

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD AT BY ZOOM ON WEDNESDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2022**

PRESENT

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)

County Councillors A W Davies, B Davies, G D Jones, A Kennerley, C Kenyon-Wade, DW Meredith, L Roberts, L Rijnenberg, J Brignell-Thorp, G Morgan, D Bebb, K Chedgzoy, Mrs S. Davies and Mrs M Evitts

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

The Chair reported the resignation of Councillor I McIntosh as a member of the Committee due to work commitments.

2. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

The Committee received the following declarations of interest from Members:

Item 7 – Crickhowell Area Review – County Councillor M Beecham – Personal and Prejudicial Interest as a parent of a pupil attending Llanbedr Church in Wales School.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

The Committee did not receive any disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member has been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

4. MINUTES

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the following meetings as correct records:

29-06-2022

15-07-2022

28-09-2022

5. QUARTER 2 / 2022-23 - PERFORMANCE, FINANCE AND RISK

5.1. Performance Report Q2

Documents Considered:

- Quarter 2, 2022-23 Performance Report and Pro-Forma.

Issues Discussed:

The Service had met with the Cabinet Member to demonstrate progress in the key performance indicators. A robust challenge process was also undertaken with the Service Management Team prior to the report being presented to Members.

Objectives

- Chweched Powys / Powys Sixth (Amber) – This was launched this year in terms of the Powys Sixth Form and vocational offers are being included in the offers for the first time this year. This is amber as it was not included in the first year but now included for the second year.

Measures

- Reduction in the Number of Primary Schools by 20 within the timelines (Red).
- ALN (Amber) – It is not possible to achieve the target of 14 as one member of staff is no longer on the programme. The other 13 staff have completed the programme.
- Number of pupils educated through the Medium of Welsh in year will increase (Amber). The WESP (Welsh in Education Strategic Plan) has been approved and the Council has appointed a Welsh Medium Lead Officer and whilst improvements have been made they were not completed by the end of the year. Work is continuing with schools regarding the Welsh Medium provision.
- Increase the number of new school builds by March 2025 in condition A and B by 8 schools (Amber). There were no new school builds in 2021-22 and this links to the schools transformation programme.

Questions:

Question	Response
<p>The transforming Education measure is green overall, but an important element of this was reducing the number of primary schools. As we have not met the target of reducing by 20 schools why is this green.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: There are significant different elements to this. A number of transformation priorities have been achieved such as the opening of Bro Caereinion.</p>
<p>As the transformation programme has been relaunched, is it still the target to reduce the number of primary schools by 20, by 2025.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: The target has not changed. A great deal of activity has been undertaken and the transformation programme is wider than just the closure of small schools and includes Post 16, ALN developments, Welsh Medium developments and school builds. Different elements of the transformation programme may be at different stages but overall this is green.</p> <p>The Council is still working to the delivery of Vision 2025 which was the corporate plan of the previous administration. Officers are working with the new administration on its corporate plan which is currently out for engagement. The new plan will be presented to Council early in 2023 in parallel with the budget. Once approved the plan</p>

	<p>will be implemented with measures and targets revised to meet the new administration's ambitions. The transition between plans is always a difficult period.</p> <p>The Director of Education advised that the ALN transformation work undertaken had been recognised by Estyn in its annual report as an example of excellent practice to be shared.</p>
<p>What is the relevance of the targets and how much time should we be spending looking at these as will they change radically in a few months' time.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member Comment: The Cabinet Member indicated that his approach was around catchment reviews which would identify different solutions. Setting a target figure for closing schools may not be appropriate and would not be the approach taken.</p>
<p>Therefore, there will not be a target for this in future.</p> <p>This could indicate that there is no vision for the future configuration of the school estate across Powys.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member Comment: No there will not be a target figure in future. The vision is to deliver education in the most appropriate way looking at all the issues affecting a catchment, including early consultation and working in partnership with communities to deliver education based on significant changes in the population in Powys.</p>
<p>This seems to be contrary to the documents which the Committee are considering today and does not seem to be the approach which the Cabinet Member will be following.</p> <p>Delay has caused the measure to be red, will the new approach not cause further delay.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member Comment: The approach is consistent and the Crickhowell report is the first of the catchment reviews which has been undertaken. This is also consistent with the approach set out in Wave 2 of the transformation programme.</p> <p>Officer Comment: There was a relaunch of the strategy in July 2022 but the corporate plan is separate to the strategy. The Corporate Plan to 2025 sets targets The reference made by the Cabinet Member to catchment reviews is the approach that is being undertaken to transformation rather than bringing individual proposals to the Cabinet for consideration. The Cabinet Member has not set out any specific target in the new draft Corporate Plan in terms of school closures and does not wish to do so.</p> <p>The red indicator is against the target set by the previous administration for rationalising the number of small schools and was a key element of the previous vision. The target set was as a means of keeping pace in the delivery of the transformation process. This is the challenge of the first year of a new administration with a former plan still in existence until it is replaced by the new administration's plan.</p>

<p>Did not understand the form shown by the Head of Education. In relation to the third target – the measure is to increase in the number of new school builds in condition A or B. Does this measure the number of new school builds or those in Condition A / B as all new builds should be in good condition.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: A new school would be in Condition A. This is around increasing the number of new builds as well as and improve the category of other schools from where they are to Condition A / B.</p> <p>New schools would be categorised as Condition A. If there is significant remodelling of schools then we would hope to improve them to Category B.</p>
<p>In relation to Post 16 – there is some concern expressed by headteachers about what budgets were likely to be for sixth forms and what subjects were to be offered. Is there more information on this.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: In terms of Post 16, work has been undertaken with headteachers regarding the curriculum offer. In addition grass polls have been undertaken of what subjects children would like to do, how many classes can be run in the North and South and the potential of a hybrid model where possible to reduce travel between schools. Headteachers are aware of the funding model which has been agreed. Transportation policies are also being reviewed. However, in the current year there has been a significant reduction in the numbers of learners needing to travel from school to school. The authority has focussed on reducing the course offer starting at A Level The next block of courses to be reviewed will be vocational courses working with other providers. The focus next term would be careers advice and promotion of the Powys Sixth.</p>
<p>In relation to the pink status targets where no data is collected. Is the data collected but not published or is the intention to collect this data such as attendance information. Is the Service aware of how schools are performing.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: The Service does have access to data from schools about attendance and some access to information about performance in the Summer Term. However, this information is held at a school level, is not verified nationally and the Council is not expected to report on that data. Therefore, the Council cannot share this data publicly. Information will not now come to the Council under the Curriculum for Wales but the Service will have its own holistic picture of school performance.</p>
<p>Which way does the data flow, does it come to the Service first. Can the Service publish Powys numbers.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: The Service has access to the SIMS Connected (Schools Management Information System) software so that the Service can monitor attendance figures in Powys but this is not publishable.</p> <p>The Director of Education indicated that since Covid the Service cannot report the performance</p>

	<p>data nationally or for Powys. Schools do share this data so that they work effectively together. With the new corporate plan and its measures there will be a need for Cabinet and scrutiny to have information about how schools are performing, and will require different data to be provided such as attendance and exclusion data. Data is one part but this is also about officers going into schools to assess progress.</p>
<p>Maintenance of Schools. It appears from a recent document that new schools do not have any maintenance backlog. Does this indicate that there is no maintenance undertaken on new schools or is this in relation to the backlog.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: In terms of new schools if work is needed then it is undertaken. Much of the work undertaken by the Property Team is maintenance or emergency repair.</p> <p>New schools are being maintained and have their own site managers. However, this is not included in the corporate costing as they are managed on site.</p> <p>All schools have grant funding for property maintenance in their budgets so they are responsible for more minor works.</p>
<p>With regard to the Head of Education's response to a previous question regarding the Powys Sixth. It is understood that organisers are finding out what subjects 6th form students would wish to pursue. The concern is that A Level subjects last year were not being offered through the medium of Welsh. It would be preferable if the information was circulated to parents as well as pupils. There is also a need for the Council to be more strategic about what is offered to pupils in line with what is required for Powys rather than what they want. An example would be physics taught through the medium of Welsh and this is a weakness in the Sixth system.</p>	<p>Officer Comment: The Service is aware of this and is working closely with headteachers to make sure there is a Welsh Medium as well as an English medium offer. The other element is careers advice to ensure that the curriculum offer meets the needs of learners. One important piece of work will be to look at the Key Stage 4 offer to ensure the transition in both languages between Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5.</p> <p>The E-Ysgol provision which was run successfully last year has been acknowledged by Welsh Government.</p>
<p>It is important when Year 11s make their requests for subjects that the Council identifies which pupils have the ability to undertake their subjects through the medium of Welsh and possibly persuade them or</p>	<p>Officer Comment: Agree and this is one focus for the Service's focus to increase the Welsh Medium offer at Post 16 and Key Stage 4.</p>

provide real opportunities for them to do courses through medium of Welsh.	
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Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

5.2. Finance Report Q2

Documents Considered:

Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation.

Issues Discussed:

- Significant savings have been made in year by using grants as efficiently and effectively as possible. Additional grants have been received and some could be carried forward which has significantly reduced the Service’s spend in the past quarter.

Questions:

Question	Response
Home to School transport £417k overspend – was this due to contractors increasing costs or something else. Virement in relation to home to school transport for post 16.	Officer Response: In relation to home to school transport this sits under the Highways, Transport and Recycling Service. The Head of Service was aware of cost pressures due to fuel increases. The virement for post 16 transport was to support in the day transport for the Powys Chweched (Powys Sixth) offer, and that was available within the Service’s budget.
Grants which have to be spent by end of the financial year. It is always the case that the money has to be spent quickly and although there is planning for spending this funding, it sometimes could be spent differently. Impact of pay awards which schools are having to fund. Moving forward what does this mean to children and how it impacts on what can be provided to them and schools.	Officer Response: The Director of Education commended the Head of Service for the work done around grant funding in particular. There is a process in place within the Service to consider any grant funding and the spend is monitored regularly. In relation to teachers’ pay and conditions the Service will be reporting back to Members following budget surgeries with schools on the budget pressures within schools and the impact on pupils.
Whilst a toolkit and advice has been provided to schools to assist them stay within budget, schools are still concerned about whether they can come within budget. To what extent is this an issue across the county and what plans are there to address this.	Officer Response: Schools’ recovery plans are currently being gathered. Follow up financial surgeries are being offered to schools and financial surgeries have been undertaken and support offered. Schools have been very collaborative with the Service. Information is being shared through Heads meetings as well

	<p>around budget pressures and what options are being considered by others. Another element is supporting schools with their grant spending and whether this is being used as effectively as possible.</p> <p>The Service will go back to schools after Christmas and see where they are with their plans and next steps. The Finance team has also looked at spend patterns and whether training is needed by individual schools or collectively. Schools were pleased with the benchmarking tool and also the Toolkit was well received.</p>
<p>In terms of working closer with schools. Have they received indicative funding for next few years.</p>	<p>Officer Response: The Service has been waiting for information from Welsh Government about funding levels and so have only been able to project funding based on what we know currently.</p>
<p>We would need to know future wage settlements and support. Page 4 – schools delegated reserves, this is a single line. This used to be more detailed and can show a great variation between schools. Could an appendix be added with more information.</p>	<p>Officer Response: Indicative funding for schools has been modelled based on the information available at that time. The provisional settlement had been received but the final settlement was not expected until March 2023. An indicative allocation of funding was also provided to schools. The position will become clearer once the proposals submitted by schools have been reviewed along with the provisional settlement.</p>

Outcomes:

- Noted.
- 5.3. Risk Report Q2

Documents Considered:

Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation.

Issues Discussed:

- The main risk related to property maintenance. The Service worked closely with Property Service to manage the risks.
- Fortnightly compliance meetings have been established with the Property Service so that the Service is aware of challenges as arise.
- Property costs are the main risk including increased utility bills. Some schools have contacted the Service about green options but these cannot be achieved quickly.

Questions:

Question	Response
<p>The report refers to the need to maintain the pace of the transformation process to address the deterioration of school buildings.</p> <p>The risk register also refers to the impact on learners, and whilst everything is being done to minimise this the costs to the Council are increasing which is of concern. Narrowing the curriculum and other options would have an impact on learners which is again of concern. There is a particular mention in the report of the poor budget situation at Crickhowell Secondary. What is being done to address that.</p>	<p>Officer Response: The Service is working with schools in their finance surgeries around and curriculum offer is part of that work. Spend patterns are also being considered. All of the school improvement officers have been involved in the financial surgeries to provide the educational perspectives in the discussions. The Service is aware of each school budget and speaking to each individual school about their budgets.</p> <p>The Service has worked with schools about their improvement planning as part of work in schools support.</p>
<p>There is a catastrophic risk in this area which relates to funding even after mitigation. Is this risk featuring heavily in the transformation programme and the future vision.</p>	<p>Officer Response: The issue and risk is around building condition and the maintenance backlog. This is a significant risk as there is a significant backlog of maintenance and in terms of transformation the aim is to provide a better learning environment for learners.</p>
<p>Should there be something in the register about increased energy costs</p>	<p>Officer Response: This is a valid point. The Service has only been able to gather approximate values currently as schools tied into different rates. The Finance team is currently gathering this information and it is a risk which should be included in the register.</p>

Outcomes:

- Noted

6.	LLANFIHANGEL RHYDITHON - WELSH MEDIUM PROVISION
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Documents Considered:

Report of the Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys.

Issues Discussed:

- This is the subsequent report following the Cabinet decision in July.
- An engagement exercise was undertaken.
- This is the outcome of the work undertaken as to whether a Welsh Medium school could be established at Dolau. A questionnaire was sent to schools to distribute to parents, early years providers. The target audience was parents and prospective parents to see if there was a demand for a Welsh Medium

school at Dolau. Schools also targeted within the catchment as well as the Llandrindod Wells catchment.

- Over 200 responses were received. 98 people supported a Welsh Medium School at Dolau, a lesser number not in support.
- There was a variety of comments arising from the engagement both in support but also raising concerns.
- An options appraisal was undertaken considering three options initially. These options were assessed against the critical success factors as well as a financial analysis and then conclusions were drawn.
- The conclusion was that it was not viable to establish a Welsh Medium school at Dolau:
- The reasons were that it did not meet the aspirations in the Council's WESP (Welsh Education Strategic Plan) to develop Welsh Medium provision in Powys' main centres of population in order to stimulate demand. This was also the view of the Welsh Medium Education Forum, which felt that local authorities should be focussing the development of new Welsh Medium provision in strategic locations where there is a critical mass to stimulate growth.
- There was concern about the capacity of the current building which meant that a new school would still be a small school and no ability to increase numbers without additional capital investment. To expand the school there would be a need for capital investment.
- The two options proposed would mean an additional cost to the Council of between £1m to £1.3m over 8 years by compared to the status quo.
- Another concern was that the school would have small pupil numbers, high budget share per pupil and teaching would continue in combined aged classes due to low pupil numbers.
- Attracting staff with proficiency to teach in Welsh could be difficult based on evidence from other schools in the county.
- High quality Welsh Medium provision is available locally at Llandrindod and Rhayader with places available at both schools. Transport would be provided for pupils wishing to pursue Welsh Medium provision in accordance with the Council's home to school transport policy.
- The recommendation was that the Council should not proceed with establishing a Welsh Medium provision at Dolau which would mean that Llanfihangel Rhydithon school would close on 31st August 2023.
- The Chair referred to representations made to the Committee from interested parties prior to the meeting.

Questions:

Question	Response
<p>There has been an email from the school in relation to the capacity of the building which it was indicated was greater than 36 and could be up to 80 if the mobile classroom was used.</p> <p>The WESP stating that the Council wanted to develop Welsh Medium in the main centres of population has been the same for years, so would have been the case when the decision to revisit the keeping Welsh Medium provision at this</p>	<p>Officer Response:</p> <p>One of the reasons for suggesting that the proposal was not viable was due to the size and configuration of the building and there would be a need for capital investment to expand it for a larger number of pupils. The school is not set up to accommodate the numbers of pupils needed for growth without additional capital funding.</p>

<p>school. It was disappointing that there was nothing new in the paper for the meeting. Many of the points in emails from parents were about maintaining English Medium provision at the school which had been considered previously.</p>	<p>If the school was to grow the Cylch Meithrin would need to be moved and additional works required as well including a reassessment by CIW if it were to be moved into the community centre. The mobile classroom would also need to be reconfigured.</p>
<p>The issue about capacity circulated to Members. It is always difficult to change a school which is held to be centre of the community. The Council needs to learn from all these experiences particularly in relation to communication as the school did not feel that communication had been adequate. Can we learn from this retrospectively to avoid some of the issues.</p>	<p>Officer Response: In terms of communication, this is a very emotive issue in the community. The communication in respect of this proposal began on 23rd June with information about the proposed changed implementation date and considering the viability of a Welsh Medium provision at the school. Cabinet agreed to consider the viability proposal in July. Information was also sent out during the summer term on changes to the implementation date and regarding the Welsh Medium proposals.</p> <p>A press release was issued about the relaunched strategy (Wave 2) and included the proposals for Welsh Medium provision at Dolau. The engagement questionnaire was launched in September and a press release issued. Further information was provided about the questionnaire in October and November (extension of time at the request of the community). In response to a question from the headteacher it was indicated that papers would be considered by the Cabinet in January 2023. A further email in December to the headteacher indicated that the papers would be considered by Cabinet before Christmas as well as consideration by scrutiny. Therefore, there has been extensive engagement over several months in relation to the proposal.</p>
<p>Nothing has changed in the paper to scrutiny. The WESP had indicated this was the wrong location for a Welsh Medium school. The options appraisal had zero scores within it so it was surprising that the Cabinet took this decision.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member Response: The Cabinet Member took advice as a previous chair of scrutiny that there might be a need for this proposal to be investigated. The 2021 Census showed an increase in Welsh speakers in this area so the Cabinet decided to explore this option, rather than lose the potential opportunity it might provide.</p>

	<p>Officer Response: Whilst none of the options scored positively against the critical success factors, two needed to be explored further. That was the reason for the approach to the options appraisal. In addition, the whole piece of work was to understand if there was a demand for a Welsh Medium provision, which had not been undertaken previously.</p> <p>In relation to the judicial review process. Due to judicial review on the Mount Street / Cradoc decision there was a delay in process. If there are delays in the process this would delay implementation by a year as it would be inappropriate to move children mid year. The Council was waiting for judicial reviews to be completed when Cabinet took its decisions. The judicial reviews for Llanfihangel Rhydithon were now completed and had been unsuccessful as the council was found to have followed due process.</p>
<p>Are the costs of transport taken out of gains made by closing a school. Do we take into account the increased time that pupils have to travel to and from school and the reduction in the opportunity for active travel. In relation to future generations, do all decisions such as this get assessed against the future generations requirements in terms of the effects on carbon emissions.</p>	<p>Officer Response: Within the Integrated Impact Assessment (currently being strengthened to take account of climate) transport is considered. The Council is clear about where children live, their nearest school, language choice. There are a significant number of schools across the county and in many instances pupils do not always attend their nearest school.</p> <p>When the Council considers buses, this might not be about increasing the numbers of buses but filling vacant places or using bigger buses. The transport policy also allows the Council to transport pupils to their nearest Welsh Medium provision which might be further away than the closest English Medium provision. However, there is a need to do more in terms of CO2 calculations which can be built into Impact Assessments.</p>
<p>Is the time travelled to school a target which is considered in weighing up</p>	<p>Officer Response: Yes this is considered and profiled on</p>

<p>options.</p>	<p>an individual basis. The other suitable Welsh Medium schools for this proposal are within the existing catchment area and 10 miles and 15 miles from Llanfihangel Rhydithon so well within the timespan for travel.</p>
<p>Not sure why this was investigated. What have the officers learned from this exercise to inform them whether to undertake such an exercise again in future.</p>	<p>Officer Response: What was difficult in this review was how to measure demand. In the past every authority had to measure demand for Welsh Medium which was very challenging. Welsh Government advice is not to measure demand but to facilitate demand instead. In this case it was important to engage, but what has been learned is that it is difficult to measure demand when the national direction is not to do this. The other thing learned is when we plan for Welsh Medium provision we need to look at centres of critical mass.</p> <p>Some of the comments from the Welsh Medium Education Forum was that the work undertaken was not the preferred approach, which is to create a new provision in strategic locations. Therefore, the Council will need to consider where are the strategic locations and numbers.</p>
<p>When the extension to the questionnaire was granted some responses had been made and some parents were complaining that they were unsure of all of the facts. Also what figure would make the proposal viable in terms of responses.</p>	<p>Officer Response: In terms of viability, it is not just the figure of those in favour which is taken into account as to whether this is viable but also all the comments provided, and the considerable cost for the Council to provide Welsh Medium provision at Dolau. Officers have to balance all the information provided.</p> <p>The information about Welsh Medium provision and bilingual education was made available in the questionnaire with a link in the document. The fact that parents have shown that they are interested in a Welsh medium provision / bilingualism should be taken as positive even though the proposal is not viable so there is further work for the Council to do to promote what Welsh Language options are available to parents and pupils.</p>

	<p>As there is interest in Welsh Medium education, there is good quality Welsh Medium provision in the cluster currently. Therefore, there is an opportunity for parents to move their pupils to a Welsh Medium provision in the cluster.</p>
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Comments:

- The WESP does cover what officers were saying about location and trying to establish a Welsh Medium provision in a small school is difficult. The distance between schools is also not important, it is the distance from the outer regions of the catchment to that alternative school.

Outcomes:

Scrutiny made the following observations:

The Committee noted that:

- The report was the outcome of the review as to whether a Welsh Medium school could be established at Llanfihangel Rhydithon.
- The conclusion of the review was that it would not be viable to establish a Welsh Medium school at Llanfihangel Rhydithon as it would not meet the aspirations of the WESP (Welsh in Education Strategic Plan) a view which was shared by the Welsh Medium Education Forum and that provision should be established at strategic locations in the County.
- High quality Welsh Medium provision already exists within the catchment at Llandrindod Wells and Rhayader.
- Increasing the capacity of the school above the current 36 pupils would require capital funding as the current layout of the school was not suitable for larger pupil numbers. Such a change would also impact on the Cylch Meithrin located at the school.
- A positive outcome of the review was that a number of parents had expressed an interest in Welsh Medium provision and it was now for the Council to ensure that such Welsh Medium options were available for those pupils requiring it.

The Committee expressed a view that:

- There had been no change in circumstances since the Committee considered the previous report proposing the review and that the WESP indicated that this would be the wrong location for a Welsh medium school as centres needed to be placed where there was a critical mass of demand.

The Committee supported the recommendations as set out in the Cabinet report.

There were no recommendations to Cabinet.

7.	CRICKHOWELL AREA REVIEW
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Documents Considered:

Report of the Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys.

Issues Discussed:

- The Cabinet Member advised that the report was different to reports received previously as this did not consider a single school but reviewed the catchment as a whole and whether there was a possibility to introduce an all through school model which is an ambition in Wave 2 of the Transformation Programme.
- There are some complexities in relation to this issue referred to by the Cabinet Member. The original proposals for Llanbedr Church in Wales (CiW) School had been the subject of a judicial review which had been concluded. The engagement for the catchment review was open to the whole catchment including Llanbedr. No new or alternative proposals to those considered previously were received in relation to Llanbedr and therefore, the case for change for Llanbedr remained the same. Had new proposals come forward in relation to Llanbedr it might have led to a different options appraisal being proposed. It was highlighted that circumstances have not changed since the decision of the former Cabinet in relation to Llanbedr. Within the process for school transformation there are additional steps which need to be undertaken in respect of a CiW school. A CiW school (the governing body, the diocese or both) can refer a decision to Welsh Government Ministers but this option was not pursued. There had also been discussion about federation and merger previously and during the judicial review which were dismissed by the court in its findings as the Council was found to have followed due process and therefore the court found in the Council's favour. This is the reason why Llanbedr was not included in the options appraisal.
- An engagement exercise was undertaken. Two engagement meetings were undertaken with school staff and governors. A questionnaire was circulated to schools for distribution to parents, staff, pupils and governors as well as made publicly available. The questionnaire focussed on what people thought were the strengths and weaknesses of current education model in the catchment and what future provision could look like as well as all age model and the need for Welsh Medium provision in the area. An options appraisal was undertaken starting with nine options then reduced to two. The cost implications were then considered and then conclusions determined.
- The conclusion of the exercise was that the preferred option was to retain primary provision in the current schools and retain the secondary provision. As no new information had come forward in respect of Llanbedr the conclusion was that the previous decision to close the school be implemented.
- During the engagement exercise it became apparent that there was a strong collaboration between schools within the cluster and suggestions on how to strengthen this collaboration, sharing resources between schools. It has been suggested that schools explore this further in partnership with the Council. There are benefits to establishing all age schools but there are costs to establish this model in Crickhowell with no savings. It was being proposed as both schools had interim headteacher arrangements, that Crickhowell High School and CP School be supported to consider sharing a headteacher which could provide the basis for considering an all age school in future.
- It was acknowledged that the lack of Welsh Medium provision in the catchment is an issue and it was proposed that further work be undertaken to explore how to provide Welsh Medium provision in the area.

Questions:

Question	Response
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<p>Why was federation discounted.</p>	<p>Officer Response: Federation was an option considered within the original proposal for Llanbedr. However, federation between Llanbedr and Llangattock CiW School was discounted as pupil numbers at Llanbedr would continue to be low, pupils would be taught separately, would not lead to rationalisation of provision, the building would need to be retained, it did not provide any financial saving, not address the issue of surplus places in the area or the high budget share per pupil and did not meet the critical success factors.</p>
<p>With all the items listed is this not what federation is supposed to combat</p>	<p>Officer Response: No. The work undertaken is in line with the strategy, take a strategic view for the area where there is a declining school population and surplus places. The aim is to provide a sustainable provision for the area.</p> <p>In terms of a small schools and federation what will remain are small numbers in the school. In terms of teacher workload, although with federation some workload can be shared it is still challenging in providing a broad and balanced curriculum.</p> <p>Other challenges seen in schools are around ALN need, and behaviour needs. With larger schools there are possibilities to recruit specialist staff to resource this under economies of scale. This is also important for Powys in the recruitment to leaders, where the Council needs to grow its own leaders who can gain enough experience to take to headship. The Council also needs to be able to recruit people and that can be challenging with school sizes.</p>
<p>Why are these papers being considered before Christmas when assurances were given to schools that they would not be considered until January.</p>	<p>Officer Response: It was initially believed that this report would be brought to Cabinet in January. Dealing with any school organisation process is always emotive. There are specific requirements in the code to undertake elements of the process i.e. within term time. There is a lead in time if the Cabinet take the decision to allow</p>

	<p>successful transition arrangements and staffing changes and management of change processes. The Council found itself in a position previously that even if the judicial reviews had been completed earlier it would not have given enough time for transition the and management of change processes to be undertaken. Therefore the sooner the decision is taken the sooner the Council can work with schools to secure a successful transition.</p>
<p>What is the latest date that the Cabinet decision could be made to accommodate the processes outlines.</p>	<p>Officer Response: A term is allowed which gives the lead in time so January would be the latest date to move forward with the process if Cabinet accepted the recommendations.</p>
<p>In relation to federation it was made clear that there was no room for manoeuvre as far as officers were concerned. Not clear as to why the Church in Wales or governors did not refer this to Welsh Government. It could be argued that federation could be considered again.</p>	<p>Officer Response: The Council cannot answer the question why the diocese or governors did not refer the issue to Welsh Government. The diocese had the opportunity to do this and chose not to. The court found that the Council had followed due process so nothing has substantially changed.</p> <p>The code is very clear around federation. Federation does not get us away from the challenges of surplus places in area, costs per pupil etc.</p> <p>If there was a vacancy in the catchment and a headteacher was at risk they would be automatically shortlisted for the vacancy in the area. The challenge from a small schools perspective is around leadership.</p> <p>The Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that Welsh Government statutory guidance indicates that the Cabinet could amend the decision and abandon the proposals if it was satisfied following consultation with the affected governing body that either the implementation proposal would be unreasonably difficult or that circumstances have so altered since the proposals were approved that their implementation would be inappropriate</p>

	<p>altogether. It would be for Cabinet to consider whether circumstances have changed, but as federation was considered at the time of the previous decision and discounted then it could be concluded that circumstances had not changed.</p> <p>It was clarified that federation is a legal agreement between two and six schools to come together with a single governing body. The schools remain as separate entities but operate under a single management. The law does not allow federation between a CiW school and a community school. CiW schools can federate with other CiW schools. The Council did believe that the Diocese would refer the decision on Llanbedr to Welsh Government within the statutory 28 day period but did not materialise.</p> <p>In terms of the timing, the Council does have good transition arrangements. Two terms are also required under teachers' pay and conditions to consider staffing and redeployment opportunities. If the Cabinet agreed the proposals there would be a need to work with schools to make sure that transition was effective. In terms of leadership Powys has difficulty in getting leaders and developing leaders as they do not have the opportunities in the larger schools to develop the leadership pathway so this has to be considered as part of school transformation to enable leaders of the future.</p> <p>The Council is having difficult recruiting into headships across all schools in Powys even for some of the larger primary schools. There is a need to recognise the work commitment for headteachers both in terms of teaching and other responsibilities as well as providing support for headteachers.</p>
<p>Llanbedr School has a high percentage of ALN pupils. Is there significant capacity in the receiving schools to meet the needs of those children.</p>	<p>Officer Response: There is a high percentage of pupils with ALN at Llanbedr. The cluster has a strong approach to supporting pupils with ALN through collaborative working.</p>

	<p>Schools are struggling with the statutory responsibilities for the ALNCo (Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator) especially if they are the Head with teaching or other responsibilities. Cluster working in Powys is successful but it can be difficult for small schools as there is no cover for staff to undertake cluster work.</p>
<p>Work is already going on to strengthen clusters. Federation does have advantages but does not remove the disadvantages of small schools in terms of high workload, or finances. Cannot see what's changed since the original report was considered by Cabinet</p>	<p>Officer Response: On the face of it nothing has changed, except the approach of looking at the whole catchment as opposed to an individual school which is different. There is nothing new in relation to the case for change for Llanbedr which has come forward. If we were to move to anything other than what has already been agreed particularly for Llanbedr there would be a need to start the whole consultation process again.</p> <p>As there were no new proposals that is the reason for the recommendation to implement the closure of Llanbedr. There is also no case currently for an all age school in Crickhowell but due to collaboration a shared headship between two schools can be considered as an option.</p> <p>One circumstance which has changed was that the judicial review for Llanbedr School had been considered by two High Court judges who confirmed the Council's interpretation of the school organisation code in respect of the closure of rural schools.</p>

Comments:

- The intervention by the Diocese should be considered as a material change and Cabinet and officers should be asked to consider this. This was proposed as an amendment but was lost by 7 votes to six.

Outcomes:

Scrutiny made the following observations:

The Committee noted that:

- This was the first report under Wave 2 of school transformation which was a whole catchment review approach rather than reviewing individual schools.
- There were no new proposals brought forward in respect of Llanbedr School other than those already considered in the original case for change

and during the judicial review processes and therefore the case for change in respect of this school remained the same, which was why it was not included in the area options appraisal.

- There was no case for the creation of an All-Through School currently, but the strong collaboration which already existed within the catchment was something which could be strengthened in consultation with the Council and could lead to the development of an All-Through School in the future.
- Federation had been considered previously in respect of Llanbedr School but discounted as it did not address the issues relating to Llanbedr C.i.W Primary School such as low pupil numbers, high cost per pupil, mixed age classes.

The Committee considered whether the change of attitude by the Church in Wales in respect of the federation of Llanbedr School was a material consideration which the Cabinet Member and officers should be asked to consider prior to the report being considered by the Cabinet. On being put to the vote this amendment was lost.

The Committee supported the recommendations being proposed to the Cabinet.

There were no recommendations to the Cabinet

8. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the work programme as detailed in the agenda pack.

The Committee considered that the following items be added for possible inclusion on the work programme:

- Schools budgets.
- School transportation
- Quality of education, pressures on staff, Estyn reports (what is the quality of education across the County and are there any gaps).
- Briefing on all through schools to Members. Also federation of schools.
- Development of ALN and how the development has progressed during the first year.
- Update on WESP. Can this be provided earlier than May. What are the plans to move schools along the language spectrum.

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)