



Neuadd y Sir / County Hall, Llandrindod, Powys, LD1 5LG

## **QUESTIONS AT ANY TIME TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

<b>Question From:</b>	County Councillor Iain McIntosh
<b>Subject:</b>	School Closure Proposals
<b>Question To:</b>	County Councillor James Gibson-Watt, Leader County Councillor Pete Roberts, Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys

### **Question:**

During the recent County Council election campaign, Liberal Democrat and Labour candidates gave unequivocal commitments to protect primary schools and keep them open. Comments were made by candidates from both parties in the press, on election leaflets, on social media, and on the doorstep, convincing members of the public that if they voted for Liberal Democrat candidates, or Labour candidates, Cradoc CP School, Llanfihangel Rhydithon School, and Llanbedr Church in Wales School would be protected from closure. Cabinet members and elected councillors making up the Liberal Democrat and Labour coalition even attended protest walks and other events to campaign against the closure the three primary schools. In recent weeks since the election, it has become clear that the new Liberal Democrat and Labour coalition no longer want to fight against the closures. Instead, they have indicated a preference to proceed with the plans to close Cradoc School, and kick the decision to close Llanbedr and Llanfihangel Schools down the road for another year. Parents, teachers and children associated with these primary schools are now being given false hope that the schools will be kept open after the recent announcement to say you merely want to reconsider the proposals.

I refer to the Cabinet meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022, available to watch here - <https://powys.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=7188&Ver=4>

At 5:39 in the webcast, Cllr Pete Roberts claims that abandoning the decision to close Dolau school, as well as others such as Llanbedr and Cradoc, would be **‘the surest way to make sure that not only this school, but many others across the county, would face closure in the coming years. Why you might ask, because this is a decision that lies ultimately not with the Cabinet, but with the Minister in Cardiff, as he has to approve our proposals under the school code as a stakeholder’**. If he believed this to be accurate, Cllr Pete Roberts should have informed Powys residents before making commitments to keep the schools open. However, I do not believe this to be accurate. At 6:23:25 I asked for clarity about this and at 6:25:10 Emma Palmer responds, together with another response from Clive Pinney a few seconds later to confirm **“We do not need the consent of the Minister”**. Therefore, by trying to suggest he could not stop the closure of the schools, Cllr Pete Roberts may have misled Cabinet, the Council, and the public.

At the end of the meeting, 6:25:10, Cllr James Gibson-Watt repeats his claim that following any decision to delay the closure of primary schools for 12 months to carry out a review, they will not have to close. However, at 6:39:00 Emma Palmer confirms that if any decision is taken to review the school closures within the next 12 months, and a new decision is then made to keep them open (for example: as part of a cluster arrangement), there would **not** be enough time to implement such a decision – therefore, the schools will **STILL** have to close next year. Emma Palmer also said this during last week's Scrutiny meeting, viewable at 1:05:14 in the recording here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdTJMj3LY7c&t=3917s>. I therefore believe Cllr James Gibson-Watt may also have been misleading in his comments during the meeting.

The **ONLY** way for the LibDem/Labour coalition to stop the closure of the three schools before the end of summer next year, is to abandon previous closure decisions and write to Welsh Government to tell them why. As mentioned above, Cllr Pete Roberts has claimed he can't do that for reasons which are not accurate.

Therefore, can the Cabinet Member for Education and the Leader confirm whether or not the LibDem/Labour coalition intends to carry out their pre-election commitments to prevent the closure of all three schools, or not? Can they also both apologise for misleading Cabinet, Council and the public please