn will undertake a further visit in November 2021 and in the meantime their Local Authority Inspectors will continue to have frequent meetings with Service Leaders and others.</p> <p><b>11/01/2021</b> Qtr 3 2020/21. Review Summary. At the Improvement Conference in October 2020, CIW confirmed they were happy with the progress of Social Services and that they no longer needed enhanced monitoring. Estyn undertook an improvement conference and concluded that: During the conference, the local authority demonstrated that it has begun to make sound progress since the inspection. It is showing a clear commitment to addressing the issues that were raised as well as evaluating its progress against its plans. Importantly, it is building leadership capacity which has the potential to secure sustainable improvements. Overall, the local authority has identified sufficient resources to implement its plans as well as considering the barriers to progress and associated risks appropriately.</p> <p>Audit Wales conducted audits of Workforce Planning, the Vision 2025 Transformation Programme, and Environmental Health all of which were positive.</p>	Cllr Rosemaire Harris  Caroline Turner	12	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement and assurance board</li> <li>• Improvement plans</li> <li>• Communications strategy (internal/external)</li> <li>• close working relationships with regulators</li> <li>• corporate support provided to services</li> <li>• close working relationship with WG</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Control In Place</li> </ul>

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
PCC0005  Nigel Brinn	The impact to Powys residents, services and Council staff as a result of a COVID-19 (Coronavirus) epidemic	Increased staff absenteeism; Increase demand for services from residents Increased workload for council staff as a result of staff absence and increased service demand Closure of Council premises resulting in reduced services to residents and office accommodation	<p><b>20/09/2021</b> Review Summary: 2nd Qtr 21/22 The Council moved back to Business Continuity on 23rd August 2021 due to rising case numbers and extreme pressures within Social Services and TTP. All BCP's and RR have been updated to reflect the current position and all HOS are working closely with their teams to ensure the Services are managing under the pressure. Gold/Silver continues to operate on a weekly basis and this issue is being closely monitored. Communications is being issued regularly to the public to ensure they understand the current pressures being experienced.</p> <p><b>09/07/2021</b> 1st Qtr 2021/22. Review Summary: The Council revoked Business critical activity in May 2021 and have been transitioning to BAU activity for most services. Children's Services, Adult Services and Commissioning continue to operate in BCP due to pressures on these services. All risk assessments and BCP's have been updated to reflect new pressures identified by a possible third wave.</p> <p><b>15/04/2021</b> Review Summary: 4th Qtr 20/21 Review Summary: The Council has developed a separate risk register for the Coronavirus pandemic. There are now 3 severe risks to the Council which are Adult Services, Children's Services and Financial impact.</p> <p>There are mitigating actions in place for all the risks identified and the risk register is reviewed weekly by the Council's internal GOLD Command Group (part of the Council's Emergency Response arrangements).</p>	Cllr Rosemaire Harris  Nigel Brinn	25	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update Business Continuity Plans (at Service and Corporate Level);</li> <li>Establishment of an Internal Silver Command</li> <li>Powys County Council Representation on Powys Teaching Health Board Gold and Silver Command;</li> <li>Liaison with all Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Partners;</li> <li>PCC Liaison with Welsh Government and Public Health Wales;</li> <li>Communication and engagement with schools.</li> <li>Communications to residents, staff and members</li> </ul>	Action Completed Control In Place Control In Place Control In Place Control In Place Control In Place

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
			<p><b>18/01/2021</b></p> <p>3rd Qtr 20/21 Review Summary: The Council has developed a separate risk register for the Coronavirus pandemic. The risks captured in this assessment include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in services demands</li> <li>Financial impact on the council</li> <li>Availability of Personal Protective Equipment</li> <li>Reopening of Schools</li> <li>Safeguarding</li> <li>Workforce absence</li> <li>Delivery of Test Trace and Protect in conjunction with PTHB</li> </ul> <p>There are mitigating actions in place for all the risks identified and the risk register is reviewed weekly by the Council's internal GOLD Command Group (part of the Council's Emergency Response arrangements).</p>					

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
PPPP0007  Gwilym Davies  Escalated From :- Powys County Council	Heart of Wales Property Services (HOWPS) being unable to undertake contracted work in a timely and cost effective manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Failure of statutory functions (Compliance). Potential for prosecution (HSE) and prohibition notices.</li> <li>- Failure to perform repairs and maintenance. Could lead to legal action against the authority.</li> <li>- Reputational damage to PCC (client credibility).</li> <li>- Cost to PCC for poor performance.</li> <li>- Officer time costs (due to additional workload).</li> <li>- Financial Risk to HRA and wider Authority.</li> <li>- Critical Wales Audit Office Report.</li> <li>- Non-delivery of key projects due to lack of resources.</li> <li>- Health and safety risks.</li> </ul>	<b>11/10/2021</b> Qtr 2 21/22 Review Summary: - Controls and Actions continue to be implemented. <b>08/07/2021</b> 1st Qtr 2021/22 Review Summary: - Risks have increased as a result of the decision to end the contract with HOWPS and bring services back inhouse and as a result of a review of risks by the HOWPS Risk Register working group. Controls and Actions continue to be implemented. Review of controls and actions to be undertaken monthly. <b>11/04/2021</b> 4th Qtr 2020/21 Review Summary: -Continued monitoring of HOWPS performance via monthly Contract Management Forum, weekly service area meetings with HOWPS, internal working groups on specific areas of concern, Compliance Boards and regular Cabinet/EMT updates. -Step in implemented for part of housing contact. -Rectification plans secured in relating to poorly performing areas. -Contract review ongoing. <b>14/01/2021</b> 3rd Qtr 2020-2021. Review Summary: - Continued monitoring of HOWPS performance via monthly Contract Management Forum, weekly service area meetings with HOWPS, internal working groups on specific areas of concern, Compliance Boards and regular Cabinet/EMT updates.	Cllr Phyl Davies  Nigel Brinn	20	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential to invoke step in clauses for specific parts of the contract in line with contract</li> <li>• Rectification plan(s) to be secured and monitored by PCC when submitted by HOWPS.</li> <li>• Additional resources allocated by Kier and PCC.</li> <li>• Close monitoring by Directors, Chief executive and Portfolio Holders.</li> <li>• Performance monitoring (Contract management forum, weekly meetings etc.)</li> <li>• Utilisation of contract document to escalate issues.</li> <li>• Development of evidence and fall-back systems (contingency plans).</li> <li>• Introduced weekly officer level meetings</li> <li>• Development of contingency plans for contract failure</li> <li>• Awaiting consultation resource plan.</li> <li>• Head of Service on HOWPS Board of Directors.</li> <li>• Portfolio Holder on HOWPS Board of Directors.</li> <li>• Escalation of risk and concerns to Chief Executive and Strategic Directors.</li> </ul>	Action In Progress Action In Progress Action In Progress Action In Progress Action In Progress Action In Progress Action In Progress Control In Place Control In Place Withdrawn Withdrawn Withdrawn





Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
			<p><b>02/07/2021</b>            1st Qtr 2021/22 Review Summary: The Workforce Futures Strategic Framework is in place and is being implemented. The Council's Transforming Education Programme which sets out a ten year strategy is also being implemented. The Council has established an apprenticeship programme which is being progressed albeit progress has been adversely impacted to a degree by the COVID19 pandemic. In Children's Services a grow your own programme is in place and continues to be implemented for social workers.</p> <p>.</p> <p>In addition we are widening access to the health and care sector in Powys by / through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the Arwain Employability skills hub project (NPTC delivering employability skills training to a range of groups including staff currently within the health and care system, carers, volunteers and new staff trying to access employment in the sector)</li> <li>- the Kickstart programme (government initiative to provide work experience to 16-24 years through a 6 month fully supported work placement)</li> <li>- Apprenticeships – widening the apprenticeship offer in Social care 5 additional post in this financial year</li> <li>- Access for carers and volunteers to statutory education packages (NHS E-learning) to start a foundation of learning pre-employment</li> <li>- Exploring a health and social care induction framework that provides the foundation skills for Health Care Support Workers coming into the sector (programme aligned to the SCW induction framework and Health clinical induction framework)</li> </ul>					

Strategic Risk Register				Portfolio	Inherent	Residual	Controls and Actions	
Ref & Owner	Risk Identified	Potential Consequence	Last Reviews	Director or Head of Service			Control or Action	Status
Page 669			<p><b>08/04/2021</b>            4th Qtr 20/21 Review Summary: The Workforce Futures Strategic Framework is in place and is being implemented. The Council's Transforming Education Programme which sets out a ten year strategy is also being implemented. The Council has established an apprenticeship programme which is being progressed albeit progress has been adversely impacted by the COVID19 pandemic            In Children's Services a grow your own programme is in place and continues to be implemented for social workers. Plans are in place to recruit a further 5 apprentices in Social Care.</p> <p><b>08/01/2021</b>            3rd Qtr 2020-2021 Review Summary: The RPB Workforce Futures Strategic Framework is in place and is being implemented. The Council's Transforming Education Programme which sets out a ten year strategy is also being implemented. The Council has established an apprenticeship programme which is being progressed albeit progress has been adversely impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. In Children's Services a grow your own programme is in place and continues to be implemented for social workers.</p>					

This page is intentionally left blank

# Heatmap Inherent and Current



Inherent Ratings Summary Heatmap

Residual Ratings Summary Heatmap

Probability



Insignificant    Minor    Moderate    Major    Catastrophic

Insignificant    Minor    Moderate    Major    Catastrophic

Impact

Impact

## Detailed Risk Information

Residual and Target Rating Changes since 05/05/2021

Risk Ref	Risk Identified	Owner	Service Area	Prev Inherent	->	Inherent Rating	Prev Residual Rating	->	Residual Rating
ASC0064	WCCIS Unreliability - IF the unreliability of WCCIS is not resolved THEN	Michael Gray	Powys County Council	No Previous		20	No Previous		20
PPPP007	Heart of Wales Property Services (HOWPS) being unable to undertake contracted work in a timely and cost effective manner.	Gwilym Davies	Powys County Council	12		20	12		20
WO0021	The Council is unable to recruit, retain and commission the workforce it requires, in the short term due to increased staff absences and a challenging UK labour market, and in the longer term due to an expected long term decrease in the local working age population	Paul Bradshaw	Powys County Council	25		25	16		16
PCC0005	The impact to Powys residents, services and Council staff as a result of a COVID-19 (Coronavirus) epidemic	Nigel Brinn	Powys County Council	25		25	15		15
FIN0001	The Council is unable to deliver a financially sustainable budget over the short and medium term. The probability of this risk is heightened due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on Welsh Government funding and subsequent settlements to the Council.	Jane Thomas	Powys County Council	25		16	15		12
ICT0029	Cyber Security Threat. Risk of financial loss, disruption or damage to the reputation of Powys County Council from a failure of its information technology systems and or/loss of Data due to a cyber attack or Incident.	Diane Reynolds	Powys County Council	12		16	9		12
PCC0002	The impact on the Council as a result of Brexit.	Nigel Brinn	Powys County Council	16		16	12		12
PRO0008	Increased risks of price variations (an increases cause by a mix of current market conditions COVID and Brexit) and labour & material shortage.	Vincent Hanly	Powys County Council	No Previous		15	No Previous		12
ICT0002	Non compliance with data protection legislation (General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and UK Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018	Diane Reynolds	Powys County Council	12		12	12		12
CS0081	BUDGET: If Children's Services are unable to manage within budget due to: - Market sufficiency for children's placements - Reliance on agency social workers - Inflationary costs and management of pressures - Surge in demand due to COVID-19 - Ending of grant funding	Jan Coles	Powys County Council	12		12	9		9
ED0022	The council will be unable to manage the schools' budget without ongoing adjustments to the distribution formula and improving financial management. If they are unable to manage the budget, there will be a significant compromise to the quality of education for Powys learners.	Lynette Lovell	Powys County Council	12		12	9		9
PCC0003	The council receives a negative regulatory / inspection report	Caroline Turner	Powys County Council	16		12	12		9
COVID0058	Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) for Estyn - Coronavirus may impact on the ability of the service to maintain the level of progress against the PIAP. In particular Recommendation 1 of the PIAP - 'Improve standards in secondary schools and more able learners' as schools are currently closed. Also, Recommendation 4 (the School Transformation / re-organisation programme) could be affected by the Council's ability to conduct strategy consultations relating to Schools Organisation.	Lynette Lovell	Powys County Council	12		12	6		6
HO0024	Failing to meet all applicable statutory requirements providing for the health and safety of the occupants in Powys County Council Housing Stock .	Nina Davies	Powys County Council	12		12	6		6

Report Selection Criteria

## Detailed Risk Information

Residual and Target Rating Changes since 05/05/2021

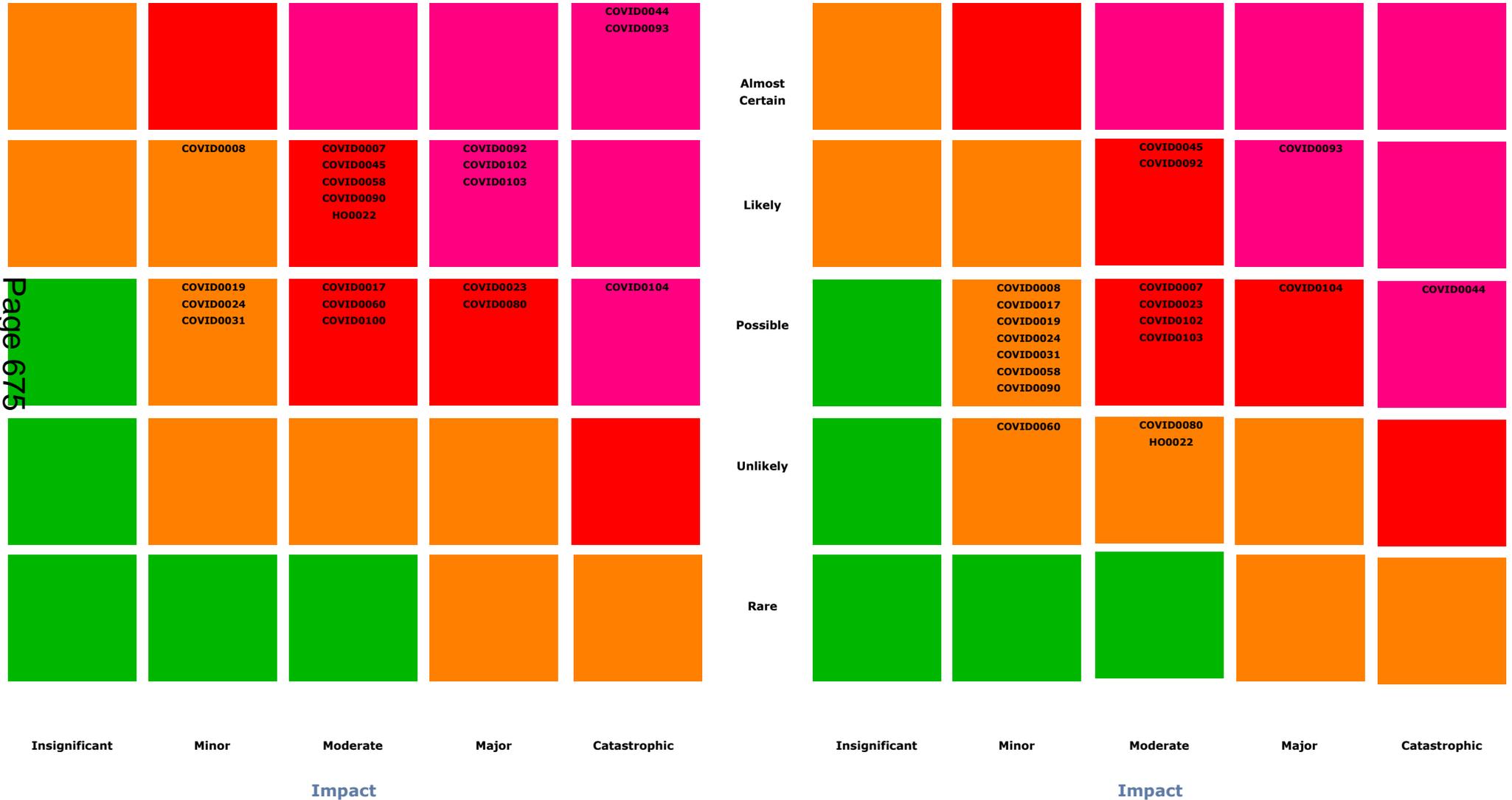
Risk Ref	Risk Identified	Owner	Service Area	Prev Inherent	->	Inherent Rating	Prev Residual Rating	->	Residual Rating
	( REP_RECORD_CROSSCUT.Business Unit Code = @StrategicBusinessUnitCode AND ( REP_RECORD_CROSSCUT.Status Flag <> "WITHDRAWN" ) ) and REP_RECORD_CROSSCUT.Record Type=1								

This page is intentionally left blank

Inherent Ratings Summary Heatmap

Residual Ratings Summary Heatmap

**Probability**



Page 675

**Impact**

**Impact**

## Detailed Risk Information

Residual and Target Rating Changes since 05/05/2021

Risk Ref	Risk Identified	Owner	Service Area	Prev Inherent	->	Inherent Rating	Prev Residual	->	Residual Rating
COVID0093	Recovery - Precarious public service finances, with significant short and medium-term pressures faced particularly by local authorities along with future uncertainty around the UK Government's budgetary response to the economic fallout of COVID 19 and the impact of Brexit.	Jane Thomas	COVID-19	25	→	25	16	→	16
COVID0044	Adult Services  Impact of COVID-19, including: Service User Illness and death; Unpaid Carer Illness; Staff Resource (further and unmanageable reduction through illness and self-isolation); Service provision volatility;	Dylan Owen	COVID-19	25	→	25	15	→	15
COVID0092	Recovery  Socio-economic challenges given the immediate economic impact and likely recession, including increased unemployment and take-up of universal credit and other benefits	Nigel Brinn	COVID-19	16	→	16	12	→	12
COVID0104	If Covid-19 impacts on Children's Services so that: The service cannot deliver mission critical activities Demand cannot be managed Placement availability is reduced Statutory functions cannot be performed Statutory and regulatory requirements cannot be met There is insufficient staff with suitable qualifications and/or experience Services cannot be delivered within budget Savings cannot be delivered	Jan Coles	COVID-19	25	↘ -10	15	20	↘ -8	12
COVID0045	Impact of Covid-19 restrictions and redeployment on the capacity of the Public Protection Service.	Gwilym Davies	COVID-19	12	→	12	12	→	12
COVID0102	HOMELESSNESS: Demand and need for - and duties to provide - homelessness and related services continues to expand	Dafydd Evans	COVID-19	16	→	16	9	→	9
COVID0103	Restricted access to homes for repairs, maintenance, servicing and inspections.	Mark Davies	COVID-19	16	→	16	9	→	9
COVID0007	Response  LEISURE/SPORT Leisure Contractor significantly affected by COVID-19 situation	Jenny Ashton	COVID-19	12	→	12	9	→	9
COVID0023	Response  Companies liquidating	Vincent Hanly	COVID-19	6	↗ 6	12	6	↗ 3	9
COVID0058	Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) for Estyn - Coronavirus may impact on the ability of the service to maintain the level of progress against the PIAP. In particular Recommendation 1 of the PIAP - 'Improve standards in secondary schools and more able learners' as schools are currently closed. Also, Recommendation 4 (the School Transformation / re-organisation programme) could be affected by the Council's ability to conduct strategy consultations relating to Schools Organisation.	Lynette Lovell	COVID-19	12	→	12	6	→	6
COVID0080	Response/Recovery  Inability to continue to provide an effective and efficient Contact Tracing service by PCC / PtHB to prevent the spread of Covid 19	Nigel Brinn	COVID-19	12	→	12	6	→	6

## Detailed Risk Information

Residual and Target Rating Changes since 05/05/2021

Risk Ref	Risk Identified	Owner	Service Area	Prev Inherent	->	Inherent Rating	Prev Residual Rating	->	Residual Rating
COVID0090	Recovery Workforce health and wellbeing	Paul Bradshaw	COVID-19	12	→	12	6	→	6
HO0022	EXTRA CARE - HOUSING - Lack of demand for extra care resulting from COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic	Dafydd Evans	COVID-19	12	→	12	6	→	6
COVID0017	Response Supply Chain Risk - potential failure of companies who supply goods and services to the Council	Jane Thomas	COVID-19	12	↘ -3	9	9	↘ -3	6
COVID0100	Disruption to pupils' learning caused by a positive COVID-19 test of a pupil or a staff member.	Lynette Lovell	COVID-19	20	↘	9	6	→	6
COVID0008	Response LEISURE/SPORT As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, residents and communities become sedentary, participation and activity levels decrease, people's health & well-being deteriorates (physical, mental, social & emotional). Sport & Active Development Team unable to deliver face to face activities , programmes, events, advice (including funding) and schemes	Jenny Ashton	COVID-19	8	→	8	6	→	6
COVID0019	Response Exemptions to keep exiting contracts	Vincent Hanly	COVID-19	6	→	6	6	→	6
COVID0024	Response Potential Insolvency of participating Pension Fund Employers	Chris Hurst	COVID-19	6	→	6	6	→	6
COVID0031	CATERING Significant Loss of Income from school meals.	Jason Rawbone	COVID-19	8	↘ -2	6	8	↘ -2	6
COVID0060	Response Reduced reputation for the council if pandemic is not managed well	Nigel Brinn	COVID-19	9	→	9	4	→	4

Page 577

### Report Selection Criteria

( REP\_RECORD\_CROSSCUT.Business Unit Code = @StrategicBusinessUnitCode AND ( REP\_RECORD\_CROSSCUT.Status Flag <> "WITHDRAWN" ) ) and REP\_RECORD\_CROSSCUT.Record Type=1

This page is intentionally left blank

## CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

## CABINET EXECUTIVE

23 November 2021

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Rachel Powell  
Portfolio Holder for Children Services

**REPORT TITLE:** Children Services Budget Pressures

---

**REPORT FOR:** Decision

---

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 This report is presented to Cabinet to ensure that the Cabinet is sighted on the pressures across Children Social Services. The report sets out the financial impact of these pressures on the service and the funding streams that have already been drawn upon to support these costs.
- 1.2 The report goes on to propose the virement of funds into the service budget to ensure that the organisation works within the financial regulations and discharges its statutory duties under the Social Services Wellbeing Act.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for Quarter 2 was considered by Cabinet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021. Due to the forecasted level of expenditure for some services the report recommended that where additional in year financial pressure cannot be accommodated within existing budgets, a detailed report is requested to give a clear explanation of the projected overspend in order for Cabinet to consider any action required to address the projected deficit.
- 2.2 This report is submitted for Children Services.

**3. Advice**

- 3.1 The Statutory Director of Social Services has a responsibility to ensure councillors have clear advice on the level of resources required for a local authority to effectively deliver its social services functions. At the end of Quarter two Children Services is reporting a forecast end of year

position of an overspend of £1.854 million. This takes into consideration of known pressures as below:

### 3.2 **Current Service Pressures** - Included in the forecast outturn at quarter 2

- £2.065 million relates to the increased expenditure which is a combination of the costs associated with the new children who are becoming looked after and the increasing costs in relation to meeting the complexity of need of the current cohort of Children Looked After (CLA). The increased demand that is directly related to Covid 19 can be recovered through the Welsh Government Hardship fund and £160k has already been drawn down to date. But the majority of the demand is not eligible under this fund and this remaining pressure falls on the Council.
- £196k relates to increased demand for short breaks due to the pressures on families as an indirect result of the pandemic. As explained above directly attributable costs are recoverable from the hardship fund and £80k has already been drawn down to date leaving this pressure.
- £72k budget pressure is in relation to Section 21 of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act, for families in need of care and support following the lockdown and trying to keep children with their families wherever it is safe and in their best interests to do so.

3.3 Budget under-spends across the service are currently being utilised to mitigate these pressures which reduces the overall figure to the £1.854 million now being reported.

3.4 The forecast does not include potential future pressures

3.5 **Potential Further Pressures that could fall in the current financial year** - Not currently included in the forecast outturn.

- The situation for families due to the pandemic makes predicting future pressures even more uncertain. We are working hard to keep children with their families wherever it is safe and in their best interests to do so. So far we have brought into care fewer children than in the same period last year. The numbers of children in care has reduced this quarter. Therefore, we are confident that we have mitigated this risk.

- The national shortage of placements is making it more difficult to find suitable placements that meet children's needs, this is particularly for children with the most complex needs. There is likely to be a further pressure on placement costs, but it is impossible to forecast at this point.
- The sustained increased demand at Front Door and Early Help means additional staff have been required. This has been covered by the Welsh Government COVID-19 recovery fund to date. If demand continues to grow this will create an ongoing budgetary pressure. It is critical to respond as early as possible to prevent escalating need and avoid the accompanying costs.

3.6 **Cost Reductions** - Children Services continue to make progress of delivering the efficiencies within the year as below:

a. **Assured**

The original target of £3.2 million is currently on target to achieve delivery, of which £2 million (62%) of the original target to date achieved and included in the forecast outturn. There is assurance of delivery of the £1.2m balance outstanding.

b. **Undeliverable**

Work to ensure shared costs for continuing care for children and young people continues with very limited success.

c. **Mitigations being delivered**

We expect to over-deliver on our 'closer to home' work to mitigate the above.

3.7 When setting the Councils budget for the year a corporate risk budget was identified to cover areas of risk that could materialise during the financial pressure. Demographic changes in children Services was identified as a risk that could be supported from this budget. £187k in relation to increased number in CLA, have now materialised and it is proposed that this budget is transferred to the service to cover his pressure. This temporary allocation will only support these costs during 2021/22 and the full year impact is being considered in the Service's Integrated Business Plan (IBP) for future years.

3.8 The Council set aside a £1m specific reserve to aide services with recovery. Children services were allocated £350k from this fund. As follows:-

- £150k to enable continued funding of the 4 additional agency workers in the Front Door and Assessment Teams to help manage the continued demand from the pandemic. Due to the increase in demand on the Front Door Service and then through to the Assessment Teams following the end of the first lockdown last year, a further 4 additional agency workers were recruited into the teams. This additional support has been vital to assisting the teams to deal with demand safely. Prior to the pandemic, the Front Door Services received between 400 and 450 contacts a month. Since the end of the first lockdown in June 2020, this has increased to consistently over 500 contacts and has been over 600 during a number of months. The teams are reporting an increase in complexity of cases that are referred since the pandemic which impacts on the workload of Social Workers.
- £200k to fund cover for staff who are shielding and unable to undertake their front facing roles. Children's Services have a number of the workforce who are in front facing roles who have been advised to shield since the start of the pandemic. This has meant that colleagues in their teams have had to pick up all of their face to face work. Now 20 months on since the start of the pandemic the service has been advised by HR that guidance dictates that although shielding has officially ended these staff still cannot undertake face to face work with children, young people and families as they are still extremely clinically vulnerable.
- We have been able to support these costs through additional Welsh Government grant received in the service and the Covid Hardship Fund with £199k claimed to date and will continue to claim if allowable under the terms and conditions of the funding. No funding has therefore been drawn down from the specific reserve.

3.9 Staff are fatigued and it is now taking its toll on their wellbeing, which is of considerable concern to the service. The impact is also being seen in the service's performance indicators as the additional workload is no longer sustainable for teams. Additional staff resource has been recruited as detailed in 3.10 and 3.11 below but this is not included in the Quarter 2 forecast outturn.

- 3.10 A further pressure of £350k will be incurred for the remainder of this financial year to cover the fixed term business support appointments made in response to this to support front line staff. A further pressure of £210k will be seen in 2022/23. £100k has been drawn down from the Welsh Government Social Care recovery grant to support these costs but the remaining £250k forecasted pressure remains.
- 3.11 Recently a team of seven agency social workers have also been commissioned to assist with the rising case load pressures the part year additional cost of this team is £260k for the current year and £50k in 2022/23
- 3.12 It is the advice of the Director of Social Services that the appropriate funds are vired to the appropriate cost centres in Children Services to ensure that the Council complies with the financial regulations and discharges its statutory duties under the Social Services Wellbeing Act.

#### **4. Proposal**

- 4.1 In the first instance all costs that are claimable under the Welsh Government Hardship fund will continue to be claimed.
- 4.2 That any additional funding provided by Welsh Government or other body is utilised wherever possible to meet these existing pressures where allowable under the Terms and conditions of grant
- 4.3 That £187k in relation to increased number in CLA as set out in paragraph 3.7 is vired from the corporately held revenue Risk budget into the service for the current financial year only. The service will need to consider any ongoing pressure in their service IBP for future financial years.
- 4.4 That the £350k allocated to the service from the £1m Powys Recovery Reserve be drawn upon to support the pressure outlined in the report and the virement is recommended for approval.
- 4.5 At the end of this financial year, any of the remaining pressures as set out in paragraphs 3.2, 3.10 and 3.11 up to a maximum of £1,854k, in relation to the specific items set out in this report, will be authorised and vired from the Councils Budget Management Reserve, providing that evidence is produced to establish that the pressures have been mitigated wherever possible.

## **5. Resource Implications**

- 5.1 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) has considered the potential funding streams to support the projected overspend for Children's services and is supportive of the proposals set out above. All avenues must be explored before supporting any drawn on the Council's reserves including the overall financial position of the Council. I therefore propose that subject to the virements proposed in paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 of the report no further transfer is made until the financial year end when an exact figure is reported, but that the commitment to Children's services is recorded in the subsequent revenue monitoring reports and that the service is operating within in an approved position and in line with the Council's Financial regulations. Any such virement required at the end of the financial year up to a maximum amount of £1.854 million will be made from the Council's Budget Management Reserve, the current balance for this reserve is £4.330 million.
- 5.2 Any further financial pressure not included in this report is not approved and the Service must seek advice before committing to any additional unbudgeted costs. In the event of an urgent decision being required to make statutory provision the Director of Social Services can commit to that expenditure but must notify the Section 151 Officer as soon as possible thereafter and prepare a further report to formally notify the Council and requesting a further draw down of funding.

## **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1 Legal: the recommendations can be accepted from a legal point of view
- 6.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: "I note the legal and financial comments and have nothing to add to the report".

## **7. Data Protection**

- 7.1 There are no data protection issues within this report.

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

- 8.1 This report relates to a service delivered across the whole County.

## **9. Comments from Health and Care Scrutiny Committee**

- 9.1 This report was considered by the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee and a copy of their comments can be viewed in Appendix I. The comments were all noted and clarification and responses are provided below.
- 9.2 It is important, in financial planning in-year, to prepare for potential over-spends and to manage the budget accordingly in a timely manner. This virement will enable the service to do so. If grants or other funds (such as the Welsh Government's COVID-19 Hardship Fund) are made available, these will be utilised as appropriate and the virement will not be required. This virement enables the service to respond to operational challenges within financial regulations, without delay.
- 9.3 All additional COVID-19 service provision is drawn down from the Hardship Fund. However, there are indirect costs where families are now accessing services, where previously they would not have done so. These developments would have been undertaken over time, regardless of the pandemic, but the situation led to having to drive the developments at a quicker pace. These costs cannot, therefore, be funded through the Welsh Government's Hardship Fund. It is challenging to identify which aspects of new service provision are the result of the pandemic, or not.
- 9.4 Work continues with the Powys Teaching Health Board to ensure that individuals who require Continuing Care are enabled to access this provision.
- 9.5 To confirm that the numbers of requests for children's services has increased significantly over the period of public health crisis.

	<b>September 2019</b>	<b>September 2020</b>	<b>September 2021</b>
Contacts to Front Door	387	534	884

The costs for placements has been increasing significantly over the past few years. It is intended to offer to meet with the Scrutiny Committee before the end of the financial year in order offer the opportunity to scrutinise these costs and to provide assurance that this virement is a part of responsible budgetary planning. This session could also consider the agency staff utilisation, especially around the Front Door Services.

9.6 Director has been meeting with Welsh Government officials to make the case for increasing funding for children's services. Similarly, the Portfolio Holder has been attending Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) meetings to influence decision making and to agree lobbying of Welsh Government ministers through the WLGA.

## **10. Impact Assessment**

10.1 No impact assessment required.

## **11. Recommendations**

11.1 That Cabinet notes and approves the proposals set out in section 4 of the report.

11.2 That Cabinet recommends to Full Council the virements of £187k and £350k set out in 4.3 and 4.4 of the report.

11.3 That Cabinet further recommends to Full Council that at the end of this financial year, any of the remaining pressures as set out in paragraphs 3.2, 3.10 and 3.11 up to a maximum of £1.854 million will be authorised and vired from the Councils Budget Management Reserve, providing that evidence is produced to establish that the pressures have been mitigated wherever possible.

Contact Officer:	Ali Bulman
Email:	jan.coles@powys.gov.uk
Head of Service:	Jan Coles
Corporate Director:	Ali Bulman

## Appendix I

### Scrutiny Committee Observations



#### **Health and Care Scrutiny Committee**

#### **Scrutiny Observations to Cabinet – Children’s Services Virement**

The Health and Care Scrutiny Committee undertook virtual scrutiny of the request for a virement for Children’s Services.

Whilst the necessity of the request for the virement is understood, there are number of additional comments and further issues to note:

- Due to the nature of Children’s services, it is understood that urgent decisions must be made, however, it seems sensible that the report notes that the S151 Officer must be made aware of such decisions at the earliest opportunity
- There is concern regarding the request at this stage to address an end of year overspend.
- Is every opportunity being taken to analyse the additional costs for a COVID component which might lead to further cost recovery from Welsh Government. Staff wellbeing, again, is a case in point, insofar as extra expenditure is being made to make up the inevitable performance deficit.
- For example, with regard to the pressures due to short breaks, why is the full cost £196k not drawn down from the Covid Hardship Fund if this is attributable to the pandemic? Also, the £72k budget pressure in relation to Section 21 of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act which is referred to being due to the lockdowns – again why can this not be claimed from the Covid Welsh Government Hardship Fund?
  - What is being done to resolve the continuing care costs with the Health Board? The Committee had hoped to speak with a representative of the health Board at a meeting in September, but this was not possible. Given the enduring nature of this, can more be done to raise the matter with Welsh Government ministers to see if they are able to exert any influence over the Health Board?

- Given that the report states that we have brought fewer children into the service than in the same period last year, the scrutiny Committee would like to see a line by line breakdown of the £2 million increased overspend which is noted as being down to “new children who are becoming looked after”. This time last year, the performance report shows there were 30 more children being looked after. Why are our costs for looked after children increasing when numbers of children being looked after are coming down? The Committee would like to understand the detail behind this.
- The Committee note the comments regarding staff weariness and believe this should be considered in more depth by the Committee. This will affect Adult Services as well as Children’s Services.
  - The Committee have been advised for some time that the workload across the service is increasing, both in numbers and the complexity of cases contributing to staff becoming fatigued. It seems there are fundamental problems that need resolving in order to effectively deliver an excellent service. More support is needed from Welsh government to address some of these issues. The level of funding that will be needed in the future to sustain this service is of concern. How is this being raised with Welsh Government Ministers?
  - Whilst the Committee recognises the pressures that Children’s Services is under, this request for more money does not sit easily. If Cabinet and Council are minded to agree to this virement, then one of the conditions must be that the Head of Service produces a report explaining the detail behind these costs discrepancies and what measures she proposes to introduce to bringing provision unit costs more in line with comparable Welsh local authorities. If this virement is approved there is a risk that the extra funding will become part of the service's base budget in 2022/23. When one service is being funded at such high unit cost it is depriving other services of funding and the Council must get to grips with this issue without further delay. The Health and Care Committee has not met formally for some time due to the service operating on a business-critical basis and being unable to support scrutiny due to other pressures. Some Members have expressed a view that formal meetings should resume otherwise there is the potential for a budget to be driven by service delivery pressures rather than by a considered assessment of needs of children in Powys.
- It is noted that agency staff are being used to build up the Front Door service and since it is important that direction at the front door is effective and has a significant role to play in cost avoidance further down the line, further information, in due course, about the extent to which these benefits are in fact being delivered by the changes in the Front Door would be welcomed. Is the service undertaking specific recruitment for Front Door services?

Members of the Health Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee: County Councillors A Jenner (Chair), J Gibson-Watt, S Hayes, E Jones, S McNicholas, G Morgan, L Roberts, K Roberts-Jones, D Rowlands, L Rijenberg, A Williams, R Williams and J M Williams

This page is intentionally left blank

## **Director of Social Services Annual Report April 2020 to March 2021**

### Contents

1. Director's summary of performance
2. Introduction
3. How Are People Shaping Our Services?
4. Promoting and improving the well-being of those we help?
5. How we do what we do
  - (a) Our workforce and how we support their professional roles
  - (b) Our financial resources and how we plan for the future
  - (c) Our partnership working, political and corporate leadership, governance and accountability
6. Accessing further information and key documents

## Director's Summary of Performance

This last year has been an extremely challenging year across Social Care & Health. However, we have continued to work together, with our partners in the NHS & the Voluntary Sector to deliver the best possible outcomes for Powys Residents whilst also responding to the direct and in direct impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Despite the challenges, we have continued to develop quality sustainable services across the County to meet the needs of our residents. We have further to go on delivering on our aspirations, but I want to recognise the progress and the journey so far for Powys. In October 2020, after inspections of both our Children and Adult services, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) held an improvement conference for both services. This conference included partners and provided CIW with a 360-degree view of the progress we have made. As an outcome CIW reported that they were sufficiently assured of significant improvement across both Children & Adult services. They assessed that there was no longer a need for enhanced monitoring activity within Powys. They commented on the visionary but realistic leadership and the learning culture developing within the Organisation. This outcome is a real tribute to the hard work and commitment of the staff across Social Services in Powys in which ever role you fill.

For the whole of this performance year Social Services staff have been working under our business continuity plan. This is a plan, which highlights those critical activities that we 'must' do and enables us to be clear about what we can stop doing to ensure we have the capacity and resource to do the 'must' do. In Social Services we invoked the Business Continuity Plan on the 16th of March 2020. At the point of writing this we are still very much working under these arrangements. Our teams have worked tirelessly to deliver these critical services to our residents. This has included often working in other teams, other parts of the organisation and even at times working within privately owned care homes (with high numbers of infection rates) to support the continued services to people who live there. We recognise the commitment and work of care staff and social care practitioners and in our wish to ensure that this work is valued, the Council committed additional money to support Adult Social Care in the budget for 2021/2022 and this has enabled us to deliver on the Powys Pledge which has greatly contributed to the sustainability of the care market in Powys and improve care staff's terms and conditions of work.

I want to dedicate this Directors report to our workforce, internally and the external workforce that we commission services from. I also want to thank the Cabinet, Council and portfolio holders, Cllr Rachel Powell and Cllr Myfanwy Alexander for the political leadership and support which has been unwavering through such a difficult year.

Alison Bulman



Director of Social Services



## Introduction

This is the Director of Social Services' report for 2020/21 for Powys County Council. It provides an overview of how well the services achieved the intended outcomes as set out in 2019/20 report, as well as identifying new developments and aspirations for 202021/2022 and beyond.

Powys County Council's Social Services Department includes Children's Services and Adults' Services, both are supported by an internal Commissioning team, as well as corporate finance, Human Resources, and other support services. The Adults' Social Care service works to agreed principles:

**Keeping people safe and well** – we want people supported to feel safe, well and listened to. Our relationship-based care approach considers community awareness and engagement with friends, families, and local communities to promote the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of those they support

**Providing relationship-based care and support** – we want to build a relationship with the person we support and to respond to what is important to the person being supported

**Working together** – we want all those involved in the person's care to work together as a team and to work more closely with the independent / third sector care providers

**Building a stronger workforce** – we want our staff to feel valued, motivated and supported. To know where they fit in the organisation, know their job role, and feel confident in their job role, and feel that they have a voice in developing the service.

**Smarter use of resources** – we want to remove manual tasks, and make these more automated. We want the team to feel confident in using digital technologies and the team to suggest ideas for improvement

Children's Services set out its principles within the Plan on a Page:

# Children's Services at a glance

- 1. Promote a range of Early Help services** which families can access, preventing the need for statutory intervention.
- 2. Focus on early intervention and prevention** ensuring access to the right support at the right time to keep families together, where possible and children safe; intervening at the earliest opportunity to ensure that children and young people do not suffer harm.
- 3. 'Work with' children, young people and their families** rather than 'do to', to co-produce plans which will bring about the changes children need as quickly as possible.
- 4. Provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high-quality placements** for children who are looked after to meet the diverse range of their needs and circumstances, keeping children as close to home as possible.
- 5. Achieve the best possible outcomes** for those children in our care by providing good parenting, specialist support and clearly planned journeys through care into adulthood.
- 6. Ensure that the service has a skilled, supported workforce,** equipped to provide a high-quality service to children, young people and their families, which is compliant with the legislative framework and in line with best practice.

Listening and responding to the voice of the child

**signs of safety**

A strengths-based approach for professionals and families to build meaningful safety for vulnerable and at-risk children

**Powys**

Adult Services vision is to treat each person as unique, with strengths and hopes as well as needs. We will support people to live the best life they can, and by focussing on what matters, we will work alongside people to help them find the right solutions for themselves. The Adult Services Plan on a Page (below) explains how we will achieve that vision:

## Our 7 key objectives

- 1. Front Door**  
We operate an effective front door which provides information, advice and signposting which enables residents to make informed choices in relation to their care and wellbeing. The service focuses on resolution at the earliest opportunity for the resident.
- 2. Hospital**  
We work with NHS Partners to have in place a set of arrangements that allow for the speedy transfer of people from hospital, to achieve the best possible outcomes for those people.
- 3. Partnership**  
We work with Powys Teaching Health Board to adopt and reinvigorate a recovery approach to all health and social care services.
- 4. Community**  
We work to ensure that there is timely, targeted and effective use of reablement, rehabilitation and support that has a focus on enabling independence and self-management and avoiding the over-prescription of care.
- 5. Long term care**  
We work alongside people with long-term care needs to have a care and support plan with a focus on achieving the maximum possible independence (as is realistic and possible for their individual circumstances) and delivers the desired outcome. We review these plans regularly based on outcomes achieved.
- 6. Workforce**  
We have in place a workforce that is fully trained and supported to work with people needing social care which fits with the ethos and principles of the Council.
- 7. Management**  
We collate and analyse data to help us understand whether there has been an impact on the delivery of outcomes and the management of demand on our services.

### 3. How Are People Shaping Our Services?

#### Citizen Forums

The citizen forums were put on hold at the beginning of the pandemic but later reconvened virtually using Zoom. On reflection, accessibility to these forums has improved as a result enabling participation from people who would otherwise have barriers to attend. This has prompted us to consider a blended approach going forward consisting of face-to-face meetings (when this is feasible) as well as on-line.

#### Credu

We have been in contact with 5,090 Carers and Young Carers, giving direct individual and peer group support to 1,918 families.

People across Powys have been saying: 'there are lots of organisations that do slightly different things – it would be so helpful if you could join up better'. This was such good advice, with funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, we joined up with Age Cymru Powys, Accessibility Powys, RVS and Citizens Advice.

**Credu is here for Young & Adult Carers and their families to enjoy a good quality of life as they define it.**

Getting a good quality of life can be hugely challenging when serious ill health or disability impacts on one's family. We work with Carers in a variety of different ways, depending on what is most important to each person and we have three main missions:

**LISTEN TO AND SUPPORT YOUNG / ADULT CARERS AND FAMILIES:**  
We know Carers are experts in their own lives and although we might have lots of information at our finger tips, we find that Carers value being listened to and having the space to work through challenges.

**BUILD CARER SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES:**  
With Carers, we build Carer awareness and support in communities, schools, services and build peer connections between Carers.

**SUPPORT STRONG CARER VOICE AND INFLUENCE:**  
This can be having a voice as an individual family wanting support, or it can be a collective voice, making changes on a community, county or national level.

This big review is in three parts, based on these three missions and includes a snippet of some of the work that has taken place across Ceredigion, Conwy, Denbighshire, Powys and Wrexham.

Get in touch for a warm welcome  
Phone: 01597 823800  
Email: [carers@credu.cymru](mailto:carers@credu.cymru)  
Website: [www.credu.cymru](http://www.credu.cymru)

Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter

## **The Improving the Cancer Journey (ICJ) in Powys programme**

Funded by Macmillan Cancer Support and in partnership with the council and Powys Teaching Health Board, the ICJ programme is being shaped by engaging and listening to the views of people living with cancer. The aim is to improve their lives and ensure they get the support that matters to them whether this is emotional, practical, physical, spiritual, or social.

Pilot projects will be launched in late Spring 2021 and offer people living with cancer a holistic needs assessment. This assessment allows the person to set out their key concerns and then discuss them with a trained worker so that a tailored package of support is put in place.

The 30+ personal stories captured from people living with cancer identified ten key themes. From these some specific details have been shared confidentially with the relevant professionals and led to discussions to aid and improve the well-being of people living with cancer in the county, including:

- Insights have been fed back to GPs via a regular newsletter asking them to help reduce “unnecessary travel” for people living with cancer who need to have a blood test ahead of their treatment which can be offered at their local surgery.
- Feedback around removal of drains by district nurses has been fed back to help the service consider again how they can help to reduce unnecessary travel for some patient's post-surgery.
- a focus group held with council employees with a cancer diagnosis led to a conversation with HR about flagging up employees with cancer so they can access welfare rights and benefits advice for the team already in situ and funded by Macmillan.

The whole programme is based on a partnership co-production ethos and involves supporting people living with cancer so that their physical and mental health and well-being is improved because of being offered a holistic needs assessment followed by a tailored support package.

## **North Powys Wellbeing Programme**

The North Powys Wellbeing Programme is a chance to create a Multi-agency Wellbeing Campus in the heart of Newtown. Led by Powys County Council and Powys Teaching Health Board under the umbrella of the Powys Regional Partnership Board, this project will promote address the biggest causes of ill health and poor wellbeing through professionals and communities working together, offering early help and health technology to ensure residents have a more seamless service when they need it.

The programme commenced in 2019 but was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic with staff resource being largely redirected elsewhere. Despite this, the overarching Programme Business Case for the Multi-agency Wellbeing Campus has been submitted to Welsh Government.

The campus will enable delivery of the Integrated Model of Care which was created following a programme of engagement with the public in 2019. The ambition is that the campus will provide:

- hospital and other health and care facilities, including the potential to carry out some diagnostic and outpatients’ services, and day-surgery
- a health and care academy
- library provision
- shared community space
- community garden space
- short and long term supported living accommodation.

As well as the longer-term aspirations of the programme, short term projects have also been funded to help improve the way services are delivered.

Since early 2021 work is now gathering a head of steam again and we look forward to re-engaging with communities and professionals with a view to submitting the next stage business case (Strategic Outline Case) for the multi-agency wellbeing campus.

Children's Services take participation extremely seriously and are fully committed to children, young people and their families having a meaningful voice in service design and delivery. During the pandemic it has been more important than ever to be engaging and communicating with children and young people, therefore we developed a range of platforms and methods to ensure that engagement and participation continued. For children aged 8 -13 years, an age-appropriate blog was developed. The blog included child friendly information on COVID-19 as well as educational links and support lines. For parents and carers there was a link to different resources for children aged 0-7 years who cannot independently use the site and it included an ALN resource. An Instagram page was developed specifically for care experienced young people. The page contained important information on COVID-19 and challenges and information to help young people have a focus during their time in lockdown.

Children's Services have developed a Participation Team within the structure which consists of a Participation Officer and Participation Apprentice. This team's complete focus is on developing ways of increasing participation and supporting the operational teams to ensure children and young people's voices are heard. During the pandemic, the children and young people's forums had to move on-line. We were grateful that they were able to help us make improvements to our Children's Guide and handbook for 16+ care experienced young people.

The Junior Safeguarding Board is well attended by young people, and they have worked with other junior safeguarding boards in Wales to develop training on safeguarding. A representative from the board also attends the Powys Local Operating Group to give updates on the work being undertaken.

A Junior Start Well Board was set up to ensure that children and young people's voices are heard by members of the Start Well Board. The Junior Board is made up of representatives from existing groups such as the Children's Services forums, voluntary sector youth organisations and the Young Carers Forums. The members of the board have so far worked on the NO wrong door project and a play sufficiency survey. We continue to work to extend the representation of young people on the Start Well Board.

In May 2020, the service launched the Mind of My Own app, which has been designed to help children and young people express themselves and communicate with their worker about what is important to them. The app was co-produced with children and young people to ensure that it is easily understood. The app can be used by young people to prepare for meetings, share good news or worries and concerns, they can say if they feel unsafe or scared and their worker is notified immediately. Young people create their own account, which can be used on any device at any time. Virtual training sessions have been held throughout the year for staff and the app has also been promoted with our Foster Carers.

As part of the Quality Assurance Learning Framework that the service implemented, all audits, including case and thematic audits, have a focus on the voice of the child being evidenced in the child's plan. In 2020-21 the service target to achieve this was 75%, however at year end this had been exceeded with 82.5% of audits demonstrating that the child's voice was evidenced in their plan.

The Intervention and Prevention Service have developed and implemented a 'distance travelled' tool. Young people complete a series of questions before they start their intervention and then complete

them again at the end. Using the tool, feedback from 83% of young people demonstrated satisfaction with the intervention and prevention service in 2020-21.

The service continues to have a strong commitment to involving young people in the recruitment and appointment of our staff and this continued during 2020-21 with care experienced young people involved in interview panels and decisions on appointments.

## **Providing Services during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic Children's Services operational management team came together to agree a business continuity plan for the uncertain times that we were facing and to ensure that we were well equipped to continue to run business critical services and keep children safe. Staff were trained across the service to be able to undertake different roles through a series of webinars. Staff surveys were produced to identify staff skills for redeployment if staff needed childcare to enable them to continue working and if they were willing to work additional hours. This allowed us to quickly identify who could be redeployed across areas of the service when required. The Children's Service Leadership Team commenced daily sit reps to review staffing capacity across the service to ensure services continued to children, young people, and families in Powys.

We were active participants in the weekly regional meetings that took place and led on several developments which have been key to supporting front line staff. A Powys Children's Services emergency procedure was developed in respect of child protection conferences, which was quickly adapted to be utilised at a regional level. This procedure ensured the continuity of child protection conferences and covered timescales, participation of families, quoracy and recording. This supported the smooth transition to virtual conferences. Another local emergency procedure led to the development of a regional policy document for child protection visits and section 47 planning considerations. This covered planning for sections 47's and included making use of outdoor spaces to speak to children alone.

We very quickly put into place arrangements to be able to run aspects of the service virtually, in order to keep children, families, and our workforce safe. Within 1 week of going into lockdown the first virtual child looked after review was held and 2 days later the first virtual child protection conference held. Our workforce adapted quickly and supported families, children, and young people through the complete change in way of working.

Our face-to-face work and visits were continued from the very start of the pandemic and at no point stopped, even when schools closed, and other agencies had stood down and were not seeing children and families in person. Between the start of lockdown on 23rd March and 13th May 2020 over 1000 face to face visits had already taken place with children and young people. Performance data was analysed in the daily sit reps to monitor demand on the service. Approaches to the service initially dropped at the start of lockdown which was a big concern to us, in response we increased contact and face to face visits and a domestic abuse project was developed due to the national reports of increases in domestic abuse and a social media and flyer campaign was undertaken across the County. The service saw a large increase in demand for services following this and this has continued throughout the year as we see and deal with the impact that lockdowns and the COVID-19 pandemic has had on children, young people, families, and communities.

Throughout this time our workforce has been totally dedicated and worked tirelessly to ensure they could continue to visit children safely by adapting practice for example, utilising PPE and outdoor visits. In 2020-21, 93% of statutory visits carried out for children who are looked after, and child protection statutory visits were within timescales. When the Welsh Government and Public Health Wales PPE guidance was issued, within 24 hours the service had produced and circulated task specific documents for the workforce alongside a risk assessment and decision-making tree. Members of staff volunteered to operate PPE stations from their own homes which could be collected by the workforce 24/7 to keep them safe and ensured visits could continue. Guidance was also produced for our Foster Carers and the Fostering teams increased their contact to provide additional support to them during the pandemic and when schools were closed.

Our workforce, at a time that the country was in fear and trepidation, showed commitment, dedication and bravery and found new and innovative ways to visit and work with children and families and ensure that our statutory duties were met. Some of those examples are:

- *During lockdown when schools were closed social workers visited homes and undertook a range of activities with children including helping with schoolwork, learning new BMX bike tricks, and making paper games.*
- *A personal advisor provided support to a care experienced young person who made the very brave decision to stay in university accommodation alone during lockdown. They kept in regular contact*
- *A young person whose placement broke down was visited face to face daily by their social worker while they settled into their new placement.*
- *Workers supported foster carer families who were shielding by collecting medication and groceries from the supermarket.*
- *Workers attended foster carers homes to help them set up technology so that children in their care could undertake video contact with families.*
- *Where a family was self-isolating a social worker played 'hide and seek' with a child through the downstairs windows of their home to help engage and communicate with them in such a difficult situation.*
- *Worker helped to encourage physical activity when the schools were shut, they undertook virtual walks with young people and video chatted whilst they were walking, and they set step challenges and made weekly targets.*
- *Social workers ensured that children who became looked after during lockdown or had a placement move, had their belongings taken with them or by observing social distancing guidelines and using PPE they assisted by collecting them and taking them to their placement.*

Communication was a priority for the service throughout lockdown and the pandemic. When the offices closed, the service overcame logistical issues to ensure that letters were still being sent to families and that information provided was up to date and current. We also ensured that partner

agencies were kept up to date of our business-critical services and to continue to refer in through the Front Door Service.

The service undertook our own welfare calls to children that had received a shielding letter from the Health Board. The Integrated Disability Team arranged food parcels where needed and kept in regular contact to support families.

Funding was secured to set up all our Foster Carers with Office 365 accounts. Working in partnership with Corporate ICT we ensured the rapid setting up of Powys emails for Foster Carers and this was invaluable for keeping in contact and providing support and information during the pandemic. It also enabled children looked after to have virtual video contact with their families during lockdown.

Also, during the pandemic, the Community Support Emergency Team (C-Sert) was created to join up PTHB, PCC, third sector partners, the Regional Partnership Board, and community volunteers. The C-Sert Team helped provide mental health support, shopping assistance, pharmaceuticals pickups and more.

## **Care Home and Dom Care Provision During Covid-19**

There are several areas in which intensive support activity was needed during the pandemic. The Council's work with care homes and domiciliary care has been subject to continuous change and some significant highlights are detailed below:

1. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council increased contact with care home and domiciliary care providers, at one point including daily calls to offer support, advice, and guidance.
2. An email address for the Council's Commissioning team was set up and monitored 7 days a week. This provided care homes with an out of hours contact for information, advice, and/or support.
3. The Council's contract monitoring officers initiated a process to reduce the number of calls being received by care homes from partners such as Powys Teaching Health Board (PTHB) and Public Health Wales and collaborated with PTHB nursing staff to streamline this process once it was in place.
4. The Council's contract monitoring officers, together with the Business Intelligence team developed a Care Home Dashboard which holds up to date care home information and as such, eliminates the need for multiple requests for information from the care homes themselves.
5. Homes were supplied with PPE packs comprising 200 disposable aprons, 200 pairs of disposable gloves, 200 fluid resistant face masks and 50 pair of reusable eye goggles. As PPE availability improved, the Council worked with homes to establish their PPE consumption needs and provide ongoing supplies.
6. The Community Equipment Service were proactive in providing equipment such as profiling beds, static mattresses, alternating mattresses, static cushions, and alternating cushions. 26 care homes (without appropriate alternative equipment) were provided with an iPad to ensure they had the capability to undertake activities such as calls to residents' relatives, virtual GP bedside visits and remote inspection visits.
7. The Council held Business Continuity Plan workshops with homes.
8. There were several instances during the 'second wave' where the Council had to provide direct support to homes. Support included actions to maintain safe staffing levels

(including temporary Council staff redeployment). In one instance the Council helped to source alternative temporary arrangements for resident catering.

9. The Council provided support to homes in response to requests concerning problems with securing COVID testing kits; correct self-testing procedures; and establishing operable staff testing arrangements, etc.
10. The Council worked with PTHB to arrange and deliver on-line infection prevention and control training sessions with care homes.
11. The Council promoted the availability of the Welsh Government hardship fund and assisted homes to make claims related to increased staffing costs and food prices, the provision of COVID secure visitor pods and testing areas, and additional costs incurred due to the requirement for staff testing. As of March 2021, the monies paid to homes via the Council from the hardship fund totalled £3,859,115.

## Feedback from the Public

To help shape our service, we collect Compliments, Comments and Complaints and we discuss this feedback on a regular basis. We categorise them into Stage 1 and Stage 2 Complaints. Stage 1 complaints are dealt with by the team or senior manager of the department. If we are unable to resolve a complaint at Stage 1, then it escalates to Stage 2 where the investigation is undertaken by an external independent investigator. If the matter is still unresolved, the complaint escalates to the Ombudsman.

Compliments	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Children's	14	14	61
Adults	126	130	93
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>154</b>



For 2020/21 there was an overall increase of 11 complaints and enquiries compared to 2019/20, however, 30% of all contacts into the complaints team are now being dealt with as enquiries and resolved before progressing to becoming a complaint. This is a result of focusing on dealing with issues as soon as possible and resolving them before they progress into bigger concerns.

There has been a slight increase in compliments received during 2020/21 from 144 to 154. There was a substantial increase in Children's compliments up 400%, demonstrating the improvements in practise compared to previous years. The full Social Services Annual Complaint report is available on our website at <https://en.powys.gov.uk/socialservicescomplaints>

## **Promoting and Improving the Well-being of Powys Residents**

### **(a) Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve**

Understanding "what matters" in our conversations with people is paramount to successfully placing the individual at the centre of what we do. "What matters" is the golden thread that runs throughout our services and is an important guiding principle of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

### **What did we plan to do last year?**

In last year's Annual Report, we set out several priority actions to enhance how we work with people to help them achieve their outcomes, namely that we would:

- A1: Provide care and support for carers which will enable them to be supported to continue their caring role.
- A2: Further develop our strengths-based approach through promoting individual's own assets and community network support when determining how eligible needs can be best met.
- A3: Strengthen the Quality Assurance Framework and workforce development arrangements to ensure that assessments include the voices of children, young people and their families and plans are co-produced.
- A4: Develop the Early Help Strategy to promote Early Help as the multi-agency approach in Powys
- A5: Launch the rebranded Children's Services Front Door and Early Help Service
- A6: Review with partners the planned approach to multi-agency Early Help Hubs in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?**

A1: Credu, our commissioned service for Carers, have released a new Carer's Rights Booklet. This helpful guide for unpaid carers is easy to follow and will help carers get the right support in their caring role.

A1: Adult Services fully acknowledge the vital role which unpaid carers undertake across our communities in Powys; our respite policy for unpaid carers, which was co-produced alongside carers, has been published - <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/10190/Council-publishes-respite-policy-for-unpaid-carers>

A2: We continued to rollout our Collaborative Communication / Strengths Based training although it has been curtailed due to Covid-19 challenges. Adult services has started a screening meeting with

our front door service, ASSIST to help deal with front door workflow and finding ways to better utilise our community services, family, and friends prior to statutory services.

The Community Connector service was instrumental in Powys's response to the pandemic at a community level. 2020-21 saw a 145% increase in referrals from the previous year. The three main reasons for referral were COVID 19 shielding/welfare support, COVID 19 support and prescription/medication delivery requests. In order to manage demand the service increased its operating hours so it was available 7 days a week, 13 locality networks were established to aid partnership working. The average time taken from when a referral was received to when support started was 3 days and 100% of clients who wanted to receive the service through the medium of Welsh were able to. Community Connector awarded grants to community groups/informal volunteering groups totalled £47,710 and grants were used to support with the cost of PPE, volunteer expenses and meal provision. 93% of health and social care professionals said that the information provided by the service improved their ability to support their client/patient.

Our *Disabilities Forum* continued throughout covid.

A member of staff who was originally deployed from her substantive post in the council to work within domiciliary care service has successfully gained permanent employment in care provision – see her tell her story at <https://youtu.be/25EOuqbV2zg>

To support, protect and keep our staff safe, a new Unacceptable Customer Conduct Policy has been implemented. <https://www.countytimes.co.uk/news/18584746.powys-council-plans-clampdown-bullying-behaviour/>

A new suite of webinar training resources has been made available for staff in the absence of being able to deliver face to face training during COVID-19.

A staff survey has been designed to enable staff to give their views on how to improve the WCCIS (people management system) interface and make it easier for staff to record information on WCCIS.

Adult Services undertook an active part in the virtual jobs fair which was hosted by the Job Centre and targeted those on furlough, unemployed or at risk of redundancy because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have continued to support our external Providers in their campaigns to recruit new members of staff through signposting on our council's job vacancy page and promoting via social media

A3: The Children's Services Quality Assurance and Learning Framework was reviewed and revised in 2020/21. Staff are committed to ensuring that quality assurance activity is embedded, evaluated, and acted upon. The Quality Assurance and Learning Framework is underpinned by the key aims of the overarching Children's Services Integrated Business Plan. The framework sets out the principles that underpin quality assurance and learning which are informed by the Signs of Safety (SofS) strengths-based approach to practice that is being implemented across Powys Children's Services. The overall aim of the framework is to support colleagues across Children's Social Care to achieve better outcomes for children and to understand 'what good looks like.' The purpose of the framework is to improve our understanding of whether we are supporting the right children, in the right way, at the right time, and whether we are making a positive difference to their lives. It is designed to help us on our path of continuous self-assessment, improvement, and learning.

Effective audits provide insight into the quality of work with children and families, the quality of management oversight and support for the social worker and, importantly, the views, experiences, and outcomes for the child.

In 2020/21 82% of audits of children’s plans evidenced the child’s voice. The voice of a child is always at the forefront of the work that Children’s Services undertake and the active offer for advocacy is made to all children and young people.

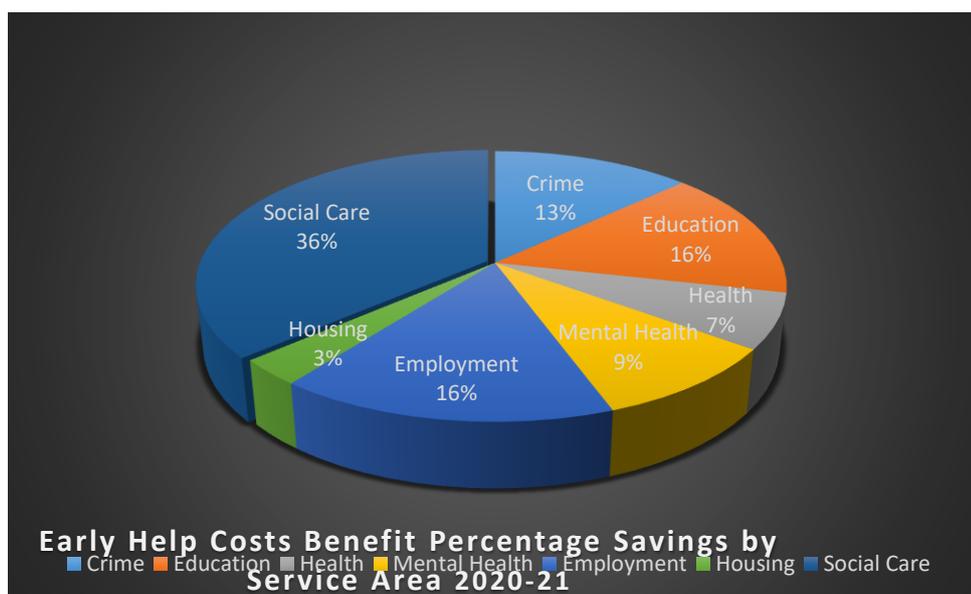
Following audits being undertaken the service reports on themes and shares learning through webinar events for all practitioners.

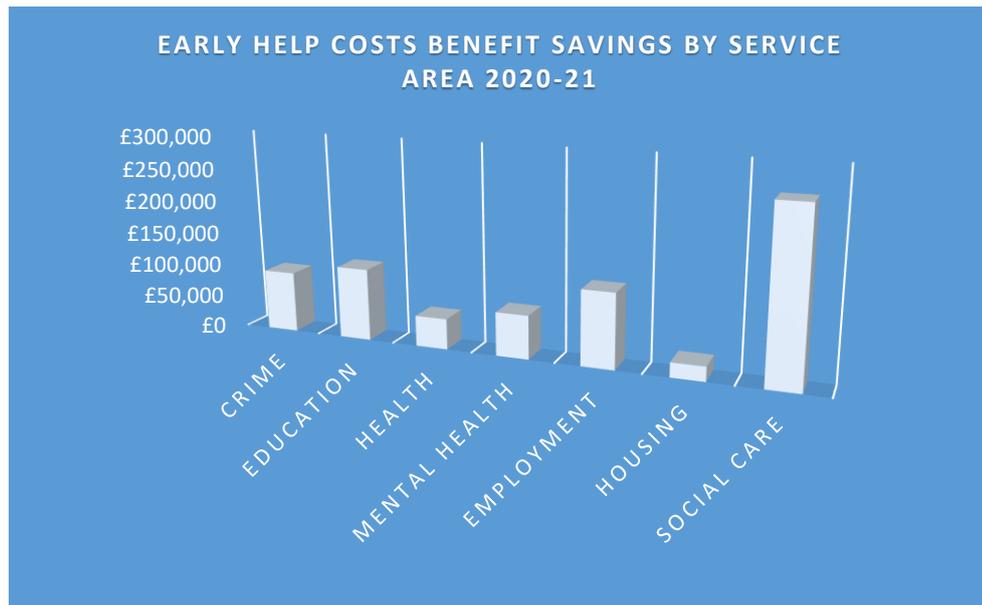
A4: Due to the challenges faced by the COVID-19 pandemic the development of the Early Help strategy was delayed initially. However, despite being in business continuity planning mode, the draft Early Help Strategy was developed in the later part of the year and went through the Council’s corporate governance process and was agreed by Cabinet. The formal launch is planned for Summer 2021. Throughout 2020-21 we have continued to provide face to face and virtual Early Help and parenting support.

During the year:

- 94% of individuals reported stabilisation or positive change following support from Early Help across all of 2020-21.
- 93% of individuals reported stabilisation or positive change in health and wellbeing following support from Early Help over 2020-21.
- 93% of individuals reported stabilisation or positive change in achieving potential over 2020-21.
- 94% of individuals reported stabilisation or positive change in confidence and resilience over 2020-21.
- 97% of individuals reported stabilisation or positive change in economic wellbeing over 2020-21.

A cost benefit analysis, using the ‘Families First Cost Savings Toolkit’ which was commissioned by Welsh Government and developed by Wavehill Social and Economic Research Group, has been undertaken and it has identified that in 2020-21 the Early Help Service provided a cost avoidance total of £703,888.03. The details are as follows:





A5: The launches of the rebranded Front Door and Early Help Services were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the service moving into business continuity plans. The work was restarted, and this is now planned for Summer 2021 alongside the launch of the Early Help strategy.

A6: Review with partners the planned approach to multi-agency Early Help Hubs in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The development of the Early Help hub was initially delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It remained as a priority in the Start Well workstream leading on Building Resilient Communities and developing Integrated Access to Services. In September 2020, the Start Well Board took the decision to temporarily stand down a number of the five workstreams due to the demand on partners responding to the Covid 19 pandemic. It was agreed that the Building Resilient Communities and Integrated Access to Services workstream and the Emotional Health and Wellbeing workstream would continue to meet regularly to progress work related to the Covid 19 response but the remaining workstreams were to be stood down. The Start Well Board agreed to review these arrangements in Spring 2021. Work continues with the development of an early help hub in the North of the County. All stakeholders have been engaged and the facility is due to open to the public April 2022.

### **What are our priorities for next year and why?**

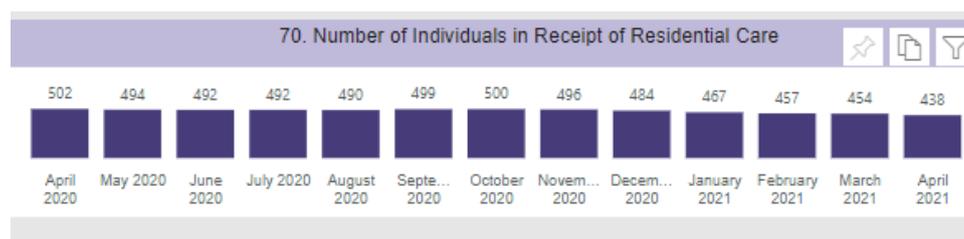
- A1 Goal: Develop a Personal Assistant finder tool to help service users who receive direct payments to find the help they need.
- A3 Goal: Launch the rebranded Front Door and Early Help Services.
- A4 Goal: Develop the Early Help Hub in the North of the County in preparation for opening in April 2022.
- A5 Goal: Strengthening the resilience of the workforce through achieving our Grow Our Own objectives.
- A6 Goal: Continue to provide mission critical services during these changing times to children, young people and families in Powys.

## (b) Working with people and partners to protect and promote people’s physical and mental health and emotional well-being

### What did we plan to do last year?

In the 2020/21 Directorate Plan we said that we would:

- B1 Improve our system of tracking what services people are needing in Powys to support future commissioning decisions.
- B2 Enable more people to remain in their own homes and reducing admissions into residential care, aided by effective partnership working in community mental health teams, and working alongside health partners to ensure that those with a primary health need have needs met through timely continuing healthcare funded support.
- B3 To develop regular conference calls with providers and to communicate effectively with providers via the conference call and by writing to them regularly with updates on national and local developments.
- B4 Improve and revamp the Adult Social Care website to ensure that people can easily find what they want and designed to match the Social Services and Well Being Act. Including promoting greater awareness of AskSara.
- B5 Work with our partners to review the Start Well Board priorities to refocus how the partnership works together to support children’s emotional wellbeing and mental health at the earliest opportunity.
- B6 Appoint an inhouse Psychologist in partnership with PTHB
- B7 Establish a trauma informed approach across Children’s Services.
- B8 Increase the number of care leavers that report good wellbeing.
- B9 Further develop the range of short breaks provision available.
- B10 To improve our partnership working with the Powys Teaching Health Board’s Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.



### How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?

B1 Improve our data tracking to support good decision-making around commissioned services.

- It was announced in August that day centres for older people and day services for individuals with a learning disability will remain closed for a further 6 months; it is not feasible for us to re-open these facilities and comply with social distancing requirements. “What matters to you” conversations are being held with all those affected and where required alternative support arrangements are being put in place including making best use of community provision across the county. It has been agreed that long-term review of daytime

opportunities will be undertaken and presented to the Council's Cabinet. The day centres and day service bases originally closed in March 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Microenterprises (small community businesses that support and care for local people) are operating in Brecon, Hay on Wye, Presteigne, Knighton and Crickhowell; it is reported that microenterprises are covering each other during periods of absence. The 12 Microenterprises in operation currently support 47 individuals known to the council and 56 private clients, totalling 663 hours/week; Our Commissioning Team are working with the Community Catalyst to identify whether the microenterprise approach can be expanded to other areas outside of the original project area.
- Information has been developed for care management teams to enhance understanding of the role of Community Catalysts.
- The personal assistant (PA) tool finder is now live and promoted amongst Community Micro Enterprises and Personal Assistants; this will enable those individuals seeking the support of a Personal Assistant or Community Micro Enterprise to search for availability in their area – demonstrations of software have taken place.
- Virtual wallet – fortnightly project meetings are being held with the commissioned provider. The virtual wallet is akin to an on-line bank account and will be available to individuals to enable them to keep track of their direct payments; this will be made available to new service users initially but there is the potential to roll out to existing service users to transfer to the virtual wallet from a managed account.
- To reduce the number of review conversations with individuals receiving a social care service, moving, and handling reviews, which are undertaken by our Occupational Therapists, are now being undertaken at the same time as community reviews wherever possible
- Opportunities are being considered as to how we can support domiciliary carers who are available but non-drivers in relation to taxi or electric bike provision especially in areas where we are finding it difficult to source care packages; this will support our work in reducing waiting times for a service
- Ask Sara – as previously reported, the Council has invested in its information and advice services in order to enable people to make informed decisions as to their needs and how to meet them. In Quarter 2, we saw a considerable increase in visits to the site which may be as a direct result of the Comms campaign which was undertaken due to the numbers accessing Ask Sara not being as high as originally anticipated; new visits have gone up to the highest level, even surpassing the first month of the site going live.

B2 Enable more people to remain in their own homes - one way that Powys Council supports people to live independently is through our Shared Lives scheme. Shared Lives provides care and support to adults with a learning disability, but also to others such as older people, people with mental health problems and young people in transition and helps them choose who they live with, where they live and how they spend their time.

### **Case Study: Shared Lives – Ryan**

This video tells the story of how Ryan, who lives with a Shared Lives caring family, has found a place where he 'truly belongs.' A video of Ryan's experience can be found at <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/1901/Supporting-adults-Shared-Lives>

B3 To develop regular conference calls with providers and to communicate effectively with providers – on hold due to Covid.

B4 Improve and revamp the Adult Social Care website to ensure that people can easily find what they want and designed to match the Social Services and Well Being Act – on hold due to Covid.

B5 The Start Well Board considered and reviewed its priorities in the Summer of 2020 and as a result revised the structure of the Board’s workstreams so they would be better aligned to support the shared partnership priorities. The Start Well Board agreed to reform the work and the workstreams in the following way to most effectively support the workplan of Start Well:



- The Start Well Board agreed to develop a Junior Start Well Board which will have representation from a wide range of children and young people across Powys. This will ensure their involvement, influence, and engagement in the work of the Start Well
- Work continues with the development of an early help hub in the North of the County. All stakeholders have been engaged and the facility is due to open to the public April 2022.
- Working to support the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people at the earliest opportunity continues to be a priority for the Start Well Board and the Start Well Board have developed a project specifically to focus on emotional Health and Wellbeing and Covid recovery which has been allocated funding for 2021/2022.

B6 In early 2020 we successfully appointed an in-house Psychologist in partnership with Powys Teaching Health Board. The in-house Psychologist supports staff across Children’s Services in thinking about their work with children and families and to help staff recognise and value their existing skills, expertise and strengths, and to develop new learning and understanding. This is being achieved through having discussions:

- To help staff to understand needs, difficulties, and strengths
- To work with children and families who have not responded to offers of support, who may be a risk to themselves or others
- To develop approaches to assist families

- To consider how different practitioners and services are working together to support a child and their family
- To work with complexity and plan future interventions
- To think about the need for and appropriateness of specialist interventions, assessments, or therapeutic input

Childrens Services are also facilitating group supervisions, reflective sessions and providing training for staff to ensure they feel confident and supported in their roles. The psychologist also provides advice and guidance in several professional meetings such as resource panel, children of concern meetings, youth justice service team meetings, Youth Justice Management Board meetings and meetings with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) practitioners at various levels. We also represent Powys on the All-Wales Traumatic Stress Workstream for Children and Young People and the Gwent Tier 3 Forensic MDT service meetings.

B7: This has been delayed as the service has been in business continuity arrangements due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Plans are in place to undertake a self-assessment in relation to being a trauma informed service and from this we will develop and action plan for implementation.

B8: *Increase the number of care leavers that report good wellbeing.* During the year, the service undertook a piece of work to develop and revise the Pathway Plan for care experienced young people. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this was delayed slightly but the plan went live in early 2020/21/2022 and the service will be able to report data on outcomes for young people from the new comprehensive plan.

The COVID-19 pandemic for care experienced young people with limited support networks and resources has been a very worrying and anxious time. Many care-experienced young people were at an increased risk of deterioration in their physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing. At the start of the pandemic supporting our care experienced young people was a clear priority for the service. All young people were contacted to assess and support their well-being and physical needs. A register of current locations was set up to easily identify where support may be needed. The young people were candid about the anxieties they feel about self-isolation and the risk of infection in the lockdown period and accepted support and guidance to address their needs. Contact was maintained with care leavers by face-to-face visits, telephone and email contact and via a variety of social media platforms according to the preference of the young person. The social worker and personal assistant workforce was strengthened in the first lockdown with additional support worker capacity by re-deployed staff to ensure that there was a flexible and responsive service in place. Emergency packs containing a basic food supply, toiletries, sanitary protection, and cleaning products were prepared and distributed. Arrangements were put into place to offer care leavers financial support either in cash or into bank accounts, allocation of food vouchers and e-vouchers and Smart meter cards to pay for utilities are available. Financial allowance was increased in line with the change to universal credit. Care experienced young people were supported with their accommodation choices whether that was to come back into care, stay in university accommodation or through providing additional support to them in semi-independent accommodation.

B9: Further develop the range of short breaks provision available. Covid-19 has presented many challenges in providing residential short break provision, practice and provision had to change quickly to meet the changing demand. Our in-house children's residential provision was re-focussed to provide safe, long-term placements for a small group of young people. For most families, the closure of schools and the lockdown restrictions placed significant pressures and the need for short breaks

has increased. By providing Short Breaks, Powys County Council aims to also support parents and carers, including young carers. The aim is to enable them to maintain their caring role and give them time to have a break from what is recognised as a lifelong responsibility. Carers have the right to an assessment of their needs.

A children's residential short break provider was identified in the north of the County and a provider outside of Powys, who had the relevant staffing teams, accommodation, and registrations (where appropriate), to provide residential short breaks for children. The relevant PPE has been provided. Relevant training and guidance and Covid-19 testing schedules were also implemented to support this. The short breaks are scheduled in two-week periods to reduce the number of contacts with staff and family members.

The number of Direct Payment packages has increased significantly during Covid-19. The Children's Commissioning Team developed a bespoke recruitment campaign to specifically recruit and match Personal Assistants to provide support to meet families' needs. We successfully advertised and recruited ten additional Personal Assistants who have been matched to families to provide short break support.

The number of hours has also been increased to some children and young people provided by our commissioned provider, Action for Children, who provide 1:1 support as part of Tier 2 short break provision.

The Short Break Project Team have met regularly throughout the pandemic to review progress against provision for each child and young person. Where direct payments have not been appropriate the Commissioning Team have worked with the Fostering Team to identify in-house, short break foster carers to provide short breaks. This has been challenging due to the implications and considerations of Covid-19; however, some children have been able to match to foster carers where this can be safely achieved.

The closure of schools allowed for the widening of the availability for children and young people to access short breaks during the week as well as weekends. For most families, the closure of schools and the lockdown restrictions have placed significant pressures and the need for short breaks has increased. The Children's Services teams worked closely with families to communicate the changes and to explore all options for short break provision.

*B10 To improve our partnership working with the Powys Teaching Health Board's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. During 2020/21 Children's Services increased activity to improve continuing care arrangements for children and young people and support for children whose mental and emotional wellbeing has been affected by the trauma they have experienced but who do not meet the criteria for CAMHS. The services are moving together to develop a response for example, the Safe Accommodation for Children and Young People with Complex Needs project, but we have not made the progress we would have liked to, and we continue to work to improve our partnership working with the Powys Teaching Health Board's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.*

### **What are our priorities for next year and why?**

In 202021/2022, we intend to address the following priorities around protecting and promoting the physical and mental health and emotional well-being of our residents.

- B1 Goal - Update our Market Position Statement for Commissioning including residential, domiciliary care and children's placements.

- B2 Goal - North Powys Wellbeing Programme will continue to expand its following successful delivery of the project in north Powys. Children's First initiative has been expanded further across north Powys to include Machynlleth and Llanidloes. Children Looked After will continue to be supported in local placements in Powys where possible. Further projects have also been funded to support digital and more local Ophthalmology and Respiratory services in north Powys.
- B3 Goal - Extra Care – Adult Social Care is committed to adding new projects to support people in need of residential care in Welshpool, Ystradgynlais, Machynlleth, and Brecon.
- B4 Goal - Support adults who require care and support through timely and strengths-based assessments and care and support planning and working to ensure that the right level of care and support is available to adults who require this support.
- B5 Goal - Provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high-quality support services for adults who require care and support and their carers to meet the diverse range of their individual needs and circumstances. With a focus on outcomes.
- B6 Goal - To increase the availability of volunteers to work in health and social care during the pandemic (and beyond), and to work with care and support providers to increase use of volunteers to increase service capacity.
- B7 Goal – Increase the number of care experienced young people that report good wellbeing.
- B8 Goal – Maximise the role of Clinical Psychologist to support across the service and establish a trauma informed approach.
- B9 - Complete an options appraisal regarding provision of short breaks in Powys or implement changes to the provision of short breaks.

### **Service User Story – Canary Monitoring System**

*My father is 89 years old and has long term health issues, including dementia. The Canary Care monitor system has allowed us to know that he is safe and that his doors have not been left open. It also enables us to know when his Careline alarm goes off - allowing us to see whether it was an accident or if there is a problem. His movements are detected by the sensors when he moves from room to room, and there is also a record of when his entry doors are opened and closed. The movement data also helps us know how well he slept and how frequent were his night-time visits to the bathroom. We also have a card system that allows carers to easily come and go, yet any unexpected visitors will be flagged up by the system providing a useful security feature. We have found the entire system easy to use and very reassuring. It is one of the key devices my father has in his package of care which helps him stay at home and to be safe in his own home.*

## **(c) Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm**

### **What did we plan to do last year?**

During 2020/21 we said we would:

- C1: The Regional Safeguarding Board will publish the regional safeguarding response to Safeguarding which is a single document outlining the Safeguarding response to children and adults safeguarding. The purpose of this document is to provide a designated reference point for the specific processes to be followed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to show the significant work undertaken by all our Board and partners in the development of these

policies. The Senior manager has engaged with the board to produce this document and provide clarity during this time.

- C2: To develop a joint care home escalation matrix with the Powys Teaching Health Board to enable full awareness by the Care Home Steering Group (Section 33) of contract monitoring and concerns.
- C3: To convene a regular interagency, multidisciplinary team meeting to consider the needs and sustainability of care homes in Powys.
- C4: Work closely with partner agencies to improve our response to child exploitation and lead on the review of the regional arrangements for multi-agency working.
- C5: Complete phase two of the Children's Services restructure to strengthen the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service.
- C6: Develop the Powys Child Exploitation Strategy and Implementation Plan
- C7: Establish our Specialist Child Exploitation Intervention team.
- C8: Undertake a review of EDT and implement an out of hours response to child protection and adult safeguarding and mental health which meets demand.

### **How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?**

- C1: The Regional Safeguarding Board will publish the regional safeguarding response to Safeguarding which is a single document outlining the Safeguarding response to children and adults safeguarding. The purpose of this document is to provide a designated reference point for the specific processes to be followed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to show the significant work undertaken by all our Board and partners in the development of these policies. The Senior Manager has engaged with the board to produce this document and provide clarity during this time.
- C2: The Council continues to prepare for the transition from the statutory obligation to complete Deprivation of Liberty assessments (DoLs) to the new Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS), which comes into force sometime in 2022. The Council continues to undertake DoLs through the pandemic.
- C2: Powys Social Care is now working to the new Regional Threshold guidance and has delivered online training to support staff with a clear process to inform safeguarding referrals.
- C3: A regular interagency, multidisciplinary care home team has been meeting regularly since April 2020, initially daily now weekly. Members are recruited from ASC Commissioning, operational, safeguarding and Environmental Health. PTHB co-chairs with commissioning in PCC. This group oversaw the development of the care home dashboard. In addition, daily system flow meetings have been held in Adult Services to monitor flow of demand through the adult services system, to identify issues that require escalation corporate management team, and to monitor our ability to respond to safeguarding alerts in a timely manner.
- C4: In 2019 Powys Children's Services created a new operational team led by a Child Exploitation Manager dedicated to preventing, protect and support children from all forms of child exploitation. Since then, team has transformed the work of Child Exploitation and has led the region in many initiatives and developments. Children's Services have taken the lead in developing the strategic MACE (Multi-Agency Child Exploitation meetings). Working with our partners and agencies we been developing a Child Exploitation profile which is co-ordinated within our strategic MACE. Early indications suggest a greatly improving picture in terms of effective responses to child exploitation in Powys, the safeguarding process is fluid in such that children are no longer entering and getting 'stuck' in a process which was

previously happening as there was no joined up working to enable effective disruption and trauma informed responses to recovery. Powys Children's Services CE team has taken the lead on change in line with research and policy across the region.

Our implemented MACE strategic child exploitation profile which centralises around key data analysis to support a collaborative understanding of trends and themes within our area and what we can collectively to enable safe change has been recognised by the Regional Independent child trafficking Guardianship service as innovative, and subsequently it has been shared to other Local Authorities as an example of best practice. In July 2020 we implemented quarterly multi-agency 'community of practice events. The aim being to support multi-agency best practice through accessing regular expert guest speakers from across Wales and the UK who promote understanding of research, policy, thresholds, and best practice approaches. We have routinely gained excellent attendance across a broad range of professionals including multi-agency partners, third sector and children's residential provisions in Powys. We have reached a maximum of 131 professionals per session, and feedback forms have reflected only the benefits of the sessions. We have also welcomed other LA's who are considering change within their approaches to child exploitation to join us which has been received by 4 Local Authorities within Wales. This has supported raising awareness and greater quality of referrals to Children's Services and a more child centred approach with greater recognition of complexities within this form of abuse, such as the impact of grooming on conditions of consent and the devastating impact it can have on the child and their family.

- C5: Complete phase two of the Children's Services restructure to strengthen the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service. Phase two of the Children's Services restructure to strengthen the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service was completed in 2021/2022. The restructure has meant the creation and appointment of a Practice Development Manager. The post leads on workforce development, practice guidance and quality assurance for the service. This has ensured that the service is supported to create and provide learning and development opportunities and that our workforce is skilled and equipped to provide a high-quality service to children. The Practice Development Manager role has developed and implemented the Quality Assurance Framework and thematic audits of plans and assessments. Feedback and learning sessions have been held following the audits to promote the services' learning culture.
- C6: Develop the Powys Child Exploitation Strategy and Implementation Plan. We have developed a Child Exploitation Strategy in consultation with key partners to support our aim in working together to set out our aspirations, intent, and vision of working together with children and families, social work teams, partner agencies and support services to create communities that are harsher for perpetrators and provide non blaming and safe environments for children. The strategy supports our vision to create a centre of excellence within Powys by ensuring strong leadership and multi-agency collaboration. These include early intervention and prevention, protection and trauma informed responses that will place the child at the heart of their care and support needs whilst providing a targeted response to disruption and the prosecution of offenders. The Strategy also utilises existing provision and maximises effective partnership working to achieve its aim. The strategy is overseen by MACE meetings which are an effective mechanism for reviewing the implementation of the plan. The Strategy is multi-agency which dilutes the burden on one single agency. It harnesses third sector and statutory bodies to ensure aims are agreed and monitored. The Local Authority has invested in the development of materials for awareness raising and the agreed workforce development budget recognises the need to invest in this area of skills development. The

meaningful measures within the action plan reflect the value and impact of the Strategy within its core elements to prevent, protect and support children at heightened risk, have or are being exploited.

- C7: Establish our Specialist Child Exploitation Intervention team. The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance restructure saw the Child Exploitation Workers move from the Intervention and Prevention Service over to Safeguarding and Quality Assurance under the leadership of the Child Exploitation Manager. The team have been extremely successful in driving forward the work in Powys around Child Exploitation. During safeguarding week last year, we successfully undertook the following activities collaboratively with other agencies across Powys:
  - We worked with the Powys Open Access Youth Services to create a video which young people helped to film. The video was shared on the Powys County Council Facebook Page. It gained 2.4K views and 19 shares.
  - The video was also shared on the Powys Open Access Youth Service Facebook Page. It gained 1.3k views and 19 shares.
  - We worked with the Powys Youth Intervention Service to create two videos in the North and South of the County. The video was shared on the Powys Family Information Service Facebook Page. It gained 289 views and 10 shares.
  - The video was also shared on the Powys Youth Intervention Facebook Page. It gained 290 views and 1 share.
  - We worked with Powys Licencing and community PCSO's to raise awareness at local off licence premises and pubs. Together we visited 3 off licences and 7 pubs within the mid of the County.
  - We communicated with employees that safeguarding is every one's responsibility and how they can support in making communities safer for children. We provided 10 information packs that included additional information and visual flyers for their premises.
  - The licencing team communicated with registered Powys Taxi Drivers. They provided an information awareness raising video promoting safeguarding as everyone's responsibility, and how they can support to make communities safer for children.
  - Each evening in the North and South of the County we met with local youth workers providing outreach to children.
  - We communicated with 71 children across the County.
  - We provided 40 Child Exploitation Wristbands to children.
  - The Youth Service provided bicycle lights to promote children's safety in the evenings.

From speaking to young people an action plan was developed to continue to strengthen the work that the team undertake in Powys. We are also providing public facing events for parents, carers, families, and communities to raise awareness, our initial session gained over 30 attendees and a further event is due to run in June.

The Child Exploitation Hub recognises and value the importance of child participation, and we are developing a child exploitation ambassador programme within every comprehensive school in Powys to promote awareness and initiate conversations within peer groups. We hope to develop this within colleges and other forms of training across Powys too.

Child Exploitation intervention workers have created opportunity to support children with trauma informed responses which are at the child's pace. The team utilise non victimising approaches and are also at the forefront of challenging people's language to support the child never being at blame for

their abuse. For example, children do not place themselves at risk which is a phrase which has previously been common across agencies when thinking about children abused through exploitation.

We have developed a comprehensive performance data set which will help us to drive and develop the service further to meet the needs of children and young people.

*C8: Undertake a review of EDT and implement an out of hours response to child protection and adult safeguarding and mental health which meets demand.* A full review of the Emergency Duty Team and the current out of hours response was undertaken in 2020/2021. Although this was delayed slightly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the work was undertaken, and a comprehensive options appraisal developed. The agreed outcome from the options appraisal is planned to be implemented in 2021/2022.

## **What are our priorities for next year and why?**

During 2020/2021 we will be focussed on delivering a range of outcomes, including:

- C1 Goal: We will work with the whole Council to mitigate adverse impact on community wellbeing in Powys from the Covid pandemic.
- C2 Goal: We will work with the third sector to develop a regular wellbeing call system to reach individuals who have been assessed as needing care, but where there is no care available.
- C3 Goal: In light of the economic impact of the pandemic, we will redefine our in-house domiciliary care service to better support outside care agencies who face resource challenges.
- C4 Goal: We will work with care homeowners, managers, and other stakeholders to ensure that care home residents are safeguarded during potential sustainability challenges.
- C5 Goal: Implement Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board Multi-Agency High -Risk Behaviour Policy (including self-neglect/hoarding.)
- C6 Introduce a best practice response to Child Exploitation and work in partnership with the region to achieve a consistent approach.
- C7 Implement the Child Exploitation strategy in line with the implementation plan.
- C8 Implement the EDT options appraisal agreed outcome.
- C9 Further implement the Quality Assurance Framework with a focus on closing the circle on learning from audits and Child Practice Reviews.

## **(d) Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society**

### **What did we plan to do last year?**

During 2020/21 we said we would:

- D1 Goal: To enable more adults with a disability to gain training and paid employment as our current commissioned service expires in October of 2020, we will be retendering by reviewing current employment needs and using a locality approach.

D2 Goal: To review daytime opportunities for adults and to support people to achieve what matters to them.

D3 Goal: To increase uptake of technology amongst the people that we support to increase social connection and reduce loneliness and isolation.

D4 Open a Spring-Board house in mid Powys.

D5 Complete an options appraisal of how a full range of supported accommodation for Care Leavers and Young People aged 16 to 17 who are homeless, can be best delivered.

D6 Increase the number of young people in care who achieve their educational goals.

D7 Increase the number of care leavers who are living in permanent accommodation at the age of 25.

D8 Increase the number of care leavers who are in full time employment, education, or training.

## **How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?**

D1 - Our Commissioning Service continues to explore employment support options using feedback from individuals who use the Service currently and those that may in the future via "what matters conversations". Strengths based conversations have been undertaken with all individuals who are currently in supported employment. Following the contract end date, Adult Services have supported individuals to maintain their employment through a variety of support options.

Due to COVID-19 and ongoing business continuity, we have not been able to fully the work to develop the options available in respect of supported employment has been extended. Work will continue to develop more supported employment options; timescales will depend on the ongoing pandemic; action completion date is dependent on business continuity and consideration of Winter pressures.

D2 - Powys we took the difficult decision, due to COVID-19 restrictions and the infection rates across Powys, to extend the temporary closure of day centre facilities until February 2022. Councillor Alexander, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Adult Social Care commented "I fully appreciate that this will be disappointing news for service users and their families, but the priority must be safety at this critical time." We will continue to discuss with citizens how to best support their needs and the review the future options for day opportunities.

D3- Technology Enabled Care – Adult Services provide a range of different pieces of technology to help make living at home easier for older people as well as individuals who just need help with certain tasks (e.g., home monitoring systems, pendant alarms, and door sensors). The Service promotes what is available through a series of animations which can be found via the following link. While recent referral levels have reduced during the first and second wave of Covid, the numbers are now returning to pre-pandemic levels. Our Contact Officers in ASSIST and Community Connectors are now trained in being able to prescribe low level equipment allowing us to support individuals at the earliest opportunity without them having to await a formal assessment.

We are working alongside a partner agency to better provide various therapeutic support to individuals in remote parts of the county and those that live on border towns. We have purchased some interactive robotic companion pets which will be trialled under this project; the evidence is that these can provide therapeutic support and have the potential to reduce medication. We will also look to trial with individuals who have dementia. The "pets" which have been purchased are robotic cats which are designed to look, feel, and sound like a real cat and come in a range of colours. They have

synthetic, brush-able fur and built-in sensors which respond to motion and touch, including petting and hugging. They also make cat-like movements and sounds.

*D4 Open a Spring-Board house in mid Powys.* Despite the service being in Business Continuity Plans and dealing with a global pandemic, we successfully opened a Spring-Board house in mid Powys. This is our third Spring-Board house to be opened so far across the County. The project helps our care experienced young people to be supported and learn essential life skills to enable them to become tenant ready. The young people are supported by the Through Care 14+ team to assist in making their journey into adulthood a positive one that provides them with the tools to become independent adults.

*D5 Complete an options appraisal of how a full range of supported accommodation for Care Leavers and Young People aged 16 to 17 who are homeless, can be best delivered.* An options appraisal was undertaken in 2020/2021 and included an analysis of the current costs and predicted future demand for 16+ accommodation, which emphasised the importance of taking a more strategic approach in commissioning accommodation and support for young people aged 16+. The options appraisal considered a range of options for delivery of services and the strengths and challenges for each option. The appraisal was considered by the multi-agency 16+ Accommodation Project Team and Children's Leadership Team and a recommendation for the preferred option made. The options appraisal went through the Council Governance process to Cabinet.

*D6 Increase the number of young people in care who achieve their educational goals* – Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the work we planned to undertake on developing our reporting of this measure, in partnership with Education was delayed. We revised our Pathway plan document as part of the Signs of Safety Implementation Group, and it has been embedded into practice. All children who are looked after had their PEP's reviewed and mechanisms are in place to ensure all children who are looked after of school age have an up-to-date PEP.

*D7 Increase the number of care leavers who are living in permanent accommodation at the age of 25.* Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the work we planned to undertake on developing our reporting of this measure was delayed. We revised our Pathway plan document as part of the Signs of Safety Implementation Group, and it has been embedded into practice.

*D8 Increase the number of care leavers who are in full time employment, education, or training.* Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the work we planned to undertake on developing our reporting of this measure was delayed. We revised our Pathway plan document as part of the Signs of Safety Implementation Group, and it has been embedded into practice.

Throughout the pandemic supporting our care experienced young people has been a clear priority for the service. Contact was maintained with care leavers by face-to-face visits, telephone and email contact and via a variety of social media platforms according to the preference of the young person. Emergency packs containing a basic food supply, toiletries, sanitary protection, and cleaning products were prepared and distributed. Arrangements were put into place to offer care leavers financial support either in cash or into bank accounts, allocation of food vouchers and e-vouchers and Smart meter cards to pay for utilities are available.

Care experienced young people were encouraged and supported to apply for the Powys County Council contact tracing advisor positions when they were created and advertising during the pandemic. We organised and ran webinars to provide advice and support to completing the application form and then a session on interview techniques and prep. Five of our care experienced young people were successful to the interview stage and two were offered positions.

## Technology Enabled Care

Technology Enabled Care (TEC) has continued to develop with new services being trialled. The number of unique individuals supported and the number of pieces of equipment prescribed continue to grow with 1,176 pieces of equipment going to 575 new clients in 2020/21. TEC is helping unpaid carers to look after their loved ones with dementia in their homes for longer, some avoiding care home admission altogether or delaying the need for this. Using an average of £670 per person in annual savings, the projected costs which have been avoided because of the use of technology enabled care was £385,183 for the 20/21 fiscal year.

### Projected Cost Avoidance to Powys Social Care 2020/21

	No Clients <sup>1</sup>	Estimated Annual Saving per Client <sup>2</sup>	Estimated Saving 2020/21 <sup>3</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>£670</b>	<b>£385,183</b>

*(1) Actual number of unique clients supported with Technology Enabled Care in Powys*

*(2) Estimated annual net savings per client based on research but at 30% only and assumes 70% of clients retain their TEC for 12 months*

*(3) Savings per client reduce each month to reflect diminishing time remaining in the financial year*

Especially popular is the *Canary Home Monitoring System* which allow non-invasive monitoring of vulnerable person to know their movements, see video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJ350uHTC2k>.

*"I have gotten fantastic feedback from clients/family using the equipment. The potential cost savings from families being able to maintain their loved one at home without the need for a care package is huge." - Health Board Occupational Therapist talking about the Canary Home Monitoring System*

*"My gran remained at home without a care package right up until she was hospitalised over a 5-month period, and, unfortunately then required 24-hour care in a nursing home. As a family we strongly feel that the Canary was the main reason we kept her at home for so long." – Granddaughter*

Overall, the number of unique individuals supported has continued to grow in line with Vision 2025.

## What We Will Do Next Year:

During 2020/21/2022 we will be focussed on delivering a range of outcomes, including:

- D1 Goal: Recruit an Employment Access Officer to work with internal and external organisations including local business to look at future employment opportunities and barriers.
- D2 Goal: Supported employment - Initiate a Work, Leisure and Learning Panel to drive strategic planning to find out the role of Day Services, education, and private sector partners.
- D3 Implement the options appraisal for supported accommodation for Care Leavers and Young People aged 16 to 17

D4 Increase the number of young people in care who achieve their educational goals.

D5 Increase the number of care leavers who are living in permanent accommodation at the age of 25.

D6 Increase the number of care leavers who are in full time employment, education, or training

## **(e) Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships.**

### **What did we plan to do last year?**

During 2020/21 we said we would

- E1 The pandemic has meant that all day services have been closed. It is likely that risk assessments will result in an inability to re-open day centres in the near future due to the requirement to physically distance, especially among vulnerable groups. Therefore, the Council will need to work with day service users to ascertain the best alternative methods of achieving what matters to them. This may mean support to access technology and use technology to maintain relationships in a different manner, or to access physically distanced befriending groups, or other types of support. In addition, we will be working alongside service users to identify suitable volunteering, work experience and employment opportunities. The service will prioritise this work during the year.
- E2 Develop Supported Living Services which are outcome focused and support individuals in their own wellbeing within society
- E3 Identify those in our teams who should complete the level two and three Violence Against Women, Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence (VASDAWS) training and provide the relevant training opportunities.

### **How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?**

E1: Day Services continue to remain closed; staff are conducting outreach activities to service users to find one-to-one activities to support them in the meantime.

E2: Supported Living Framework – As part of our 5-Year Live Well Accommodation and Support Delivery Plan, the framework has now been in place for 12 months with all handovers of recommissioned services being smooth and feedback from providers and adult services being positive. The initial review of the contract has identified that the services are performing flexibly and meeting their aims and objectives. We have also increased the number of individuals and types of support provided during this period. Our commissioning team have facilitated during COVID-19 over 50 virtual visits by video calls to undertake monitoring activity and provide support to tenants. On a further positive note, the services have suffered a relatively low number of COVID-19 infections in tenants and support staff.

Powys commissions Domestic Abuse Support from two main providers, one North one South. Providers provide services which include:

- Access to safe and appropriate accommodation
- Crisis Support
- Recovery Support
- Preventative Services

- Services specifically for children and young people effected by domestic Abuse
- General awareness raising services

E3: We continue to promote staff training, ensure relevant training is available and support staff to attend; this is reviewed with staff in their monthly 1:1s and Annual Reviews/appraisals.

## **Other Projects**

Social Care has other project that are supporting people to develop healthy domestic, family, and personal relationships, as follows:

### **Technology Enabled Care**

Adult Services are able to provide a range of different pieces of technology to help make living at home easier for older people as well as individuals who just need help with certain tasks which includes e.g., home monitoring systems, pendant alarms, and door sensors. The Service has continued to promote what is available through a series of animations which can be found via the following link - <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/10016/Help-to-live-at-home-through-the-use-of-technology> Whilst referrals are relatively low currently, our Contact Officers in ASSIST and Community Connectors are also trained in being able to prescribe low level equipment which means we are able to support individuals at the earliest opportunity without them having to await a formal assessment.

We are working alongside a provider who is providing support to individuals in a remote part of the county on different therapeutic solutions. We have purchased some interactive robotic companion pets which will be trialled under this project; the evidence is that these can provide therapeutic support and have the potential to reduce medication. We will also look to trial with individuals who have dementia. The “pets” which have been purchased are robotic cats which are designed to look, feel, and sound like a real cat and come in a range of colours. They have synthetic, brush-able fur and built-in sensors which respond to motion and touch, including petting and hugging. They also make cat-live movements and sounds.

Full quarter statistics for Technology Enabled Care are not available for Quarter 4 and will be reported retrospectively. However, between 1st April 2020 and 28th February 2021, 518 unique individuals have been supported with technology enabled care. The 518 individuals received between them a total of 653 prescriptions (deliveries) equating to 1051 items of technology enabled care.

We took the difficult decision, due to COVID-19 restrictions and the infection rates across Powys, to extend the temporary closure of day centre facilities until August 2021. However, Adult Social Care have continued to discuss with citizens how best to support their needs in different ways, including living with the support of carers or through family support. Our staff teams who normally work in day services have been supporting other business critical areas such as domiciliary care and outreach work.

### **Domiciliary Care and Microenterprises**

Adult Services continue to seek alternatives to the traditional domiciliary care model. One method is called microenterprises, where individuals are assisted in navigating the complexities of forming a small care business and taking on a few clients. The aim being to support 47 individuals known to the council and 56 private clients. Overall, they deliver 663 hours of care and support per week. to stay at home for longer and in the communities of their choice. Microenterprises also allow people with skills and willingness to serve members of their community, whilst not willing to work full time for a

domiciliary care agency. Our Commissioning Team are working with the Community Catalysts to identify whether the microenterprise approach can be expanded to other areas outside of the original project.

Powys has 23 microenterprises listed among our directory of larger providers that our social care staff provide to service users for them to contact directly. Our disabilities team has also seen an increase in individuals wishing to have their support provided via the microenterprise approach and individuals have embraced the flexibility that this provides.

### **Community Connectors**

Our social work teams have continued to work collaboratively with Community Connectors with the number of referrals to them increasing. The Community Connector lead is now an integral member of the Community Resource Panels providing additional overview of services which are available within communities to support residents.

15 Community Connectors who work across the locality areas of Powys.

2 Homeless Community Connectors who work closely with PCC Housing to support clients who are facing homelessness, are homeless or in need of temporary accommodation.

1 Duty Officer who receives referrals, enquiries and responds to emails on behalf of the team, 9am – 4pm Monday – Friday.

1 Senior Officer supporting the team. The team sits with PAVO Health and Wellbeing Team.

We also have 13 Locality Networks across Powys to bring together community groups, 3rd sector organisations, individuals, and statutory professionals to share best practises and ways to collaborate.

### **Achievements 2020/21**

- 7,340 people supported to find ways for them to take responsibility for their own health and well-being
- 3,577 new clients; 2,537 self-referrals
- 4,901 people were guided to third sector services that met their need within their own community
- 3,937 people supported with Covid-19 related support (shopping, prescription delivery, etc)
- 278 clients supported in temporary accommodation as part of Phase 2 Homelessness Project
- 617 Multi-disciplinary, Virtual Wards or Patient flow meetings attended

### **What are our priorities for next year and why?**

During 2021/2022 we will be focussed on delivering a range of outcomes, including:

- E1 Goal: To develop our early intervention and prevention services including self-service options for the public, home-based support options and provision of technology enabled care.
- E2 Goal: In the absence of normal day services, to find ways to support individuals to maintain and develop social connections.
- E3 Goal: To develop welfare/wellbeing calls for people at home awaiting care provision.
- E4 Goal: To review respite and home-based respite options with Credu to support unpaid carers to maintain their relationships both with the cared for and with their wider networks and communities.

## **(f) Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live-in suitable accommodation that meets their needs**

### **What did we plan to do last year?**

In the 2020/21 fiscal year, we stated that we would:

F-1 Goal: Further embed discharge to recover and assess pathways in partnership with health and third sector to promote as far as possible the recovery and rehabilitation of patients following their transfer from hospital.

F-2 Goal: Conduct a review of our reablement service. Our joint partnership board has agreed to work together to commission a review of our reablement service to formalise the model we are working under; one that supports both the managing of demand from hospitals and in service users in our communities.

F-3 Goal: To develop wellbeing calls to proactively contact vulnerable individuals in the community to support their independent living.

F-4 Goal: To continue to develop the extra care schemes across Powys.

F-5 Goal: To review the older persons' care home market to consider appropriate provision and evaluate provision is appropriate to meet need.

F-6: We will continue the recruitment drive for foster carers and supported lodgings hosts.

F-7: We will improve the support provided to our foster carers.

F-8: We will increase the number of supported lodgings hosts.

F-9: We will open the first of our new Powys Residential Children's Homes.

F-10: Undertake an analysis of range and cost of accommodation for care leavers age 18+

F11: Following the review, we will commission or develop provision to improve the range of accommodation options for young people leaving care and homeless young people aged 16 to 17 years and deliver value for money.

F-12: Design the model of care and therapeutic model for a Powys Children's Therapeutic Residential Home.

### **How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?**

F1: The Discharge to Recover and Assess pathway was implemented and is now embedded into health and social care in Powys. More work is being undertaken, via the North Powys Programme to develop the pathway further and to integrated with other rehabilitative services which aim to support people to transfer home.

F2: A review of our reablement service has commenced as part of a wider review of intermediate care across Powys. This work has been enabled through the North Powys Wellbeing Programme.

F3: Wellbeing calls were undertaken with those residents that were classified as extremely or clinically extremely vulnerable in 2020/21. We worked alongside colleagues in digital services to create a script for our customer services staff who we were undertaking wellbeing calls to shielded individuals. Whenever any potential social care needs were identified, the individual was contacted by our Adult Services Front Door to have a what matters conversation and provide any information/advice further referrals, as necessary.

Between 3 April and 14 August, a total of 23,791 welfare calls were made by Powys County Council staff to individuals in Powys who had been told to shield, resulting in:

- 649 Welsh Government food parcels being ordered
- 438 requests for a call back from the resident's local county councillor
- 459 requests for help with basic care needs which were passed on to ASSIST
- 1,654 referrals to PAVO's Community Connector Service (of these 1,076 wanted help with food, 373 needed help with their prescriptions and 205 wished to talk to a volunteer)
- 150 referrals over safeguarding.

In addition, we worked proactively to contact individuals that were known to us in Adult Services to ensure that their welfare was maintained and that their needs were currently being met. In quarter 1, we contacted 2,275 individuals. Of those 1,210 were signposted to third sector organisations for support and 87 were flagged to Welsh Government as in need of a food parcel.

F4: Work has continued in developing older persons' accommodation options across the county, with planning and funding agreed for both Ystradgynlais and Welshpool extra developments. It is anticipated that work will commence on site in both Welshpool and Ystradgynlais during the summer of 2021. We are also working with housing associations to consider options at Brecon, Builth/Llandrindod and Machynlleth.

F5: The review of care home accommodation in Powys has been undertaken in light of the pandemic, considering resilience, staffing capacity, and financial challenges. A further review of older persons' accommodation in general is being developed and incorporates the wider plan for extra care and care home availability.

F6: *We will continue the recruitment drive for foster carers and supported lodgings hosts* Despite the COVID-19 pandemic the service continued their recruitment drive for foster carers and supported lodgings hosts. During the lockdown we came up with new and innovative ways to run campaigns using social media and other means. These included:

- Produced and printed new information leaflets to promote supported lodgings.
- Produced new supported lodgings merchandise, including various items of clothing, table, tablecloth, pens, notepads, trolley tokens, banners, insulated cups, shopping bags, book bags.
- Newspaper articles.
- Regular social media posts including promotion of foster care fortnight, regional campaign in June and July 2020, campaign for emergency carers, short break carers and carers for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- Leaflet drops and posters displayed in all towns.
- Attended local markets.
- Emails to all staff and Councillors in the Council and to Powys Teaching Health Board.
- Posts on the Powys County Council Intranet.

During the year we received 81 fostering enquiries from members of the public and 57 viability assessment enquiries from family members and friends to become carers. In total there were 11 new foster carer families approved and in addition there were 13 connected persons (family and friends) approved. There were also 9 new supporting lodgings hosts approved, taking the number of hosts in Powys to 15.

F7: We will improve the support provided to our foster carers. At the start of the year and the pandemic all foster carers were provided with Office 365 and Powys emails to ensure we could keep them up to date quickly with changes in guidance and provide support. Foster Carer support groups were increased to 2 every month, these moved to virtual meetings at the start of the month. Foster Carers receive regular supervision from the Fostering Teams, which in 2020-21 were held virtually using Teams that Foster Carers have access to with Office 365. A range of training courses have also

been developed online during the pandemic and these are held virtually through Teams and the Adoption mentoring scheme was set up in the year. Foster Carers received face to face support and visits from the Fostering Team alongside all the virtual support provided.

F8: We will increase the number of supported lodgings hosts. In 2020-21 there were 9 new supporting lodgings hosts approved, taking the number of hosts in Powys to 15. The Supported Lodgings Coordinators, alongside recruitment have worked on retaining the hosts, they have supplied information packs and fire blankets, hosted regular social and training events, and provided regular supervision to support hosts.

F9: We will open the first of our new Powys Residential Children's Homes. We secured a suitable property with capacity for two children to be accommodated in the South of the County at the start of the year. All the renovations and adjustments to accommodate the regulations, were completed, however the work was delayed initially due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lock downs. Staffing rotas have been developed and recruitment has taken place for the home. We are now able to register the home with the aim to welcome our first children as residents in 2020/2021/2022.

F10: Undertake an analysis of range and cost of accommodation for care leavers age 18+ In Powys, demand is greater than supply for quality placements for our Children Looked After aged 16 plus. Analysis of the current costs and predicted future demand for 16+ accommodation emphasises the importance of taking a more strategic approach in commissioning accommodation and support for young people aged 16+. An options appraisal was undertaken and has been informed by the Multi-Agency 16+ Accommodation and Support Project Team as part of a much wider range of commissioning activity. A cost and needs analysis were produced to examine the picture of Powys' 16+ children who are looked after population and to understand how the budget was being used to support young people. The options appraisal considered a range of options for delivery of services. It informed of the current position, evaluated the strengths and challenges with each option including any associated costs and any hidden costs.

F11: Following the review, we will commission or develop provision to improve the range of accommodation options for young people leaving care and homeless young people aged 16 to 17 years and deliver value for money. The options appraisal was presented to the Children's Services Leadership team and a scoring matrix undertaken to make a recommendation on the best option. A report was prepared, and this went through the Council Cabinet Governance process. The preferred option has gone out to a tender process and will be implemented in 2021/2022.

F12: Design the model of care and therapeutic model for a Powys Children's Therapeutic Residential Home

The model of care to develop safer accommodation for children and young people with complex needs was developed via the safe accommodation project group. A suitable property was identified and is in the process of being purchased and the necessary planning permission have been sought, with a plan to opening in 2021/2022.

The model of care we have developed will promote the wellbeing of a child or young person with extremely complex needs. We are in discussion with Welsh Government and Powys Teaching Health Board on how the project will be financed.

## **What are our priorities for next year and why?**

During 2020/2021/2022 we will be focussed on delivering a range of outcomes, including:

- F1 Goal: Continue to progress with our closer to home programme, which will see more people with disabilities moving out of County and back into Powys, to help them live the lives they want. The programme is not only a significant investment but also a fantastic example of partnership working with builders, housing associations, support providers and of course people who draw on care and support. The work aligns with our vision in Powys of supporting people to live the best life they can, and by focussing on what matters, working alongside people to help them find the right solutions for themselves.
- F2 Goal: Continue to work alongside Health and Third Sector colleagues to embed Powys hospital to home pathways, through the embedding of a hospital assessment and D2RA team which will be part of a wider integrated discharge planning process.
- F3 Goal: To develop, in conjunction with the third sector, wellbeing calls for individuals who have no support and are waiting for care provision.
- F4 Goal: To continue to develop the older persons' accommodation options.
- F5: We will continue the recruitment drive for foster carers and supported lodgings hosts.
- F6: We will improve the support provided to our foster carers.
- F7: We will increase the number of supported lodgings hosts.
- F8: We will open further Powys Residential Children's Homes.
- F9: Continue to work with health colleagues to develop safer accommodation for children and young people with the most complex needs.

## **How We Do What We Do**

### **(a) Our Workforce and How We Support their Professional Roles**

During 2020-21 Children's Services workforce have worked tirelessly and gone over and above to support and safeguard children, young people and their families. It has been more important than ever as service to support and look after the wellbeing of our workforce due to the many challenges faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the start of the year, it was vital that we ensured that staff were issued with the correct PPE and guidance so that business critical and face to face activities could continue. We very quickly moved all training to a virtual online basis and between the first lockdown and the end of August 53 webinars were held, they were also recorded so that staff could view them anytime. The social care workforce training programme also moved to online, and practitioners have had many opportunities to attend a comprehensive range of courses for their own professional and career development.

Wellbeing has been a priority and the service introduced weekly wellbeing sessions which all staff were encouraged to attend, these were mindfulness and singing and were very well attended. Staff roadshows were held virtually instead of in person, and they also contained an interactive session on wellbeing. The service developed weekly wellbeing bulletins that went on email, the leadership team ran a campaign encouraging staff to take their leave.

The Corporate Centre sent out a wellbeing questionnaire to all the council, and Children's Services had the highest response rate, and the results were extremely positive and are as follows:

#### **Questions about home working:**

- 91% receive the right amount of communication from their manager
- 90% have a manager/supervisor who is regularly checking that they are ok (e.g., once a week)
- 94% say that the communication about COVID-19 has been clear and timely

#### **Questions to Front Line Workers:**

- 98% feel that they have good colleagues who are supportive
- 92% have a manager/supervisor who is regularly checking that they are ok (e.g., once a week)
- 94% are feeling good about being a frontline employee providing support to more vulnerable residents or delivering key services like recycling, support in the hubs, care to those in need
- 90% receive the right amount of communication from their manager
- 93% say that the communication about COVID-19 has been clear and timely

During the year, the service received a Care Inspectorate Wales performance evaluation inspection. The findings of the inspection were positive with areas of strength being seen in leadership and management. Some of the key findings were:

The local authority's investment in the professional development of its workforce, particularly in introducing a systemic model of practice in children's services, shared with partners, is delivering positive results for children and families, and delivering shared understanding of practice between agencies and families.

The restructure of children's services to include early help, intervention, and preventative services along with a Signs of Safety approach is enabling social workers and support staff to maintain a strength-based focus when engaging with young people and families.

Senior officers have a high level of skills and professional knowledge with a robust understanding of relevant legislation, social care professional practice and workflow management. By developing shared responsibility, oversight of service delivery and a clear sense of direction, it has created an environment in which social work can flourish.

The local authority recognises supporting its workforce is business critical and it has a clear focus on recruitment, retention, and workforce development. All staff benefit from the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills, and careers. The local authority is ambitious to ensure people living in Powys benefit from longer-term and trusting relationships with skilled and supportive social workers who understand their needs and how best to work with them to reduce risk and improve their personal outcomes.

Senior managers provide operational practitioners with internal guidance and management support to make informed choices about maintaining their own health and well-being and the health of those they visit. Management support and supervision is highly regarded and practitioners welcome opportunities to be autonomous and creative.

Support for practitioners during the pandemic has included a range of information, quizzes, virtual singing, and virtual lunches. Practitioners told us about the difference this support makes to their well-being.

The service was extremely proud to have been deemed to have made significant progress since the last inspection in October 2018 and we continue to strive to provide the best services to children, young people and their families in Powys.

### Strength-Based Approach

In Adult Services strengths-based working is ‘what we do.’ It means that we take the time to understand what matters to those who approach us for support, to identify what they can do for themselves and what support they can draw upon from friends, family, and their wider communities. We have made our Strengths-based outcome focus training a mandatory requirement for all staff in adult operational teams.

We maintain strong links with Social Care Wales (SCW) to utilise their on-line training videos and other resources. We continue to attend all-Wales mentoring Group facilitated by SCW which enables us to network with other organisations and share their experiences of embedding the approach into practise. We have also attended workshops on outcome focussed case recording facilitated by SCW and researchers from Swansea University.

We have a pool of 36 Strengths-based outcome focussed mentors and have been running monthly support groups to increase their skills and confidence. Mentoring is undertaken formally through supervision, group reflective sessions and informally on day-to-day basis. We have also created an online library of guidance and good practice.

Powys is fortunate to have dedicated and hard-working social care staff who routinely demonstrate commitment and care for the individuals they serve. Despite that, Powys faces a significant long-term challenge because demographic change is leading to an increase in older people (75+) and a decline in the number of people of working age (see table below).

	2018	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Total	132,447	132,421	132,710	132,905	133,211	133,602
18-29	15,127	14,301	13,082	12,935	13,468	13,313
30-44	18,419	18,554	19,258	19,277	18,283	17,940
45-54	18,911	17,805	15,213	14,297	15,187	15,612
55-67	26,124	27,013	28,529	27,995	25,190	23,688
Working Age	78,581	77,672	76,082	74,504	72,128	70,552

**Table 1 Population projections**

Source: 2018 Welsh Government Population Projections © Crown Copyright

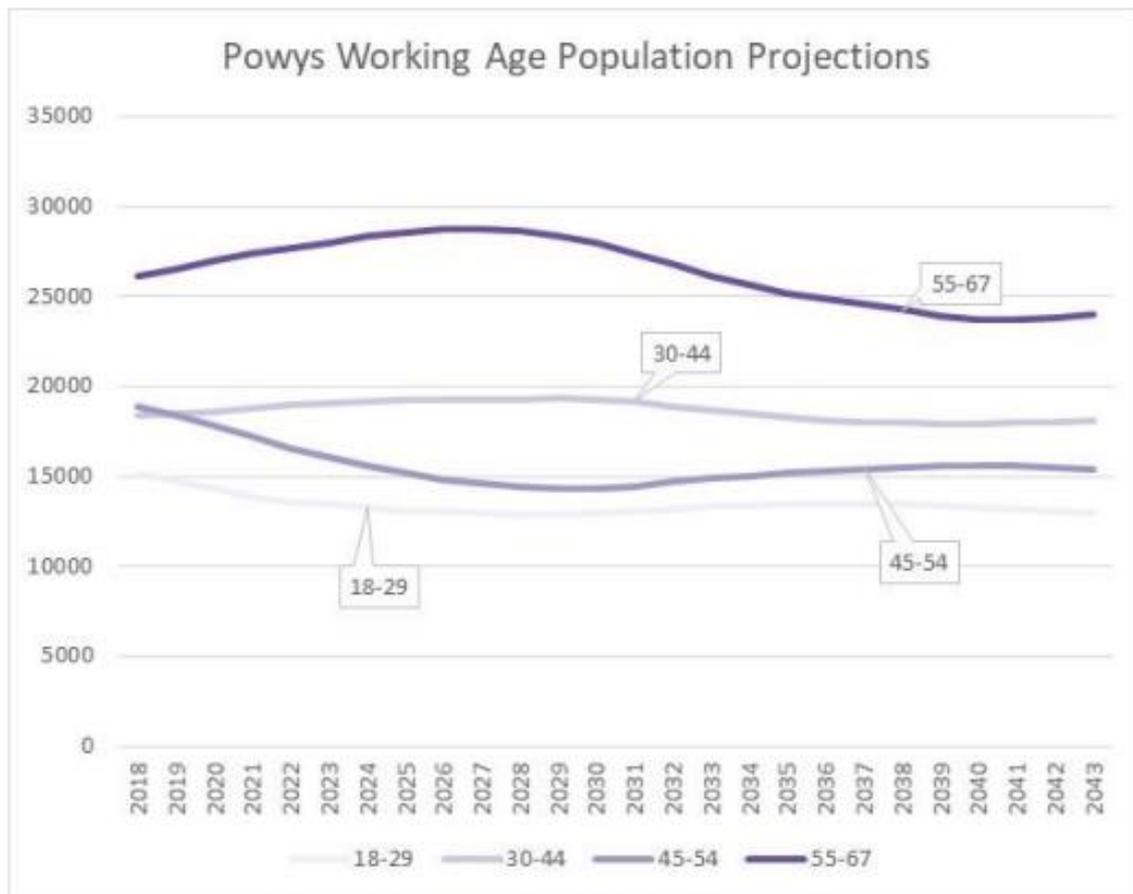


Chart 4 Powys working age population projections

Source: 2018 Welsh Government Population Projections © Crown Copyright

This is causing recruitment and retention problems for the council. The longer-term challenges are shown in the table and graph below, which identifies the age categories of the Council’s workforce:

	Annual population survey	Powys County Council workforce						
		Powys Dec 2020	Education	Economy & Environment	Children & Adults	Resources and Transformati	Legal & Democratic Services	(above L3)
aged 16-64	59,560	2,971	1,383	923	409	48	10	5,744
aged 16-19	2,500	42	7	4	1	0	0	54
aged 20-24	4,800	118	55	25	25	1	0	224
aged 25-34	10,800	496	175	189	80	4	1	945
aged 35-49	18,660	1,127	423	290	153	6	2	2,001
aged 50-64	22,820	1,046	640	378	141	25	7	2,237
Other		142	83	37	9	12	0	283

Table 2

Source: Annual Population Survey (APS), ONS © Crown Copyright and Powys Headcount August 2021

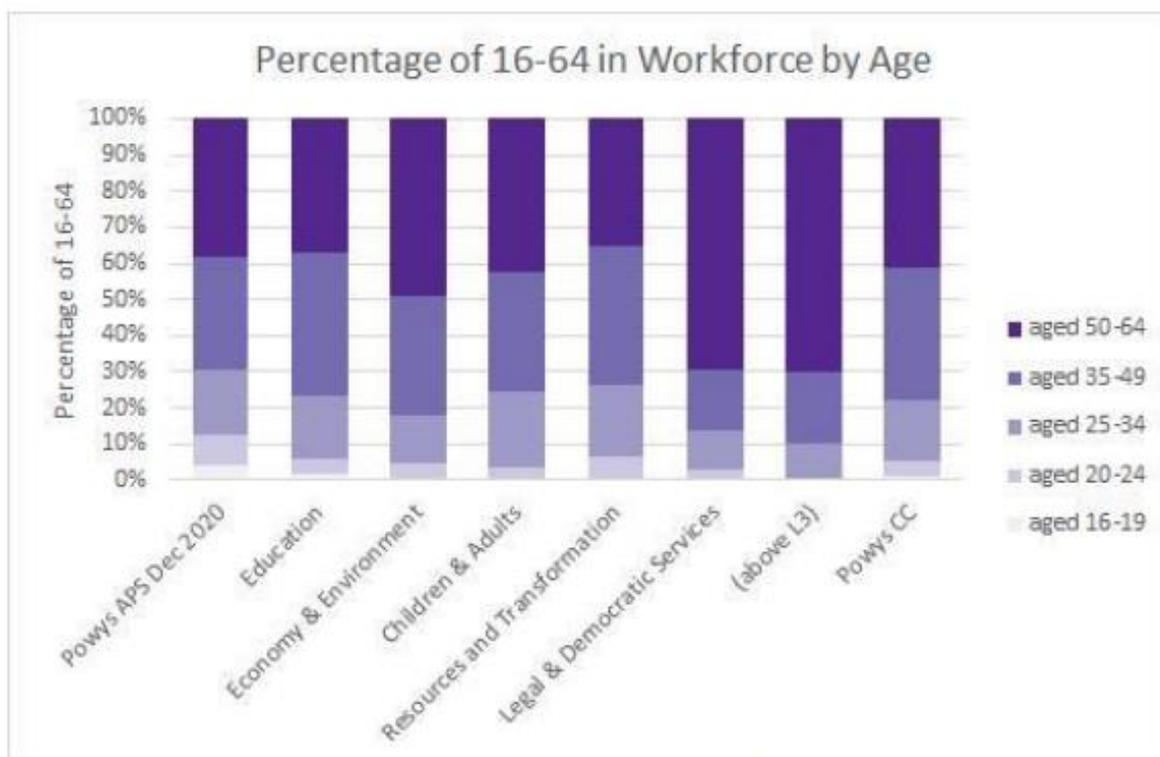


Chart 7 Percentage of 16-64 in the workforce by age

Source: Annual Population Survey (APS), ONS © Crown Copyright and Powys Headcount August 2021

As part of a “One Council” approach, we acknowledge the need to have the right numbers of people in the right roles with the required capabilities to deliver improvement. To achieve that goal, we are investing in the following:

- Workforce planning
- Attracting and recruiting staff
- Leadership and management development
- Performance management of people
- Workforce development
- Pay reward and recognition
- Professional progression
- Workforce health and wellbeing

The workforce in Powys is highly skilled and demonstrates an eagerness to improve services. The Council was developing agile working systems and policies throughout 2019/20, but this changed rapidly towards the end of March 2020 when the Council invoked business continuity and social services staff were supported to work from home or to be based at home where possible. The previous developments enabled this to be implemented effectively and efficiently and enabled swift transition to a new mode of working.

## What we Achieved

To increase our staff engagement, we established an employee representative forum, which provides an opportunity for staff to be briefed on current issues within the Service and to have the

opportunity to raise issues and ideas for discussion or escalation. The group is working collaboratively to support the wider engagement and build a stronger culture of continuous feedback and learning across Social Services.

Grow our own – Adults services have 5 and Children’s Services have 1 student on the Open University Degree in Social Work, all of whom are on Level 2 of their degree and have commenced their practice learning opportunity. There are also 4 members of staff in Adult Services undertaking their practice assessor qualification.

## **Securing a Stable Workforce**

The Children’s Services workforce needs to be stable and sustainable to deliver high quality timely responses to protect and support vulnerable families. It is essential that we plan for the future continuity of services to deliver our statutory duties and reliable and cost-effective interventions. There has been success in recruiting a permanently employed senior and team management cohort. However, there continue to be difficulties in recruiting and retaining experienced social workers across the county. Powys has some characteristics which pose additional challenges in the recruitment and retention of permanent social workers. Powys has a unique and spectacular geography which supports an attractive rural lifestyle. However, this rural factor also adds complexity to the recruitment of social workers. There is a need to visit families in their homes across all areas of the community, which adds mileage and time to the working day. Despite various innovative recruitment campaigns, social services continue to invest a significant amount of financial resource into recruiting agency workers to cover qualified social work positions. In response to this Children’s Services have developed a Grow Our Own Social Worker project.

The Grow Our Own Social Worker project has been in its early stages of development over the last two years. Grow Our Own Social Worker (GOOSW) aims to promote professional growth and development of employees of Powys Local Authority by supporting the development of social care skills as well as financially supporting staff to undertake a social work qualification. The GOOSW project aims to support the sponsorship of a further 57 qualified social workers between 2021-2026 for both Children’s and Adults Services. In 2020, GOOSW commenced its implementation stage. This consisted of a significant increase in the numbers of staff applying to undertake the 1<sup>st</sup> year of practice modules (K102 and KZW113) and an increase in sponsorship for the Open University social work degree (Wales) compared to previous years. There were 20 Children’s Services staff commencing onto K102, 16 commencing onto KZW113 and 6 commencing the degree sponsorship. In addition to the scale up plans for OU degree sponsorships, Children’s Services are funding 2 sponsorships for the Master’s in social work commencing in 2021. The successful applicants will have their course fees fully funded and will be paid a salary for the duration of the two-year programme. Interviews occurred and 2 candidates were selected and offered places at Cardiff University. The students will be required to remain within the service area for a 3-year period post qualifying. The costs of this initiative are being met by Children’s Services.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic putting many of plans on hold, including attending national recruitment events and promotion in universities, we adapted quickly and implemented various social media campaigns to advertise our vacancies. We also advertised in a Welsh national newspaper, on the radio and developed new promotional videos with our social workers talking about why they like working in Powys and in Children’s Services.

As part of the work to recruit and retain more permanent social workers, Children’s Services implement a new pilot project in 2020-21, which provided additional support to frontline social workers in the form of Team Co-Ordinator’s. The aim of the project was to ‘reclaim social work’ and enable social workers to spend more time building relationships and working directly with children, young people and their families. The pilot has been a great success and social workers have fed back that they could not manage without this role now. The project has therefore been extended into 202021/2022 to continue this support to our frontline social work teams.

While we had to curtail our attendance at usual recruiting events dur to the pandemic, we found other ways to ensure a stable workforce by promoting our Grow Our Own Social Worker pathway, where staff can undertake a degree in Social Work via a distance learning route with our partner university (Open University). Twelve staff across adult and children's services children's are due to commence their degrees and we have successfully appointed several staff into permanent social worker posts via the "grow your own" approach.

**(b) Our Financial Resources and How We Plan for the Future**

Many local authorities are experiencing budget challenges and Powys is no exception, with significant financial savings having to be made over the past ten years. The large variation in our expenditure makes resource management especially challenging. Decisions which affect the type and cost of services to be provided are often outside of the council's control and thus are uncontrolled and unpredictable (e.g., decisions taken by the court in children’s cases).

As part of the budget setting process Adult Social Care had identified significant service pressures of £9.534 million. To counter the pressures, efficiencies were identified and achieved in full of £5.052 million. The gap was bridged with cost mitigation due to early intervention and prevention through strengths-based practice and Technology Enabled Care (TEC) and the decision not to give an uplift to providers during the year. This has left the care market, which was supported financially through the Welsh Government’s Hardship Fund paying for a proportion of vacant beds in care homes, in a fragile position and may need to be addressed in the future.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created huge pressures on the availability of suitable placements for children and young people. There has been a national shortage of placements which has been exasperated by the pandemic with complications arising due to government guidance around Children’s homes and issues with isolating and positive cases. In particular there is a lack of provision of therapeutic residential placements for children and young people with severe emotional and behavioral needs in Powys and Wales. This has made it extremely difficult to balance the competing priorities of managing service demand, meeting the needs of children and young people and reducing expenditure with the need to achieve budget savings.

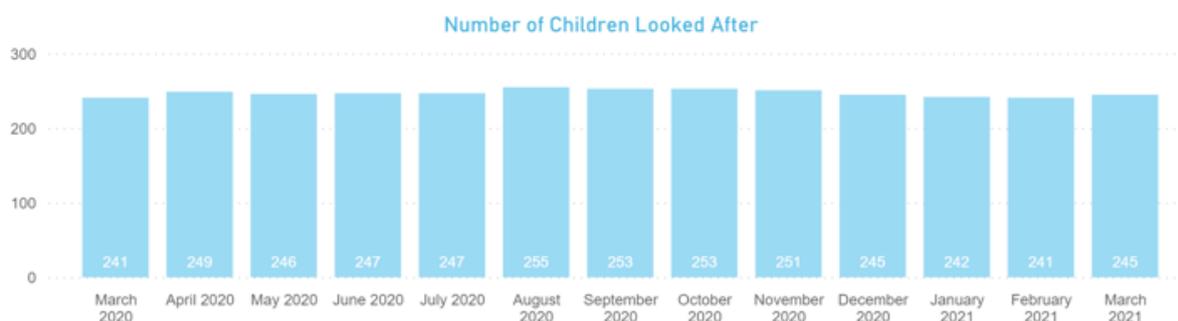
From June 2020, as we were coming out of lockdown, we saw an increase in demand for services into the Front Door, this followed through to statutory services and the increase has sustained ever since. Our children looked after population increased alongside the number of children on the child protection register.

	<b>September 2019</b>	<b>September 2020</b>	<b>September 2021</b>
Contacts to Front Door	387	534	884

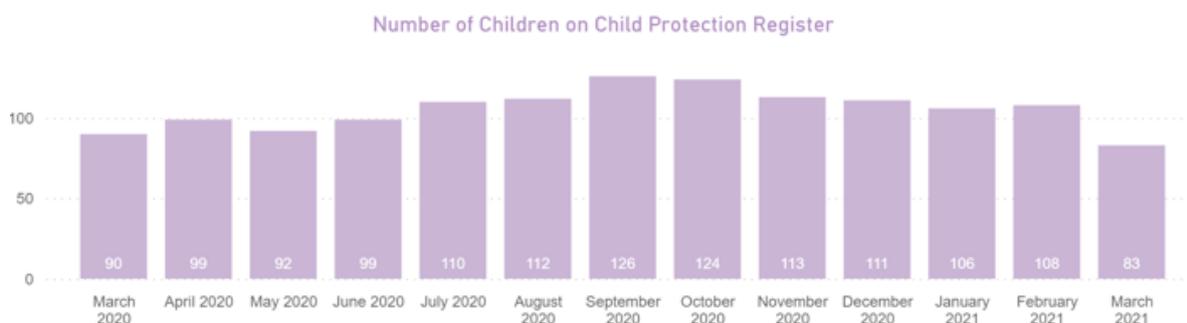
## Contacts to Children's Services for the year



## Number of Children Looked After



## Number of Children on the Child Protection Register



The increase in demand for services meant we needed to increase staffing resources in the Front Door, Assessment teams and Early Help. Initially these costs were going to be funded by the core budget but at the end of the year they were covered by Welsh Government grants for Covid relief.

The Children's Services 2020/21 baseline budget included an investment of £5.15 million which in part was for new service development, to offset the 2019/20 existing pressures and the 2020/21 salary inflation, including employers pension contributions. Within the Financial Resources Model (FRM) pressures of £7.646 million were identified (and materialised) and savings of £2.221 million were agreed, of which £1.753 million were delivered. Additionally, £275,000 of the unachieved 2019/20 savings were rolled forward into 2020/21 and achieved. The £468,000 of 2020/21 unachieved savings were written off as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process. The outturn was an underspend of £944,000.

It is recognised that the impact of the global pandemic, COVID-19 will be felt within the service for the year 2020/21. Towards the end of 2020/21 the service had started to increase its spending in

preparation for a potential surge in infection rates and demand for support. This spending was eventually funded by the Welsh Government.

### **(c) Our Partnership Working, Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability**

Powys Children's Service has engaged with all aspects of the regional safeguarding boards activities throughout the pandemic and have shown leadership on several developments which have been key to supporting frontline staff. Children's Services are committed to continuing this level of engagement and regard the relationship with the regional board as positive and productive. The regional safeguarding board have been pivotal in supporting multiagency efforts to ensure people are protected during this period and we have fully engaged with this work. Children's services continue to attend all the regional sub-groups and CPR action plans have been updated and all LOG reports have been submitted within timescales. The Powys audit subgroup has continued its activities and has recently analysed a multi-agency audit which led to a CPR referral being discussed at PLOG prior to the CPR subgroup, as it is felt that learning can occur from the case. The policy development officer attends the policies and procedures subgroup and has recently led on the regional development of a pre-birth pathway. The Senior Manager for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance overseeing workforce development, chairs the training subgroup. They also attend the Childrens safeguarding lead meetings which began during the pandemic. Children's Services are active in preparations for Safeguarding Week and regional developments on standardising webinar training for the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

We developed an emergency procedure in respect of child protection conferences, which was quickly adapted to be utilised at a regional level. This procedure ensured the continuity of Child Protection Conferences and covered timescales, participation of families, quoracy and recording. This supported the smooth transition to virtual conferences. Another local emergency procedure led to the development of a regional policy document for child protection visits and s47 planning considerations. This covered planning for s47's and included making use of outdoor spaces to speak to children alone. Ensuring child protection visits remained in timescale was included and the importance of updating child protection plans to consider the impact of lockdown on family functioning. Both documents supported practitioners with clear guidance in the early stages of the crisis and drew attention to the potential impact on children's welfare and wellbeing.

A Senior Manager in Children's Services led a task and finish group to revise the regional terms of reference for multi-Agency Child exploitation meetings. This involved drafting a document which explains the rationale for the meetings to consider wider forms of exploitation and to strengthen strategic elements of meetings. This includes the improvement of a regional data set to promote an understanding of the effectiveness of tackling child exploitation in the region. There is a plan to expand on this work as the regional board is interested in the Child Exploitation Strategy currently being developed by Powys Children's Services.

A Senior Manager in Children's worked with the regional business manager and a police colleague to develop and deliver a regional Joint Investigation Training. This project aimed to design a regionally owned course content to be delivered at a local level. Powys will be piloting this course in 2021. The course involves input from police, health, in-house psychologist, a researcher from Cardiff university and social services staff. This is an identified gap as joint training ceased several years ago when the police college introduced the SCAIDIP course which ended highly valuable joint training.

Children’s Services, working closely with the Education Service, understand the importance of working closely with our multi agency partners and this was recognised in Care Inspectorate Wales Performance Evaluation Inspection report. Key findings were:

Partnership arrangements at both local and regional level continue to develop and mature. Senior officers are increasingly able to demonstrate how the links between their different directorate responsibilities including health, housing and finance are supporting the social services agenda across the local authority. Joint working with third sector organisations in the development and delivery of care and support and preventative services during these unrepresented times is seen as a strength the authority wishes to build on and embed in its practice.

Partnership working during COVID-19 has highlighted positive examples of improvements partners can realise through closer working. For example, practitioners told us there was an opportunity to replace the present pupil inclusion panel (PIP) with an integrated access to services panel which places greater emphasis on joint working and decision-making. Panel members ensure the purpose of panel is to promote access, prevent children reaching crisis, and placing unnecessary demand on services. Arrangements for “virtual” meetings has improved communication with partner agencies.

There is positive, improving, working relationships with the health board. We were told about clear escalation processes in relation to professional challenges. Newly developed partnership working, stability of workforce and creative relationships driving service improvements at pace with a shared vision.

The local authority is a proactive member and contributor to regional boards, and aspects of the local authority’s improvement and transformation agenda are being progressed through the priorities of Mid and West Wales Regional Partnership Board and the work of the Regional Safeguarding Board

Working in partnership our Area Plan identifies which services will receive greatest priority in respect of integrated working between the Council, the health service and others, including:

- Older people with complex needs and long-term conditions, including dementia
- People with learning disabilities
- Carers, including young carers
- Integrated Family Support Services
- Children with complex needs due to disability or illness

In line with the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act, the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) provides cross sector leadership through a strong and shared commitment to providing seamless and integrated health and social care services for children, young people and adults living in Powys, with a primary emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

To this end, we have developed a high-level, overarching plan called the Health and Care Strategy which sets out the strategic vision and approach to be taken in Powys. The Area Plan will outline the priorities to be delivered over the first 5 years and identify the lead agency for delivery.

The Health and Care Strategy priority areas are:

- Wellbeing
- Early help and Support
- Tackling the Big Four (cancer, circulatory disease, respiratory disease, mental health)
- Joined up Care

The RPB will also address the key strategic enablers outlined in the Health and Care Strategy which will help us to develop and deliver the proposed model of care including:

1. Workforce
2. Innovative environments
3. Digital First
4. Transforming in Partnership

Our renewed focus on our corporate leadership and governance through our vision 2025 plan sets out many challenges for us:

- a. The Council will ensure that its vision for the future is promoted and understood by the officers, partners, and residents.
- b. The Council, members and officers will be open about what the most important issues are and focus on addressing them.
- c. The Council will create a mutually supportive leadership culture, with clear roles between members and officers.
- d. By strengthening the corporate center, the Council can support a more delegated leadership structure.
- e. Integrated Disability Service – We established the Integrated Disability Service (IDS) to include co-located multi-agency teams and a single management structure. An Integrated Disability Service triage process has been started. What were monthly physical meetings are now weekly meetings using Skype where needed. This gives quicker and more informed advice and action for children with disabilities or complex health needs.

## **Accessing Further Information and Key Documents**

In publishing this annual report, we have relied upon a substantial amount of information, data, progress reports including those that have featured heavily this year following our recent inspections, and surveys.

The annual report identifies the progress of the Council in responding to the wellbeing of those people who need our help and support. This report however is not the only source of information available to members of the public, key partners, and service providers.

We have a significant amount of background information that sits behind this report that provide additional detail about what we do and how we do it. Importantly if something is not mentioned in this report as a key priority it doesn't mean we're not doing it, as there is a lot of activity across social services that plays a part in helping us to provide for some of the most vulnerable groups in our community. It's not possible to capture everything which is why we are keen to signpost people to further information.

To access further information about what we do then these are some of the documents that will provide more detail:

1. Powys County Council Corporate Leadership & Governance Plan 2017- 2020
2. Healthy Caring Powys – Delivering the Vision (Area Plan)
3. The Adult Services Improvement Plan 2018-2023
4. The Powys Population Needs Assessment
5. Children's Services Integrated Business Plan 2020-2023
6. Vision 2025 Corporate Improvement Plan

7. Council's Annual Performance Report

This page is intentionally left blank

## CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE  
Date 23rd November 2021

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Aled Davies  
Portfolio Holder for Finance

**SUBJECT:** Council Tax Base for 2022-2023

---

**REPORT FOR:** Decision

---

**1. Purpose**

1.1 Section 33 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992 requires each Billing Authority to calculate the basic amount of its Council Tax by applying a formula which includes calculating the Council's Council Tax Base.

**2. Background**

2.1 This report is to formally set the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2022-23 for tax setting purposes. Setting the Council Tax base is an annual statutory requirement and is an integral part of the setting of the Council's council tax level (at band D) in accordance with specified formulae, reflecting its budget requirements for the relevant financial year.

2.2 The Council Tax Base is the adjusted number of chargeable dwellings in the Council's area belonging to each valuation band modified to take account of a number of assumptions and factors including the proportion applying to dwellings in each Council Tax Band together with the number of discounts, exemptions, disablement reductions and premiums. An estimate for losses on collection is also made.

2.3 The Council determined to introduce a 50% Premium from April 2017, for Council Tax on long term empty homes (unoccupied and unfurnished) and periodically occupied dwellings (second homes/holiday homes- that are furnished and not someone's main residence). This Council Tax Base calculation includes a projection of those properties expected to be subject to the Council Tax Premium during 2022-23, based on the 50% premium charge continuing.

2.4 This calculation is made in accordance with the "Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.

2.5 The Council Tax Base calculation for 2022-23 is based on the list prepared by the Valuation Office Agency, as at 31<sup>st</sup> October for the financial year.

- 2.6 The gross Council Tax Base calculation is supplied to Welsh Government and is used as part of the distribution of Revenue Support Grant in the annual provisional and final local Government Revenue Settlement.
- 2.7 The Council is not only required to calculate the Council Tax Base for the County Council as a whole, but also make separate calculations for areas that have their own Town or Community Council.
- 2.8 The net Council Tax Base is used by the Police & Crime Commissioner and Town/Community Council's to set their Council Tax precepts for 2022-23, which will be included in the annual demands sent to every Council Tax payer in March 2022.

### 3. The Calculation

- 3.1 Appendix one sets out the calculation of the 2022-23 Council Tax Base.
- 3.2 The estimated collection rate on non-military dwellings is **98.5%**, an increase of 0.1% to that used within 2021-22 calculation.
- 3.3 For military dwellings the Regulations require Authorities to assume a **100%** collection rate on dwellings.
- 3.4 The breakdown of the Council Tax Base for each Community is set out in paragraph 4.2 below.

### 4. Advice

It is proposed:

- 4.1 That this report on the calculation of the Council Tax Base for the whole and parts of its area for the year 2022-23 be approved. The calculation is contained within appendix one.
- 4.2 That, pursuant to the report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2016, the amount calculated by Powys County Council as its Council Tax Base for the whole of its area for the year 2022-23 shall be **63,072.19**, a growth of 487.93 (0.78%) on 2021-22 Tax-Base, and for the parts of the area listed below for the year 2022-23 shall be for the:

#### Community of:

Community	2022-23
Abbeycwmhir	127.81
Aberedw	141.00
Aberhafesp	228.65
Abermule with Llandyssil	742.58
Banwy	330.48
Bausley with Criggion	368.65

Beguildy	377.64
Berriew	754.78
Betws Cedewain	232.44
Brecon	3544.43
Bronllys	445.19
Builth Wells	1090.75
Cadfarch	456.08
Caersws	715.00
Carno	351.36
Carreghofa	318.17
Castle Caereinion	309.79
Churchstoke	886.49
Cilmery	238.23
Clyro	431.50
Cray	128.50
Crickhowell	1130.11
Cwmdu and District	566.21
Disserth & Trecoed	552.91
Duhonw	152.80
Dwyrhiw	284.20
Erwood	246.13
Felinfach	384.43
Forden	824.33
Gladestry	226.75
Glantwymyn	649.15
Glasbury	573.99
Glascwm	270.41
Glyn Tarrell	305.08
Guilsfield	866.40
Gwernyfed	484.76
Hay-on-Wye	913.67
Honddu Isaf	229.25
Kerry	1011.20
Knighton	1323.68
Llanafanfawr	237.44
Llanbadarn Fawr	348.76
Llanbadarn Fynydd	142.99
Llanbister	188.77
Llanbrynmair	492.56
Llanddew	123.41
Llanddewi Ystradenny	146.70
Llandinam	450.08
Llandrindod Wells	2469.68
Llandrinio & Arddleen	772.56
Llandysilio	556.11
Llanelwedd	191.17

Llanerfyl	216.54
Llanfair Caereinion	803.23
Llanfechain	275.91
Llanfihangel	278.91
Llanfihangel Rhydithon	124.92
Llanfrynach	326.97
Llanfyllin	722.90
Llangammarch	273.92
Llangattock	580.90
Llangedwyn	201.76
Llangorse	567.91
Llangunllo	202.46
Llangurig	391.82
Llangynidr	600.59
Llangyniew	303.48
Llangynog	193.37
Llanidloes	1218.94
Llanidloes Without	315.88
Llanigon	285.80
Llanrhaeadr Ym Mochnant	596.38
Llansantffraid	738.09
Llansilin	360.06
Llanwddyn	128.01
Llanwrthwl	107.02
Llanwrtyd Wells	410.02
Llanyre	584.49
Llywel	261.32
Machynlleth	890.08
Maescar	464.41
Manafon	184.08
Meifod	711.81
Merthyr Cynog	143.70
Mochdre with Penstrowed	261.42
Montgomery	725.29
Nantmel	349.85
New Radnor	235.14
Newtown & Llanllwchaiarn	4381.76
Old Radnor	408.81
Paincastle	294.11
Pen Y Bont Fawr	260.21
Penybont & Llandegley	211.25
Presteigne & Norton	1308.28
Rhayader	919.66
St Harmon	312.98
Talgarth	749.38
Talybont-on-Usk	392.52

Tawe Uchaf	573.21
Trallong	202.36
Trefeglwys	492.16
Treflys	231.24
Tregynon	393.52
Trewern	657.44
Vale of Grwyney	501.18
Welshpool	2740.79
Whitton	217.24
Yscir	260.72
Ystradfelte	252.42
Ystradgynlais	2938.36

**63,072.19**

## **5. Resource Implications**

- 5.1 Setting the Council Tax base is an annual statutory requirement and is an integral part of the setting of the Council's council tax level (at band D) in accordance with specified formulae, reflecting its budget requirements for the relevant financial year.
- 5.2 The Deputy Head of Finance confirms that the increase in the Council Tax Base will provide additional council tax revenue in 2022/23. The tax base is accounted for as part of the council's financial strategy alongside the Revenue Support Grant distributed by the Welsh Government which uses the Council Tax Base to determine the level of financial support. The figures proposed in this report are consistent with the projections already set out in our Finance Resource Model.
- 5.3 There are no known ICT, customer services or physical implications
- 5.4 Communications commented that no proactive communication action is required
- 5.5 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) confirms that the setting of the Council tax base is a significant part of the overall budget setting process and is a statutory requirement. Setting the Band D Council Tax level takes account of the requirement of specified formulae, reflecting its budget requirements for the relevant financial year.

## **6. Legal Implications**

- 6.1 Legal, the recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view
- 6.2 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".

## **7. Data Protection**

- 7.1 There are no data protection implications within the proposal

## 8. Local Members

8.1 No comments have been received from local members.

## 9. Integrated Impact Assessment

9.1 There is no impact assessment, as report is one of a technical nature.

## 10. Recommendation

10.1 That the calculation of the Council Tax Base for the whole of its area for the year 2022-23 of 63,072.19 be approved, and

10.2 That the calculation of the Council Tax Base for each Town and Community Council contained within 4.2 above, be approved to meet the legal requirement of the Council to set a Council Tax Base for 2022-23.

Contact Officer:	David Morris
Tel:	01597 826127
Email:	<a href="mailto:david.morris@powys.gov.uk">david.morris@powys.gov.uk</a>
Head of Service:	Jane Thomas

## Appendix One

A: Chargeable dwellings	A*	Valuation band									Total (= sum of band figures)
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	
All chargeable dwellings		5,605	8,893	12,669	10,240	12,077	9,337	4,027	567	200	63,615
Dwellings subject to disability reduction (included in line A1)		12	46	92	78	152	130	60	11	27	608
Adjusted chargeable dwellings (taking into account disability reductions)	12	5,639	8,939	12,655	10,314	12,055	9,267	3,978	583	173	63,615
Dwellings with no discount or premium (including long term empty properties and second homes with no discount)	4	2,064	4,192	7,178	6,511	8,245	7,041	3,179	447	131	38,992
Dwellings with a 25% discount (excluding long term empty properties and second homes)	8	3,336	4,490	5,165	3,476	3,457	2,005	678	95	33	22,743
Dwellings with a 50% discount (excluding long term empty properties and second homes)	0	5	12	12	16	24	30	14	26	2	141
Dwellings with a variable discount other than 25% or 50% (Part G, line 11)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dwellings with long term empty property or second homes discount		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dwellings with long term empty property or second homes premium		234	245	300	311	329	191	107	15	7	1,739
Total adjusted chargeable dwellings (sum of B1 to B3c=A3)	12	5,639	8,939	12,655	10,314	12,055	9,267	3,978	583	173	63,615
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>P</b>											
<b>Discount and premium adjustments</b>											
Long term empty property and second homes premium adjustment (Part H, line 10g, 12g)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Long term empty property and second homes discount adjustment (Part H, line 9g, 11g)		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Long term empty property and second homes premium adjustment (Part H, line 10g, 12g)		117.0	122.5	150.0	155.5	164.5	95.5	53.5	7.5	3.5	869.5
<b>C: Calculation of chargeable dwellings with discounts and premiums</b>											
Total dwellings including discounts and premiums (=A3-(B2x0.25)-(B2bx0.5)-B5-B6+B7)	10	4,920	7,933	11,508	9,593	11,343	8,846	3,855	554	167	
Ratio to band D	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	1	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	21/9	
Band D equivalents (=C2xC3) (rounded to 2 decimal places)	5.56	3,279.67	6,170.11	10,229.11	9,592.50	13,863.97	12,777.92	6,425.00	1,107.50	390.25	63,841.59
Total discounted dwellings excluding long term empty and second homes adjustment	10	4,803	7,811	11,358	9,437	11,179	8,751	3,802	546	164	
Band D equivalents excluding long term empty and second homes adjustment	5.56	3,201.67	6,074.83	10,095.78	9,437.00	13,662.92	12,639.97	6,335.83	1,092.50	382.08	62,928.14

## Part E: Calculation of council tax base

E1	Chargeable dwellings: band D equivalents (=C4 total)	63,841.59
E2	Collection rate (please enter to 2 decimal places)	98.50 %
E3	= E1 x E2 (rounded to 2 decimal places)	62,883.97
E4	Class O exempt dwellings: band D equivalents (please enter to 2 decimal places)	188.22
E5	Council tax base for tax-setting purposes (=E3+E4)	63,072.19
E5b	Discounted chargeable dwellings excluding long term empty and second homes adjustment	62,928.14
E6	100% council tax base for calculating revenue support grant (=E5b+E4)	63,116.36

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.****AUDIT COMMITTEE**5<sup>th</sup> November 2021**CABINET EXECUTIVE**23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Aled Davies  
Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transport

**REPORT TITLE:** Treasury Management Quarter 2 Report

---

**REPORT FOR:** Information

---

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 CIPFA's 2009 Treasury Management Bulletin suggested:  
'In order to enshrine best practice, it is suggested that authorities report formally on treasury management activities at least twice a year and preferably quarterly.'

The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management emphasises a number of key areas including the following:

xi. Treasury management performance and policy setting should be subject to scrutiny prior to implementation.

- 1.2 In line with the above, this report is providing information on the activities for the quarter ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Treasury Management Strategy approved by Full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021 can be found here.

<https://powys.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s57662/Appendix%20F%20Capital%20Strategy%20and%20Treasury%20Management%20Strategy.pdf>

- 2.2 The Authority's investment priorities within the Strategy are.

- (a) the security of capital and  
(b) the liquidity of its investments.

- 2.3 The Authority aims to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity. The risk appetite has been low in order to give priority to security of investments.

2.4 With interest rates for investments remaining extremely low the use of cash reserves as opposed to borrowing is prudent and cost-effective.

### **3. Advice**

#### **3.1 Investments**

3.2 Short-term money market investment rates continue to remain just above zero as the Bank Rate remains at 0.10%. Given this environment and the fact that increases in Bank Rate are unlikely to occur before the end of the financial year, investment returns are expected to remain low.

3.3 When looking at temporary investing, the Treasury team consider the bank fee to set up the arrangement, because of this cost some investments are not cost effective for very short periods of time where interest rates are circa 0.01% - 0.03%. However, the Authority does not have sufficient certainty around its cashflow to lend for longer periods where the return is higher. As a result, not all available cash is currently earning interest.

3.4 The Welsh Government repayable funding the council received in March 2021 towards the Global Centre of Rail Excellence (GCRE) is currently being held in the Council's deposit account until it is required for the project. It is earning a minimal return (0.02%) which under the terms of the funding is ringfenced to be used for this scheme.

3.5 The Authority had no other investments on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

#### **3.6 Credit Rating Changes**

3.7 There have been no credit rating changes relevant to this Authority's position during the last quarter.

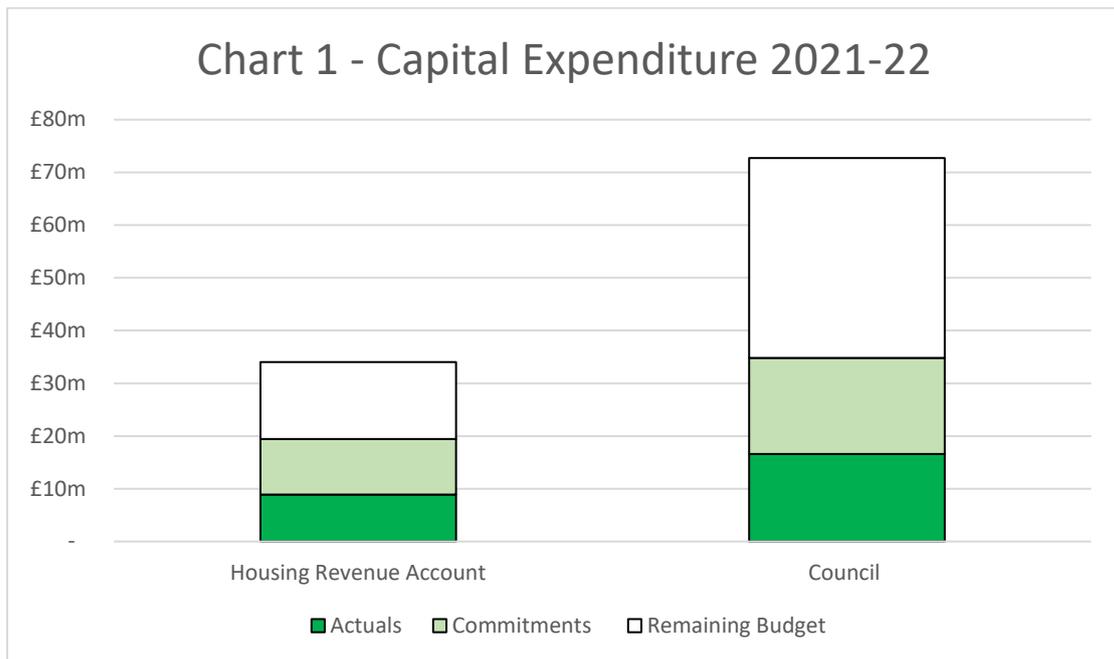
#### **3.8 The Authority's Capital Position**

3.9 The council approved the 2021 to 2031 Treasury Management and Capital Strategy on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2021. This included a Capital Programme for 2021/22 totalling £101.53 million.

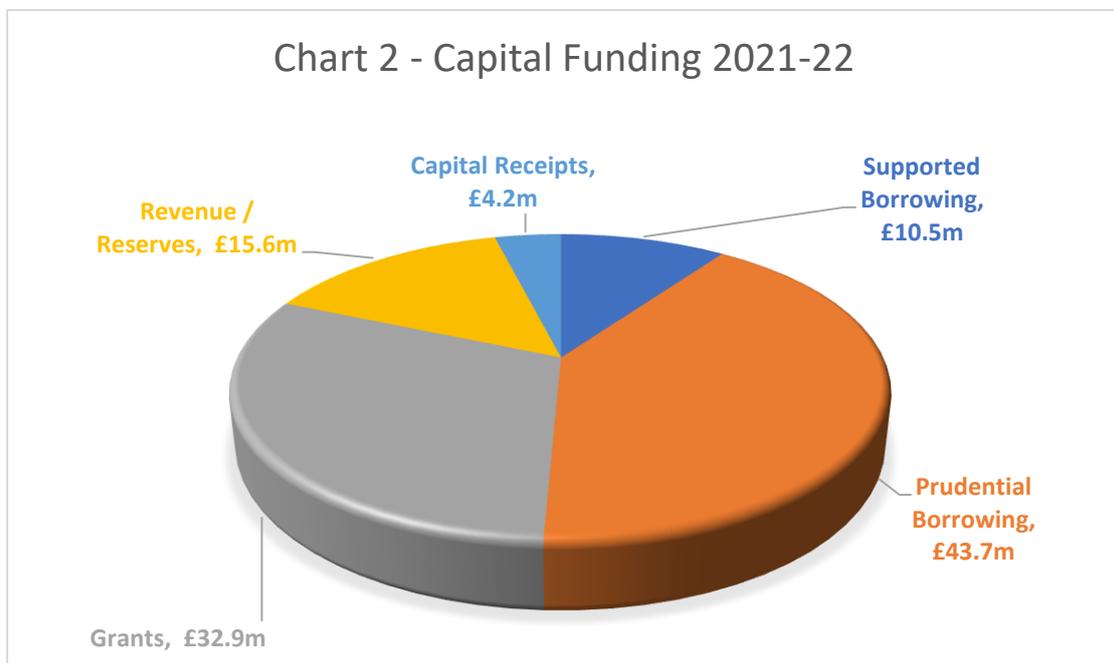
3.10 The revised programme at the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2021 has increased to £106.75 million following the successfully awarding of grants and the reprofiling of budgets between financial years. As part of the Capital Review, services are being challenged on their profile of spend in year, it is likely this forecast will reduce.

3.11 Actual spend to date amounts to £25.48 million, representing only 24% of the total budget at the half year stage

3.12 Chart 1 below summarises the spend against budget.



3.13 Chart 2 below sets out how the 2021/22 capital programme is funded, 44% will be funded through borrowing, the interest cost for this is charged to the revenue account.



3.14 The Council's underlying need to borrow for capital expenditure is termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This figure is a gauge of the Council's indebtedness. It represents the current year's unfinanced capital expenditure and prior years' net or unfinanced capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for by revenue or other resources.

- 3.15 Part of the Council's treasury activities is to address the funding requirements for this borrowing need. Depending on the capital expenditure programme, the finance team organises the Council's cash position to ensure that sufficient cash is available to meet the capital plans and cash flow requirements. This may be sourced through external borrowing or utilising temporary cash resources within the Council.
- 3.16 Net external borrowing (borrowings less investments) should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for the current year and next two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years.

### 3.17 Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

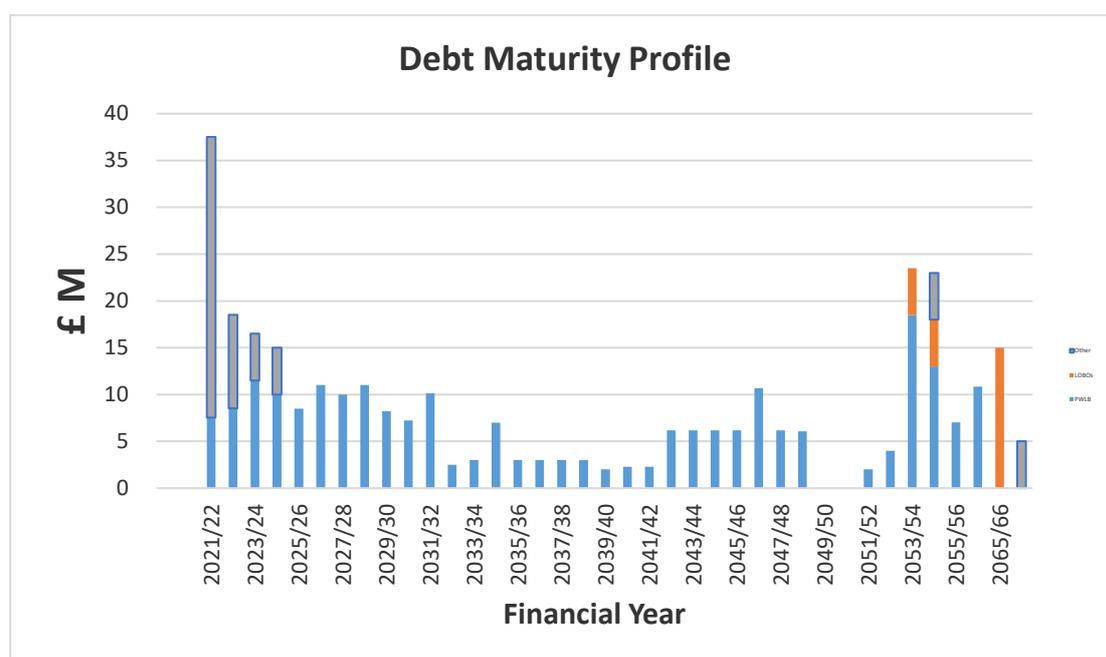
£'m	2020/21	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate
Original Estimates 25/02/2021	422.77	468.58	509.45	534.90
Quarter 1 estimate	397.10	436.96	460.03	480.61
Quarter 2 estimate	397.10	431.17	453.27	472.40

- 3.18 The budget reprofiling into future financial years has reduced the CFR estimates as shown in the above table.

### 3.19 Borrowing / Re-scheduling

- 3.20 Effective management of the Authority's debt is essential to ensure that the impact of interest payable is minimised against our revenue accounts whilst maintaining prudent borrowing policies.
- 3.21 A prohibition is still in place to deny access to borrowing from the PWLB for any local authority which had purchase of assets for yield in its three year capital programme. There are currently no schemes for yield in the Capital Programme. With the significant amounts of borrowing in the future Capital Programme, the inability to access PWLB borrowing will need to be a major consideration for any future purchases of assets for yield. The additional income these assets generate must be sufficient to cover the increased borrowing costs, as borrowing sources other than the PWLB are likely to be more expensive.
- 3.22 The Authority had outstanding long-term external debt of £347.7 million at 31st March 2021 (excluding the GCRE repayable funding). In relation to the CFR figure for 31st March 2021, this equated to the Authority being under borrowed by £49.4 million. Using cash reserves as opposed to borrowing has been a prudent and cost-effective approach over the last few years. However, members will be aware that internal borrowing is only a temporary situation and officers have advised that, based on capital estimates, it will be necessary for the Authority to borrow at stages over the next few years.

### 3.23 Debt Maturity Profile as at 31st March 2021.



**Key** Blue = PWLB; Grey = Market Loans including other local authorities; Orange = LOBOs

3.24 £21.5 million of debt has been repaid so far in 2021/22. A further £4 million of debt is maturing in quarter 3 with a further £11.5 million maturing in quarter 4. £10 million of new borrowing was required in the previous quarter

3.25 Staged repayment of the Nant Helen section 106 deposit is underway as the backfilling works on the site progress. This is also reducing the cash position of the authority, this repayment will reduce the amount the council is under borrowed.

3.26 It is unlikely that there will be sufficient resources to absorb these repayments, if this is the case then new borrowing will be required along with additional borrowing to fund the ongoing capital programme. It is currently estimated that a further £40 million will be required in this financial year, the intention is to source PWLB borrowing over the medium to long term to lock in the current interest rates.

3.27 With the changes to the MRP policy and the delayed requirement to borrow, it is likely that the revenue budget set aside to cover these costs will be underutilised in this financial year, however as demonstrated in the tables later in the report, these costs are likely to increase year on year.

### 3.28 PWLB Loans Rescheduling

3.29 Debt rescheduling opportunities have been very limited in the current economic climate and following the various increases in the margins added to gilt yields which have impacted PWLB new borrowing rates since

October 2010. No debt rescheduling has therefore been undertaken to date in the current financial year.

### 3.30 Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

3.31 This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital, (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income), against the Councils net revenue budget (net revenue stream). The estimates of financing costs include current commitments and the proposals in the capital programme.

£'m	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate
<b>From the approved Treasury Management and Capital Strategy</b>			
Financing Costs	13.59	16.55	17.61
Net Revenue Stream	280.66	281.26	282.17
%	4.84%	5.88%	6.24%
<b>Quarter 1 estimates (before any over provision)</b>			
Financing Costs	11.14	13.09	14.35
Net Revenue Stream	280.66	281.26	282.17
%	3.96%	4.65%	5.08%
<b>Quarter 2 estimates (before any over provision)</b>			
Financing Costs	10.07	11.73	12.89
Net Revenue Stream	280.66	281.26	282.17
%	3.82%	4.17%	4.57%

3.32 The table above shows the change in the current estimates for the capital financing costs between those disclosed in the Treasury Management and Capital Strategy included as part of the 2021/22 Budget report and the updated estimates at the end of September 2021.

3.33 The decrease has been caused by two factors.

1. The updated Minimum Revenue Policy (MRP) approved by Council in March 2021 has realigned these costs more equally across the life of the assets involved.
2. The reduced borrowing requirement to support the capital programme in 2020/21 and future years. This has been the result of reprofiling of budgets into future years and funding from Welsh Government being made available earlier than anticipated. This has allowed the council to defer the date that it expected to take out additional borrowing, reducing the current interest costs, however this borrowing will still be required in the future.

The table below provides a breakdown of these changes

£'m	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<b>Original Estimates 25/02/2021</b>	<b>13.59</b>	<b>16.55</b>	<b>17.61</b>
Change in MRP Policy	(1.75)	(3.64)	(3.68)
Change due to reprofiling/grants	(0.70)	0.18	0.42
<b>Quarter 1 estimate</b>	<b>11.14</b>	<b>13.09</b>	<b>14.35</b>
Change due to reprofiling/grants	(0.44)	(1.36)	(1.46)
<b>Quarter 2 estimate</b>	<b>10.70</b>	<b>11.73</b>	<b>12.89</b>

3.34 A principal was set in both the 2021/22 Budget and the MRP Policy Report that any benefits from the MRP change are ringfenced to support the Capital Programme to ensure the Council is beginning to address its increasing capital financing costs. As such, an overprovision of MRP will be made in line with any surplus in the revenue budget allocated to MRP to help reduce the increasing Capital Financing Requirement. Further work is being undertaken as part of the Capital Review to understand the implications of the Capital Programme and the capital ambitions of the council.

### 3.35 Prudential Indicators

3.36 All Treasury Management Prudential Indicators were complied with in the quarter ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

### 3.37 Economic Background and Forecasts

3.38 The most recent forecast of interest rates by the Authority's advisor are shown below, an increase in the rates is expected over the next few years which will increase the costs of borrowing.

Link Group Interest Rate View		29.9.21								
	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24
<b>BANK RATE</b>	0.10	0.10	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75
3 month ave eamings	0.10	0.10	0.20	0.20	0.30	0.40	0.50	0.50	0.60	0.70
6 month ave eamings	0.20	0.20	0.30	0.30	0.40	0.50	0.60	0.60	0.70	0.80
12 month ave eamings	0.30	0.40	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.60	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00
5 yr PWLB	1.40	1.40	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.70
10 yr PWLB	1.80	1.80	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.10
25 yr PWLB	2.20	2.20	2.30	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.50	2.50	2.60
50 yr PWLB	2.00	2.00	2.10	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.30	2.30	2.40

3.39 The economic background provided by our treasury advisers; Link Group is attached at Appendix A.

### **3.40 VAT**

3.41 The Technical Section of Finance act as the authority's VAT section. VAT can pose a risk to the authority hence this report includes VAT information.

3.42 The monthly VAT returns were submitted within the required deadlines during this quarter.

3.43 Key Performance Indicators - The VAT KPI's for 2021/22 are attached at Appendix B.

### **4. Resource Implications**

4.1 N/A

### **5. Legal implications**

5.1 N/A

### **6. Data Protection**

6.1 N/A

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

7.1 N/A

### **8. Impact Assessment**

8.1 N/A

### **9. Recommendation**

9.1 This report has been provided for information and there are no decisions required. It is recommended that this report be accepted.

Contact Officer:	James Chappelle
Tel:	01597 826492
Email:	james.chappelle@powys.gov.uk
Head of Service:	Jane Thomas

## Appendix A

### Economic Background

#### **MPC meeting 24.9.21**

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted unanimously to leave Bank Rate unchanged at 0.10% and made no changes to its programme of quantitative easing purchases due to finish by the end of this year at a total of £895bn; two MPC members voted to stop the last £35bn of purchases as they were concerned that this would add to inflationary pressures.
- There was a major shift in the tone of the MPC's minutes at this meeting from the previous meeting in August which had majored on indicating that some tightening in monetary policy was now on the horizon, but also not wanting to stifle economic recovery by too early an increase in Bank Rate. In his press conference after the August MPC meeting, Governor Andrew Bailey said, "the challenge of avoiding a steep rise in unemployment has been replaced by that of ensuring a flow of labour into jobs" and that "the Committee will be monitoring closely the incoming evidence regarding developments in the labour market, and particularly unemployment, wider measures of slack, and underlying wage pressures." In other words, it was flagging up a potential danger that labour shortages could push up wage growth by more than it expects and that, as a result, CPI inflation would stay above the 2% target for longer. It also discounted sharp increases in monthly inflation figures in the pipeline in late 2021 which were largely propelled by events a year ago e.g., the cut in VAT in August 2020 for the hospitality industry, and by temporary shortages which would eventually work their way out of the system: in other words, **the MPC had been prepared to look through a temporary spike in inflation.**
- So, in August the country was just put on alert. However, this time the MPC's words indicated there had been a marked increase in concern that more recent increases in prices, particularly the increases in gas and electricity prices in October and due again next April, are, indeed, likely to lead to **faster and higher inflation expectations and underlying wage growth, which would in turn increase the risk that price pressures would prove more persistent next year than previously expected. Indeed, to emphasise its concern about inflationary pressures, the MPC pointedly chose to reaffirm its commitment to the 2% inflation target in its statement;** this suggested that it was now willing to look through the flagging economic recovery during the summer to prioritise bringing inflation down next year. This is a reversal of its priorities in August and a long way from words at earlier MPC meetings which indicated a willingness to look through inflation overshooting the target for limited periods to ensure that inflation was 'sustainably over 2%'. Indeed, whereas in August the MPC's focus was on getting through a winter of temporarily high energy prices and supply shortages, believing that inflation would return to just under the 2% target after reaching a high around 4% in late 2021, now its primary concern is that underlying price pressures in the economy are likely to get embedded over the next year and elevate future inflation to stay significantly above its 2% target and for longer.
- Financial markets are now pricing in a first increase in Bank Rate from 0.10% to 0.25% in February 2022, but this looks ambitious as the MPC has stated that it wants to see what happens to the economy, and particularly to employment once furlough ends at the end of September. At the MPC's meeting in February it will only have available the employment figures for November: to get a clearer picture of employment trends, it would need to wait until the May meeting when it would have data up until February. At its May meeting, it will also have a clearer understanding of the likely peak of inflation.

- **The MPC's forward guidance on its intended monetary policy** on raising Bank Rate versus selling (quantitative easing) holdings of bonds is as follows: -
  1. Placing the focus on raising Bank Rate as “the active instrument in most circumstances”.
  2. Raising Bank Rate to 0.50% before starting on reducing its holdings.
  3. Once Bank Rate is at 0.50% it would stop reinvesting maturing gilts.
  4. Once Bank Rate had risen to at least 1%, it would start selling its holdings.
- **COVID-19 vaccines.** These have been the game changer which have enormously boosted confidence that **life in the UK could largely return to normal during the summer** after a third wave of the virus threatened to overwhelm hospitals in the spring. With the household saving rate having been exceptionally high since the first lockdown in March 2020, there is plenty of pent-up demand and purchasing power stored up for services in hard hit sectors like restaurants, travel and hotels. The big question is whether mutations of the virus could develop which render current vaccines ineffective, as opposed to how quickly vaccines can be modified to deal with them and enhanced testing programmes be implemented to contain their spread.
- **US.** See comments below on US treasury yields.
- **EU.** The slow roll out of vaccines initially delayed economic recovery in early 2021 but the vaccination rate has picked up sharply since then. After a contraction in GDP of -0.3% in Q1, Q2 came in with strong growth of 2%, which is likely to continue into Q3, though some countries more dependent on tourism may struggle. Recent sharp increases in gas and electricity prices have increased overall inflationary pressures but the ECB is likely to see these as being only transitory after an initial burst through to around 4%, so is unlikely to be raising rates for a considerable time.
- **German general election.** With the CDU/CSU and SPD both having won around 24-26% of the vote in the September general election, the composition of Germany's next coalition government may not be agreed by the end of 2021. An SPD-led coalition would probably pursue a slightly less restrictive fiscal policy, but any change of direction from a CDU/CSU led coalition government is likely to be small. However, with Angela Merkel standing down as Chancellor as soon as a coalition is formed, there will be a hole in overall EU leadership which will be difficult to fill.
- **China.** After a concerted effort to get on top of the virus outbreak in Q1 2020, economic recovery was strong in the rest of the year; this enabled China to recover all the initial contraction. During 2020, policy makers both quashed the virus and implemented a programme of monetary and fiscal support that was particularly effective at stimulating short-term growth. At the same time, China's economy benefited from the shift towards online spending by consumers in developed markets. These factors helped to explain its comparative outperformance compared to western economies during 2020 and earlier in 2021. However, the pace of economic growth has now fallen back after this initial surge of recovery from the pandemic and China is now struggling to contain the spread of the Delta variant through sharp local lockdowns - which will also depress economic growth. There are also questions as to how effective Chinese vaccines are proving. In addition, recent regulatory actions motivated by a political agenda to channel activities into officially approved directions, are also likely to reduce the dynamism and long-term growth of the Chinese economy.

- **Japan.** 2021 has been a patchy year in combating Covid. However, after a slow start, nearly 50% of the population are now vaccinated and Covid case numbers are falling. After a weak Q3 there is likely to be a strong recovery in Q4. The Bank of Japan is continuing its very loose monetary policy but with little prospect of getting inflation back above 1% towards its target of 2%, any time soon: indeed, inflation was negative in July. New Prime Minister Kishida has promised a large fiscal stimulus package after the November general election – which his party is likely to win.
- **World growth.** World growth was in recession in 2020 but recovered during 2021 until starting to lose momentum more recently. Inflation has been rising due to increases in gas and electricity prices, shipping costs and supply shortages, although these should subside during 2022. It is likely that we are heading into a period where there will be a reversal of **world globalisation** and a decoupling of western countries from dependence on China to supply products, and vice versa. This is likely to reduce world growth rates from those in prior decades.
- **Supply shortages.** The pandemic and extreme weather events have been highly disruptive of extended worldwide supply chains. At the current time there are major queues of ships unable to unload their goods at ports in New York, California and China. Such issues have led to mis-distribution of shipping containers around the world and have contributed to a huge increase in the cost of shipping. Combined with a shortage of semi-conductors, these issues have had a disruptive impact on production in many countries. Many western countries are also hitting up against a difficulty in filling job vacancies. It is expected that these issues will be gradually sorted out, but they are currently contributing to a spike upwards in inflation and shortages of materials and goods on shelves.

## Interest rate forecasts

The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

The latest forecast on 29<sup>th</sup> September is compared below to the previous forecast on 10<sup>th</sup> May. A comparison of these forecasts shows that some PWLB rates have increased marginally and there are now three increases in Bank Rate, to end at 0.75%, instead of one to only 0.25%. However, many PWLB rates were significantly lower than forecast during the earlier part of quarter 2.

Link Group Interest Rate View		29.9.21									
	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	
BANK RATE	0.10	0.10	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75	
3 month ave earnings	0.10	0.10	0.20	0.20	0.30	0.40	0.50	0.50	0.60	0.70	
6 month ave earnings	0.20	0.20	0.30	0.30	0.40	0.50	0.60	0.60	0.70	0.80	
12 month ave earnings	0.30	0.40	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.60	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00	
5 yr PWLB	1.40	1.40	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.70	
10 yr PWLB	1.80	1.80	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.10	
25 yr PWLB	2.20	2.20	2.30	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.50	2.50	2.60	
50 yr PWLB	2.00	2.00	2.10	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.30	2.30	2.40	

Link Group Interest Rate View		10.5.21											
	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	
BANK RATE	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.25	0.25	0.25	
3 month ave earnings	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.30	0.30	0.30	
6 month ave earnings	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.20	0.30	0.40	0.40	0.40	
12 month ave earnings	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.30	0.30	0.40	0.50	0.50	0.50	
5 yr PWLB	1.20	1.20	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.50	1.50	1.50	
10 yr PWLB	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.80	1.80	1.90	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	
25 yr PWLB	2.20	2.20	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.60	
50 yr PWLB	2.00	2.00	2.10	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.40	

*Additional notes by Link on this forecast table: -*

- *LIBOR and LIBID rates will cease from the end of 2021. Work is currently progressing to replace LIBOR with a rate based on SONIA (Sterling Overnight Index Average). In the meantime, our forecasts are based on expected average earnings by local authorities for 3 to 12 months.*
- *Our forecasts for average earnings are averages i.e., rates offered by individual banks may differ significantly from these averages, reflecting their different needs for borrowing short term cash at any one point in time.*

The coronavirus outbreak has done huge economic damage to the UK and to economies around the world. After the Bank of England took emergency action in March 2020 to cut Bank Rate to 0.10%, it left Bank Rate unchanged at its subsequent meetings.

## Forecasts for Bank Rate

Bank Rate is not expected to go up fast after the initial rate rise as the supply potential of the economy has not generally taken a major hit during the pandemic, so should be able to cope well with meeting demand without causing inflation to remain elevated in the medium-term, or to inhibit inflation from falling back towards the MPC's 2% target after the surge to around 4% towards the end of 2021. Three increases in Bank rate are forecast in the period to March 2024, ending at 0.75%. However, these forecasts may well need changing within a relatively short time frame for the following reasons: -

- There are increasing grounds for viewing the economic recovery as running out of steam during the summer and now into the autumn. This could lead into stagflation which would create a dilemma for the MPC as to which way to face.
- Will some current key supply shortages e.g., petrol and diesel, spill over into causing economic activity in some sectors to take a significant hit?
- Rising gas and electricity prices in October and next April and increases in other prices caused by supply shortages and increases in taxation next April, are already going to deflate consumer spending power without the MPC having to take any action on Bank Rate to cool inflation. Then we have the Government's upcoming budget in October, which could also end up in reducing consumer spending power.
- On the other hand, consumers are sitting on around £200bn of excess savings left over from the pandemic so when will they spend this sum, in part or in total?
- There are 1.6 million people coming off furlough at the end of September; how many of those will not have jobs on 1<sup>st</sup> October and will, therefore, be available to fill labour shortages in many sectors of the economy? So, supply shortages which have been driving up both wages and costs, could reduce significantly within the next six months or so and alleviate the MPC's current concerns.
- There is a risk that there could be further nasty surprises on the Covid front, on top of the flu season this winter, which could depress economic activity.

In summary, with the high level of uncertainty prevailing on several different fronts, it is likely that these forecasts will need to be revised again soon - in line with what the new news is.

It also needs to be borne in mind that Bank Rate being cut to 0.10% was an emergency measure to deal with the Covid crisis hitting the UK in March 2020. At any time, the MPC could decide to simply take away that final emergency cut from 0.25% to 0.10% on the grounds of it no longer being warranted and as a step forward in the return to normalisation. In addition, any Bank Rate under 1% is both highly unusual and highly supportive of economic growth.

## Forecasts for PWLB rates and gilt and treasury yields

**The current PWLB rates are set as margins over gilt yields as follows: -.**

- **PWLB Standard Rate** is gilt plus 100 basis points (G+100bps)
- **PWLB Certainty Rate** is gilt plus 80 basis points (G+80bps)
- **PWLB HRA Standard Rate** is gilt plus 100 basis points (G+100bps)
- **PWLB HRA Certainty Rate** is gilt plus 80bps (G+80bps)
- **Local Infrastructure Rate** is gilt plus 60bps (G+60bps)

**Gilt yields.** Since the start of 2021, we have seen a lot of volatility in gilt yields, and hence PWLB rates. During September, gilt yields from 5 – 50 years have steadily risen and rose further after the hawkish tone of the MPC's minutes last week. Our forecasts show a steady, but slow, rise in both Bank Rate and gilt yields during the forecast period to March 2024.

While monetary policy in the UK will have a major impact on gilt yields, there is also a need to consider the potential impact that rising treasury yields in America could have on gilt yields. **As an average since 2011, there has been a 75% correlation between movements in US 10 year treasury yields and UK 10 year gilt yields. This is a significant UPWARD RISK exposure to our forecasts for longer term PWLB rates. However, gilt yields and treasury yields do not always move in unison.**

**US treasury yields.** During the first part of the year, US President Biden's, and the Democratic party's, determination to push through a \$1.9trn (equivalent to 8.8% of GDP) fiscal boost for the US economy as a recovery package from the Covid pandemic was what unsettled financial markets. However, this was in addition to the \$900bn support package already passed in December 2020. This was then followed by additional Democratic ambition to spend further huge sums on infrastructure and an American families plan over the next decade which are caught up in Democrat / Republican haggling. Financial markets were alarmed that all this stimulus was happening at a time when: -

1. A fast vaccination programme has enabled a rapid opening up of the economy.
2. The economy has been growing strongly during 2021.
3. It started from a position of little spare capacity due to less severe lockdown measures than in many other countries.
4. And the Fed was still providing stimulus through monthly QE purchases.

These factors could cause an excess of demand in the economy which could then unleash strong inflationary pressures. This could then force the Fed to take much earlier action to start increasing the Fed rate from near zero, despite their stated policy being to target average inflation. It is notable that in the September Fed meeting, Fed members again moved forward their expectation of when the first increases in the Fed rate will occur. In addition, shortages of workers appear to be stoking underlying wage inflationary pressures which are likely to feed through into CPI inflation. A run of stronger jobs growth figures could be enough to meet the threshold set by the Fed of "substantial further progress towards maximum employment" for a first increase in the Fed rate.

A further concern in financial markets is when will the Fed end QE purchases of treasuries and how will they gradually wind them down. These purchases are currently acting as a downward pressure on treasury yields. In his late August speech at the Jackson Hole conference, Fed Chair Powell implied that the central bank plans to start tapering its asset purchases before the end of this year. But the plan is conditional on continued improvement in the labour market, which the August employment report suggests is proceeding more slowly than the Fed anticipated. That may mean that any announcement of tapering is pushed back, possibly even into early 2022.

As the US financial markets are, by far, the biggest financial markets in the world, any upward trend in treasury yields will invariably impact and influence financial markets in other

countries. Inflationary pressures and erosion of surplus economic capacity look much stronger in the US compared to those in the UK, which would suggest that Fed rate increases are likely to be faster and stronger than Bank Rate increases in the UK. Nonetheless, any upward pressure on treasury yields could put upward pressure on UK gilt yields too.

There are also possible **DOWNSIDE RISKS** from the huge sums of cash that the UK populace have saved during the pandemic; when savings accounts earn little interest, it is likely that some of this cash mountain could end up being invested in bonds and so push up demand for bonds and support their prices i.e., this would help to keep their yields down. How this will interplay with the Bank of England eventually getting round to not reinvesting maturing gilts and then later selling gilts, will be interesting to keep an eye on.

### **Significant risks to the forecasts**

- COVID vaccines do not work to combat new mutations and/or new vaccines take longer than anticipated to be developed for successful implementation.
- The pandemic causes major long-term scarring of the economy.
- The Government implements an austerity programme that suppresses GDP growth.
- The MPC tightens monetary policy too early – by raising Bank Rate or unwinding QE.
- The MPC tightens monetary policy too late to ward off building inflationary pressures.
- Major stock markets e.g. in the US, become increasingly judged as being over-valued and susceptible to major price corrections. Central banks become increasingly exposed to the “moral hazard” risks of having to buy shares and corporate bonds to reduce the impact of major financial market sell-offs on the general economy.
- Geo-political risks are widespread e.g. German general election in September 2021 produces an unstable minority government and a void in high-profile leadership in the EU when Angela Merkel steps down as Chancellor of Germany; on-going global power influence struggles between Russia/China/US.

### **The balance of risks to the UK economy: -**

- The overall balance of risks to economic growth in the UK is now to the downside, including residual risks from Covid and its variants - both domestically and their potential effects worldwide.

### **The balance of risks to medium to long term PWLB rates: -**

- There is a balance of upside risks to forecasts for medium to long term PWLB rates.

### **A new era – a fundamental shift in central bank monetary policy**

One of the key results of the pandemic has been a fundamental rethinking and shift in monetary policy by major central banks like the Fed, the Bank of England and the ECB, to tolerate a higher level of inflation than in the previous two decades when inflation was the prime target to bear down on so as to stop it going above a target rate. There is now also a greater emphasis on other targets for monetary policy than just inflation, especially on ‘achieving broad and inclusive “maximum” employment in its entirety’ in the US before consideration would be given to increasing rates.

- The Fed in America has gone furthest in adopting a monetary policy based on a clear goal of allowing the inflation target to be symmetrical, (rather than a ceiling to keep under), so that

inflation averages out the dips down and surges above the target rate, over an unspecified period of time.

- The Bank of England has also amended its target for monetary policy so that inflation should be 'sustainably over 2%' and the ECB now has a similar policy.
- **For local authorities, this means that investment interest rates and very short term PWLB rates will not be rising as quickly or as high as in previous decades when the economy recovers from a downturn and the recovery eventually runs out of spare capacity to fuel continuing expansion.**
- Labour market liberalisation since the 1970s has helped to break the wage-price spirals that fuelled high levels of inflation and has now set inflation on a lower path which makes this shift in monetary policy practicable. In addition, recent changes in flexible employment practices, the rise of the gig economy and technological changes, will all help to lower inflationary pressures.
- Governments will also be concerned to see interest rates stay lower as every rise in central rates will add to the cost of vastly expanded levels of national debt; (in the UK this is £21bn for each 1% rise in rates). On the other hand, higher levels of inflation will help to erode the real value of total public debt.

## **Appendix B**

### **VAT - Key Performance Indicators**

#### **Creditor Invoices**

VAT return for	No of high value Creditor invoices checked	No of Creditor invoices highlighted as requiring "proper" document for VAT recovery	% of creditor invoices checked requiring "proper" document for VAT recovery
Apr-21	205	0	0.00%
May-21	209	1	0.48%
Jun-21	286	1	0.35%
Jul-21	259	1	0.39%
Aug-21	189	0	0.00%
Sep-21	259	1	0.39%
Oct-21			
Nov-21			
Dec-21			
Jan-22			
Feb-22			
Mar-22			

#### **Income Management Entries**

VAT return for	No of entries checked by formula per the ledger account code used	No of entries needing follow up check (but not necessarily incorrect).	% of entries needing follow up check
Apr-21	697	0	0.00%
May-21	847	2	0.24%
Jun-21	972	4	0.41%
Jul-21	860	8	0.93%
Aug-21	869	0	0.00%
Sep-21	636	20 <sup>1</sup>	3.14%
Oct-21			
Nov-21			
Dec-21			
Jan-22			
Feb-22			
Mar-22			

- 1 These relate to two cash amounts, but one of them was NMWTRA which is split over many budgets so is counted per budget line for consistency with past statistics.

## Debtor Invoices

VAT return for	No of Debtor invoices checked	No of checked debtor invoices with incorrect VAT code used	% of debtor invoices with incorrect VAT code
Apr-21	88	0	0.00%
May-21	82	0	0.00%
Jun-21	86	0	0.00%
Jul-21	95	0	0.00%
Aug-21	72	0	0.00%
Sep-21	193	1	0.52%
Oct-21			
Nov-21			
Dec-21			
Jan-22			
Feb-22			
Mar-22			

Note: Debtors VAT checking is carried out by Finance via a work process prior to the invoice being raised hence the improvement in errors compared to previous years

## Purchase Cards

VAT return for	No of transactions for which paperwork requested for checking	Resolvable errors discovered	Value of VAT potentially claimable but recharged to budget due to non- response	No of transactions where VAT claimed incorrectly	% of transactions available to be checked where VAT was claimed incorrectly	Value of VAT incorrectly claimed hence recharged to budget
Apr-21	193	15	£2,000.55	14	7.25%	£555.26
May-21	144	5	£1,165.80	16	11.11%	£849.52
Jun-21	153	5	£1,083.04	28	18.30%	£726.18
Jul-21	123	6	£1,289.84	23	18.70%	£858.25
Aug-21	61	5	£730.68	1	1.64%	£5.00
Sep-21	151	14	£1,028.56	9	5.96%	£711.13
Oct-21						
Nov-21						
Dec-21						
Jan-22						
Feb-22						
Mar-22						

### Chargebacks to service areas

The upload of appropriate documents to the Barclaycard purchase card system to enable vat recovery was made mandatory in September 2017 as a result of the lack of response from service areas/establishments to provide documents when requested. Where no document has been uploaded, any VAT amount input against the transaction is charged to the service area as there is no evidence to support the vat recovery.

Any other VAT errors that come to light as a result of the various checks are also charged to the relevant service areas.

Budget holders are able to see this clearly as chargebacks are coded to account code EX400600 and the activity code used alongside this gives the reason why this chargeback has occurred.

The total amount charged back to service areas in 2021/22 to end of September is £184,109. The breakdown of this is as follows:

### **Potentially correctable errors**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Amount £</b>
Not a tax invoice	3,825
Powys County Council is not the named customer	0
No invoice uploaded to purchase card system	42,516
Invoice(s) do not match payment	4,069
No evidence to back recovery	252
No Signed Authenticated Receipt	127,904
<b>Total</b>	<b>178,566</b>

### **Other errors**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Amount £</b>
Non-domestic VAT	45
No tax on invoice	1,661
Supply not to Powys County Council	1,794
Over-accounting for VAT	2,017
Internal payments	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,543</b>

This page is intentionally left blank

## CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE  
23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Rosemarie Harris, Leader Powys County Council

**REPORT TITLE:** Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC)

---

**REPORT FOR:** Decision

---

**1. Purpose**

1.1 To provide an overview to Members on the requirement to establish a Corporate Joint Committee (“CJC”) for the Mid Wales Region and to seek delegated authority for officers to enter into discussions with the relevant authorities to develop suitable proposals for the Mid Wales CJC.

**2. Background**

2.1 Part 5 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (“the Act”) provides for the establishment, through regulations, of CJsCs. This can be achieved by two routes: at the instigation of two or more principal councils; and at the instigation of Welsh Ministers, but only in relation to certain functions or functional areas which are specified on the face of the Act.

2.2. The Welsh Government believes that CJsCs have a role to play in bringing coherence to regional governance – strengthening local democracy and accountability by integrating decision making, with the goal to build wherever possible on existing regional arrangements. The wider purpose is to share resources and ensure all local priorities and requirements can be complemented by regional action, ensuring a sense of consistency, harmony and resilience permeates regional public investment, planning and accountability.

2.3 Establishment Regulations have now been approved by the Senedd to establish four CJsCs in Wales:

- The Mid Wales CJC Regulations 2021
- The North Wales CJC Regulations 2021
- The South East Wales CJC Regulations 2021
- The South West Wales CJC Regulations 2021

2.4 The Welsh Local Government Association political group leaders wrote to the Minister in March 2020 to set out the local government view that the footprint for CJsCs should be based on the existing city and growth deals

geography. Accordingly, Powys County Council will be included in the Mid Wales CJC, also comprising of:

- Ceredigion County Council
- Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

2.5 Composition – each CJC will be comprised of a number of principal councils that, when combined, will form the area of the CJC. The CJC will be run by a committee of its members, and it will be the CJC which will be responsible for delivering the functions exercised by it and taking the necessary decisions required to deliver those functions. The CJC will be accountable to its constituent principal councils and CJC members will report back to their principal councils and respond to questions and scrutiny. However, the CJC will have powers delegated to it and will make timely decisions without the need for ratification by its constituent principal councils.

2.6 Membership – CJCs will comprise of the Leaders (senior executive members) of the constituent councils together with the Chairman, Deputy Chairman or the Chairperson of a committee with responsibility for planning matters in the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. The Leaders will decide whether additional representatives from the constituent councils or other organisations will be invited to be members of the CJC. The CJC will be able to co-opt such members to the CJC and determine/agree the terms of membership of any co-opted member (e.g. voting rights, role, funding contribution etc.)

2.7 Meetings – the Establishment Regulations require that each CJC must hold its first meeting by Spring 2022. It will be possible for a CJC to meet as soon as the Establishment Regulations come into force, but CJCs are not expected to be fully operational on day one as they need to take various decisions (e.g. election of chair & deputy chair; appointment of statutory officers) and implement governance & administrative arrangements. The frequency of meetings for the CJC is to be determined. It is also necessary to agree / set the budget for the CJC in line with Regulation 16(7) of the CJC Establishment Regulation. This requires the CJC to have set its budget by the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022. The CJC must meet to agree its budget.

2.8 Voting arrangements – CJCs will be established on a ‘one member one vote’ (OMOV) basis with decisions being taken by simple majority; however, CJCs will have the ability to adopt alternative voting procedures should they wish to do so. If a vote is tied, the matter is not carried, then the chairperson will have the casting vote. The Establishment Regulations provide a limit on the number of co-opted members with votes, but only in so far as that the number of votes which may be cast by co-opted members may not exceed the number of votes cast by council members (plus Brecon Beacons National Park Authority members on strategic planning matters). They also provide for a quorum of no fewer than 70% of the voting members.

2.9 Liability of members – CJCs will be corporate bodies in their own right and the members will be taking decisions on functions which are theirs and theirs

alone. As a result, in the event of any claim or legal action, it would be inappropriate for liability to be allocated or apportioned to each constituent council. CJsCs should therefore be required to indemnify their members for the decisions they take. The CJC should hold the liability, rather than individual members, employees or others discharging functions on their behalf.

2.10 Sub committees – CJsCs will be able to establish sub committees if they wish to do so and decide who sits on them. These could consist of members of the constituent principal councils other than those members on the CJC itself (e.g. relevant Portfolio Cabinet Members). Other partner organisations may also be invited/co-opted to be sub-committee members should a CJC wish to do so.

2.11 Scrutiny – each CJC will be required to put in place appropriate scrutiny arrangements (at the discretion of the CJC) and have an Audit and Governance Committee. Scrutiny committees are expected to not include a member of the CJC (or one of its sub committees) and could include members (including non-executive members) of the constituent principal councils, whilst also taking account of political balance in the constituent principal councils.

2.12 Standing Orders and Code of Conduct – all CJsCs will be required to make standing orders for the regulation of their proceedings and business. They will also be required to adopt a Code of Conduct for its members and staff, and will fall within the future scope of the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.

2.13 A number of Statutory Instruments have also been laid alongside the Establishment Regulations to ensure that, from the point they are established, CJsCs:

- are subject to appropriate standards of conduct and come under the remit of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
- are subject to appropriate accounting and financial management duties and come within the remit of the Auditor General for Wales
- are subject to the Public Services Equality Duty
- will be able to be subject to Welsh Language Standards

2.14 Whilst the Act provides for improving education to be one of the functions that Welsh Ministers can specify a CJC on, this function is not provided for in the Establishment Regulations. Welsh Ministers have been clear that consideration of the role of CJsCs in the area of improving education is something that would evolve over time and further discussion is required with principal councils about the desired approach

2.15 Three specific areas however are now expected to be incorporated into CJsCs:

- strategic development planning;
- regional transport planning; and

- the power to do things to promote or improve the economic well being of the areas covered by the principal councils within the region.

### Strategic Development Planning

2.16. The intention of the Welsh Ministers is to create a hierarchy of Development Plans in Wales with the National Development Framework at the highest level, and with Strategic Development Plans sitting between that and the Local Development Plan and with the requirement that all are in general conformity with each other.

2.17. The requirement to prepare Strategic Development Plans is already contained in the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, allowing the option to produce Strategic Development Plans either on a voluntary basis (by two or more Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) or by Ministerial Direction.

2.18 The policy intent in respect of Strategic Development Plans is to introduce a more strategic approach to plan making at a scale greater than individual Local Development Plans. There is an identified need to improve how the planning system addresses issues that cross local authority boundaries, to reflect how people live their lives today and in the future. Strategic Development Plans aim to provide a more consistent, cost effective and efficient approach to plan making, with key decisions taken once at the strategic level. This will allow larger than local issues such as housing numbers, strategic housing allocations, strategic employment sites, strategic green infrastructure routes, supporting transport infrastructure which cuts across a number of Local Planning Authority areas to be considered and planned for in an integrated and comprehensive way. The aim being a more efficient and effective planning outcomes for communities.

### Regional Transport Planning

2.19 Section 108 of the Transport Act 2000 Act requires a local authority to develop a local transport plan which promotes safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport within the authority's area.

2.20 The particular function to create this regional transport plan will now vest in the CJC. The aim of the CJC will help to reflect the overarching Welsh Government Transport Strategy which is also being reviewed and is currently at the consultation stage. Llwybr Newydd – the Wales Transport Strategy sets out the long-term vision for transport in Wales.

### Economic Well-Being

2.21 The Economic Wellbeing function is the power to do anything which the CJC considers is likely to promote or improve the economic wellbeing of its area. This will enable the principal councils, should they wish, to evolve the current regional approaches to the City and Growth deals into the CJC structures.

2.22 It may be necessary for a CJC and its constituent councils to operate the powers concurrently. The CJC will need to agree a process with its constituent principal councils for agreeing how this might operate in practice including but not limited to the specific activities within the scope of the agreement, how agreement will be achieved, reviewed and how disputes may be resolved. This is a matter for each CJC in response to local and regional needs and is in line with the approach to enable flexibility and local determination where possible. The Welsh Government intends to provide guidance to CJCs and its constituent principal councils on this matter.

### **3. Advice**

3.1 The Leaders of two principal councils within the Mid Wales region are agreed that work should now commence to establish appropriate governance arrangements for the CJC. Welsh Government have made funding available, to create capacity to do this work. This funding could provide financial support towards, for example:

- Programme resource to take the lead in each region to plan and oversee the transition from existing arrangements to CJCs
- Dedicated resource / additional expertise to coordinate and /or develop appropriate constitutional and governance arrangements for the CJC;
- Support for any meetings which may take place during the implementation / regional transitional planning phase
- Expertise to develop approaches (potentially 'once for Wales' common approaches) to aspects such as scrutiny arrangements / standards / approaches to terms and conditions for staff
- Other activity associated with setting up / establishing a CJC

3.2 Officers of the two principal authorities will now establish the workstreams needed to progress the development of the Mid Wales CJC. The relevant officers will work with their counterparts to develop suitable proposals in line with the Local Government, Wales CJC Regulations 2021 and the Draft Statutory Guidance for the Establishment of CJC's.

### **4. Resource Implications**

#### Workforce Implications

4.1 The Establishment Regulations provide flexibility for each CJC to determine the approach it takes to staffing, including the ability to employ and recruit staff; make agreements to place staff at the disposal of other devolved Welsh Authorities and have staff placed at the CJC's disposal; and undertake secondments (in and out) to enable CJCs to discharge their functions.

4.2 CJCs will also be required to appoint a number of statutory "executive officers" similar to the roles within principal councils (e.g. Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer and Chief Governance Officer/Head of Democratic Services). The intention is for CJCs to be able to directly employ, commission services or have relevant staff loaned from a constituent council to fulfil these roles as the CJC may determine. It is also intended that all executive roles within a CJC will be afforded the same statutory protection and indemnity as statutory officers within principal councils.

4.3 The provisions in law relating to staffing which apply to principal councils will also apply to CJCs. These include TUPE and staff transfers; Trade Union relations and standing orders relating to employment (e.g. procedures relating to the appointment/dismissal of officers and disciplinary action). Staff employed by the CJC are to be appointed on the same or similar terms and conditions (including remuneration) as officers appointed to one of the constituent councils undertaking substantially similar or the same responsibilities.

4.4 The impact on the workforce and staffing of CJCs will be considered as part of any programmes of work dealing with their establishment.

#### Financial Implications

4.5 The Establishment Regulations do not prescribe any formula basis for funding of CJCs. It will be for each CJC to decide how the budget requirement will be met by the constituent principal councils (and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority in the case of the strategic planning functions). In the absence of unanimous agreement on the amount payable, the regulations provide for the amounts payable by the constituent councils and National Park member(s) to be directed by Welsh Ministers.

4.6 CJCs will be the accountable body for the funding provided by constituent councils and/or directly received from any other funding streams. CJCs will also be able to pay towards expenditure incurred or to be incurred in relation to carrying out its functions as it may determine, and to charge fees relating their specified functions. The Establish Regulations also enable CJCs to provide assistance by way of grant or contributions to support functions exercisable by them. The funding from constituent principal councils will be held and managed by CJCs and it is expected that they will be required to manage the funds under the same financial management arrangements as local government bodies in Wales.

4.7 CJCs are new legal structures which include the ability to directly hold assets and budgets, employ staff, enact legal structures and undertake any

other delivery and strategic functions vested in them. Any review will need to consider the impact on financial provisions, this includes understanding the costs and funding sources of any new frameworks required in order to meet and deliver agreed objectives. Welsh Ministers have made grant funding available to participant authorities to assist in the set-up of CJsCs and an application has been made and accepted for the Mid Wales CJC for such funding to assist in the scoping and governance work necessary to create this new body. The grant awarded of £250k will be paid to Powys County Council.

## **5. Legal implications**

5.1 Part 5 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provides for the establishment, through regulations, of CJsCs and compliance will be had with this and the Establishment Regulations in the establishment of CJsCs.

## **6. Data Protection**

N/A

6.1

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

N/A

## **8. Impact Assessment**

8.1 There is no requirement for an Integrated Impact Assessment for this report as this relates to governance arrangements. This will be kept under review with any future reports considering whether impacts require consideration.

## **9. Recommendation**

It is recommended that:

9.1 delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executives (in conjunction with the Leaders) to enter into dialogue within the respective authorities including Brecon Beacons National Park to develop proposals for establishing the Mid Wales CJC;

and

9.2 officers of the two principal authorities will now establish the workstreams needed to progress the development of the Mid Wales CJC. The relevant officers will work with their counterparts to develop suitable proposals in line

with the Local Government, Wales CJC Regulations 2021 and the Draft Statutory Guidance for the Establishment of CJC's.

Contact Officer:	Nicola Williams, Strategic Programme Manager - CJC
Tel:	01597 826924
Email:	nicola.williams@powys.gov.uk

Corporate Director:	Nigel Brinn, Corporate Director (Economy & Environment)
---------------------	---

**CABINET REPORT NEW TEMPLATE VERSION 3**

5 November	Portfolio Holder for Education and Property	Approved the name of the new dual stream all-age school in Llanfair Caereinion as Ysgol Bro Caereinion.
5 November	Portfolio Holder for Education and Property	Approved a budget virement of £90,000 to obtain a capital budget to cover costs associated with obtaining planning consents at Forden and Sarn.
16 November	Portfolio Holder for Environment	Authorised the local highway authority to commence the legal public consultation procedure for the proposed traffic regulation order relating to new waiting prohibitions at Llanwddyn identified at Appendix A to the report, and if no substantive objections are received implement the prohibition of waiting Order in accordance with the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

This page is intentionally left blank

Cabinet / Delegated Decision Date	Cabinet/EMT Date	Title	Portfolio Holder	Lead	Decision Maker
14/12/21	30/11/21	Delegated Schools Budget Formula Review	Councillor Phyl Davies	Mari Thomas	Cabinet
14/12/21	30/11/21	Older People's Accommodation	Councillor Myfanwy Catherine Alexander	Dylan Owen	Cabinet
14/12/21	02/12/21	Cradoc and Mount Street Schools	Councillor Phyl Davies	Emma Palmer	Cabinet
18/01/22	04/01/22	Draft WESP	Councillor Phyl Davies	Emma Palmer	Cabinet
18/01/22	04/01/22	Budget 2022/23	Councillor Aled Davies	Jane Thomas	Cabinet
18/01/22	04/01/22	CIP Update	Councillor Rosemarie Harris	Emma Palmer	Cabinet
18/01/22	04/01/22	Supported Accommodation	Councillor Myfanwy Catherine Alexander	Dylan Owen	Cabinet
08/02/22	25/01/22	Quarter 3 Performance Report	Councillor Beverley Baynham	Emma Palmer	Cabinet
08/02/22	25/01/22	Quarter 3 Strategic Risk Register	Councillor Aled Davies	Jane Thomas	Cabinet
08/02/22	25/01/22	Powys Nature Recovery Action Plan	Councillor Heulwen Hulme	Sian Barnes	Cabinet
22/02/22	15/02/22	Population and Well Being Assessment	Councillor Rosemarie Harris	Emma Palmer	Cabinet
22/02/22	15/02/22	LDP Delivery Agreement	Councillor Iain McIntosh	Peter Morris	Cabinet
01/03/22	08/02/22	North Powys Project Strategic Outline Case	Councillor Myfanwy Catherine Alexander		Cabinet
08/03/22	15/02/22	Housing Support Programme Strategy	Councillor Myfanwy Catherine Alexander	Dylan Owen	Cabinet
08/03/22	22/02/22	Corporate Safeguarding Update	Councillor Rachel Powell	Alison Bulman	Cabinet

This page is intentionally left blank