

Public Document Pack

Cabinet

Meeting Venue
Hybrid meeting - Zoom - County Hall

Meeting date
Tuesday, 27 February 2024

Meeting time
10.00 am

For further information please contact
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County Hall
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 5LG

21/02/2024

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.	APOLOGIES
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To receive apologies for absence.

2.	MINUTES
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To authorise the Chair to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 6th and 13th February as correct records.
(Pages 5 - 8)

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

4.	LLANGEDWYN C. IN W. SCHOOL - OBJECTION REPORT
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To consider a report by County Councillor Pete Roberts, Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys.
(Pages 9 - 90)

5.	FINANCIAL FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024 (AS
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AT 31ST DECEMBER 2023)

To consider a report by County Councillor David Thomas, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation.
(Pages 91 - 128)

6. CAPITAL FORECAST 2023-24, AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2023
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To consider a report by County Councillor David Thomas, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation.
(Pages 129 - 138)

7. RETAIL, LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY RATES RELIEF SCHEME IN WALES 2024-25
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To consider a report by County Councillor David Thomas, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation.
(Pages 139 - 154)

8. SEVERN VALLEY WATER MANAGEMENT SCHEME UPDATE
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To consider a report by County Councillor Jackie Charlton, Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys and County Councillor Richard Church, Cabinet Member for a Safer Powys. (Appendix to follow)
(Pages 155 - 162)

9. GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE HEART OF WALES PROPERTY SERVICES (HOWPS) WORKING GROUP

To consider the recommendations of the Governance and Audit Committee's HoWPS Working Group.
(Pages 163 - 166)

10. GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE HIGHWAYS TRANSPORT AND RECYCLING WORKING GROUP
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To consider the recommendations of the Highways Transport and Recycling (HTR) Working Group.
(Pages 167 - 168)

11. CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING BOARD ACTIVITY UPDATE

To consider an update report from the Corporate Safeguarding Board.
(Pages 169 - 174)

12. DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST MEETING

To note the delegated decisions taken since the last meeting.
(Pages 175 - 176)

13.	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
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To consider the Cabinet forward work programme.
(Pages 177 - 178)

14.	EXEMPT ITEMS
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The Monitoring Officer has determined that category 5 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules applies to the following items. His view on the public interest test (having taken account of the provisions of Rule 14.8 of the Council's Access to Information Rules) was that to make this information public would disclose information relating to

Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

These factors in his view outweigh the public interest in disclosing this information. Members are asked to consider these factors when determining the public interest test, which they must decide when considering excluding the public from this part of the meeting.

15.	SEWERAGE AND WATER TREATMENT RECHARGES - CHANGES FOR 2024-25
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To consider a report by the Leader, County Councillor James Gibson-Watt.
(Pages 179 - 222)

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT COUNTY HALL AND ON
ZOOM ON TUESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2024**

PRESENT

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)

County Councillors J Berriman, J Charlton, R Church, S Cox, S C Davies,
M J Dorrance, P Roberts, D Selby and D A Thomas

In attendance: County Councillors J Brignell-Thorp, AW Davies

1.	APOLOGIES
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Apologies for absence were received from Cabinet Assistant Councillor Adam Kennerley.

2.	MINUTES
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 16th and 23rd January 2024 as correct records subject to the deletion of the name of Councillor J Brignell-Thorp from the list of Cabinet members present on 23rd January.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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There were no declarations of interest reported.

4.	CORPORATE AND STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN (2024-2027)
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Cabinet considered the annual update to the Council's Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan: Stronger, Fairer, Greener (2024-2027). The Plan reaffirmed the Council's three well-being objectives and the updated actions that need to take to deliver them.

Cabinet noted that the Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys had asked for the following text to be added to the Leader's and Chief Executive's joint introduction to reflect the Nature Emergency:

"During 2024-2025, we will be focusing on how we can contribute to addressing both the Climate Emergency (where we need to reach the goals of Net Zero by 2030), and Nature Emergency (where we need to set the road to recovery with many species and habitats at risk of extinction), by aiming to effectively manage 30% of our land, freshwater and sea for nature by 2030. This is a key action of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and will help to support and recover existing habitats, which in turn will positively impact upon a range of species in Powys and beyond."

It was noted that reference to the Property Planning and Public Protection Improvement Board on page 28 should be amended to the Planning Improvement Board. The Cabinet Member for a Connected Powys would liaise

with the Head of Transformation and Democratic Services on this section of the report.

It was confirmed that once approved, the Plan would be translated into Welsh. Officers would also look producing a simplified version and making it available to those members of the public who were digitally excluded.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the annual update to the Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan (as outlined in Appendix A and updated at the meeting) is approved for publication, with implementation from 01 April 2024.

5.	DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST MEETING
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Cabinet noted the delegated decisions taken by Portfolio Holders since the last meeting.

6.	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
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Cabinet noted that reports on the Local Development Plan, Road Safety and the Netherwood report should be listed. Officers were asked to review the forward work programme.

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT COUNTY HALL AND ON ZOOM ON TUESDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2024

PRESENT

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)

County Councillors J Berriman, J Charlton, R Church, S Cox, S C Davies, M J Dorrance, P Roberts, D Selby and D A Thomas

In attendance: County Councillors A Davies, AW Davies, J Brignell-Thorp, A Kennerley and G Thomas

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Nina Davies, Director of Social Services and Housing.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported.

3. DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25

Proposed Amendment to the 2024-25 Draft Revenue Budget

Cabinet considered an amendment to the draft revenue budget for 2024-25 to be presented for consideration by Full Council following information received from Welsh Government advising of potential additional funding for Welsh Local Authorities. Powys' share of the funding was estimated to be in the region of £570k. It was proposed that any additional revenue funding received be allocated in full to the schools delegated budget and that any additional grant funding transferred into the final settlement be allocated at an equivalent value to the service areas currently in receipt of those grants.

The additional funding was welcomed.

RESOLVED to approve the following for inclusion in the Revenue Budget for 2024/25 proposed to Council on the 22nd February 2024:-

- 1. Any additional revenue funding received as a result of the £14.4million consequential and included in the final settlement is allocated in full to the schools delegated budget.**
- 2. Any additional grant funding transferring into the Final Settlement is allocated at an equivalent value to the service areas currently in receipt of those grants.**

3. A review of how the funding under 2 above is utilised is undertaken during 2024/25 to ensure that the use of funding meets the objectives and priorities of the Council and where this is not the case an exit plan can be established and actioned and any virement of the funds can be considered.

Scrutiny Committee recommendations on the Budget and Cabinet Responses

The Scrutiny Committee recommendations on the Budget and Cabinet responses were considered. The Chair of the Finance Panel, County Councillor Aled Davies, and the Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee, County Councillor Gwynfor Thomas, highlighted the issues that had been raised by the Panel and the Committee.

Expanding on the response in the document to the Finance Panel's comment on the transformation of services, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation rejected the claim that this was a holding budget, noting that it ensured that the Council was able to work with its budget for the next four years. He pointed out that the budget included savings as a result of Sustainable Powys. He further noted that Sustainable Powys was continuing at pace and a number of reviews and the engagement process were underway. He also rejected the call for a 10 year capital programme given the uncertainty over the national financial picture.

Cabinet did not accept that there was a crisis in Welsh medium education and noted the progress that had been made. The Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee explained that the word crisis had been used in the meeting. While he was content to remove it from the recommendation, the point the Committee was making was that with budgets so tight, individual schools would not be able to concentrate any efforts or finance on developing Welsh language in their schools or to promote TROCHI. The Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys noted that proposals on Bro Caereinion and WESP would be brought forward in the near future. There was a clear commitment to bring forward transformational reports at pace.

The Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee also referred to the pressures in schools' budgets and said that there was a desperate need for more funding. The Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys referred to the decision taken earlier in the meeting to passport any additional funding received to schools' delegated budgets.

The Chair of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee said that the Committee had not seen any evidence that the proposals for the reduction in swimming and the proposals for the Pupil Referral Units would lead to achievable savings or what the outcomes would be for pupils as the business cases had not yet been developed.

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

27 February 2024

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Pete Roberts
Portfolio Holder for a Learning Powys

REPORT TITLE: Llangedwyn C. in W. School – Objection Report

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 19th December 2023, the Council published a Statutory Notice proposing to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet members of the outcome of the statutory objection period and the objections received.
- 1.3 The report includes a recommendation to proceed with implementation of the proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2024.
- 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

- 2.1 Llangedwyn C. in W. School is a small English-medium primary school located in the village of Llangedwyn in the Llanfyllin catchment area of North Powys.
- 2.2 It currently operates as part of a formal federation with Llanfechain C. in W. School. Ffederasiwn Dwy Afon was established in 2018. The Federation has a single governing body and headteacher that are responsible for both schools.
- 2.3 Pupil numbers at Llangedwyn C. in W. School have decreased significantly over recent years. Current pupil numbers at the school are as follows¹:

¹ Teacher Centre, 14th February 2024

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	7

- 2.4 In the Summer of 2022, the Council updated and relaunched its Strategy for Transforming Education², and also published a work programme for Wave 2 of implementation of the Strategy. This includes a commitment to restart and conclude the review of the Llanfyllin / North Welshpool catchment, which commenced in 2020. This restarted in April 2023.
- 2.5 In September 2023, the Council's Cabinet considered a paper which outlined the findings of the review and presented an indicative preferred way forward. The preferred way forward included the possible closure of Llangedwyn C. in W. School, however this would be subject to the Statutory Process as outlined in the School Organisation Code (2018).
- 2.6 The paper considered by Cabinet included a recommendation that a proposal paper was prepared in respect of the closure of Llangedwyn C. in W. School, for consideration by Cabinet in October 2023.
- 2.7 On the 10th October 2023, Cabinet considered a proposal paper in respect of Llangedwyn C. in W. School, and approved the following recommendation:

'It is recommended that Cabinet approves commencing the statutory process on the following proposal:

- To close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School.'

Consultation

- 2.7 Consultation on the proposal to close Llangedwyn C.in.W Primary School was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code (2018) from the 12th of October 2023 to the 23rd of November 2023.
- 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 19th of December 2023.
- 2.9 At the meeting on the 19th of December 2023, Cabinet agreed to proceed with the publication of a Statutory Notice in order to proceed

² Available at <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/9344/Transforming-Education-Strategy>

with the process to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st of August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School.

Statutory Notice

2.10 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 19th of December 2023, the Council published a Statutory Notice proposing the following:

- i. *‘To discontinue Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Llangedwyn, Oswestry, Powys, SY10 9LD, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Llanfechain, Oswestry, Powys, SY22 6UQ.’*

It is proposed to implement the proposal on 31st of August 2024.’

2.11 The Statutory Notice was published on the 10th of January 2024 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 7th of February 2024.

Objections

2.13 16 objections were received during the statutory objection period.

2.14 The objections received and the Council’s response to the issues raised in the objections are listed in the Objection Report, which is attached as Appendix B.

3. Advice

3.1 Having considered the objections received, it is recommended that the Council proceeds with implementation of the proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2024, as outlined in the Statutory Notice (Appendix A).

3.2 The reasons for this are as follows:

- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers at Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School.
- Would reduce the Council’s overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- Revenue saving to the Council
- The Council would no longer need to maintain the Llangedwyn building
- Pupils would attend a larger school where they would be part of a larger cohort of pupils

- Pupils would be able to transfer to a school they are already familiar with
- Pupils would be able to continue to access Church in Wales provision

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 result in annual revenue savings to the Council of around £56.4k. This overall figure comprises a potential saving on Schools' delegated funding of over £91.0k and estimated additional transport costs of £34.6k. The proposal is expected to have no impact on the costs of delivering a catering service. These figures do not include any estimated redundancy costs.

4.2 Llangedwyn C. in W. School is currently projecting a carry forward deficit of £17k at the end of financial year 2023-24. If the school remains open the cumulative deficit is estimated to rise to £142k by 31 March 2026.

4.3 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'

The Council and the governing body have signed a deficit agreement which includes spending restrictions. The budget position by September 2024 is estimated to be as follows:

	2023-24	2024-25
In year Surplus/(Deficit)	(20,305)	(26,443)
Bfwd Balance	3,596	(16,709)
Cfwd Balance	(16,709)	(43,152)

4.4 Based on the current school condition data report it would cost approximately £90k to bring the building up to current standards, however this figure is expected to rise due to construction industry inflation experienced. If the proposal is implemented this cost would be avoided.

4.5 The Llangedwyn C. in W. School building is not owned by the Council. It is likely that there may be some costs related to clearing the building

so that it can be transferred back to its owners. This would be in the region of £10k (based on costs of disposing other school buildings recently) and would be a one-off cost funded from the Council's Corporate Transformation budget.

- 4.6 Implementation of the proposal would require involvement from a number of service areas, including staff from the Schools Service, Finance, HR and ICT. These service areas have been kept informed of the development of the proposal throughout the statutory process.
- 4.7 Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the report and supports the recommendation. Every opportunity to minimise the budget deficit incurred by the School must be actioned. Any subsequent remaining deficit will fall on the Council.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Legal: The recommendations can be supported from a legal point of view as the correct process has been followed.
- 5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: " I note the legal comment and support the recommendations".

6. Climate Change & Nature Implications

- 6.1 Implementation of the proposal would impact on travel arrangements for pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. School. This could have a negative environmental impact, as additional home to school transport would need to be provided to transport pupils to their nearest alternative school. However, Llangedwyn is not currently the closest school for the majority of pupils attending the school, so the number of pupils impacted by this would be minimal – it is possible that there would be a reduction in travel for some pupils.
- 6.2 In addition, running a single school site would be more environmentally friendly than running two, due to a reduction in the use of heating and electricity amongst other factors.

7. Data Protection

N/A

8. Comment from local member(s)

- 8.1 Cllr Aled Davies, Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant and Llansilin

'Llangedwyn CIW school has served the children and the local community well over the last 200 years, and the school has been well served by excellent teachers and governors, past and present. But the

simple truth is that there are not enough children in the area to maintain the school and prepare the children for their next steps in education. The vast majority of pupils do not live locally and Llangedwyn is not their nearest school.

However, there are issues that must be addressed before closure:

1. The backlog in maintenance at Llanfechain school and other local Powys schools that these children may possibly attend as their closest school.
2. The transfer of any Powys owned assets, such as playing fields, to the local community to ensure that there are sporting facilities available for the community including the very successful Llangedwyn Football Club, which played a vital role in the development of one of the most talked about current football league players.
3. Support any potential development of a Nursery within the school building to help support young working families.

If the decision is taken to close this precious community school, all efforts should be made to ensure that the next few months are the best ever for the remaining pupils and staff and the community must celebrate the success that the school has had in shaping the lives of its past pupils.'

9. Integrated Impact Assessment

- 9.1 An initial impact assessment was considered by Cabinet on the 10th October 2023.
- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 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 19th December 2023 when considering whether or not to proceed with the publication of a statutory notice.
- 9.4 These have been further updated following the objection period, and the updated versions are attached as Appendix C.
- 9.5 The Overall Summary from the Impact Assessment is as follows:

'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 ensuring the best strategic management of the Powys schools estate, the assessment has also

identified some negative aspects; these primarily relate to the impact on the community of Llangedwyn due to loss of educational provision from the village.'

10. Recommendation

- To consider the Objection Report in Appendix B in respect of closing Llangedwyn C. in W. School.
- To approve the proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School.

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CABINET REPORT TEMPLATE VERSION X

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POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

SCHOOL STANDARDS AND ORGANISATION (WALES) ACT 2013

NOTICE OF PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE LLANGEDWYN CHURCH IN WALES VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY 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 Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Llangedwyn, Oswestry, Powys, SY10 9LD, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Llanfechain, Oswestry, Powys, SY22 6UQ

It is proposed to implement the proposal on the 31st August 2024. The proposal will be implemented by Powys County Council.

The school is currently maintained by Powys County Council, and the school building is owned by the Wynnstay Estate.

The school is a Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School. The appropriate religious body is the Diocese of St Asaph, Diocesan Office, High Street, St Asaph, Denbighshire, 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/14855/Llangedwyn-Church-in-Wales-School>

Admissions

From 1st September 2024, pupils currently attending Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School will be admitted to Llanfechain Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Llanfechain, Oswestry, SY22 6UQ.

Parents may express a preference for an alternative school via the in-year transfer process. 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 Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School will be able to apply for a place at any school in accordance with the Council’s Admissions Policy.

Details of nearest alternative schools

The proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School. The details of this school are as follows:

	School Type	Language Category
Llanfechain C. in W. School	Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary	English-medium

Pupils could also choose to transfer to a number of other schools which are closer to their homes. The details of these schools are as follows:

	School Type	Language Category
Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant C.P. School	Community Primary	Dual stream
Ysgol Llanfyllin	Community Primary	Dual stream
Ysgol Meifod	Community Primary	English-medium
Ysgol Bro Cynllaith	Community Primary	English-medium
Bryn Offa CE Primary School (Shropshire)	Church of England	English-medium
Weston Rhyn Primary School (Shropshire)	Community Primary	English-medium

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

No measures are currently proposed to be taken to increase the number of school places available at alternative schools on consequence of the proposed discontinuance of Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School.

However, it is recognised that should all pupils currently attending Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School transfer to Llanfechain Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, there could be some pressure on places at the school in the short term. If needed, the Council would discuss with the school's governing body to understand how the pupils could be accommodated.

Home-to-School Transport Arrangements

Transport arrangements will be provided in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy. This is as follows:

'Home to school transport will be provided for learners who ordinarily reside in Powys to attend their nearest suitable school or catchment school.'

A 'catchment' school means the nearest school within a geographic area.

To be eligible for free home to school transport, the learners' nearest school or catchment school must be:

- *The nearest to the learners' home address and if so,*
- *They are more than 2 miles from their home address for primary school (aged 4-11)'*

In addition, the Council will provide transport for pupils for whom Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School is currently the closest school to Llanfechain Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School.

In future, transport arrangements for any new pupils living in the area currently served by Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School would be in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy.

Proposal to close a rural school

The proposal to discontinue Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School is considered the most appropriate response to the reasons for formulating the proposal. The reasons are as follows:

- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers at Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School
- Would increase pupil numbers at Llanfechain C. in W. School
- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- Revenue saving to the Council
- The Council would no longer need to maintain the Llangedwyn building
- Pupils would attend a larger school where they would be part of a larger cohort of pupils
- Pupils would transfer to a school they are already familiar with
- Pupils would continue to access Church in Wales provision

How to Object to this Notice

Within a period of 28 days after the publication of this proposal, that is to say by **7th February 2024**, any person may object to the proposal.

Objections should be sent to Lynette Lovell, Director of Education and Children, Powys County Council, Powys County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LD1 5LG, or by e-mail to transforming.education@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,
Director of Education and Children
For Powys County Council**

Dated this day 10th January 2024

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 Llangedwyn C. in W. Voluntary Controlled Primary School on the 31st August 2024.
- Pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. Voluntary Controlled Primary School will be able to attend Llanfechain C. in W. School. Alternatively, parents may express a preference for another school, and the Council will comply with any such expressed preference subject to Section 86(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
- In future, any new pupils living in the area currently served by Llangedwyn C. in W. School will be able to apply for a place in any school in accordance with the Council's Admissions Policy.
- Transport arrangements would be made for pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy. In addition, transport would be provided for pupils for whom Llangedwyn C. in W. School is currently the closest school to Llanfechain C. in W. School. In future, transport arrangements for any new pupils in the area currently served by Llangedwyn C. in W. School would be in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy
- The rationale for this proposal was set out in a Consultation Document which was issued in October 2023. 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/14855/Llangedwyn-Church-in-Wales-School>

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**Proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W.
School
Objection Report**



Proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School

Objection Report

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If you require a copy of the document in a different format, please contact the Transforming Education Team on 01686 611553, or e-mail transforming.education@powys.gov.uk.

Consultation on the closure of Llanedwyn C. in W. School

Objection Report

1. BACKGROUND

Powys County Council consulted on proposals to close Llanedwyn C. in W. School. The consultation took place from the 12th October 2023 to the 23rd November 2023. The Council published a consultation report outlining the findings of the consultation exercise.

On 19th December 2023, the Council's Cabinet agreed to proceed with the proposal, and a Statutory Notice was published from the 10th January 2023 to the 7th February 2024.

The proposal was as follows:

'To close Llanedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School.'

2. SUMMARY OF OBJECTIONS RECEIVED

16 objections were received during the statutory objection period.

The objections are listed in section 3 of this report, along with the Council's response to the comments made in the objections.

3. ISSUES RAISED IN THE OBJECTIONS RECEIVED

The issues raised in the objections received are summarised below, along with the local authority's response to each issue.

Objection 1

Issue	Points raised	Council response
1.1	We strongly believe the closure of Llangedwyn school would be detrimental to the whole village community, it would take the heart away and ruin such a lovely village.	The Council recognises the school's role within the local community, and that closure of any school has an impact on the community in which it is located. A community impact assessment has been prepared which considers the proposal's impact on the local community, this has been updated throughout the process to reflect comments received.
1.2	It would also prevent future families moving to the area - if there is no primary school within the village, families are less inclined to want to move to the area.	The Council notes this concern, however, Llangedwyn isn't currently the nearest school for most of the pupils currently attending the school, which suggests that families in the area are already choosing to send their children to alternative schools.
1.3	This would also have an impact on the church and village hall within Llangedwyn as they are both establishments that the school use often.	The Council notes this concern about the possible impact of closure on the church and the village hall in Llangedwyn.
1.4	The school has been a huge asset to our children and many other children in the past and the present, it would be awful if many other children couldn't have the opportunity to thrive here.	The Council acknowledges the part that Llangedwyn CiW School has played in the area's history. However, pupil numbers at the school have decreased significantly in recent years, suggesting that parents in the area are already choosing to send their children to alternative schools.
1.5	We feel there should be a much fairer opportunity for us as a school and community to have a better chance at	The Council notes this comment, however, there are only 7 pupils currently attending Llangedwyn CiW School, and

	building the school back up, to have more pupils and opportunities for other families.	there is no evidence that pupil numbers in the school are expected to increase significantly.
1.6	The school has many familiarities for the children here and they are happy and comfortable at their school, it would be detrimental for them to lose this and could have a huge impact on their mental health and wellbeing.	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, and 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.
1.7	We feel we have not been given enough time to consider other options for our children to go somewhere that is suitable for them, for us as a family Llanfechain is not an option at all and would mean considerably more distance to travel to get our children to a school that's suitable for them and their needs. The travel and cost to another suitable school would be considerably more, as it is very important to us that our children go to a school that is fitting for them.	Whilst the proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain, families can apply for a place at any school. All applications will be dealt with in accordance with Powys County Council's admissions arrangements. Transport will be provided in accordance with the Home to School Transport Policy.
1.8	It would also be something else taken away from the beliefs and opportunities that are held within it as being a Church of Wales Primary it has a huge connection with the church and parishioners of the community. The closure of this amazing and opportunistic school is taking away the history of the village for other future children and parents to enjoy.	The proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School to ensure that they can continue to access Church in Wales provision. However, the Council acknowledges that there may be an impact on links between the community and the Church in Llangedwyn.

Objection 2

Issue	Points raised	Council response
2.1	I would like to formally object to the closure of Llangedwyn School on the grounds that the school has been badly managed and run as part of the Federasiwn Dwy Afon by	The Council does not agree that 'the school has been badly managed and run as part of the Federasiwn Dwy Afon by the current Federation Governing Body.'

	the current Federation Governing Body, and other options have not been considered.	A range of options were considered by the Council when developing the proposal. In addition, a number of alternative options were suggested in the consultation responses. These were considered and assessed in the consultation report.
2.2	Governors advised parents to move children in June 2023 because Llangedwyn School is closing. Scare tactics used by governors to get parents to move children to reduce pupil numbers.	The Council was not involved in any discussions between Governors and parents which took place in June 2023.
2.3	I believe the financial data used to make final decision didn't cover all costs.	The estimated savings included as part of the proposal are based on the revenue funding provided to the school and estimated additional transport costs. However it is acknowledged that there could be some additional costs which haven't yet been calculated, such as redundancy costs.
2.4	Distance from Llangedwyn School to Llanfechain School is incorrect in the consultation document, it is 8.2 miles along current bus route, double the estimate.	The information in the consultation document is based on the shortest distance between Llangedwyn and Llanfechain, however, it is acknowledged that this route may not be suitable for buses.
2.5	Pre-school children born in Llangedwyn area not considered.	Pre-school aged children are reflected in the projections for future pupil numbers that were included in the consultation document.
2.6	Cost saving within Federation not considered by governing body or Powys County Council.	The federation has existed since 2018, so any cost savings across the federation could have already been realised. Federation does not result in any cost savings for the Council.

2.7	There is a culture of bullying and removal of any governors or teachers that question the core controlling governors aiding pupil number decline.	<p>The Welsh Government's '<i>School Governors' guide to the law</i>¹ states that:</p> <p><i>'Governing bodies and individual governors should act at all times with honesty and integrity and be ready to explain their actions and decisions to staff, pupils, parents and anyone else with a legitimate interest in the school...'</i></p> <p>Any complaints about governor behaviour should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.</p> <p>Any removals from the Governing Body are dealt with in accordance with <i>The Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations</i>.</p>
2.8	Several governors have conflict of interests involving the after school club which has been reduced to one day in Llangedwyn school with no openness or transparency around this separate organisation also aiding pupil number decline.	The Council is not involved in the running of the after-school club.
2.9	I believe the reduction in pupil numbers of Llangedwyn school is a direct result of bad leadership by the leaders of the governing body, there is a lack of processes and procedures and inability to run a school correctly financially and the bullying culture towards anyone that questions them, including staff, governors, parents or community past and present.	Pupils/parents can apply for places at alternative schools at any time should they wish to do so. Applications from pupils attending Llangedwyn have been dealt with in accordance with the Council's admissions policy.
2.10	Poor Website does not attract parents.	The Council is not responsible for updating the school's website.
2.11	Rurals school are a key part of rural life, and the removal of a rural school starts the process of losing a rural	The Council acknowledges the role of rural schools in Powys communities. The Council has followed the

¹ www.gov.wales/school-governors-guide-law

	community. Rural council taxpayers get the lowest benefit of services and education for our children in a great rural village school is the least we should get.	additional requirements associated with the 'Presumption against closure of rural schools' which are outlined in the School Organisation Code.
2.12	Complaints not dealt with by Governing body and covered up.	Any complaints relating to the school should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy. The Council is aware that the Governing Body are dealing with complaints, and the Council is providing advice and support as appropriate.
2.13	PCC cost saving on closure is £56,400, this could be saved by restructure of staffing and budgets of the federation and or Llangedwyn School's standalone budget, a cost saving option has not been considered.	As stated in the Consultation Document that was issued: 'It is estimated that this would result in annual revenue savings to the Council of around £56.4k. This overall figure comprises a potential saving on Schools' delegated funding of £91.0k and estimated additional transport costs of £34.6k.' Any restructure of staffing and budgets across the federation would not result in savings to the Council, as both Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School would continue to be funded as separate schools.
2.14	No consideration to involving local community or local businesses to help with fundraising for the school.	The council is not responsible for involving the local community or local businesses in helping with fundraising for the school.
2.15	Current Governors allowed the PTA to be abandoned and funds lost that were raised for the school.	The Council is not involved in the running of the school's PTA.

Objection 3

Issue	Points raised	Council response
3.1	I strongly object to this course of action.	Comment noted.

Objection 4

Issue	Points raised	Council response
4.1	I hereby wish to lodge my objections to the proposed closure of Llangedwyn C in W School. The closure of our village school will have a detrimental effect on our local community. This school has an integral part in village life with its close relationship with our church.	The Council recognises the school's role within the local community, and that closure of any school has an impact on the community in which it is located. A community impact assessment has been prepared which considers the proposal's impact on the local community, this has been updated throughout the process to reflect comments received.
4.2	The loss of such an excellent school will deny the more vulnerable pupils from a nurturing caring environment giving them the opportunity to live a full and enjoyable life.	Whilst recognising the support Llangedwyn C. in W. School has provided to vulnerable pupils, Llangedwyn is a mainstream school and does not have any specialist facilities to support vulnerable pupils compared with other mainstream schools. Pupils will still be able to 'live a full and enjoyable life' should they attend different schools.
4.3	There are many reasons why this school should remain open. In addition, the conduct of those responsible for its success needs to be considered.	Comment noted.

Objection 5

Issue	Points raised	Council response
5.1	I am wholeheartedly against the closure.	Comment noted.
5.2	The school has taught children since 1815 and therefore has a long history of providing education to the children of the Tanat Valley.	The Council acknowledges the part that Llangedwyn C. in W. School has played in the history of the area.

5.3	The school currently has low pupil numbers, but that is partly due to children being relocated to other schools due to the threat of Llangedwyn School closure.	Pupils/parents can apply for places at alternative schools at any time should they wish to do so. Applications from pupils attending Llangedwyn have been dealt with in accordance with the Council's admissions policy.
5.4	Other schools in the area are full and therefore closure of Llangedwyn School means that there will be insufficient places in schools in the area.	There are sufficient places in the local area to accommodate the 7 pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. School.
5.5	The school premises is owned by the Llangedwyn estate, and I believe that the estate has confirmed that it wishes the school to remain open, and that the school should remain as an education property into the future.	Comment noted.
5.6	The national population is rising rapidly due to immigration, and this has had profound implications for healthcare, education, transport, housing, and all other services. The relentless building in rural areas on a national basis is well known, and many are leaving town to live in the countryside. It is only a matter of time before there are more children in the Llangedwyn area.	Current projections are that pupil numbers in Powys schools will continue to decrease over the coming years. There is no current evidence of any significant increased demand for places in Llangedwyn over the coming years.
5.7	Some children attending Llangedwyn School have additional needs, and they are supported by the school admirably and it is a great advantage to have the one-to-one support that is provided there.	Whilst recognising the support Llangedwyn C. in W. School has provided to pupils with additional learning needs, Llangedwyn is a mainstream school, and does not have any specialist facilities to support vulnerable pupils compared with other mainstream schools.
5.8	Financial reasons for the closure have been ventilated, but there is a question mark over the funds apportioned to Llangedwyn School and the funds attracted for children with additional needs.	As stated in the Consultation Document: <i>'It is estimated that this would result in annual revenue savings to the Council of around £56.4k. This overall figure comprises a potential saving on Schools' delegated funding of £91.0k and estimated additional transport costs of £34.6k.'</i>
5.9	If Llangedwyn School closed, children would have to travel further afield and that is costly, time consuming, and	Llangedwyn C. in W. School is currently not the closest school for most of the pupils that attend it. The proposal is

	contrary to the need to reduce travel where possible, and to keep things local.	for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School, which could result in an increase in travel for some pupils, however pupils could choose to transfer to other schools. Should pupils transfer to their closest schools, it is likely that there would be a reduction in travel time.
5.10	Reports show that Estyn has no concerns with Llangedwyn School, and the school has been removed from the need for review.	The council acknowledges that Llangedwyn was removed from Estyn Review in 2021. This information was included in the Consultation Document.
5.11	I believe that the threat of Llangedwyn School closure during recent years has been detrimental to the school.	It is acknowledged that there have been discussions about the future of Llangedwyn C. in W. School for a number of years. Whilst acknowledging that this could have had an impact on pupil numbers at the school, the historical pupil numbers included in the consultation document shows that Llangedwyn pupil numbers have fluctuated from 31 in 2016 to the current number of 7 pupils.
5.12	I believe that if the school closed, this would be a further degradation of services to our rural community.	Comment noted.

Objection 6

Issue	Points raised	Council response
6.1	I am absolutely appalled at the proposal of Llangedwyn school closure and believe it to be unfairly treated as long term sick leave from consecutive head teachers, a dominant board of governors from the federated school at Llanfechain, who would benefit from the closure of Llangedwyn school have brought this on the community of Llangedwyn.	The Council is proposing to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School due to the very low pupil numbers currently attending the school.
6.2	The threat of closure has exaggerated any temporary low numbers, and if this was to go a head there will be no young families wanting to come to Llangedwyn.	It is acknowledged that there have been discussions about the future of Llangedwyn C. in W. School for a number of

		<p>years. Whilst acknowledging that this could have had an impact on pupil numbers at the school, the historical pupil numbers included in the consultation document shows that Llangedwyn pupil numbers have fluctuated from 31 in 2016 to the current number of 7 pupils.</p> <p>Llangedwyn isn't currently the closest school for most of the pupils currently attending the school, which suggests that families are already choosing to send their children to alternative schools.</p>
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Objection 7

Issue	Points raised	Council response
7.1	I am writing to suggest that the proposed closure of Llangedwyn school should be reversed. I have lived in the village for many years and have known of the excellence of the teaching.	Comment noted.
7.2	<p>During that time there has to a greater and sometimes lesser extent been rumours of closure and this will have had a detrimental effect on child recruitment thus hastening the councils desire for closure and making the whole procedure self-fulfilling.</p> <p>It now needs a guaranteed period with no threat of closure where parents can place their children in the school for the period of their junior education which can take place near to home and with good leadership the school would prosper and be an asset to Llangedwyn.</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that there have been discussions about the future of Llangedwyn C. in W. School for a number of years. Whilst acknowledging that this could have had an impact on pupil numbers at the school, the historical pupil numbers included in the consultation document shows that Llangedwyn pupil numbers have fluctuated from 31 in 2016 to the current number of 7 pupils.</p> <p>There is no evidence of any significant increased demand for places in Llangedwyn over the coming years.</p>

7.3	Children taught in their own village grow up with a feeling of belonging to the community and this feeling can be carried into adult life and have a long-term beneficial effect on the whole community.	Comment noted. A community impact assessment has been prepared which considers the impact of the proposal on the community.
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Objection 8

Issue	Points raised	Council response
8.1	I am horrified by the proposals to close this valuable community asset. The whole proposal has been rushed through with no real time or opportunity for the parents and community members to have worthwhile input into the process. Rather than a meaningful and detailed discussion with parents and the community in general there has been the minimum time that is required to push this closure through at speed, we are talking about children's futures in the short term and the future of the whole community over the long term, not something that we should be rushing through.	The process has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code. This included consultation, which provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to let the Council know their views on the proposal. Timescales have been in accordance with the requirements of the Code.
8.2	There has been no community involvement in exploring all of the alternative opportunities including not only the 5 proposals put forward by Powys but also at least 3 other proposals for continuing education in Llangedwyn.	A range of options were considered by the Council when developing the proposal. In addition, a number of alternative options were suggested in the consultation responses. These were considered and assessed in the consultation report.
8.3	Llangedwyn CinW Primary school currently has a larger than average number of pupils with ALN which deserves special and careful consideration and consultation with the parents in any plans for closing the school or moving the pupils en bloc and this has not been given appropriate consideration.	The needs of ALN pupils have been considered throughout the process, including in the impact assessments, which have been updated throughout the process.

		<p>The proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School, which would provide an opportunity for pupils to move 'en bloc' to an alternative school.</p>
8.4	<p>There is no definitive resolution for Llanfechain being over numbers the plan merely states 'we will talk to the governors and the school about this'. There should be a defined resolution as this is a central part of the proposal and with Llansantffraid already being over numbers the removal of places at Llangedwyn will mean that the 3 schools involved in this proposal (short, medium and long term) will have no vacancies when they are reduced down to 2.</p>	<p>As stated in the Statutory Notice published in respect of this proposal:</p> <p><i>'No measures are currently proposed to be taken to increase the number of school places available at alternative schools on consequence of the proposed discontinuance of Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School.</i></p> <p><i>However, it is recognised that should all pupils currently attending Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School transfer to Llanfechain Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, there could be some pressure on places at the school in the short term. If needed, the Council would discuss with the school's governing body to understand how the pupils could be accommodated.'</i></p> <p>It is correct that the Council's preferred way forward for the Llanfyllin catchment identifies longer term plans for Llanfechain C. in W. School and Llansantffraid C. in W. School, however these are unlikely to proceed for a number of years, and there are statutory processes which would need to be undertaken to achieve them. Pupil numbers at Llanfechain C. in W. School are also projected to decrease in the meantime in the coming years.</p>

8.5	There is no allowance in the plan for people moving into the area, into both new build houses or into rental properties so the estimated future pupil figures are at the very best on the low side meaning that Llanfechain will reach and pass capacity far quicker than the plan suggests.	Current projections are that pupil numbers in both Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School will decrease over the coming years.
8.6	<p>There is no definitive plan for pupils currently at Llangedwyn to move to other schools, the proposal calls for all children to move to Llanfechain but in reality this isn't going to happen, indeed this is proved by the actions of the past few months with parents moving their children to alternative schools due to the worry of there being no places at Llanfechain.</p> <p>Llanfechain is not the nearest school to Llangedwyn, in fact Llansillin is closer and the argument that by moving to Llanfechain Powys is protecting Church in Wales places is not true as if there are no spaces at Llanfechain to accept pupils they will (as the past few months have shown) move to other non CinW schools.</p>	The proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School as the school is currently federated with Llangedwyn C. in W. School and would also ensure that pupils would continue to access Church in Wales provision, however parents can apply for a place at alternative schools, including Ysgol Bro Cynllaith in Llansilin, should they prefer.
8.7	It is a mistake to cite the preservation of Church in Wales places in the proposal. There are currently 47 plus 43 places in the 2 schools so a total of 90, if Llangedwyn closes there will only be 47 Church in Wales places meaning a loss of 43 whichever way you look at it.	<p>The Council does not state that the proposal would 'preserve Church in Wales places'. However, the proposal for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School would mean that pupils currently accessing Church in Wales provision at Llangedwyn C. in W. School would continue to access Church in Wales provision. One of the reasons for the proposal as set out in the Statutory Notice is that:</p> <p><i>'Pupils would continue to access Church in Wales provision'</i></p>
8.8	The budget figures included in the plan do not seem to give a realistic picture of Llangedwyn finances going forward, there does not seem to be any allowance for the	The information in the Consultation Document reflected the position at the time. Updated information will be included in the paper considered by Cabinet alongside this report.

	reduction of teaching staff that has already taken place meaning that the figures given to cabinet in order for them to make an informed decision may be completely wrong and give an overinflated view of Llangedwyn finances moving forward, there have also not been any discussions with parents or other community groups to explore future savings that could be made at the school nor looking at increasing revenue, all of this seems to show Llangedwyn finances in a much worse position that it would actually be.	
8.9	Not enough consideration has been given to the proposal to de-federate Llangedwyn from Llanfechain, nor to examine the savings that such a move would enable to be made nor the increase in revenue that could be generated by Llangedwyn being an independent school. Savings would include not having an executive head teacher (non-teaching) and instead operating under the skilled hands of an acting head teacher whilst moving forward. Increased revenue would come from increased use of the school buildings for after school and holiday clubs, something that the current regime appear to be against.	<p>‘Dissolve the Federation and allow Llangedwyn to exist as a standalone school’ was an alternative option suggested in the consultation responses received, and was listed as a possible alternative option in the consultation report.</p> <p>As stated in the consultation report:</p> <p><i>‘The proposal to federate Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School was led by the governing bodies of the two schools, and both governing bodies agreed to establish the federation. ‘The Federation Process of Maintained Schools in Wales’ does allow for schools to leave federations, however neither school has done this.’</i></p>
8.10	The whole thing has been rushed through without being explored fully or correctly and that there should be an extended period of consultation to include direct conversations with the parents, prospective parents, community groups and the wider public. Members of the community would be willing to meet with the transforming education team to start to explore in depth some of the alternatives that are available, and other parents and community groups would also take up such an opportunity.	The process has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code. This included consultation, which provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to let the Council know their views on the proposal. Timescales have been in accordance with the requirements of the Code.

Objection 9

Issue	Points raised	Council response
9.1	<p>The proposed alternative provision is at Llanfechain CinW VC School. However, no evidence has been given as to how many of the current Llangedwyn pupils will in fact transfer to Llanfechain. It is very likely, given their place of residence, that pupils will transfer to a range of schools, negating the advantages of moving to a school sharing staff and governing body, and breaking friendship groups.</p>	<p>The proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School as the school is currently federated with Llangedwyn C. in W. School and this would ensure that pupils would continue to access Church in Wales provision. However parents can apply for a place at alternative schools should they prefer. Given that Llangedwyn C. in W. School isn't currently the closest school for the majority of pupils attending, it is acknowledged that many of the pupils may choose to transfer to other schools, and that this could mean that pupils would transfer to different schools.</p>
9.2	<p>No evidence has been given as to how capacity at Llanfechain School will be increased to accommodate pupils transferred from Llangedwyn.</p>	<p>As stated in the Statutory Notice published in respect of this proposal:</p> <p><i>'No measures are currently proposed to be taken to increase the number of school places available at alternative schools on consequence of the proposed discontinuance of Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School.</i></p> <p><i>However, it is recognised that should all pupils currently attending Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School transfer to Llanfechain Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, there could be some pressure on places at the school in the short term. If needed, the Council would discuss with the school's governing body to understand how the pupils could be accommodated.'</i></p>

		Given that Llangedwyn C. in W. School is not the closest school for the majority of pupils attending the school, it is likely that some pupils would choose to transfer to schools other than Llanfechain C. in W. School.
9.3	Llanfechain school's physical condition is cited by Estyn as being 'poor'. The Authority should not be proposing to introduce more pupils into a school rated 'poor' when no improvement programme has been put in place.	As stated in the Consultation Report: <i>'The Authority has a duty to maintain the building condition of all its schools. Llanfechain will be included in the Schools Major Improvements Programme as required. Work to provide additional fencing and lockable access gates is already being prioritised within the Programme.'</i>
9.4	Travel between Llangedwyn and Llanfechain is dependent on single-track roads highly vulnerable to winter weather conditions. This was recognised at the time of previous proposals to close Llangedwyn in 2011 and was a key factor in not progressing closure at that time. The current closure proposals have not adequately addressed this issue.	These comments about the roads between Llangedwyn and Llanfechain are noted. However, Llangedwyn is not currently the closest school for the majority of pupils attending the school, so it is likely that very pupils would need to travel between Llangedwyn and Llanfechain. The suitability of the route would be considered when arranging any home to school transport required.

Objection 10

Issue	Points raised	Council response
10.1	The proposal to close Llangedwyn CinW Primary School states under admissions ' from 1 st September 2024 pupils currently attending Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary controlled primary school will be admitted to Llanfechain Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School' and this is a central ethos of the proposal, in fact this assumes that all parents of children currently attending Llangedwyn	The proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School as the school is currently federated with Llangedwyn C. in W. School and this would ensure that pupils would continue to access Church in Wales provision. However parents can apply for a place at alternative schools should they prefer. Given that Llangedwyn C. in W. School isn't currently the closest school for the majority of pupils

	<p>CinW Primary school will wish to transfer their children to Llanfechain which is not true, over the past few months parents who have moved their children having been concerned by information relating to limited places at Llanfechain have in fact moved their children to other schools including one parent who moved their child to a school across the border.</p>	<p>attending, it is acknowledged that many of the pupils may choose to transfer to other schools, and that this could mean that pupils would transfer to different schools.</p>
10.2	<p>The proposal states that no measures are currently proposed to be taken to increase the number of school places available at alternative schools, with Llansantffraid already over capacity and Llanfechain at capacity this leaves no capacity for new families that move into the area or for additional children that may come to live in or around Llangedwyn thereby restricting parents choices.</p>	<p>As stated in the Statutory Notice published in respect of this proposal:</p> <p><i>‘No measures are currently proposed to be taken to increase the number of school places available at alternative schools on consequence of the proposed discontinuance of Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School.</i></p> <p><i>However, it is recognised that should all pupils currently attending Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School transfer to Llanfechain Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, there could be some pressure on places at the school in the short term. If needed, the Council would discuss with the school’s governing body to understand how the pupils could be accommodated.’</i></p> <p>There is no current evidence of any significant increased demand for places in Llangedwyn over the coming years. Pupil numbers at Llanfechain C. in W. School are also projected to decrease.</p>
10.3	<p>Llangedwyn school have a large percentage of children with ALN, many of whom would be considerably distressed</p>	<p>The needs of ALN pupils have been considered throughout the process, including in the impact assessments, which</p>

	by being forced to travel to school on a bus, by minibus or by taxi which would have a serious detrimental effect on their education.	have been updated throughout the process. Should the Council proceed with the proposal to close the school, it would work with the school to ensure appropriate transition arrangements are made to support pupils with ALN. Parents are also able to arrange their own transport for their children.
10.4	Obviously closing the school would address the issue of low pupil numbers but so would a concerted campaign to attract new pupils to the school which could be coupled with a proactive group running an after school and holiday club for the whole area.	There is no evidence of any increased demand for places at Llangedwyn C. in W. School.
10.5	It would not increase the pupil numbers at Llanfechain as they are already at capacity.	<i>'Would increase pupil numbers at Llanfechain C. in W. School'</i> is one of the reasons for the proposal as stated on the Statutory Notice, however should the Council proceed with implementation of the proposal, it is acknowledged that pupils may choose to transfer to alternative schools rather than transferring to Llanfechain C. in W. School.
10.6	It may reduce the councils overall surplus capacity in primary schools but it would remove any spare capacity for the 3 (would be 2) schools in the proposal meaning that future transport cost could well be prohibitive and wipe out any proposed financial savings being projected under this proposal. The proposal is very vague in some areas meaning that projected figures cannot be relied upon and after future transport costs there may in fact be no revenue saving to the council from this proposal and there could very well be a financial cost to the council overall.	The Council is confident that there would be sufficient places in the area to accommodate all pupils, particularly given that pupil numbers at both Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School are projected to decrease. Llangedwyn C. in W. School is not currently the closest school for the majority of pupils currently attending the school, so it is possible that pupils would transfer to other schools outside the immediate Llangedwyn area.
10.7	It is true that the council would no longer need to maintain the Llangedwyn Building but they would still need to carry out the £500k backlog of maintenance required at	The Council has a duty to maintain the building condition of all its schools. The council would need to ensure that the Llanfechain building is appropriately maintained regardless of whether or not Llangedwyn C. in W. School closes.

	Llanfechain which being an old building will have substantial ongoing maintenance costs into the future.	
10.8	It is not always beneficial for pupils, especially those with ALN, to attend larger schools or be part of larger groups, the experimental federation afternoons seem to prove this point with the majority of parents of children at Llangedwyn asking for their children to be excused from going to Llanfechain as their children feel isolated, picked on and sometimes segregated, this was not beneficial to the childrens well being or mental health.	<p>The Council is not required to provide a choice of schools according to size. The Welsh Government's definition of a small school is a school with 91 pupils or less. Llanfechain C. in W. School, which is the named receiving school in respect of this proposal, also meets this definition.</p> <p>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 will offer support to school leaders to help them manage possible changes for their learners.</p>
10.9	Pupils are not that familiar with Llanfechain school (see above) and many of them have closer connections to other schools through siblings and/or friends.	Llanfechain C. in W. School is federated with Llangedwyn C. in W. School and the Council is aware that some joint activities take place, so the expectation would be that Llangedwyn pupils have some familiarity with Llanfechain C. in W. School, its pupils and its staff. However, it is acknowledged that Llangedwyn C. in W. School is not the closest school for the majority of pupils attending, so it is possible they would have connections to other schools closer to their homes.
10.10	With Llanfechain being at capacity pupils unable to transfer may move to non-Church in Wales schools, capacity for CinW schools will disappear with the proposed closure of Llangedwyn school meaning that additional children in the future may not be able to attend a CinW school, this has been demonstrated over the past few months with parents moving their children away from Llangedwyn due to the	The proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School, which would ensure pupils currently accessing Church in Wales provision at Llangedwyn C. in W. School would be able to continue to access Church in Wales provision. However, it is acknowledged that parents may choose for their children to transfer to alternative schools, which may mean that they would no longer attend Church in Wales provision.

	uncertainties have elected to send their children to non CinW schools.	
10.11	<p>Overall the regurgitated proposal to close Llangedwyn CinW Primary school seems to be a revamp of an earlier proposal without enough consideration for changes in the local area, local people and certainly without fully exploring all of the available options for alternative proposals.</p> <p>I object to the proposal to close Llangedwyn CinW Primary school as I feel that not enough research and community consultation has taken place to allow the proposal to go forward with any credibility.</p> <p>There is now a very proactive support group for Llangedwyn CinW Primary School which means that other options should be examined and evaluated before the proposal to close is moved forward.</p>	<p>The process has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code. This included consultation, which provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to let the Council know their views on the proposal.</p> <p>A range of options were considered by the Council when developing the proposal. In addition, a number of alternative options were suggested in the consultation responses. These were considered and assessed in the consultation report.</p>

Objection 11

Issue	Points raised	Council response
11.1	<p>North Powys is a rural and sparsely populated area, however more new family houses are being built in Llansantfraid where the school is full, Llanfyllin has regularly been full in the years up to now, in fact those 2 schools being full is what scuppered the plans to close Llanfechain all those years ago, the closure was agreed by cabinet, and then it was halted when it was “discovered” that there was not enough space in the 2 nearest schools to take all the pupils.</p>	<p>Information about housing developments in the area was considered as part of the Llanfyllin Catchment Review paper.</p> <p>The latest projections indicate that no significant increase in demand for places at Llangedwyn or Llanfechain is expected over the coming years.</p>

11.2	It seems that again this process has been rushed and there has not been enough consideration given to where the children will go to school and how the children will get there.	<p>The process has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code. Timescales have been in accordance with the requirements of the Code.</p> <p>The impact on pupils has been considered throughout. Whilst the proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School, it is acknowledged that some pupils may transfer to alternative schools. Transport would be provided in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.</p>
11.3	The staff it seems have felt very much the secondary partners in the federation with Llanfechain and were not treated fairly when the announcements were made about closure.	<p>The Council notes this concern that Llangedwyn staff have felt like the secondary partners in the federation. Management of relationships across the federation is a matter for the Governing Body and the Headteacher.</p> <p>Information about the proposals for the area was shared with all schools in the area at the same time, however it is acknowledged that there were some challenges associated with the communications arrangements given that a number of schools were involved.</p>
11.4	There have been some parents who are so worried about Llanfechain being oversubscribed, that they have moved their children now, to avoid the chance of not having a place for the next academic year.	Comment noted.
11.5	The process being undertaken in the way that it has been, not consulting considerately or looking at other options, has put families and teachers under stress.	<p>The process has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code.</p> <p>A range of options were considered by the Council when developing the proposal. In addition, a number of</p>

		<p>alternative options were suggested in the consultation responses. These were considered and assessed in the consultation report.</p> <p>The Council fully acknowledges that any school reorganisation proposal creates a period of uncertainty for those affected by the proposal, including families and staff.</p>
11.6	<p>The council argue that there is a falling role, which both staff and governors put down to the extended threat of closure that has been hanging over the school and all small schools in general. In responses to previous consultation staff and governors say that the process has destabilised the staff and pupils, and caused pupils to be moved to other schools already. The poor handling of the situation could be seen as a deliberate move by Powys Council to make the closure more likely.</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that there have been discussions about the future of Llangedwyn C. in W. School for a number of years. Whilst acknowledging that this could have had an impact on pupil numbers at the school, the historical pupil numbers included in the consultation document shows that Llangedwyn pupil numbers have fluctuated from 31 in 2016 to the current number of 7 pupils.</p>
11.7	<p>Wider community involvement can also bring financial benefits to the school with the buildings being used for other community activities.</p>	<p>Fundraising for individual schools is not part of the Council's role.</p>
11.8	<p>It says in the notice explaining how to object to the closure, that the children will be bussed to Llanfechain, but then says that after that specific event of the closure, school transport will be in accordance with Powys transport Policy.</p> <p>Siblings not yet old enough to be at Llangedwyn will not get the option to attend the same Primary School as their older siblings, as the nearest school to Llangedwyn would be Llanrhaeadr Ym Mochnant.</p>	<p>The Statutory Notice states the following in respect of Home to School Transport Arrangements:</p> <p>'Transport arrangements will be provided in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy. This is as follows:</p> <p><i>'Home to school transport will be provided for learners who ordinarily reside in Powys to attend their nearest suitable school or catchment school.</i></p>

		<p>A 'catchment' school means the nearest school within a geographic area.</p> <p>To be eligible for free home to school transport, the learners' nearest school or catchment school must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nearest to the learners' home address and if so, • They are more than 2 miles from their home address for primary school (aged 4-11)' <p>In addition, the Council will provide transport for pupils for whom Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School is currently the closest school to Llanfechain Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School.</p> <p>In future, transport arrangements for any new pupils living in the area currently served by Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School would be in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy.'</p> <p>Whilst transport to Llanfechain would be provided for those for whom Llangedwyn is currently their closest school, it is correct that in future, transport would be provided in accordance with the Home to School Transport Policy, which would mean that pupils living in Llangewdyn would be entitled to transport to <i>'their nearest school or catchment school'</i>. It is acknowledged that this could impact on any pupils currently attending the school who have younger siblings, however Llangedwyn C. in W. School is not</p>
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		currently the closest school for the majority of pupils attending the school.
11.9	Many of the children at Llangedwyn are there specifically because it is a small school, there are children with ALN and also social issues who thrive there in their early school experience and move on to secondary school in a caring and supported way. I believe some children have already found the shared time with Llanfechain, brought about by federating the schools, overwhelming. They would struggle even in the slightly larger Llanfechain, and are likely to require more one to one attention from teaching assistants which is likely to disrupt the current teaching regime.	Whilst recognising the support Llangedwyn C. in W. School has provided to ALN pupils over the years, Llangedwyn is a mainstream school and does not have any specialist facilities to support ALN pupils compared with other mainstream schools.
11.10	I have heard that new classrooms and/or significant building work will be needed at Llanfechain to make it suitable for more children. In this light, I would like to have detailed information about the savings that Powys believes will be made possible by this move. In my experience in education, it is not the fabric of the building that costs the money in education, it is the daily staff and transportation costs, capital verses revenue expenditure. Also Powys will not benefit from selling the building at Llangedwyn as I assume it is owned by the Church.	<p>No new classrooms and / or significant building work is currently planned at Llanfechain C. in W. School as a result of the proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School.</p> <p>The Council has a duty to maintain the building condition of all its schools. The council would need to ensure that the Llanfechain building is appropriately maintained regardless of whether or not Llangedwyn C. in W. School closes.</p> <p>The Council is not expecting to realise a capital receipt from sale of the building. This is not one of the reasons for this proposal.</p>
11.11	I know Powys is having great difficulty balancing the books in education and many other areas and that savings are needed, but as previously the situation has not been properly thought through and although revenue savings may be made (although I doubt it as more teaching assistants are likely to be required in any school attended	<p>As stated in the Consultation Document:</p> <p><i>'It is estimated that this would result in annual revenue savings to the Council of around £56.4k. This overall figure comprises a potential saving on Schools' delegated funding</i></p>

	by those from Llangedwyn) in the long run it just means more of the Powys education budget being spent on busses and feeding private bus company profits.	<i>of £91.0k and estimated additional transport costs of £34.6k.'</i> The estimated savings include estimated additional transport costs.
11.12	Long bus journeys often demotivate children and families, the population of Powys will be less well educated, which in the long run can only disadvantage Powys as a whole.	Llangedwyn is not currently the closest school for the majority of pupils attending the school. Pupils already have quite lengthy journeys to get to school, which would be reduced should they attend their closest school.
11.13	Where children's education is concerned, small savings now just bring a lack of possible economic development in the county in 15-20 years, when its youth have not been given the skills to step up to the plate to start new businesses, to work in the high-tech businesses that are relocating here, or to continue family businesses.	The Council is confident that pupils would continue to be supported to develop the skills to start new business should they attend alternative schools.
11.14	Although I am not personally religious, the number of Church in Wales primary school places will be greatly reduced, which will cause some Powys residents some distress.	The proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School, which would ensure that pupils currently accessing Church in Wales provision could continue to do so. Whilst there would be a reduction in the places available, there would be sufficient places to meet the current demand, particularly given that pupil numbers at both Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School are projected to decrease.
11.15	The friends of the Llangedwyn School have become far more active recently, and have contributed to playground maintenance and school trip provision in recent months and have raised the profile of the school in the local community.	Comment noted.
11.16	I believe there is a suggestion within the school, to de-federate, moving back to the model of 2 teachers at Llangedwyn, one being part time head. In the many small	'Dissolve the Federation and allow Llangedwyn to exist as a standalone school' was an alternative option suggested in the consultation responses received, and was listed as a possible alternative option in the consultation report.

	schools I have worked in, both in Powys and Shropshire, this seems to work well.	As stated in the consultation report: <i>'The proposal to federate Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School was led by the governing bodies of the two schools, and both governing bodies agreed to establish the federation. 'The Federation Process of Maintained Schools in Wales' does allow for schools to leave federations, however neither school has done this.'</i>
11.17	Small communities, like Llangedwyn, invest in their local school and its facilities, governors and Friends of the School can aid this to support their local children and families in appropriate ways. For example an after school club could be run every afternoon, that could well be a positive move and also a draw for new parents in the current climate where more and more families need to have 2 parents earning, out of school childcare is severely lacking in the wider area.	Establishing an after school at Llangedwyn C. in W. School would be a matter for the school.

Objection 12

Issue	Points raised	Council response
12.1	Children are thriving at Llangedwyn and are very upset by the idea of changing schools, despite the joint activities that have been arranged with Llanfechain in recent times.	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, and 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.

12.2	The school has been proactive dealing with pupils on the autistic spectrum, who have developed well in the nurturing environment provided at the school.	<p>Whilst recognising the support Llangedwyn C. in W. School has provided to ALN pupils, Llangedwyn is a mainstream school and does not have any specialist facilities to support ALN pupils compared with other mainstream schools.</p> <p>All schools are expected to cater to the needs and requirements of learners with Additional Learning Needs, while also ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and ensuring that learners are not discriminated against as per the directions in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.</p>
12.3	The threat of closure and the way that it has been undertaken with staff finding out about closure through other schools in the area announcing it on social media before being informed by the council themselves is terrible. It has affected the staff personally and has especially affected my children who are sensitive to change in the stability of their school environment.	<p>The Council recognises that any school reorganisation process creates a period of uncertainty for all involved, including staff and pupils.</p> <p>Information about the proposals for the area was shared with all schools in the area at the same time, however it is acknowledged that there were some challenges associated with the communications arrangements given that a number of schools were involved.</p>
12.4	Pupils with behavioural issues really struggled at Llanfechain, as they were not equipped to deal with these issues, and I have concerns that this will happen again. I fear that if pupils have to move to Llanfechain now the progress made in Llangedwyn will be put in jeopardy and they will require more ALN support.	Whilst the proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School, parents can apply for a place for their children at any school should they prefer them to attend a different school.
12.5	Llangedwyn school has always been popular in the past, especially with parents who value the small school community, and the protracted threats to close the school has caused some parents to remove their children before the closure, this has affected finances and moral at the	It is acknowledged that there have been discussions about the future of Llangedwyn C. in W. School for a number of years. Whilst acknowledging that this could have had an impact on pupil numbers at the school, the historical pupil numbers included in the consultation document shows that

	school and in the local community who really value their local school.	Llangedwyn pupil numbers have fluctuated from 31 in 2016 to the current number of 7 pupils.
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Objection 13

Issue	Points raised	Council response
13.1	I strongly feel the closure of Llangedwyn school would have a devastating effect on the community, village and church, as the school has strong connections with all of these. The village would become a ghost town without the school at the heart of it all.	The Council recognises the school's role within the local community, and that closure of any school has an impact on the community in which it is located. A community impact assessment has been prepared which considers the proposal's impact on the local community, this has been updated throughout the process to reflect comments received.
13.2	The options giving for alternative schools are not suitable for every child that attends Llangedwyn and under the impression that Llanfechain is near or full. I feel it hasn't been taken in to account that a larger school isn't always better and doesn't suit all children, their needs and their mental health and wellbeing, Llanfechain may be familiar however some don't go as it isn't suitable for them, they are unhappy going there and it is detrimental to their mental health and wellbeing. This may still be a c of w school however it would be losing the history of Llangedwyn.	The proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School as the school is currently federated with Llangedwyn C. in W. School and would also ensure that pupils would continue to access Church in Wales provision, however parents can apply for a place at alternative schools should they prefer.
13.4	I feel we should be given more time to build up pupil numbers and a fair chance to rejuvenate the school, I feel we haven't had any support from governors or council members to give us a fair chance to save not only our school but the community as well.	The Council notes this comment, however, there are only seven pupils currently attending Llangedwyn CiW School, and there is no evidence that there will be an increase in pupil numbers.

13.5	The build is privately owned so wouldn't generate any extra cash for Powys and the education of the children should come before money. If we had time to increase the number this would out way the costs of the building etc.	The Council is not expecting to realise a capital receipt from sale of the building. This is not one of the reasons for this proposal.
13.6	I feel being a smaller school there is more opportunities for individual pupils to grow and have a fair chance at everything, this wouldn't be the case in a larger school.	The Council notes these comments about smaller schools. However, as stated in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2022-32, the Council faces a challenge due to the high proportion of small schools in the county and the lack of equity amongst schools. Llangedwyn C. in W. School currently has only 7 pupils, which means that it is increasingly difficult for the school to deliver education.
13.7	The extra cost of travelling to another school would not be possible as the fuel costs would be too much and we wouldn't qualify for school transport. It would also take away the availability for me to use after school clubs or breakfast clubs as the times would be much earlier start and finish so this wouldn't be an option for us either, this is something else we would lose.	As stated in the Consultation Report: <i>'The Council acknowledges that attending Llanfechain School would require additional travel for pupils for whom Llangedwyn is currently the closest school. However, Llangedwyn is not currently the closest school for the majority of the school's 7 pupils. Whilst the proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School, pupils could choose to transfer to alternative schools closer to their homes, which would reduce their travel time to school.'</i>
13.8	This would have a huge impact on the village church community also as the school has my connections and events running with each other, so not only losing our school but taking these away from the community.	The Council recognises the school's role within the local community, and that closure of any school has an impact on the community in which it is located. A community impact assessment has been prepared which considers the proposal's impact on the local community, this has been updated throughout the process to reflect comments received.

Objection 14

Issue	Points raised	Council response
14.1	I have concerns and objections for the proposed closure of Llangedwyn CW school in August 2024. My first concern is the disruption to the education of the children currently attending Llangedwyn school some of which have special educational needs.	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, and 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. This would include any pupils with additional learning needs.
14.2	For those of Christian faith, it important to school their children in a church school and Llangedwyn has always been exceptional for being closely involved with the local church. I don't feel that Llanfechain school will provide the Church connection as it is not a Church School.	The proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School, which is also a Church in Wales school and would ensure that pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. School could continue to access Church in Wales provision.
14.3	Llangedwyn is the heart of the village and the whole community will be destroyed with the closure of this school.	The Council recognises the school's role within the local community, and that closure of any school has an impact on the community in which it is located. A community impact assessment has been prepared which considers the proposal's impact on the local community, this has been updated throughout the process to reflect comments received.
14.4	We do realise the pupil numbers are low however some of my other children attended when the numbers were low this is a good thing as the children get a great education and more one to one tuition and it does attract other families to the area. It would be a great shame for this beautiful Village school to close.	The Council notes these comments about smaller schools. However, as stated in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2022-32, the Council faces a challenge due to the high proportion of small schools in the county and the lack of equity amongst schools. Llangedwyn C. in W. School currently has only 7

		pupils, which means that it is increasingly difficult for the school to deliver education.
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Objection 15

Issue	Points raised	Council response
15.1	I make this submission against the closure of Llangedwyn C in W School to be considered within the “New code setting out the presumption against rural school closures” Kirsty Williams, Education Secretary 30/6/2017 referencing bullet point 4 “Consideration of alternatives to be a two-stage process with the proposer having to consider other alternatives that emerge during the consultation process.	The Council has followed the additional requirements associated with the ‘Presumption against closure of rural schools’ which are outlined in the School Organisation Code in respect of the proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School. A further assessment of alternative options suggested during the consultation process was carried out, this is included in the consultation report.
15.2	The council have proceeded following their own closure procedure and laid out the Consultation Process to allow access for stakeholders. Whilst this sets out the process, the procedure is drawn up by the council, implemented by the council, monitored by the council but allows no independent scrutiny of the council’s initial decision. The Overview of the Consultation shows clearly the procedure is within the remit of the council but is introspective in that a consensus within the council appears to have been reached without critical reasoning or evaluation of any alternatives outside those included in the published consultation. Councillors appear to have accepted a group consensus within a predilection for school closure masked within their own consultation framework.	The process has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code. A consultation report was prepared which outlined the comments received during the consultation period. This was considered by the Council’s Cabinet, however having considered the feedback received during the consultation and the Council’s response to the issues raised, the Cabinet decided to proceed with the process.

15.3	<p>An informal review, i.e. parents and residents, of the reason for the low number of pupils attending Llangedwyn C. in W. School looking over the last two years would reveal a string of unique circumstances causing the drop in number on roll. The disastrous federation enterprise has brought disruption and upset to Llangedwyn pupils despite the best efforts and commitment of the teaching staff. There was a lack of leadership when the headteacher was away from Llangedwyn fulfilling her commitment to Llanfechain whilst battling with her own health, and eight children were removed from the school because of the behaviour of one pupil.</p>	<p>There are many reasons why parents decide to move their children from one school to another. Regardless of the reasons why pupil numbers at the school have decreased, there are currently only 7 pupils at Llangedwyn C. in W. School, and current projections are that pupil numbers are not expected to increase significantly over the coming years. This is the main reason for the current proposal to close the school.</p>
15.6	<p>The effect of the perception of the children of Llangedwyn being the poor relation within the federation has not been recognised and the lone voice of the one parent governor from Llangedwyn has now been silenced by the present chair of governors removing him from the governing body.</p>	<p>The Council notes this concern that Llangedwyn children and the Llangedwyn school community have felt like the poor relation in the federation. Management of relationships across the federation is a matter for the Governing Body and the Headteacher.</p>
15.7	<p>The structure of the teaching staff is a cause for concern in that the headteacher has a non teaching role within the staff provision of the Federation. A non teaching headteacher?</p>	<p>Staffing arrangements across the Federation are the responsibility of the Governing Body.</p>
15.8	<p>Historically when Llangedwyn C. in W. School was taken out of Clwyd into Powys there were 13 pupils on roll and Powys issued a closure notice to close the school within one year. The then incumbent drew up a recovery plan which was submitted to the Welsh Office who sent their advisor to review the school at the request of the incumbent. The recovery plan was implemented and the progress monitored by the Welsh Office who then instructed Powys County Council to withdraw the closure notice. In 1997 the pupil roll had dropped to 11 due to the</p>	<p>The Council notes that pupil numbers at Llangedwyn C. in W. School have varied over the years. However there are currently only 7 pupils at the school, making Llangedwyn C. in W. School the smallest school in Powys with the highest cost per pupil. There is no evidence that there will be a significant increase in pupil numbers at the school in the future.</p>

	threat of closure but then rose to 36 on roll in 1999 and further grew to 49 on roll in 2001. So is recovery to a sustainable number possible?	
15.9	Reference to alternative options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissolve the federation and let Llangedwyn stand alone. 	<p>‘Dissolve the Federation and allow Llangedwyn to exist as a standalone school’ was an alternative option suggested in the consultation responses received, and was listed as a possible alternative option in the consultation report.</p> <p>As stated in the consultation report:</p> <p><i>‘The proposal to federate Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School was led by the governing bodies of the two schools, and both governing bodies agreed to establish the federation. ‘The Federation Process of Maintained Schools in Wales’ does allow for schools to leave federations, however neither school has done this.’</i></p>
15.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint a new governing body for Llangedwyn school who would be committed to one school. 	A new governing body could only be appointed for Llangedwyn School following the dissolution of the current federation. See response to 15.9 above.
15.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave the present headteacher at Llanfechain to continue the development of that school. 	The headteacher has a permanent contract as Executive Headteacher for the Federation, which includes Llangedwyn and Llanfechain schools.
15.12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a dynamic deputy head with career aspirations in a Powys school who would welcome the professional development opportunity of leading a small school to recovery. A year secondment may be possible with the salary being paid from the deputy's school. 	The current headteacher has a permanent contract as Executive Headteacher for the Federation, so there is no Headteacher vacancy at Llangedwyn.
15.13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lift the closure notice and allow an 18 month period for the school to recover. 	In accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code, the Council’s Cabinet will consider the content of this Objection Report, and will consider whether or not to proceed with the process to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School.

15.14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw together a strategy to apply for special funding help from the Welsh Assembly to allow the council to fulfil the Welsh Assembly of its intent to fulfil the presumption against rural school closure in these unique circumstances. 	<p>There is no 'special funding help' available from the Welsh Assembly to support rural schools. A 'small and rural schools grant' was available for a short time following the introduction of the 'presumption against closure of rural schools', and funding from this grant was allocated to Llangedwyn C. in W. School. However, this grant is no longer available.</p>
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Objection 16

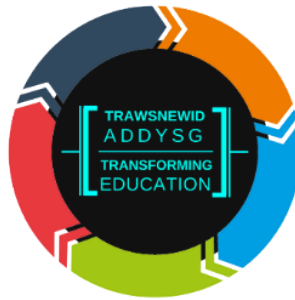
Issue	Points raised	Council response
16.1	<p>Powys County Council (PCC) stated publicly in October 2023 the timescales for the proposal to close the school. These timescales have not been adhered to and have been hastened by PCC. For instance, PCC stated the final decision would be made by the end of April 2024. We now discover that this has been moved to the end of February 2024. The process appears hurried and the closure decision pre-determined by PCC and the federated schools' leadership team as we have discovered from various FOIs received.</p>	<p>The process has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code. Whilst the original indicative timeline published in the consultation document was for the final decision to be made by the end of April 2024, this was only an indicative timeline, and the number of consultation responses received meant that it was possible to prepare the consultation report more quickly. The decision has not been 'pre-determined'.</p>
16.2	<p>One of the reasons for the proposed closure is the lack of pupil numbers. We have evidence which shows that parents were being persuaded to leave the school due to its closure way back in June 2023 and parents of potential new pupils dissuaded in enrolling in the school. The low pupil numbers are wholly misleading of the true picture of children who could attend this amazing school from within Llangedwyn and all of the surrounding areas.</p>	<p>There are many reasons why parents choose to move their children from one school to an alternative school. Regardless of the reasons why pupil numbers at the school have decreased, there are currently only 7 pupils at Llangedwyn C. in W. School. This is the main reason for the current proposal to close the school.</p>

16.3	<p>PCC continue, throughout their publicity on this matter, to mention the fact that all pupils, upon closure of Llangedwyn School, would move to Llanfechain School (which is not the nearest school to Llangedwyn). This is not feasible as Llanfechain School is at 100% capacity. As an aside, Llansantffraid Primary School is currently at 110% capacity. PCC's previously stated solution to this should this situation arise is to 'talk to the governors'. This does not constitute a considered plan nor a long-term strategy. If pupils are to continue their education through the medium of Welsh and English, and they are to maintain their tutelage encased within Church in Wales values and ethea with guidance from St. Cedwyn's supportive and involved church leaders, where are they to move to and still be near to this supportive community? Should Llangedwyn School close, the 47 Church in Wales places will be irrevocably lost.</p>	<p>As stated in the Statutory Notice, the proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School. However, parents can apply for a place at any school. Given that Llangedwyn is not the closest school for the majority of pupils attending the school, it is possible that many pupils would choose to transfer to different schools.</p> <p>The Council has acknowledged in the Statutory Notice that should all pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. School transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School, there could be some pressure on places at Llanfechain.</p> <p>As stated in the Statutory Notice:</p> <p><i>'No measures are currently proposed to be taken to increase the number of school places available at alternative schools on consequence of the proposed discontinuance of Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School.</i></p> <p><i>However, it is recognised that should all pupils currently attending Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School transfer to Llanfechain Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, there could be some pressure on places at the school in the short term. If needed, the Council would discuss with the school's governing body to understand how the pupils could be accommodated.'</i></p> <p>The proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School, which would ensure that pupils currently accessing</p>
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		Church in Wales provision could continue to do so. Whilst there would be a reduction in the places available, there would be sufficient places to meet the current demand, particularly given that pupil numbers at both Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School are projected to decrease.
16.4	The financial data for both Llangedwyn and Llanfechain Schools, the lack of transparency of PTA financial records going back to 2019, and the absence of openness concerning Llangedwyn After School Club's monetary operations has resulted in FOLS' new Treasurer reporting these discrepancies to the Charity Commission alongside the notification of this action given to various departments within PCC. This is after weeks of investigation by the Treasurer of FOLS and his attempt to gather information from the schools' federated governorship which has resulted in a discernible lack of cooperation. FOLS, as an unregistered charity, is duty bound by charity law to report said concerns. At best, this is a potential mismanagement of Llangedwyn School's finances. At worst, it could be proven fraudulent. This should be investigated forthwith and the process to close Llangedwyn School stopped by PCC.	<p>The Council is not responsible for the PTA or the After School Club. Any issues with financial arrangements relating to the PTA or the After School Club are a matter for the Charity Commission, not the Council.</p> <p>Any investigations which are ongoing relating to the financial records of these bodies is not a reason to stop the process to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School.</p>
16.5	Llangedwyn School has educated children for almost two hundred years. Its importance is deeply felt within the community, and it is ingrained in our rural culture, ruralism being something the Welsh Government have said they wish to protect.	The Council acknowledges the role that Llangedwyn CiW School has played in the history of the village.
16.6	We would love to be given the opportunity to defederate the two schools (which PCC were clear about prior to	'Dissolve the Federation and allow Llangedwyn to exist as a standalone school' was an alternative option suggested in

<p>federation that it would not offer them any cost savings) and allow Llangedwyn School to operate under a more accomplished leadership team supported by an incredibly involved community, its church leaders, the many business owners living in the area, and also various charity founders.</p>	<p>the consultation responses received, and was listed as a possible alternative option in the consultation report.</p> <p>As stated in the consultation report:</p> <p><i>'The proposal to federate Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School was led by the governing bodies of the two schools, and both governing bodies agreed to establish the federation. 'The Federation Process of Maintained Schools in Wales' does allow for schools to leave federations, however neither school has done this.'</i></p>
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Proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School

Final Updated Impact Assessments

February 2024



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Proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School

Draft Impact Assessments

1. Introduction

Powys County Council has consulted on a proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School. The proposal is as follows:

- To close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School

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, 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 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.

Proposal	Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School Proposal
Outline Summary / Description of Proposal	
To close Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School from the 31 st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School.	

1. Consultation requirements

Consultation Requirement	Consultation deadline/or justification for no consultation
Public consultation required	Consultation in accordance with the School Organisation Code took place from the 12 th of October to the 23 rd of November 2023.

2. 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"/>	Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Children's Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Commissioning	<input type="checkbox"/>	Highways, Transportation and Recycling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Digital Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Housing and Community Development	<input 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 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Is Powys County Council the data controller? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Personal details will be processed in accordance with the Transforming Education Privacy Notice.			

3. Geographical Locations

Llanfyllin



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

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
<p>A prosperous Wales: 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>As part of the Council’s Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys, this proposal represents an effort to ‘reconfigure and rationalise primary provision’ for the pupils of Llangedwyn. Implementation of this proposal would positively contribute to a Powys that uses resources efficiently, and which produces a skilled and well-educated population.</p> <p>Comments received from school staff and governors during the consultation period indicate that implementation of the new Welsh curriculum has been difficult with such a small number of pupils attending Llangedwyn. The development of pupils into skilled and well-educated members of Powys’ population will be more easily achieved at a larger school.</p>	Good		
<p>A resilient Wales: 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>Comments received during the consultation and objection periods state that implementation of the proposal would require additional travel for pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary 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. However, Llangedwyn is not currently the closest school for the majority of pupils attending the school, so the number of pupils impacted by this would be minimal – it is possible that there would be a reduction in travel for some pupils.</p>	Neutral		

	In addition, running a single school site is more environmentally friendly than running two, due to a reduction in the use of heating and electricity amongst other factors.			
<p>A healthier Wales: 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>Public Health (Wales) Act, 2017: 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 Llangedwyn C. in W. School, with pupils transferring to Llanfechain C. in W. School. 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>It is recognised that some parents may choose other schools rather than Llanfechain C.in. W School, and there could potentially be an impact on the wellbeing of pupils who are transferring to other schools without their classmates. Comments were received during the Objection Period which support this.</p>	Poor	<p>The intention is that pupils would transfer to Llanfechain, which is currently federated with Llangedwyn, meaning that they are already familiar with this school, its staff, and its pupils through taking part in joint activities. This would help with transition arrangements.</p> <p>Whichever school a parent may choose for their child, the local authority would work with the headteacher of that school to ensure that support is provided during the transition period to enable them to transfer effectively to their new schools.</p> <p>The process is to be concluded as quickly as possible to minimise the period of uncertainty for pupils, staff, and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Comments received during the consultation and objection periods indicate an emphasis on the importance of wraparound care for parents, including breakfast and after-school clubs. Activities such as these should be more easily provided at larger schools, where the greater number of pupils generally means that there is a greater level of demand. Easier access to sports clubs, and extra time to socialise with peers, should have a positive impact upon the mental and physical health of pupils.</p>	Neutral
<p>A Wales of cohesive communities: Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected Communities.</p>	There would be an impact on the community of Llangedwyn, as there would no longer be provision in the village, and therefore there could be a potential loss of community facilities associated with the school.	Poor	The Llangedwyn School building is not owned by the Council. Should the school close, the building would be transferred to its owners, who would need to determine its future use, and therefore whether facilities would remain available in Llangedwyn.	Poor

	<p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School for whom Llangedwyn is the closest school. However, Llangedwyn is not currently the closest school for the majority of pupils attending the school, so the number of pupils impacted by this would be minimal.</p> <p>A separate draft community impact assessment has been carried out with input from the school, which concludes that the impact on the village would be minimal, particularly as most pupils that attend the school don't live in Llangedwyn.</p> <p>Responses to the consultation and issues raised during the objection period indicate that the school plays an important part in the community of Llangedwyn. Especially emphasised is the school's connection with the church. Concern was also expressed during the objection period about the potential impact on the village hall.</p>		<p>There is a Village Hall in Llangedwyn which is already used more widely by the local community, so any events/meetings which are currently held at the school could be located there.</p>	
<p>A globally responsible Wales: 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>Human Rights - is about being proactive (see guidance)</p> <p>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: The Convention gives rights to everyone under the age of 18, which</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 consultation period and the objection period have given an opportunity for those affected by the plans to let the Council know their views. As part of the consultation, the school's Headteacher discussed the proposal with pupils. The feedback received from them was included in the Consultation Report.</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		

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.				
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. <i>Incorporating requirements under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards</i>				
<i>Opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and treating the Welsh language no less favourable than the English language</i>	<p>Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School and Llanfechain C. in W. School are both English-medium schools, 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>Comments made during the consultation and objection periods indicate that some pupils may move to schools in England should Llangedwyn close, thus reducing the number of pupils accessing Welsh-language lessons. However, the number of pupils at Llangedwyn is very small, so this is unlikely to have a significant impact upon opportunities for Powys pupils to access the Welsh language.</p>	Neutral		
<i>Opportunities to promote the Welsh language</i>	<p>Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School and Llanfechain C. in W. School are both English-medium schools, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the proposal would impact on opportunities to promote the Welsh language.</p>	Neutral		
<i>People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation.</i>	<p>Implementation of the proposal would lead to the closure of Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School,</p>	Good		

	<p>with pupils transferring to Llanfechain C. in W. School.</p> <p>This would result in increasing pupil numbers at Llanfechain C. in W. School, which should enable the school to provide additional opportunities for pupils to take part in sport, art, and other extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>Comments made during the consultation and objection periods indicate that wraparound care such as breakfast and after-school clubs are very important for parents. Larger schools are generally able to offer a greater number of sports clubs than smaller schools. Should Llangedwyn close, pupils should be able to access sports clubs more easily.</p>			
<p>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). <i>Incorporating requirements under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and the Social Economic duty (2020).</i></p>				
Age	<p>The proposal would impact on primary aged pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School. The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all affected pupils.</p>	Neutral		
Disability	<p>The proposal would impact on any pupils with disabilities currently attending Llangedwyn 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 and objection periods expressed concern about the</p>	Neutral	Support to be provided to pupils with additional learning needs to support their transition to alternative schools.	

	proposal's impact on pupils with additional learning needs in particular.			
Gender reassignment	No impact.	Neutral		
Marriage or civil partnership	No impact.	Neutral		
Race	The proposal would impact on all primary aged pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary 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		
Religion or belief	The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School, regardless of their religion or belief. Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School is a church school, however the proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School, which is also a C. in W. School, which would ensure continued access to Church in Wales provision.	Neutral		
Sex	The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School.	Neutral		
Sexual Orientation	The proposal aims to provide improved educational opportunities for all pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School, regardless of their sexual orientation.	Neutral		
Pregnancy and Maternity	No impact.	Neutral		
Socio-economic duty	The aim of the proposal is to provide improved educational opportunities for all pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School,	Neutral		

	<p>including any eligible for Free School Meals. PLASC data from January 2023 shows that 23.1% of pupils at Llangedwyn C. in W. School were eligible for Free School Meals, so the proposal would impact on some pupils from lower income homes.</p> <p>Should the proposal be implemented, there would be no school in Llangedwyn. This would mean that pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School would need to travel to Llanfechain C. in W. School. 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. However, Llangedwyn is not currently the closest school for the majority of pupils attending the school, so the number of pupils impacted by this would be minimal.</p>			
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Source of Outline Evidence to support judgements

PLASC, consultation responses, consultation report, objections, objection report

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

Principle	How does the proposal impact on this principle?	IMPACT 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?	IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION Please select from drop down box below
Sustainable Development Principle (5 ways of working)				
<p>Long Term: Looking to the long term so that we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.</p>	<p>Pupil numbers at Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School are very low and are not expected to increase 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.</p>	<p>Good</p>		
<p>Collaboration: Working with others in a collaborative way to find shared sustainable solutions.</p>	<p>The consultation period and the objection period have given an opportunity for those affected by the plans to let the Council know their views. This included an opportunity to suggest alternative options for the school.</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		
<p>Involvement (including Communication and Engagement): Involving a diversity of the population in the decisions that affect them including: Unpaid Carers: Ensuring that unpaid carers views are sought and taken into account</p>	<p>The consultation period and the objection period have given an opportunity for those affected by the plans to let the Council know their views. The findings of this exercise will be reported to Cabinet and will be taken into consideration when determining how to proceed.</p> <p>All stakeholders have had the opportunity to give their views as part of this process, this includes any unpaid carers in the area.</p>	<p>Good</p>		

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Principle	How does the proposal impact on this principle?	IMPACT 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?	IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION Please select from drop down box below
<p>Prevention: Understanding the root causes of issues to prevent them from occurring including:</p> <p>Safeguarding: Preventing and responding to abuse and neglect of children, young people and adults with health and social care needs who can't protect themselves.</p>	<p>The aim of the proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. 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> <p>Comments made by governors and school staff indicate that safeguarding measures have been difficult to uphold in a school as small as Llangedwyn. On occasion, the school has been forced to close where it has had too few staff available to meet safeguarding requirements.</p>	Good		
<p>Integration: Taking an integrated approach so that public bodies look at all the well-being goals in deciding on their well-being objectives.</p>	No impact.	Neutral		

Principle	How does the proposal impact on this principle?	IMPACT 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?	IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION Please select from drop down box below
Powys County Council Workforce: What Impact will this change have on the Workforce?	Implementation of the proposal would impact on all current staff at Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School as there would no longer be a school in Llangedwyn, therefore staff would be subject to a Management of Change process. The current process has been supported by relevant LA teams (e.g. HR). This has included consultation with staff, ensuring that they had an opportunity to give their views.	Poor		Poor
Payroll: 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 Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School.	Neutral		
Welsh Language impact on staff	Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School is an English-medium school, therefore it is not anticipated that there would be a Welsh-language impact on staff.	Neutral		
Apprenticeships: 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				

6. 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
Llangedwyn	<p>There would be an impact on the community of Llangedwyn, as there would no longer be provision in the village, and therefore there could be a potential loss of community facilities associated with the school.</p> <p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School for whom Llangedwyn is the closest school. However, Llangedwyn is not currently the closest school for the majority of pupils attending the school, so the number of pupils impacted by this would be minimal.</p> <p>A separate community impact assessment has been carried out with input from the school, which concludes that the impact on the village would be minimal, particularly as most pupils that attend the school don't live in Llangedwyn.</p> <p>Comments made during the consultation and objection periods indicate that the school plays an important part in the Llangedwyn community for those that live in it, especially regarding its links with the church.</p>	Major	<p>The Llangedwyn School building is not owned by the Council. Should the school close, the building would be transferred to its owners, who would need to determine its future use, and therefore whether facilities would remain available in Llangedwyn.</p> <p>There is a Village Hall in Llangedwyn which is already used more widely by the local community, so any events / meetings which are currently held at the school could be located there.</p>	Major	

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

Description of risks			
Risk Identified	Inherent Risk Rating Impact X Likelihood (See Risk Matrix in guidance document)	Mitigation	Residual Risk Rating Impact X Likelihood (See Risk Matrix in guidance document)
N/A			

8. Overall Summary and Judgement of this Impact Assessment?

Outline Assessment (to be inserted in cabinet report)	Cabinet Report Reference:
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 ensuring the best strategic management of the Powys schools estate, the assessment has also identified some negative aspects; these primarily relate to the impact on the community of Llangedwyn due to loss of educational provision from the village.	

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

What additional evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?
Feedback received during the consultation period and the objection period has enabled the impact assessment to be further developed.

10. 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.
Please state when this Impact Assessment will be reviewed.
The impact assessment will be reviewed at all stages of the development.

3. Equality Impact Assessment

Powys County Council

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)



Proposal	To close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School.
Service Area	Schools Service
Date of Assessment	October 2023 Updated December 2023 Updated February 2024

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

The Council has carried out the statutory process on a proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School.

The proposal is as follows:

- To close Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School from the 31st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School

2. OBJECTIVES

Please state the current business objectives of the change proposal.

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

- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers at Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School
- Would increase pupil numbers at Llanfechain C. in W. School
- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- Revenue saving to the Council
- The Council would no longer need to maintain the Llangedwyn building
- Pupils would attend a larger school where they would be part of a larger cohort of pupils
- Pupils would transfer to a school they are already familiar with
- Pupils would continue to access Church in Wales provision

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 Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School
- Would increase pupil numbers at Llanfechain C. in W. School
- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- Revenue saving to the Council
- The Council would no longer need to maintain the Llangedwyn building
- Pupils would attend a larger school where they would be part of a larger cohort of pupils
- Pupils would transfer to a school they are already familiar with

- Pupils would continue to access Church in Wales provision

4. CORPORATE RELEVANCE

How does this change proposal relate to Corporate Improvement Plan?

The proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School is aligned to the Transforming Education Programme and forms part of the Transformation Portfolio, setup to support the priorities and objectives outlined in the Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan.

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 No

Please state the gaps:

- None

How will the gaps be addressed going forward? N/A

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 2023

Based on the information provided in the school's PLASC return in January 2023, the following pupils at Llangedwyn C. in W. School belong to the protected characteristic groups:

- Free school meals: 23.1% of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals.
- ALN: 38.5% of pupils have additional educational needs. Of these, 15.4% of pupils are on School Action, 15.4% of pupils are on School Action Plus, 0.0% of pupils have statements, 0.0% of pupils have IDPs issued by the School and 7.7% of pupils have IDPs issued by the local authority.
- Disabilities: 38.5% of pupils have additional learning needs.
- English as an Additional Language: 0.0% of pupils with EAL.
- Ethnicity: The ethnic group of 100% of pupils in the school is White British
- Looked after Children: 15.4% of pupils are looked after.

This information shows that a small number of pupils that belong to a protected characteristic group will be affected by this proposal. In particular:

- 23.1% of pupils at Llangedwyn C. in W. School are eligible for Free School Meals. This is higher than the Powys average for primary schools (18.8%), however, there are very small numbers of pupils at Llangedwyn, so this percentage translates to very few pupils
- 38.5% of pupils at Llangedwyn C. in W. School have additional learning needs. This is higher than the Powys average for primary schools (20.9%)

	The proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School would impact on all pupils currently attending the school, including those pupils belonging to protected characteristic groups.
<p>6.2 Qualitative Summarise the key qualitative data analysis, providing key themes or patterns. Include data that relates to existing provision and also data relating to proposal. E.g. protected characteristics focus group on the proposal.</p> <p>Key questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Do certain groups have a different service user experience? How will a change affect this? ii) Have any areas for improvement been communicated by particular groups? Will a change have an impact upon these views? iii) What are the reasons behind some groups not using the service? How will a change affect this position? iv) What has consultation on your proposals revealed about impact on the protected characteristics? 	<p>Consultation has been carried out on the proposal relating to Llangedwyn C. in W. School, which included consultation with pupils. In addition, there has been a 28 day objection period when people could submit written objections if they did not agree with the proposal. This provided qualitative data in respect of the proposal, and information regarding any additional impact on pupils that belong to protected characteristic groups.</p> <p>Comments received during the course of the consultation indicated concern about the impact on pupils with additional learning needs that currently attend the school, and concern about Looked After Children that currently attend the school.</p> <p>Comments expressing concern about the impact on pupils with additional learning needs were also received during the objection period.</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.

The proposal does not present any adverse impact on equality. [Proceed to question 10]	
The proposal presents some adverse impact on equality. [Proceed to question 8]	✓
The proposal presents significant impact on equality [Proceed to question 8]	

8. AREAS for IMPROVEMENT

<p>Please provide detail of weak or sensitive areas of the proposal identified by the assessment.</p> <p>i) Which protected characteristic groups are particularly affected? ii) Will people on low incomes be affected? iii) Will Welsh speakers be affected?</p>	<p>i) Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) attending the school would be affected by the proposal. The proportion of pupils with ALN at the school is higher than the Powys average. Comments received during the consultation expressed concern about the impact on pupils with ALN if they had to move to different schools.</p> <p>In addition, there are a number of Looked After Children currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. School who would be affected by the proposal. Comments received during the consultation expressed concern about the impact on these pupils.</p> <p>ii) As indicated above, 23.1% of Llangedwyn pupils are eligible for Free School Meals, which is higher than the Powys average, so it is likely that a number of pupils / families on low incomes would be affected by the proposal.</p> <p>iii) Llangedwyn C. in W. School is an English medium school – therefore the proposal will not directly affect Welsh speakers.</p>
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9. EQUALITY IMPROVEMENT

<p>9.1 Having identified problematic aspects to the proposal, how will this now be addressed?</p>	<p>Should the proposal be implemented, Llangedwyn C. in W. School would close. Whilst the proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School, it is possible that pupils would choose to transfer to other schools.</p>
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<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>The proposal would have a significant impact on pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. School, including any pupils belonging to the protected characteristic groups that attend that school.</p> <p>In particular, some additional travel may be required for them to attend their nearest alternative school. However, it is to be noted that Llangedwyn is currently not the nearest school for the majority of pupils that attend provision there. Therefore, the impact of additional travel is likely to be minimal. Some pupils may choose to transfer to schools that are closer to their homes, which would minimise the impact further.</p> <p>In addition to the impact of additional travel, concern has been raised about the impact on pupils belonging to the protected characteristic groups of having to transfer to alternative schools. This includes pupils with additional learning needs. Whilst the Council acknowledges these concerns, all schools are expected to cater to the needs and requirements of learners with Additional Learning Needs, so there is no reason to believe that Llanfechain C. in W. School or any other schools pupils may choose to transfer to would be unable to meet the needs of pupils. Smaller schools with limited resources and personnel may be presented with challenges implementing responsibilities in line with the Equality Act – including providing diverse support systems, accommodations and bespoke services necessary to meet the diverse needs of learners. In addition, social interaction is key to development. In small classes, there are fewer opportunities for learners with ALN to interact with a diverse peer group, and experience role modelling from their peers. In essence, the effectiveness of an educational environment for learners with ALN depends on a holistic approach that includes both class size and the availability of appropriate resources and support.</p> <p>Concern has also been expressed during the consultation and objection periods about the impact on pupils who currently attend the school, who would need to transfer to alternative schools should Llangedwyn close. Whilst the Council acknowledges these concerns, there is no reason to believe that Llanfechain C. in W. School or any other school pupils may choose to transfer to would be unable to meet the needs of pupils belonging to the protected characteristic groups that would be affected.</p>
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	Having considered the impact on protected characteristic groups, the Council does not consider that the proposals requires modification to reduce or remove the impact on protected characteristic groups.
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9.2 Will the management of the impact as outlined in 9.1, be included in the Service Improvement Plan?

<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Date added.....</p> <p>Reference.....</p>	<p>No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If no, please explain why not: Need was not identified at time of writing Service Strategy</p>
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4. Community Impact Assessment – Llangedwyn C. in W. School.

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

The closest provider for the 17 pupils that were attending Llangedwyn C. in W. School in January 2022 was as follows:

School	% of Pupils
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	17.6%
Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant C.P. School	35.3%
Ysgol Llanfyllin	11.8%
Ysgol Meifod	11.8%
Llanfechain C. in W. School	5.8%
Ysgol Bro Cynllaith	5.8%
Bryn Offa Primary School (Shropshire)	5.8%
Weston Rhyn Primary School (Shropshire)	5.8%

This suggests that Llangedwyn was the closest school for only 17.6% of pupils attending the school. 82.4% of pupils attending the school lived closer to other primary schools.

This information has been updated to reflect the pupils attending the school in January 2024. The closest provider for these pupils is as follows:

School	% of Pupils
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	14.3%
Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant C.P. School	14.3%
Ysgol Meifod	28.6%
Ysgol Bro Cynllaith	14.3%
Bryn Offa Primary School (Shropshire)	14.3%

Weston Rhyn Primary School (Shropshire)	14.3%
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ii) After-school clubs and extra-curricular activities provided by the school

- After School Club

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

- Little Hedgehogs Stay and Play
- Venue for Church Council Meetings

iv) Other use by the community of the school building

- None

v) Other links between the school and the community

- Links with St Cedwyn's Church. E.g. services in the church, visits from church members, activities in the church.
- Children meet with Jubilee Club (over 60's group)
- Campaigning for purchase of Sycharth Castle
- Community coffee mornings
- School field used by Football Club and for Car Boot sales
- Recycling site for Crisp packets

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

The school has indicated that while some services are provided at and by the school, there is a Village Hall in Llangedwyn which is used more widely by the local community than the school building.

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

- The majority of pupils in attendance at Llangedwyn C. in W. School live closer to other schools, with only 17.6% of Llangedwyn pupils being able to call Llangedwyn their nearest school.
- Information from the schools suggests that most pupils travel to Llangedwyn from out of catchment.

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 eventual implementation of the preferred option, support would be provided to pupils and their parents as part of the transition process.

The proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School, which is federated with Llangedwyn C. in W. School, which would help with the transition arrangements and would help to ensure parents' and pupils' engagement.

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

As mentioned above, Llangedwyn is currently not the closest school for the majority of its pupils. Closure of Llangedwyn school may result in greater numbers of pupils walking or cycling to school should they choose to attend their closest school, as there would be a reduction in the distance from their home to school.

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 Llangedwyn 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

The school has indicated that several families of pre-school aged children may choose to move elsewhere should Llangedwyn be closed.

The school has also indicated that fewer families may choose to move to the village should the school be closed.

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

Llangedwyn has a Village Hall which the school has indicated is more widely used by the community than the school. Therefore, some of the services offered by the school in the local community may be moved to the Village Hall.

- **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 while a small number of services are run from the school building, there is also a Village Hall in Llangedwyn which is used more widely by the local community.

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

The school has indicated that due to the size and nature of the village, there is virtually no local economy based in Llangedwyn, and what there is, is not dependant on the school or the families that attend.

- **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 eventual implementation of the preferred option, support would be provided to pupils and their parents as part of the transition process.

The proposal is for pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School, which is federated with Llangedwyn C. in W. School, which would help with the transition arrangements and would help to ensure parents' and pupils' engagement.

It is acknowledged that there could be an impact on pupils' ability to participate in after school activities, however Llangedwyn is not currently the closest school for the majority of pupils that attend.

- **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 while the school offers some local services, in particular linking with the Church, what services are on offer could be relocated to the Village

Hall in Llangedwyn, which is already used more widely by the local community.

Based on information provided by the school, the fact that the majority of pupils that Llangedwyn is not the closest school for the majority of pupils that currently attend, combined with the low pupil numbers, means that the closure of the school would not have a significant impact economically, culturally, or socially on the village of Llangedwyn.

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**
 - Additional travel time/distance
 - Queries about the Council's Home to School Transport Policy

- **Comments about Church in Wales provision**
 - Positive comments about Church in Wales schools / Christian ethos
 - Access to Church in Wales provision will be insufficient if Llangedwyn closes

- **Impact on the community**
 - General concern about the impact on the community
 - The school is an important part of the community
 - Reference to the importance of the school working with the church to the community

xii) Issues raised during the objection period

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

The objections received are listed in the Objection Report produced in respect of this proposal, along with the Council's response to the points raised. The

following is a summary of the points raised regarding the proposal's impact on the community:

- General concern about the impact on the community
- Concern that families would not want to move to the area
- Concern about impact on links with the Church
- Concern about impact on the Village Hall
- Concern about additional travel for pupils
- Concern about the impact of losing rural schools on rural communities

xiii) Conclusion

Should Llangedwyn C. in W. School close, there would be an impact on the village of Llangedwyn as there would no longer be a school in the village. However, the impact of school closure on the village would likely be minimal, particularly as most pupils that currently attend the school don't live in Llangedwyn.

In addition, information received from the school indicates that whilst there are links between the school and the community, community use of the school building is minimal. There is a Village Hall in Llangedwyn which is already used more widely by the local community, so any events/meetings etc which are currently held at the school could be located to the Village Hall.

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

27 February 2024

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Cllr David Thomas
Portfolio Holder for Finance

REPORT TITLE: Financial Forecast for the year ended 31st March 2024 (as at 31st December 2023)

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To provide Cabinet with the forecast revenue budget outturn for the 2023-24 financial year, based on the full year forecasts as at 31st December 2023.

2. Background

- 2.1. Based on the position as at the end of December 2023, the projected outturn position has stabilised at a position of £3.0 million of general surplus with a further £0.1 million to be transferred to specific reserves. This represents a slight change from the position reported at Quarter 2 (£2.9 million surplus reported, which included the £0.2 million to be transferred to specific reserves).
- 2.2. The increased employee costs following pay awards being settled at a higher than anticipated level have all now been accounted for and are reflected within this quarter's position.
- 2.3. Whilst the council is managing its budget position this year, we cannot underestimate the challenge the council faces in maintaining a balanced budget next year and over the medium term. Inflation and increased demand continue to create pressure on our finances and with the outlook for public finances nationally, the situation across local government is described by the Welsh Local Government Association as "extremely bleak and the options for many local services will be unpalatable".
- 2.4. Table 1 below summarises the projected full year outturn position across the Council's services including HRA and delegated schools as at 31 December 2023. Appendix A provides detail of the financial position for each service, broken down into categories covering cost pressures, cost underspends, cost reductions and use of reserves.

Table 1 – Forecast Position

Revenue Budget	£'000
Base Budget	326,622
Cost Pressures	7,385
Cost Underspends	(11,982)
Cost Reductions Shortfall	1,259
Costs Funded from Risk	0
Sub Total	323,284
Underspend before Reserves	3,338
Funded by:	
Agreed use of reserves	188
Net Underspend before agreed transfers to specific reserves	3,151
Agreed transfer to Specific Reserve	131
Underspend	3,019

- 2.5. Children's Services continue to face unavoidable pressures in relation to an increased demand for placements for children with complex needs amid a national shortage of placements. Alongside this, there continues to be increasing demand due to the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). These pressures have impacted on the service's ability to deliver the cost reductions identified for 2023-24 in full. Cumulatively, these issues would have resulted in a forecast overspend position of £1.2 million, however it has been agreed that £0.8m of the risk budget would be applied to mitigate some of these pressures. The service is continuing to work on measures that will address the remaining forecast overspend (£0.4m) in order to minimise budget pressures for the next financial year.
- 2.6. The underspend projected for Corporate budgets in quarter 2, is due to borrowing costs being lower than previously projected, due to some capital schemes being reprofiled into future years, and a drive to minimise in-year borrowing whilst borrowing rates remain high. There has also been increased income from any surplus cash that is held in deposit accounts. As in previous years, we are proposing to transfer this underspend into the capital financing reserve and these figures reflect this. The final figure will be reported at year end. Corporate budgets continue to project a £2.1 million underspend at the end of quarter 3, due in part to underspends on the cost of collection, council tax premium collection and benefits, although these are partially offset by an overspend on housing benefit. The remaining underspend relates to the Risk budget, although some elements of the Risk budget have been released to mitigate pressures in service areas. The Risk budget will be released to services as costs materialise through the last three months of the financial year. This becomes more likely as the year progresses.

2.7. Further detail about each service area is provided in Appendix B, with Heads of Service setting out their individual narrative that explains their financial position. This includes their activities being undertaken to deliver approved cost reductions, the pressures facing the service and how they are managing their budget to mitigate any shortfalls.

3. Cost Reductions

3.1. Cost reductions of £16.5 million were approved as part of the Council's budget for 2023-24 and the delivery of these is required to achieve a balanced budget this year. In addition, undelivered savings from 2022-23 have been rolled forward totalling £0.9 million, these also need to be delivered.

3.2. The summary at Table 2 shows that 71% or £12.4 million has been delivered to date with a further 21% (£3.7 million) assured of delivery by services. £1.2 million (7%) are unachieved and are unlikely to be delivered in this financial year. Services are being challenged as to why the position for some proposals has changed and will be required to consider mitigating action to ensure that they can deliver within the budget allocated.

Table 2 – Cost Reductions

£'000	To Be Achieved	Actually Achieved	Assured	Un-achieved	% Achieved
Adult Services	4,648	4,085	563	-	88%
Childrens Services	3,013	1,561	952	500	52%
Commissioning - Adults & Children	97	97	-	-	100%
Economy and Digital Services	24	-	24	-	-
Education	830	825	5	-	99%
Schools Delegated	864	864	-	-	100%
Finance	73	73	-	-	100%
Central Activities	3,003	3,003	-	-	100%
Highways Transport & Recycling	3,594	1,202	1,817	575	33%
Housing & Community Development	379	191	187	-	51%
Legal Services	8	8	0	-	95%
Transformation and Communications	8	8	-	-	100%
Property, Planning & Public Protection	848	510	137	201	60%
Workforce & OD	20	2	17	-	12%
Total	17,409	12,429	3,704	1,276	71%
		71%	21%	7%	

3.3. The budget savings for 2022-23 amounted to £10.9 million in total and at the quarter three point, 67% had been achieved and only 11% were assured. By year end, we were unable to deliver 22% (£2.4 million). Comparing that performance against this year's predictions suggests services are making better progress in delivering savings put forward through budget setting for 2023-24.

3.4. Those services that show unachieved savings targets must consider what remedial action they take to mitigate the impact on the overall performance within their service, as their budget forecast must come back to a balanced position. At this point in the year, opportunities to reduce spend and bring the targets back on track are diminishing.

4. Reserves

- 4.1. The Reserves position at Table 3 sets out the forecast movement in reserves for the whole financial year as at 31st December 2023. The opening reserves totalled £68.0 million, with a general fund reserve £9.3 million, representing 4.3% of total net revenue budget (excluding Schools Delegated Budget and the HRA). The Council's Reserves policy requires the general fund reserve to be maintained at a minimum of 4% of net revenue budget.

Table 3 – Reserves Table

Summary	Opening Balance (1st April 23) Surplus / (Deficit)	Budgeted (Use) of Reserves	Forecast (Over) / Under Spend	Projected Balance (31st March 24) Surplus/ (Deficit)
General Fund	9,333	936	0	10,269
Budget Management Reserve	3,584	0	0	3,584
Specific Reserves	35,329	(7,925)	230	27,634
Transport & Equipment Funding Reserve	9,460	(1,043)	0	8,417
Total Useable Reserves	57,706	(8,032)	230	49,904
Schools Delegated Reserves	6,666	(6,201)	216	681
School Loans & Other Items	(371)	7	0	(364)
Housing Revenue Account	3,967	0	0	3,967
Total Reserves	67,968	(14,226)	446	54,188

- 4.2. The budgeted use of specific reserves relates to the use of grants received in 2022/23 for use in 2023/34 (£5.6 million), £1.0 million relates to levelling up match funding and £0.9m relates to the closure of specific reserves and transfer into general fund reserves as agreed in the quarter 1 revenue report.
- 4.3. Schools set their original budgets, as approved by governing bodies with an expected call on reserves of £6.0 million as shown in the right hand column in Table 4. That budgeted draw on reserves then increased to £6.2 million, but the current forecast shows that schools are now forecasting to draw £6.0 million from reserves in the financial year. This would result in a forecast school reserve balance of £0.6 million by 31 March 2024, with a balance of £0.3 million deficit on the closed schools reserve.

Table 4 – Schools reserve forecasts

School Sector	Opening Balance 31/3/23	Budgeted Contribution (from) / to Reserves in 2023/24 as at 31/3/24	Forecasted Variance to Budgeted Contribution (from) / to Reserves in 2023/24 as at 30/11/23	Forecasted Closing Balance 31/3/24	Governing Body submitted Budget Contribution (from)/to reserves as at 1/5/23
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Primary	6,654	(3,409)	(17)	3,228	(3,479)
Special	1,047	(620)	164	591	(817)
Secondary	(1,908)	(1,695)	19	(3,584)	(1,291)
All Through	830	(477)	50	403	(424)
Sub Total	6,623	(6,201)	216	638	(6,011)
Loans	(7)	0	0	(7)	0
Closed Schools	(321)	0	0	(321)	0
Total	6,295	(6,201)	216	310	(6,011)

4.4. Schools projecting deficit budget plans are being supported to implement recovery plans to realign their budgets and deficit agreements are being put in place where needed.

5. Virements and Grants

5.1. There are some budget virements required based on the current financial position which are listed below and are included to comply with financial regulations in relation to budget virements:

Highways, Transport and Recycling:

5.1.1. As part of the Finance Resource Model for the 2023/24 budget setting cycle, Waste and Recycling Strategy received growth budget of £363k for the expected impact of a Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) contract retender. Due to delays in retendering the contract Waste Strategy do not require the full growth budget provided and the service are requesting to transfer £206k of this growth funding to Transport Services who are presently reporting an overspend position due to escalating school transport expenditure.

5.1.2. A virement request for £400k is made to fund additional spend to address potholes as the highways service is projecting an overspend of £407k due to increased demand. Use of the Risk Budget is requested.

5.1.3. A virement request of £500k is made to top up the Transport Reserve. This year the transport reserve is budgeted to fund £1.0 million for the purchase of equipment and vehicles, but unlike previous years contributions from services through annual depreciation of £1 million are being used to support delivery of a balanced budget position. This reserve is used for all transport and equipment costs, the purchase costs of which are increasing, but contributions remain static. It is requested that the Risk Budget is used to fund the virement request.

Social Care:

- 5.1.4. Health and Social Care Climate Emergency National Programme grant of £28,500 - This initiative provides a good opportunity for social care suppliers to address the role they have in climate change. The main impact of the project will come from how it is communicated and implemented with providers.
- 5.1.5. Turnaround Programme, Ministry of Justice grant of £50,387.54 - The purpose of the funding is to enable earlier intervention and improve outcomes for children on the cusp of entering the Youth Justice System. This additional funding will enable consistent support to a cohort of children not currently on the statutory caseload.
- 5.1.6. Youth Custody grant funding of £3,093 - allocation towards remands to youth detention accommodation of children and young people (under 18 years of age). This payment is in respect of children detained on remand in under-18s Young Offender Institutions (YOIs), the treatment of remanded children as “children looked after”, and the costs of escorting remanded children to and from youth detention accommodation.
- 5.1.7. Additional Youth Justice grant allocation of £2,198 - an uplift of 4.5% to the 2023/24 allocation. To be used to support YJS to overcome some of the financial barriers to maintaining relationships with children in the secure estate. Where services don't have children in custody this additional funding can be used in wider delivery of the youth justice services to support children.
- 5.1.8. Eliminating Profit from Care, Welsh Government Grant of £260,000 - the purpose of the funding is to support the Programme for Government commitments to eliminate profit from the care of looked after children and explore radical reform of current services for looked after children and care leavers.
- 5.1.9. Transfer of the Childrens Contract & Commissioning budget £804,970 from Commissioning for Adults & Children to Childrens services to align with line management and budget holder responsibilities.
- 5.1.10. A virement request of £0.810m from the Risk Budget to fund the increasing demand due to the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and the unavoidable pressures in relation to an increased demand for placements for children with complex needs amid a national shortage of placements which has impacted on the service's ability to deliver the cost reductions identified for 2023/24 in full.

Costs of borrowing

- 5.1.11. As has been requested in previous years, we are proposing to transfer the underspend from the cost of borrowing for the capital programme, estimated at £1.6 million into the Capital Financing Reserve. This reserve will be essential in future years to support our Capital Programme helping to reduce the need to borrow. The budget proposed for 2024/25 does not increase the revenue budget to support borrowing. because we have not increased budgets through the budget process and will call on reserve or use receipts, in order to support capital projects in future years in line with previous years.

6. Financial Risks

- 6.1. The Council holds a £3.0m revenue risk budget centrally to manage the cost of potential additional pressures identified through budget setting but not funded at a

service level, especially inflation and demographic pressures. Although CPI levels are now starting to fall, they remain higher than our budgeted allocations. This risk remains as the year progresses.

- 6.2. The greatest financial risk remains in our ability to deliver a balanced budget over the medium and longer term. The Draft Budget for 2024-25 recommended to Council sets a balanced budget, but the MTFs published alongside it shows a funding gap of £18.3 million in 2025/26. If not addressed, the cumulative funding gap by 2028-29 of £46.0 million as a best-case scenario, although based on anticipated reductions in aggregate external finance, this gap could be £64.6 million. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the assumptions on which the Financial Resource Model is based continue to be reviewed and we continue to plan in a challenging and uncertain time. We will continue to update on our projections as more information becomes available.
- 6.3. The Council remains under-borrowed as we continue to utilise our cash reserves to underpin our cashflow. We can borrow both in the short to medium or longer term, but the cost of borrowing has risen due to the changes in bank rate. Our approach is regularly updated and explained as part of the Treasury Management update to Governance and Audit Committee.

7. Resource Implications

The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) has provided the following comment:

- 7.1. As outlined in paragraph 2.3 the council is managing its in-year position in 2023/24.
- 7.2. The delivery of savings is progressing well with assurance provided by Heads of Service that a further £3.7 million can be achieved by year end. £1.2 million remains at risk of delivery and it is essential that those services consider what remedial action they take to mitigate the impact and deliver a balanced position, otherwise any shortfall will be rolled into next year for delivery then, alongside any further reductions agreed as part of the budget setting for 2024-25.
- 7.3. The pressure is equally felt across School budgets. Collectively schools are projecting a slightly reduced draw from their specific reserves than that reported in quarter 2 which is due to recovery plans submitted during the third quarter. Local authority officer support to schools will ensure that Governing Bodies take appropriate and timely action to manage their individual budget positions which will be essential to help them manage the ongoing financial pressures.
- 7.4. We continue to develop proposals to reduce the budget gap projected over the medium term. The Sustainable Powys programme is fundamental to our approach to this, but may take several years to be fully realised, meaning that alternative strategies have also been considered as part of developing the budget plan for 2024/25. Local authorities across Wales will face unpalatable decisions as they set their budgets for the coming years.
- 7.5. Financial Resilience and sustainability can only be achieved by delivering a lower cost Council, effectively managing our collective resources, robust and transparent decision making, and actively managing risk supported by an appropriate level of reserves.

8. Legal implications

8.1. The Head of Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer has no comment with this report.

9. Climate Change & Nature Implications

9.1. Not applicable.

10. Data Protection

10.1. There are no data protection issues within this report.

11. Comment from local member(s)

11.1. This report relates to all service areas across the whole County.

12. Impact Assessment

12.1. No impact assessment required.

13. Recommendation

13.1. That Cabinet note the current budget position and the projected full year forecast to the end of March 2024.

13.2. The virements set out in section 5.1 are approved, this is to comply with the virement rules for budget movements as set out in the financial regulations.

Contact Officer: Jane Thomas

Email: jane.thomas@powys.gov.uk

Head of Service: Jane Thomas

Appendix A – Forecast to year end as at 31st December 2023

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Adult Services	82,463	775	(71)	563	83,730	(563)	0	(714)	82,453
Children's Services	29,968	2,976	(2,239)	1,452	32,157	(952)	0	(810)	30,395
Commissioning	2,188		(31)	0	2,157	0	0	0	2,157
Education	19,091	604	(610)	19	19,104	(19)	0	0	19,085
Highways Transport & Recycling + Director	34,139	522	(1,257)	2,392	35,796	(1,817)	0	0	33,979
Property, Planning & Public Protection	6,996		(11)	338	7,323	(137)	0	0	7,186
Housing & Community Development	7,740	1,075	(1,653)	187	7,349	(187)	0	0	7,162
Economy and Digital Services	7,583		(579)	24	7,028	(24)	0	0	7,004
Transformation & Democratic Services	4,057	36	(86)	0	4,007	0	0	0	4,007
Workforce & OD	2,632	4	(148)	0	2,488	(17)	0	0	2,471
Legal	1,533	147	(185)	0	1,495	(0)	(28)	0	1,467
Finance & Insurance	7,079	140	(172)	0	7,047	0	0	0	7,047
Corporate Activites	36,660	1,106	(4,724)	0	33,042	0	0	1,524	34,566
Total	242,129	7,385	(11,766)	4,976	242,724	(3,718)	(28)	0	238,979
Housing Revenue Account	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Schools Delegated	84,493		(216)	0	84,277	0	216	0	84,493
Total	84,493	0	(216)	0	84,277	0	216	0	84,493
Total	326,622	7,385	(11,982)	4,976	327,001	(3,718)	188	0	323,471
					(379)				3,151

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
10	31
(427)	(853)
31	8
6	237
160	108
(190)	(181)
578	699
579	365
50	51
161	189
66	78
32	47
2,094	2,074
3,150	2,853
0	0
0	0
0	0
3,151	2,853

* The £216k cost underspend / reduction in agreed use of specific reserves is the movement since Quarter 2. Overall, Schools are currently forecasting that they will draw £6.0 million from their reserves in 2023/24.

Appendix B Head of Service Commentary

Adult Social Care Overview

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Adult Services	82,463	775	(71)	563	83,730	(563)	0	(714)	82,453

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
10	31

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Adult Social Care Overview

The forecast outturn at the end of quarter 3, 31st December 2023, is an overspend of £1.267 million. When the cost reductions are delivered and £0.714m funding from reserves in regard to additional review and assessment capacity, trailing a Mental Health Hub and Domiciliary agency cover, then there would be a forecast underspend of £10k.

Cost Pressures

(a) Current Pressures - Included in the forecast outturn at quarter 3. Current pressures are being managed within the current budget allocation approved.

(b) Future pressures

The forecast outturn does not account for any future costs that may materialise in relation to:

- Winter pressures and potential demand on home-based care and interim bed options, as future demand is unknown. To date Welsh Government have not indicated that there will be an additional funding.
- Stability of commissioned providers, particularly the care home sector. There are currently a number of providers who may be at risk of failure.

- The unmet need in regard to community services sitting on the CROFT following assessment but lack of provision, estimated annual cost of £1.543 million.
- Future demography, which was agreed to be funded from the risk reserve as part of the Financial Resources Model (FRM) budget setting process. This temporary allocation will only support these costs during 2023/24 and the full year impact will need to be considered in the FRM and Service's Integrated Business Plan (IBP) for future years.

Cost Underspends

The very small underspend in the main is due to staff slippage as a result of recruitment turnover and a reclaim in relation to 2022/23 for non-service delivery on a contract.

Cost Reductions

- **Assured**

Of the original target of £4.648 million, £4.085 million (88%) has been achieved to date and included in the forecast outturn. There is assurance of delivery of the remaining outstanding balance of £0.563 million (12%).

- **Undeliverable**

A risk on delivery if hospital pressures and referrals continue at the current levels.

Other mitigating actions to deliver a balanced budget.

- The service will take every opportunity to maximise/utilise any grant underspends, if applicable within the Terms & Conditions of the grant.
- To ensure we maximise every opportunity to avoid costs the service is prioritising the development of preventative and early intervention measures, such as Technology Enabled Care, Reablement and Local Area Coordination. We are supporting citizens to support themselves, remain independent and build resilient communities reducing admissions into residential care and hospital.

Children's Services Overview

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Children's Services	29,968	2,976	(2,239)	1,452	32,157	(952)	0	(810)	30,395

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
(427)	(853)

Children's Services Overview

The forecast is an overspend of £2.189m, before cost reductions of £0.952m yet to be delivered but assured and the use of risk budget funding. Children's Services continue to face unavoidable pressures in relation to an increased demand for placements for children with complex needs amid a national shortage of placements. Alongside this, there continues to be increasing demand due to the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). These pressures have impacted on the service's ability to deliver the cost reductions identified for 2023-24 in full. Cumulatively, these issues would have resulted in a forecast overspend position of £1.237 million, however it has been agreed that £0.810m of the risk budget would be applied to mitigate some of these pressures. The service is continuing to work on measures that will address the remaining forecast overspend of £0.427m in order to minimise budget pressures for the next financial year.

Cost Pressures £2.976 million

The unavoidable cost pressures continue in terms of the demand for high-cost residential placements often outside of Powys. The cost of placements for children which are unregulated, due to the lack of placements nationally, continues to be a financial challenge. We have a further increase in our Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking children (UASC) which is likely to rise further, and which continues to have an impact on the financial position. The 2023/24 forecast for these placements is £0.933 million. We receive grant income of £143 per night pre 18 years of age and £270 per week post-18 from the Home Office. The forecasted income in relation to the above is £644,000. So, the net expenditure position is £234,000.

We are continuing to work collaboratively with colleagues in Housing and across the council to strengthen ways of working with this group of young people. The plan is to develop further local housing opportunities for our 16+ provision and our UASC.

The unfunded pressures within the service are due to

- £1.877 million Children Looked After (CLA) placements - new, step up in provision and increasing costs in relation to meeting the complexity of the need of the current cohort. This is in the context of a national shortage of placements for looked after children across the UK. This is an increase of £451,000 from quarter 2. All funding that was earmarked as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process for growth in CLA placements in 2023/24 has already been fully utilised. All new or step up in provisions going forward will be a pressure.
- £217,000 additional overspend to placement pressures for CLA support, an increase of £105,000 from quarter 2.
- £589,000 total pressure forecasted for the four 'In House' Residential homes, a decrease of £90,000 from quarter 2, due to service decision to transfer employees to meet need in homes not their base and reduce dependency on agency. Overspend due to relief staff over and above base budget to cover rotas and the use of agency staff due to recruitment and escalating needs of the children, over and above that included in the original business cases.
- £116,000 budget pressure in regard to Section 21, for families in need of care and support, in the main due to post lockdown and trying to keep children with their families wherever it is safe and in their best interests to do so. This is an increase of £29,000 from quarter 2.
- £64,000 Out of Hours (EDT) due to unfunded structure following a Management of Change in 2021/22 and use of agency staffing to cover vacancies and undertake AMHP duties. An increase of £19,000 from quarter 2.
- £113,000 due to increased demand for short breaks due to the pressures on families as an indirect result of the pandemic, a decrease of £126,000 from quarter 2 due to addressing e-procurement over commitments and ledger miscoding's.

All budget underspends £2.239 million baseline budgets are currently being utilised to mitigate the overall budget forecast overspend. The majority of this is around posts and associated costs.

- £140,000 due to underutilisation of the Market supplement. Currently not all qualifying posts are occupied or have been occupied for the relevant time frame.
- £1.536 million Staffing underspend based on current vacancies qualified and non-qualified positions.
- £93,000 due to a delay to the Special Guardianship project.
- £127,000 Welsh Government grants mitigating baseline funded costs, in line with grant terms and conditions.
- £250,000 various small underspends across all service subjective headings.
- £93,000 Legal underspend, although this is difficult to predict as Legal services do not use commitment accounting.

There is a risk if these underspends are utilised in the future, then the overspend forecast will increase.

Savings were identified of £2.796 million in the 2023/24 budget setting process and £217,000 was rolled forward from 2022/23, £1.560 million of the savings have been achieved, 51.8%.

The outstanding £1.452 million, of which £0.952m is assured to be delivered by the end of the 2023/24 financial year.

Other mitigating actions to deliver a balanced budget.

We will

- fully utilise grants across the service as in 2022/23. We will continue to scrutinise the pressures and savings targets to identify matters with potential solutions. Our current predicted savings are on track to be met during this financial year.
- continue to monitor our high-cost residential placements and look to reduce these wherever is possible.
- continue to build our 16+ provision and homes for our UASC.

Our work with our closer to home strategy will continue.

The purchase card expenditure will be tightened particularly with our residential homes.

The use of agency staff will more closely monitored in terms of requirements.

Commissioning Overview

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Commissioning	2,188		(31)	0	2,157	0	0	0	2,157

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
31	8

Commissioning Overview

Underspend due to staff slippage due to recruitment.

Education overview

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Education	19,091	604	(610)	19	19,104	(19)	0	0	19,085

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
6	237

Education overview

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The service continues to work effectively to make financial savings without compromising service delivery. We continue to use our grants effectively to support the forecast outturn position of the service where possible and to alleviate pressure within the service. The Schools Service (excluding Schools Delegated Budgets) had forecasted outturn underspend at the year-end of £6k at Quarter 3.

All managers within the service continue to be robustly challenged regarding financial decisions to ensure they deliver value for money but also align to the service priorities. Senior managers ensure all significant financial decisions are discussed at a strategic level and support the realisation of the vision for the service. The aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic continues to place additional pressures on the service and through self-evaluation processes we have implemented changes to support schools further. The recent changes to the funding formula now ensure equitable distribution of funding for our deprivation learners. In addition, more funding is being given directly to schools to support our ALN learners and give schools more autonomy to plan and support their needs.

Cost pressures:

Cost pressures at present are being effectively managed within the overall forecast outturn position of the service. The two areas causing the pressure are in relation to essential buildings works and early retirement pension costs. Ongoing work is taking place in these areas to review the costs.

Cost underspends:

Cost underspends in the service in the main are in relation to any vacant posts, slippage in relation to actual costs vs budgeted costs of staff, travel and supplies and services. These underspends have been reviewed as part of the budget setting to identify permanent reductions to mitigate ongoing cost pressures.

Cost reductions:

We continue to identify savings and projected a reduction in costs of £842k, £5k has not yet been delivered, but is assured to be delivered by year end.

- * Targeted use of CfW grant to offset base budget
- * Removal of unfilled posts that have not impacted on service delivery
- * Post 16 transition managed within service by newly appointed 14+ Lead
- * ALN and PRU review
- * Reduction in third party spend but further work is to be undertaken
- * Internal delivery of VAWDSW
- * Use of grant funds to manage staff pay inflation
- * Realignment of costs to delegated budget e.g. union costs
- * Restructure in areas of the service
- * Significant reduction in the use of consultants

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Other mitigating actions to deliver a balanced budget:

We are reviewing income generation, and another member of the service has become an RI so can generate income through working for Estyn. However, Estyn inspections are a significant time commitment, so we need to ensure we balance service pressures with income generation.

We have also facilitated external support for an ALN and behaviour review in response to our internal evaluation of the Powys ALN Strategy, the strategy was written pre-pandemic, and we need to ensure the priorities align to current ALN and behaviour pressures within Powys.

Schools Delegated Overview

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Schools Delegated	84,493		(216)	0	84,277	0	216	0	84,493

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
0	0

* The £216k cost underspend / reduction in agreed use of specific reserves is the movement since Quarter 2. Overall, Schools are currently forecasting that they will draw £6.0 million from their reserves in 2023/24.

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Schools Delegated Overview

Through ongoing effective communication and collaborative working, the PCC finance team, School Improvement Advisers, Senior Managers, Headteachers and Chairs of Governors continue to identify potential savings for schools from reviewing spending plans and continuing to support schools with the development of their financial planning.

We have also recently identified additional financial pressures on specific schools which are linked to deprivation and significant ALN needs so we have successfully revised the funding formula following consultation to ensure we are allocating deprivation funding equitably. We have also changed the ALN funding approaches as well to ensure less is held centrally but allocated to schools quicker to enable them to plan more effectively to support their ALN learners.

The in-year position that was submitted by governing bodies in May 2023 showed that there was an expected draw on reserves of £6,011k, overall, this position has decreased to a forecasted £5,985k draw on reserves, a reduction of £26k in 9 months. Updated projections including the updated estimates for pay awards and inflation have been included in these figures.

Recovery plans were submitted and reviewed in the Autumn Term for schools that did not meet the requirements of the scheme for financing schools. Further requests for recovery plans were made where schools didn't meet the requirement, these are currently being reviewed. Recovery plans have also been requested for schools projecting a cumulative deficit at the end of 25/26 which are due to be submitted by 31st January 2024 which will be reviewed by officers. Officers are continuing to use statutory powers where needed to ensure compliance. Since Q1 we have completed a further 3 financial deep dives in the secondary sector which have identified further savings to be considered by the schools and have informed recovery plans.

There are also a number of schools that will work with officers to put a deficit agreement in place. Considerable staffing reductions are projected across all schools over the next 3 years and officers will support schools through these difficult times. A number of VSS applications have been approved for August 23 reductions of teachers and non-teaching staff and more are being received.

In terms of Delegated central any underspend on this area is allocated out to schools with a % done in January 24 and the remainder at year end. The impact of the formula review has been modelled and will be phased in over the next two years.

Highways Transport & Recycling Overview

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Highways Transport & Recycling + Director	34,139	522	(1,257)	2,392	35,796	(1,817)	0	0	33,979

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
160	108

Highways Transport & Recycling Overview

Page 1

Forecast underspend for Qtr.3 is £160k - This is an improvement since Qtr.2 of £52k, which has principally arisen from improvements in street work income and reductions in waste disposal.

Cost Pressures

- Unachieved savings totalling £575k. Total savings target for 2023/24 is £3.594m, of which £1.201m has been achieved to date, £1.816m assured to be achieved by year end and the remaining £575k is reported as unachieved. However, we have been able to carry out temporary in-year virements to offset the bulk of the £575k
- £65k expenditure on 2 x project officer posts, where the service has been unsuccessful in securing transformation budget in 2023/24 to support these costs.
- £407k overspend on highways routine & structural maintenance works.
- £233k overspend on county winter maintenance works.
- £153k under-recovery of the budgeted profit target for Trade Waste collection services
- £415k overspend on home to school transport expenditure arising from changes to mileage, contracts and/or bigger bus capacity requirements and unfunded inflation.

Many of the above pressures is causing us to cut back on highway maintenance and there are elements that are out of our control around weather conditions, which can increase revenue costs, particularly around flooding and winter maintenance. Furthermore, there are long standing pressures within the Transport service, which are due to a number of reasons, particularly around additional bus capacity and bus

contract changes. As outlined above, we are using in-year virements to offset some of the pressures because of the cost underspends, which are highlighted below:

Cost Underspends

- There is an underspend of £349k reported because of vacant management/supervision posts and reduced private contractor spend in Highways Operations.
- £306k underspend on street lighting energy costs and maintenance.
- £198k under spend on domestic waste collections, resulting in the main from an underspend against the staffing/agency budget and additional grant funding.
- An over-recovery of recycling income against budget of £102k.
- An under spend of £161k on disposal of residual waste, which has improved from 380k in qtr.2
- An under-spend of £57k against bring sites and other waste services.
- A forecast over-achievement of £183k against street works resulting from increased income against budget.
- A forecast over-achievement of £407k against car parks resulting from increased income against budget.
- An underspend on dual base transport costs of £100k
- An underspend on ALN for £113k

Other mitigating actions to deliver a balanced budget.

- Promote the green waste and Trade Waste Service.
- Reduce spend on highway Operations.

Undelivered savings - £575k

- £130,000 Reduction in Winter Maintenance - It was envisaged that this would be achieved for 2023/24, but due to the summer consultation on the new Matrix and the need to review at September's Scrutiny, this saving will not be achieved for Winter season 2023/24, but will be in place for 2024/25. In order to mitigate this, the service will be doing an in-year virement to offset this.
- £352,782 – Efficiencies within Public Transport (we've given assurance of £167k based on service reductions in January 2023. Further work to be undertaken to make routes more efficient). In-year virement from the underspends will be used to offset this.
- £52,500 – Route Optimisation (This is in its final stages, but in order to clear this saving it is proposed we do a permanent virement from Recycling income, which is currently in a surplus position to clear this target)
- £40,000 – Use of Abermule to transfer recyclable material (we expect to make around £58k of savings and the proposal is to offset the remaining £40k by doing a virement from Recycling Income, which is currently in a surplus position to clear this target)

Property, Planning & Public Protection (PPPP) Overview

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Property, Planning & Public Protection	6,996		(11)	338	7,323	(137)	0	0	7,186

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
(190)	(181)

PPPP Overview

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PPPP are currently predicted an overspend of £181k.

The overspend is principally the result of statutory compliance inspections having to be commissioned rather than being undertaken internally due to several trade positions being vacated within the Strategic Property team. Other smaller areas of overspend relate to higher than expected electricity costs, higher than expected surplus property costs, and the savings relating to cleaning budget and The Park offices being secured for only part of the financial year. Whilst steps have been taken to ensure that the Strategic Property service area operates within budget envelopes, the statutory compliance work due to its nature (legislative requirement) cannot be reduced or stopped to fall within their allocated budget without placing the authority at unacceptable risk.

With regards to the savings proposals not mentioned above, as the year moves forward, more robust evidence has become available to enable to provide greater assurance relating to their deliverability. Income levels to be secured from a 10 percent increase in fees (£42k overspend) and reduction in Strategic Property staffing levels (£42k overspend) are unlikely to be achieved in this financial year but have been offset by underspends found in other areas of PPPP.

Housing & Community Development Overview

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Housing & Community Development	7,740	1,075	(1,653)	187	7,349	(187)	0	0	7,162

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
578	699

Community Development Overview

Spend is on track across most budget areas. Housing & Community Development is reporting a forecast outturn underspend of £578k compared to £699k, at the end of September. A forecast overspend in General Fund Housing of £997k is offset by a forecast underspend in Leisure of £1,433k and Catering and Cleaning of £142k. The forecast assumes the assured savings of £187k will be achieved if this is not the case the outturn position will worsen to an underspend of £390k. The forecast position of £699k has reduced since September, this is mainly because of an increase in the forecast overspend on Homelessness.

Savings

The service has savings to achieve of £379k in 2023-24, £191k of savings have been achieved, with all the savings forecast as assured by the end of the financial year. If the savings forecast as assured are not achieved the forecast position will worsen.

Cost Underspends

'Leisure Services' are reporting an outturn under spend of £1,433k against a budget of £4,392k, compared to an underspend of £1,393k at the end of September. There have been improvements in the forecast across all services due to further slippage in staff costs, but the main reason for the underspend is the £1,100k set aside for utility support in Freedom Leisure not currently forecast to be required.

Libraries are reporting an under spend of £129k against an annual working budget of £1,251k. An improvement compared to the £121k underspend reported at the end of September. The improvement is mainly because of further staff slippage. The under spend reported is mainly because of vacancies/slippage in staffing costs and increased grant income that is funding base budget funded costs as well as underspends on utility costs, where costs have not increased to the levels estimated in the budget particularly on gas.

Archives are reporting an outturn underspend of £8k compared to a working budget of £137k, a similar position to that reported in September. This is due to slippage in staffing costs and increased income for storage of records and records management. This is a similar position to that reported in September.

The Policy Unit covers the central team and is forecasting an underspend of £57k against a working budget of £478k, compared to a £40K underspend reported in September. The main reasons for the forecast underspend are an underspend against staffing resulting from vacant posts and a forecast underspend of £21k on other services. The main reason for the improvement in the position is further slippage on staffing costs.

Leisure and Sports Centres are reporting an underspend of £1,100k against a working budget of £1,606k. The main reason for the forecast underspend is the £1,100k set aside to support increased utility costs in Freedom not forecast to be required in this financial year. The position reported is in line with the position reported in September. SPF grant has been secured to fund the cost of condition surveys being undertaken as part of the Leisure review.

Sports Development is reporting an underspend of £17k against a working budget of £67k. The position similar position as that reported in September. The underspend is due to receiving grant income in arrears and income about budgeted income.

Arts and Cultural Services are reporting a breakeven position against a budget of £95k, the same position as reported at the end of September. There was a saving put forward relating to a reduction in staffing and this has been achieved.

Museums are reporting a forecast outturn underspend of £17k compared to a working budget of £122k, the underspend is mainly a result of forecast underspends against utility costs.

Y Gaer is reporting an outturn underspend of £104k compared to a working budget of £636k. The forecast underspend has increased since September by £8k. The underspend is due to forecast underspends against utility costs and there is also increased income resulting from service charges levied as part of the lease for NPTC.

Catering is reporting an outturn underspend of £122k against a budget of £2,047k this includes assured savings of £187k. If the saving is not achieved an outturn overspend of £65k will be reported. The roll out of the universal provision of free school meals continues, the uptake of meals has increased as a direct result of this initiative and therefore income is increased. Welsh Government have now increased the grant funding per meal for the delivery of UPFSM from £2.90 to £3.20.

BAC's and vouchers to FSM children during holidays have been provided up until the summer holidays, this was funded by WG up until the end of the financial year and by the council for the summer holidays, the cost of this provision has been estimated in the forecast but needs to be confirmed by the service. The forecast has improved since the September forecast of a breakeven position, and this is mainly because of the increase in the grant being provided to deliver UPFSM.

Cleaning is reporting a forecast underspend of £20k, against a budget of £591k, this is because of increased income. The forecast considers the saving required for the reduction in cleaning of offices.

Matters affecting the forecast

- The catering forecast is based on several estimates, due to the continuing roll out of UPFSM. The final year groups will be rolled out in April 2024, it won't be known until May or June the final staffing and supplies costs and grant income received because of this program.
- Growth was identified to fund the increased utility costs in the leisure centres of £1.1m it is assumed in this forecast that that money will not be required, if this situation was to change the forecast outturn would be affected.
- Payment of invoices on time is not always on target and needs to be addressed.

Housing Services Overview

Cost Pressures

Homelessness services remain likely to exceed budget, an unavoidable consequence of the continued high demand for these statutory services, in particular temporary accommodation, not all of which can be provided using existing social housing owned by the Council and housing associations. In the absence of publicly provided alternatives, the Council is compelled to use high cost privately provided temporary accommodation provision. The Council is continuing to experience a levelling out in the rate of increase in demand for homeless services, but demand remains high compared to historic trends. In addition, the nature of the demand is becoming more challenging (for example drug and substance abuse, mental health challenges), with increasingly high service needs, increasing the resource which needs to be devoted to managing and resolving each case. It remains unclear what the impact of increased interest rates, which while base rates have fallen from the

high reached in 2022, remain higher than for many years, will have on home buyers' abilities to maintain mortgage repayments and avoid the risk of losing their homes.

Cost Underspends

There are no anticipated underspends.

Cost Mitigation

The Council is increasing the number of Council and housing association owned homes used for temporary accommodation, to reduce the spend with private providers. However, this means that fewer homes will be available to let as permanent accommodation, meaning that people may need to spend longer in temporary housing. Revenue support from 2025-2026 onwards will be needed for Instant Access 24/7 Triage Centres and Interim 24/7 Supported Accommodation, for which capital funding has been allocated (approved by Capital Oversight Board in 2023-2024). This will reduce the need for external private sector homeless accommodation and allow for some of homes being used for this purpose to be let as permanent accommodation. The funding pressure for 2025-2026 onwards will be considered as part of the FRM/IBP process for 2024-2025 onwards. Once revenue funding has been agreed, work will be able to start immediately on developing, either by new build or 'acquisition and works', of the premises needed for the Instant Access 24/7 Triage Centres and Interim 24/7 Supported Accommodation schemes.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Housing Revenue Account	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
0	0

HRA

Summary

The HRA is ring fenced and forms part of its own trading account, any surpluses and deficits are contained within a ring-fenced reserve. Overall, the HRA is predicted to end the financial year 2023-2024 in balance (as of December 2023). However, there are actions being taken to achieve greater efficiency in the repairs and maintenance service to underpin this prediction and to allow for investment to continue to be made in homes owned by the Council and maintain a strong HRA reserve.

Cost Pressures

Repairs and maintenance costs are ahead of profile, due to the age of the properties owned by the Council which is driving up the overall demand for repairs and maintenance and reliance in the first three quarters of the year on external contractors to undertake works to void properties. Mitigation continues to be undertaken (please see below) which will bring spending back in line, which if left unchecked, may result as of end of December 2023 in a year-end deficit on repairs and maintenance.

Cost Underspends

There are anticipated underspends in salaries and other management and supervision costs within the HRA.

Cost Mitigation

Spending on external contractors is slowly reducing as internal resources continue to be introduced and on-boarded. External contractor use is being limited to specialist work the in-houses teams cannot undertake or to cope with unforeseen peaks in the number of voids. The cost of external contractors has been much higher than anticipated at the time of internalisation of repairs and maintenance, due to continued inflationary pressures on materials and labour costs impacting adversely on the construction sector.

Housing and Commercial Services have been working to secure higher trade discounts from locally operating material and component suppliers, to allow for the formal procurement of a locally sensitive (to dovetail with the locality-based approach to housing management and maintenance) framework to 'go-live' in April 2024.

Heating servicing contract is due for mobilisation during February 2024 which will reduce spending on agency workers and external contractors.

Income recovery is as of the end of January 2024 running at 96.20% of rent due; for the same period last year this was 96.79. Rent collection remains increasingly challenging. This is a consequence of the high cost of living continuing for many households. The Financial Support Officers have been working effectively to help our tenants better manage the consequences of the cost-of-living challenges many are experiencing.

Void times continue to be reduced, although the number of properties requiring extensive works – which require longer works times – is increasing due to the age of our properties. Performance management of voids is one of the three Top Priorities for Housing Services in 2024 to reduce rent loss due to void properties that are to be retained for letting. Further progress will be made on reducing void times now that the void repairs teams which had been deployed to complete the new housing scheme at Red Dragon, Newtown, following the collapse of the external construction contractor, have been able return to void works.

Economy & Digital Overview

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Economy and Digital Services	7,583		(579)	24	7,028	(24)	0	0	7,004

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
579	365

Economy & Digital Overview

Cost Pressures

The service is managing current cost pressures from within service budgets. The service also identified activity that we were able to delay at low risk meaning that we are able to manage current pressures in line with other priorities.

Cost Underspends

Staffing costs are currently underspent due to a variety of reasons such as short-term funding meaning that it is hard to attract people to our positions, leaving them vacant for periods of time. Also, the recruitment of staff has become increasingly difficult with many job adverts having no applicants and needing to go out multiple times. This is causing delays with the implementation of some projects, which is seeing impact on other services ability to deliver change.

Cost Reductions

The cost reduction in the budget for 2023/24 includes the need to review the Careline Alarm service and to make the service cost neutral for private clients. Whilst starting this work other services using the same service are also conducting their own reviews due to the cessation of copper telephone lines. The team are now working in partnership with other services to review the entire provision and options for an approved way forward. This will take some time and it is unlikely the savings will be met until later in the year. Any shortfall will be covered by underspends from staffing as set out above. Also, due to ongoing negotiation joint working arrangements with PTHB, some posts have not been replaced like for like and have resulted in underspends. However, it has been agreed by both PCC and PTHB that these underspends will be held in reserves, which will be used to fund any transition costs for the changes to the current working arrangements.

Other mitigating actions to deliver a balanced budget.

Economy budgets have been set on a 3-year basis following WG grant allocations giving more stability to staffing resource and ability to deliver longer term initiatives with improved outcomes.

ICT continually challenge their contracts, scaling from "are they needed at all", to "can they be reduced" or "can the price be negotiated". This is assisting to limit the impact of some price increases.

Transformation and Democratic Overview

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Transformation & Democratic Services	4,057	36	(86)	0	4,007	0	0	0	4,007

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
50	51

Transformation and Democratic Overview



Cost Pressures

The service is not fully funded by the permanent base budget, in particular, the Communications team are not fully funded. The current forecast outturn position for the service is an underspend of £50k. This is due to some staff vacancies (in Welsh translation and Strategic Policy and Performance), an underspend on members travel, and additional income received through the Ukraine scheme. Savings to be found in this area amounted to £8k and all savings have been achieved.

Cost Underspends

The forecast position at the end of December is a £50k underspend (compared with an underspend of £51k at the end of September).

Use of Reserves

If the forecast outturn is realised, then there is no requirement to draw down money from the specific reserve we hold (funded by income generation in other years).

Other mitigating actions to deliver a balanced budget.

The Transformation and Democratic service is reliant on income, any reduction or increase in income will affect the forecast. We are fortunate to have been able to access external funding from other sources to generate income to support the staffing structure we have, however there is a risk whether this will always be available. We have recently successfully recruited 1 FTE Welsh Translation to ensure

we can keep up with demand and statutory functions around Welsh Language and are exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence to support the translation of some documents.

Workforce and Organisational Development Overview

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Workforce & OD	2,632	4	(148)	0	2,488	(17)	0	0	2,471

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
161	189

Workforce and OD Overview

We are forecasting an annual underspend of £161k, which mainly arises from underspends against staffing budgets due mainly to delays in recruiting to vacancies in Health and Safety and 2 OD posts established to help support the delivery of key initiatives relating to Objective 2. These posts are now filled and the initiatives progressing. An overachievement of additional income / profit has to a lesser extent also contributed to the forecasted figure, however additional staffing will be needed to undertake the extra work involved, which will impact on our ongoing forecasting. The service will deliver the cost reductions of £19k approved.

Legal Overview

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
	£'000	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Legal	1,533	147	(185)	0	1,495	(0)	(28)	0	1,467

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
66	78

Legal Overview

We are forecasting an outturn underspend of £66k and no issues to report.

Finance Overview

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Finance & Insurance	7,079	140	(172)	0	7,047	0	0	0	7,047

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
32	47

Finance Overview

Expenditure across Financial services is in line with the budgets approved and the service is expected to deliver a balanced budget this year.

The service has funded additional posts through additional income streams to support Money Advice, Procurement, Financial training and Transformation work. Our transformation work continues to deliver efficiencies enabling us to redirect resource to areas of pressure as well as releasing the savings we expected.

Corporate Overview

		FORECAST FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAR 2024 AS PER CP/LEDGER DECEMBER 2023				ADJUSTMENTS OUTSIDE THE LEDGER			
		Add	Less	Add	Revised	Less	Less	Less	Final
£'000	2023/24 Base Budget	Cost Pressures	Cost Underspends	Cost Reductions not delivered	Outturn	Cost Reductions not yet delivered but assured	Specific Reserves with Agreed use	Use of Risk Funding to cover unfunded Pressures	Outturn Position 2023/24
Corporate Activites	36,660	1,106	(4,724)	0	33,042	0	0	1,524	34,566

Forecast as at December Variance	Forecast as at September Variance
2,094	2,074

Corporate Overview

Cost Pressures

The Housing Benefit budget forecast is overspending mainly due to the increased cost of homelessness in Powys and the differential between what is paid out to providers and what can be claimed back from the Department of Work and Pensions. This is in part mitigated by an underspend on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Cost Underspends

There is an overachievement of council tax projected this year due to the increase in the level of premiums charged, this is based on current premiums being raised and may change as the impact of the additional charge reduces the number of empty properties or second homes. It is also reliant on the council tax collection rate achieved.

£1.5 million relates to pulling through the corporate risk budget that is held to fund unforeseen pressures, whilst the balance will be factored in later to support exceptional increased demand across social care during the winter months.

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CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

27th February 2024

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Cllr David Thomas
Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate
Transformation

REPORT TITLE: Capital Forecast 2023-24, as at 31st December 2023

REPORT FOR: Decision / Information

1. Purpose

1.1 This report provides an update on the financial position of the Council's capital programme for 2023/24 as at 31st December 2023.

2. Background

2.1 The 2023/24 Capital Programme was approved by Council on the 23rd February 2023. It included capital schemes totalling £93.29 million, of which £23.48 million related to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The programme has been updated following the reprofiling of projects and additional grants received from Welsh Government.

2.2 Table 1 - Breakdown by service

Service	Original Budget	Virements Approved	Revised Budget	Actuals	Remaining Budget		Commitments
	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	%	£,000
Adult Services	200	677	877	181	696	79%	570
Childrens Services	0	379	379	333	46	12%	350
Education	33,005	(5,169)	27,836	12,817	15,019	54%	20,227
Highways Transport & Recycling	12,681	7,190	19,871	10,619	9,252	47%	14,676
Property, Planning & Public Protection	100	1,004	1,104	456	648	59%	537
Community Development	922	608	1,530	430	1,100	72%	727
Housing General Fund	1,748	1,279	3,027	1,477	1,550	51%	2,229
Economy & Digital Services	16,196	(10,492)	5,704	2,183	3,521	62%	10,814
Unallocated	4,953	(4,953)	0	0	0		75
Total Capital	69,805	(9,477)	60,328	28,496	31,832	53%	50,205
Housing Revenue Account	23,482	(3,357)	20,125	9,969	10,156	50%	14,412
TOTAL	93,287	(12,834)	80,453	38,465	41,988	52%	64,617

- 2.3 The revised programme at the 31st December 2023 is budgeted at £80.45million following the successful award of additional grants and the reprofiling of budgets between financial years. Actual spend amounts to £38.47 million, representing 48% of the total budget. An increase of £15.62 million since that reported at Quarter 2.
- 2.4 Currently 36%, £29.34 million, of the capital expenditure is budgeted to be financed by borrowing, the interest cost for this is charged to the revenue account.

2.5 Table 2 – Capital Programme funding

Service	Supported Borrowing	Prudential Borrowing	Grants	Revenue Contribution	Capital Receipts	Total
	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000
Capital	4,562	16,265	34,547	1,240	3,715	60,329
HRA	0	8,514	6,710	3,900	1,000	20,124
Total	4,562	24,779	41,257	5,140	4,715	80,453

3. Grants Received

3.1 The following grants have been received in the last quarter. These are for additional schemes and have been included in the Capital Programme.

3.2 Education

3.3 £0.61 million has been awarded by the Welsh Government to support the delivery of the Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme at Ysgol Pennant.

3.4 Community Development

3.5 £0.08 million received from Sport Wales to install solar PV panels in the Flash Leisure Centre, Welshpool.

3.6 Highways, Transport and Recycling

3.7 £0.17 million received from Welsh Government for flood alleviation schemes at Plasnewydd, Pontfaen and Legar Brook.

3.8 £0.34 million awarded by the Welsh Local Government Association for a nature habitat management project at Welshpool Golf Club and working through the Powys Nature Partnership with Llais y Goedwig, RSPB Llyn Vyrnwy, and the Canal and River Trust to support tree, hedge, and wildflower planting and setting up new tree nurseries across Powys which will support future tree planting projects.

4. Reprofiling Budgets Across Financial Years

4.1 During the last quarter, all services have reviewed their allocations in the capital programme. Following this review and using the estimates provided by the services of the spend in this financial year, £15.32 million has been reprofiled into future years. These are included in the proposed Capital Programme which is due for consideration by members as part of the councils 2024/25 budget proposals. A breakdown is shown in the following table.

4.2 Table 3 – Capital Programme Reprofileing by Service

Service Area	£
Pipeline Schemes	4,216,397
County Farms	100,000
Sport & Leisure	714,634
Salt Barns	58,228
Countryside & Outdoor Rec	80,000
Waste Minimisation & Recycling	138,805
Fleet Management & Vehicle Replace	205,875
Libraries	93,520
Office Accommodation	175,000
Levelling Up Fund	4,691,688
Economic Development	3,553,178
Information Services	498,845
Customer Services	12,258
Social Services	245,000
Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (Transforming Education)	535,034
Total	15,318,461

4.2 **Housing Revenue Account** - A review of the budgets held for WHQS and other capital works to the existing housing stock has been carried out. As a result, £2.65 million has been reprofiled into future years and the revised profile will be used as part of the HRA business plan, that will be finalised by year end.

5. Capital Receipts

5.1 A total of £1.86 million has been received to date. There are currently sales agreed to the value of £0.53 million, with a further £0.28 million for the HRA, these are at the legal stage of the process and will generate future capital receipts. At this stage it is expected that sales totalling £2.57 million and £0.28 million for the HRA, could be achieved by the end of this financial year (31st March 2024).

6. Resource Implications

6.1 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the content of the report. The re-profiling of schemes that has taken place is welcomed and is essential to enable us to accurately project expenditure, the consequential need to borrow and the impact on the revenue budget. Expenditure on the Capital Programme continues to be monitored carefully through the year, although inflation has stabilised, costs are high, alongside supply chain issues and additional borrowing costs which will have to be carefully considered. Prioritisation of resources at a corporate level ensures that the council can effectively meet its objectives whilst maintaining an affordable level of investment. The delay in utilising the Capital allocated has created slippage in the revenue budget as borrowing is delayed, the revenue budgets have been reviewed and reduced accordingly for the 2024/25 budget. Additional funding will need to be sourced or the revenue budget reinstated in future years to support the borrowing required.

7. Legal implications

7.1 The Monitoring Officer has no specific concerns with this report.

6. Climate Change & Nature Implications

6.1 The capital programme remains a key enabler in how we contribute to addressing both the Climate Emergency (where we need to reach the goals of Net Zero by 2030), and Nature Emergency. Approximately £34.00 million of the 2023/24 Capital Schemes and at least £10.00 million of the HRA schemes directly contribute to climate change and nature initiatives.

6.2 Grant funding noted in 3.7 and 3.8 of this report will fund additional schemes that will help to support and recover existing habitats as part of the Powys Nature Recovery Plan, which in turn will positively impact upon a range of species in Powys and beyond.

7. Data Protection

7.1 Not applicable

8. Comment from local member(s)

8.1 Not applicable

9. Impact Assessment

9.1 Not applicable

10. Recommendation

10.1 That the contents of this report are noted.

Contact Officer: Jane Thomas Email: jane.thomas@powys.gov.uk Head of Service: Jane Thomas

Appendix A:

Head of Service Commentary

Service Area	Budget	Actuals	Budget Remaining	Budget Remaining as a % of Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Adult Services	877	181	696	79

HOS Comment

Expenditure will occur by the end of the financial year as expected.

- Regional Integration Fund allocation of £100,000 for community equipment has been fully utilised.
- Community Equipment Store contract roof improvements £265,000, initial works have commenced, and this will be completed and allocation fully utilised.
- Powys owned care homes £335,000, utilised £77,000 to date, remainder to be utilised by year end - lift improvements at one of the care homes will absorb a large element of the available allocation. The last property condition survey on all of the 13 homes identified a list of improvements required and as part of the contract the landlord is responsible for completing the list of improvements. There is a high confidence that the allocation will be fully utilised.
- Balance is an allocation for 'robotics', which means using technology to support care, this is not on course to spend.

Service Area	Budget	Actuals	Budget Remaining	Budget Remaining as a % of Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Childrens Services	379	333	46	12

HOS Comment

The Flying Start childcare provision in Brecon has been completed.

Safe Accommodation is nearing completion and will be completed before the end of March 2024.

Service Area	Budget	Actuals	Budget Remaining	Budget Remaining as a % of Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Education	27,836	12,817	15,019	54

HOS Comment

Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (Transforming Education)

Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, Machynlleth

RIBA stage 3 is completed. Pre-planning Application Consultation (PAC) completed December 17th 2023. Preparing for planning application in February 2024. Need clarity about BREAM exemption.

Ysgol Cedewain, Newtown

In construction. Programme has encountered delays due to various issues with continued uncertainty about handover date. Legal advice has been sought to protect the Council's interests. Team are continuing to monitor progress.

Brynllwarch Hall School

Planning application has been submitted and subsequently approved by the Council's Planning Committee. Currently awaiting Welsh Government's response to a request to call in the decision that was submitted after PAC. Re-tendering cannot take place until Welsh Government's decision is known but work is progressing on pulling the tender documentation together.

Sennybridge C.P. School

Following detailed examination of the tender returns, concerns were raised about the commercial return and legal advice was sought. The view is that the information contained within the commercial returns do not provide a robust basis to enter into contract. Programme Board have given approval to re-tender the project, which will take place in early 2024.

Ysgol Gymraeg y Trallwng, Welshpool

Anticipated projected out-turn cost is £131k below budget - project still in post-occupancy phase.

Brecon Primary School

Programme Board approved the initial feasibility and selected a site option. Work continues with the temporary governing body to establish the school by September 2024 across 3 sites initially.

Ysgol Calon Cymru

Implementation plan currently being worked up for Cabinet's consideration in March.

Major Improvement Programme

The Programme supports the improvement of education and early years setting facilities and infrastructure for pupils and staff. In financial year 2023-24, there are 145 projects with:

- 2 projects on hold
- 7 schemes to commission
- 8 schemes commissioned
- 28 at the design stage
- 24 at the tender stage
- 10 at the construction stage
- 66 schemes are practically completed on site.

The overall programme budget is £6,226,508 for 2023/24 with expenditure of £2,353,601 to end of December 2023. There are contract commitments of £1.473 million for projects in progress. The combined expenditure and commitments represent 62% of the overall budget is committed. There are some projects which are part funded by the Welsh Governments Asset Collaboration and Community Focused Schools Capital grants as agreed with Schools Service. There has been an allocation of £870,208 WG (Welsh Government) ALN Capital Grant and priorities for projects are agreed with Schools Service. These grants sit within this programme and priorities have been agreed.

Welsh Medium Grant – Ysgol Pennant classroom extension - The classroom extension work has been handed over to the school with minor works to complete.

Early Years Capital Grant – Ysgol Pennant new early years accommodation – The new early years mobile is anticipated to be complete before end March 2024. The work is progressing on site to program and the project is within budget.

Service Area	Budget	Actuals	Budget Remaining	Budget Remaining as a % of Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Highways, Transport and Recycling	19,871	10,619	9,252	47

HOS Comment

- The Highways Capital programme is on track.
- The Street Lighting programme is on track.
- Refurbishment of Brecon HWRC has started on-site and is on-track.

The Service notes that the Q3 financial profile in terms of expenditure is 53% of the total budget at three quarters of the way through the financial year, however, works associated with grants are often programmed for Q4.

As noted last year, inflationary costs continue to significantly reduce the scope of works achievable within the highway's capital programme.

Service Area	Budget	Actuals	Budget Remaining	Budget Remaining as a % of Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Property, Planning and Public Protection	1,104	456	648	59

HOS Comment

The Glanyrafon project is unlikely to be completed in the 2023/24 financial year. Reprofiling is therefore required for this project.

The remainder of the capital projects are progressing well and should be delivered within Q4.

Service Area	Budget	Actuals	Budget Remaining	Budget Remaining as a % of Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Community Development	1,530	430	1,100	72

HOS Comment

Some projects / works were unavoidably delayed in 2022/23 which resulted in capital budget being carried forward, with the intention of spending the full amount in 2023/24 (which was planned for within the programme). The 'review of leisure services' commenced in the spring 2023 (as a result of the energy crisis/increased costs of utilities) has meant that much of the capital programme is paused, apart from essential works, where agreed. This has led to just under £715,000 of capital funding being reprofiled into 2024/25.

Service Area	Budget	Actuals	Budget Remaining	Budget Remaining as a % of Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Housing General Fund	3,027	1,477	1,550	51
Housing Revenue Account	20,125	9,969	10,156	50

HOS Comment

Housing General Fund

Disabled Facilities Grants: Taking into account both works completed (as reported above) and those committed and good to go, Housing Services anticipates being able to end the year on target for both works and use of financial resources. Any works that cannot be funded in 2023-2024 will be rolled forward to 2024-2025.

Improvement Loans for Private Property Owners: Demand remains robust for Home Improvement Loans and the Zero Interest Loan Fund scheme, important schemes aimed at private property owners. Taking into account both loans completed and those committed and good to go, it remains possible that in-year resources from the Council may not meet demand. The schemes are administered on behalf of Housing Services by the Robert Owen Community Banking Fund (ROCBF), based in Newtown. The ROCBF has advised that it may be able to consider supporting clients with loan support for the remainder of the year using its own funds. Core funding from

the Council will then, subject to funds being made available, return for 2024/25. Landlord Loans and Town Centre Loans continue to run well.

Housing Revenue Account

New build - our development programme remains limited to the areas of the county not affected by the moratorium on new house building until the management of phosphate matters is resolved in the Wye and Usk river catchments. Six proposed Powys County Council social rented housing schemes fall within the affected area. However, in anticipation of works to the water treatment plant serving Llandrindod Wells, provisionally scheduled for 2025 by Welsh Water, Housing Services has now started design and preparatory work on two new Council-housing schemes in the town. The Housing Development Team have continued to work on other areas, with the acquisitions programme in particular now proceeding well. No compliant tenders were received for the demolition of redundant apartments and the development of new homes in the Ael-y-bryn and Pen-y-bryn area of Ystradgynlais. Housing Services is now exploring the option of clearing the site (demolition of existing buildings) in preparation for retendering the construction work for new build only.

Service Area	Budget	Actuals	Budget Remaining	Budget Remaining as a % of Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Economy & Digital Services	5,704	2,183	3,521	62

HOS Comment

Digital Services Capital

The desktop refresh programme is a continual programme and is on track to spend this year.

The Cloud transformation capital - due to budget pressures and conflicting priorities the majority of this work will now take place next year, however further business cases will be required to highlight changes in capital funding.

For the individual projects, these have been reviewed in light of the Digital Programme and will be drawn down as part of individual Project Business cases.

Economy Capital

An underspend from 2022-2023 capital programme from UK Government has resulted in monies being utilised through freedoms and flexibilities which is shown in the difference between allocated budget and remaining budget.

Overall capital budgets are managed from grant funds and profiled until March 2025. This process is managed through quarterly reporting fund management and slippage is being managed in monthly review meetings with partners and contractors.

This includes:

Transforming Towns Programme £5,080,000 for Placemaking Grant is managed through an application process. The capital fund is managed through a local and regional panel and the spend profile for 2022/23 is slightly under target spend but with approval for roll forward to 2023/24. Projects are developed with partners and

approved as bids are received. The team work hard to create opportunity for partners to draw down the capital investment and this is regularly monitored with Welsh Government.

Levelling-up Capital Projects. Project expenditure is currently behind schedule, this is regularly reviewed with partners to ensure delivery against grant terms and conditions. Council project aspects are being managed carefully and costs are within contingency limits with work slightly behind schedule but within grant agreements. Any required changes will be considered as a one-off Performance Assessment Review (PAR) during the lifetime of the project. We are assuming continued underspend of capital receipts from UK Government in quarters 1 to 3 at which point it is estimated a PAR review will take place to align predicted spend and schedule of works to the capital programme. This review is being left late in year as we need to be confident of anticipated delivery timescale from partners and have accurate costings from contractors, as changes can only be made once in the lifetime of the programme between 2022 and 2025. Current boards are monitoring progress on a monthly basis to ensure the programme remains on track against the current profiled spend for quarter 4. Contracts for Theatr Brycheiniog (Brecon & Radnor) and Y Lanfa (Montgomery) have been awarded and Ty Brycheiniog (Brecon & Radnor) is in the final stages of progressing the award. All 3 projects will commence construction/renovation during Q4 2023/24. The brownfield site in Llandrindod (Brecon & Radnor) will be completed by the end of Q4 2023/24. The Montgomery Canal project managed by Canal & River Trust is split into separate contracts which are being awarded throughout the programme.

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET EXECUTIVE

27th February 2024

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor David Thomas
Portfolio Holder for Finance

SUBJECT: Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief Scheme in
Wales 2024-25

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To adopt a Business Rates Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme for financial year 2024-25, to support Powys businesses with the ongoing economic challenges including increased inflation rates, by granting rate relief which is compliant with Welsh Government guidance.

2. Background

- 2.1 Due to the ongoing economic challenges faced by businesses and the impact on the economy the Welsh Government have introduced several measures to support businesses. The current Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme for 2023-24, which offers relief of 75%, has been extended with a further temporary Business Rates Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme for the financial year 2024-25 offering rates relief of **40%** on Business Rates bills with the total available relief being subject to a cap in the total amount each business can claim across Wales of **£110,000**.
- 2.2 The Welsh Government have announced that this rates relief scheme will be available for the financial year 2024-25 to support businesses within the retail, leisure, and hospitality sector in Wales. Properties that will benefit from this relief will be occupied properties such as shops, pubs, restaurants, sport & leisure facilities, hotels, guest houses and caravan parks. Registered charities, not for profit organisations and Community Amateur Sports Clubs operating within the retail leisure and hospitality sector are eligible to apply for this relief.
- 2.3 Powys is to receive funding of up to **£3.288 million**. The funding will be provided by way of a Welsh Government Grant, and it is estimated that **1,000** Powys businesses may be entitled to the 40% rates relief, estimated at a total value of £3.288 million off their Business Rates bills. Due to the £110,000 cap, the relief will need to be applied for via an on-line application form.
- 2.4 All businesses will be required to make a declaration, within the application, that the amount of relief they are seeking across Wales does not exceed the £110,000 cap.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 The Welsh Government will provide relief of 40% to eligible businesses occupying premises in the financial year 2024-25. Relief is available from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The proposal as to how the scheme is to operate is detailed below in 3.2-3.16.
- 3.2 The total amount of Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief granted to each property is 40% of the remaining bill, after Small Business Rates Relief, Mandatory reliefs and other discretionary reliefs have been applied, excluding those where wider discretionary reliefs have been granted under the Localism Act 2011. The relief will be applied against the net bill after other reliefs have been applied, and having regard to the total relief cap of £110,000.
- 3.3 The eligibility for this relief and the amount of relief itself will be assessed and calculated on a daily basis. The following formula will be used to determine the amount of relief to be granted to a property in the financial year:
- Amount of relief to be granted = $V \times 0.40$, where
- V is the daily charge for the hereditament for the chargeable day after the application of any mandatory relief and any other discretionary reliefs, excluding those where local authorities have used their discretionary relief powers introduced by the Localism Act 2011 which are not funded by section 31 grants.
- 3.4 This will be calculated by ignoring any prior-year adjustments in liabilities which fall to be liable on the day.
- 3.5 Businesses that occupy more than one property will be entitled to Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief for each of their eligible properties within the cap of £110,000 per business across Wales. Where a ratepayer has a “Qualifying connection” with another ratepayer they will be considered as one for the purpose of the relief cap. Retail, leisure and hospitality properties which are excluded from Small Business Rates Relief due to the multiple occupation rule are eligible for this relief scheme.
- 3.6 As this is a temporary scheme, Welsh Government will provide the relief by reimbursing local authorities that use their discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The Welsh Government will reimburse local authorities for the relief that is provided in line with this guidance via a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 and 58A of the Government of Wales Act 2006.
- 3.7 The Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme qualifying criteria being:
- The property is **occupied** for retail, leisure, and hospitality purposes between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, and

- The property is being used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public, or
- The property is being used for the provision of services to visiting members of the public (as contained within the guidance) or
- Properties that are being used for the sale of food and/or drink to visiting members of the public, or
- Properties that are being used for the provision of sport, leisure and facilities to visiting members of the public (including for the viewing of such activities) and for the assembly of visiting members of the public, or
- Properties that are being used for the assembly of visiting members of the public, or
- Properties, where the non-domestic part is being used for the provision of living accommodation as a business.

3.8 To qualify for the relief, the property must be wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purposes. In a similar way to other reliefs, this is a test on use rather than occupation. Therefore, properties which are occupied but not wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purpose will not qualify for the relief.

3.9 There are certain types of properties that, in compliance with the Welsh Government guidance, the Council will exclude the ratepayer from Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Relief, these are as follows:

- The property is not occupied for any period between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.
- The property is not reasonably accessible to visiting members of the public (even if there is ancillary use of the property which is retail)
- Properties that are owned, rented or managed by a local authority.

In addition, and in compliance with the Welsh Government guidance, the Council will deem that the types of uses below (or those similar in use) are not considered to be retail, leisure or hospitality use for the purpose of this relief, and as such they would not be eligible for the relief. Excluded uses are:

- Financial services (e.g., banks, building societies, cash points / ATMs, bureau de change, payday lenders, betting shops, pawn brokers)
- Medical services (e.g., vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors)
- Professional services (e.g., solicitors, accountants, insurance agents / financial advisers, tutors)
- Post office sorting office
- Day nurseries
- Kennels and catteries
- Casino & gambling clubs
- Show homes and marketing suites
- Employment agencies

3.10 The Council will be reimbursed in full by Welsh Government for any relief that is awarded, in other words if correctly applied there will be no direct cost to the Council.

- 3.11 Empty properties becoming occupied after 1 April 2024 will qualify for this relief, on a pro-rata basis.
- 3.12 If there is a change in occupier part way through the financial year, after relief has already been provided to the property, the new occupier will qualify for the relief on a pro-rata basis based on the remaining days of occupation using the formula in paragraph 3.3 above.
- 3.13 The discount will be applied on a day-to-day basis using the formula set out above. A new property created because of a split or merger during the financial year, or where there is a change of use, should be considered afresh for the discount on that day.
- 3.14 Having regard to the ongoing challenges Powys businesses continue to face, it is essential that the 40% relief available to businesses is promoted through all available channels and it is proposed that:
- Applications (upon receipt of a valid application form for Retail Leisure and Hospitality rates relief 2024-25) the decision to award relief be made by the Portfolio Holder for Finance in consultation with the Head of Finance (section 151 officer), provided all terms of the scheme are met.
 - An appeal against a decision to reject or restrict the relief must be made in writing within 28 days of the notification of the original decision. The appeal must set out the grounds of the appeal and shall be considered by the appeal panel, which is made up of members of the Cabinet.
- 3.15 As of 4 January 2023, the new UK subsidy control regime commenced, when the Subsidy Control Act 2022 came into force. This relief scheme is likely to be a subsidy under the new regime. Any relief provided by local authorities under this scheme will need to comply with the UK's domestic and international subsidy control obligations.

To the extent that a local authority is seeking to provide relief that falls below the Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) thresholds, the Subsidy Control Act 2022 allows an economic actor (e.g., a holding company and its subsidiaries) to receive up to £315,000 in a 3-year period (consisting of the 2024-25 year and the two previous financial years). Previous iterations of the RLHRR scheme in Wales were not provided as a subsidy. Local authorities should ask the ratepayers, on a self-assessment basis, to declare as part of their application for RLHRR that they are not in breach of the cash cap or MFA limit.

It is the responsibility of the local authority to comply with all relevant subsidy control provisions, including MFA procedure and transparency requirements.

- 3.16 Guidance notes regarding the scheme are shown in **Appendix 1** to this report.

4 Resource Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications to the Council as Welsh Government will reimburse in full for any relief that is awarded, if correctly applied meaning there will be no direct cost to the Council.
- 4.2 An online form will minimise the workforce implications to the Council and minimise administration work in awarding the relief upon a completed application form being received.
- 4.3 The Deputy Head of Finance (Deputy Section 151 officer) confirms that there are no direct financial implications to the Council in adopting the scheme provided the Welsh Government guidelines in terms of qualifying ratepayers, are adhered to. The full value of discretionary awards provided under this scheme will be reimbursed by the Welsh Government. Subsidy Control requirements will be monitored to ensure we remain compliant, i.e., Minimal Financial Assistance thresholds are not breached and awards over £100,000 are declared.
- 4.4 Furthermore there are no known ICT, customer services or physical implications. Front line services have been made fully aware of the temporary scheme to operate during the financial year 2024-25.
- 4.5 Corporate Communications commented, "This relief is of significant public interest to Powys businesses within these sectors and will be promoted widely through all available channels including press release and social media".

5 Legal Implications Options Considered/Available

- 5.1 The report was shared with legal who commented "The recommendations can be supported from a legal point of view".
- 5.2 The Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report, I am not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report".

6 Data Protection

- 6.1 Applications for this relief will be submitted by way of an on-line form, on Councils' website, thus minimising the handling and transferring of personal data.

7 Local Member(s)

- 7.1 The relief scheme in respect of Business Rates will apply equally across the whole County. No comments have been received from local members.

8 Integrated Impact Assessment

8.1 An impact assessment has not been undertaken, as the relief scheme will apply equally to all businesses that meet the criteria set out in section 3 and **appendix 1**.

9 Recommendation

9.1 That a Business Rates Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme 2024-25 be established in accordance with section 3 of this report.

9.2 Applications for Business Rates retail, leisure, and hospitality rates relief 2024-25 under the scheme referred to above shall be delegated to and determined by the Portfolio holder for Finance in consultation with the Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer).

Contact Officer	Andrew Griffiths
Email	andrew.griffiths@powys.gov.uk
Head of Service	Jane Thomas

Background Papers used to prepare Report:

Appendix 1

Non-Domestic Rates Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief in Wales 2024-25
Guidance Note

INTRODUCTION

This relief is aimed at businesses and other ratepayers in Wales in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors, for example shops, pubs and restaurants, gyms, performance venues and hotels. The aim of the relief is to support these sectors to improve their chances of recovery from the economic challenges which have affected them in recent years.

The Welsh Government will provide grant funding to all 22 local authorities in Wales to deliver the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme to eligible businesses for 2024-25. The scheme aims to provide support for eligible occupied properties by offering a discount of 40% on non-domestic rates bills for such properties. The scheme will apply to all eligible businesses, however the relief will be subject to a cap in the amount each business can claim across Wales. The total amount of relief available is £110,000 across all properties occupied by the same business. All businesses are required to make a declaration when applying to individual local authorities, confirming that the amount of relief they are seeking across Wales does not exceed this cap. An example declaration form is at Annex 1 for local authorities to utilise when developing their own forms to publish and issue to businesses.

This document provides guidance on the operation and delivery of the scheme.

[Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief - How will the relief be provided?](#)

As this is a temporary measure, we are providing the relief by reimbursing local authorities that use their discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. It will be for individual local authorities to adopt a scheme and decide in each individual case when to grant relief under section 47. The Welsh Government will reimburse local authorities for the relief that is provided in line with this guidance via a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 and section 58A of the Government of Wales Act 2006.

[How will the scheme be administered?](#)

It will be for local authorities to determine how they wish to administer the scheme to maximise take-up and minimise the administrative burden for ratepayers and for local authority staff.

Local authorities are responsible for providing businesses with clear and accessible information on the details and administration of the scheme.

Which properties will benefit from relief?

Properties that will benefit from this relief will be occupied retail, leisure and hospitality properties – such as shops, pubs and restaurants, gyms, performance venues and hotels across Wales. More detailed eligibility criteria and exceptions to the relief are set out below.

Relief should be granted to each eligible business as a reduction to its rates bill based on occupation between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. It is intended that, for the purposes of this scheme, retail properties such as ‘shops, restaurants, cafes and drinking establishments’ will mean the following (subject to the other criteria in this guidance).

Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public

- Shops (such as florists, bakers, butchers, grocers, greengrocers, jewellers, stationers, off-licences, newsagents, hardware stores, supermarkets, etc)
- Charity shops
- Opticians
- Pharmacies
- Post offices
- Furnishing shops or display rooms (such as carpet shops, double-glazing, garage doors)
- Car or caravan showrooms
- Second hand car lots
- Markets
- Petrol stations
- Garden centres
- Art galleries (where art is for sale or hire)

Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public

- Hair and beauty services
- Shoe repairs or key cutting

- Travel agents
- Ticket offices (e.g. for theatre)
- Dry cleaners
- Launderettes
- PC, TV or domestic appliance repair
- Funeral directors
- Photo processing
- DVD or video rentals
- Tool hire
- Car hire
- Estate and letting agents

Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of food and / or drink to visiting members of the public

- Restaurants
- Drive-through or drive-in restaurants
- Takeaways
- Sandwich shops
- Cafés
- Coffee shops
- Pubs
- Bars or Wine Bars

We consider assembly and leisure to mean the following.

Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of sport, leisure and facilities to visiting members of the public (including for the viewing of such activities) and for the assembly of visiting members of the public

- Sports grounds and clubs
- Sport and leisure facilities
- Gyms
- Tourist attractions
- Museums and art galleries

- Stately homes and historic houses
- Theatres
- Live Music Venues
- Cinemas
- Nightclubs

Hereditaments that are being used for the assembly of visiting members of the public

- Public halls
- Clubhouses, clubs and institutions

We consider hotels, guest and boarding premises, and self-catering accommodation to mean the following.

Hereditaments where the non-domestic part is being used for the provision of living accommodation as a business

- Hotels, Guest and Boarding Houses
- Holiday homes
- Caravan parks and sites

Retrospective relief

New awards of relief may not be made retrospectively for previous years under the terms of the scheme. Whilst the broad powers of local authorities enable discretionary relief to be retrospectively awarded up to six-months following the end of the relevant financial year, funding for any such awards is not covered by the terms of the funding agreement for the current year. Retrospective adjustments may only be made where relief has already been awarded under the terms of the scheme in the relevant year and the ratepayer's liability is subsequently revised as a consequence of a change in circumstances.

Other considerations

To qualify for the relief, the hereditament should be wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purposes. In a similar way to other reliefs, this is a test on use rather than occupation. Therefore, hereditaments that are occupied, but not wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purpose, will not qualify for the relief. For the avoidance of

doubt, hereditaments which closed temporarily due to the government's advice on Covid-19 should be treated as occupied for the purposes of this relief.

The above list is not intended to be exhaustive as it would be impossible to list all the many and varied retail, leisure and hospitality uses that exist. There will also be mixed uses. However, it is intended to be a guide for local authorities as to the types of uses that the Welsh Government considers for this purpose to be eligible for relief. Local authorities should determine for themselves whether particular properties not listed are broadly similar in nature to those above and, if so, to consider them eligible for the relief. Conversely, properties that are not broadly similar in nature to those listed above should not be eligible for the relief.

The grant of the relief is discretionary. Should local authorities decide to exercise their discretion not to apply the relief to eligible businesses, they may wish to consider taking their own legal advice upon any potential consequential legal issues which might arise from such a decision and on a case by case basis.

Businesses may view that they have not faced substantial impacts from the recent economic pressures and as such may be inclined to not apply for the relief.

[Types of hereditaments that are not considered to be eligible for Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief](#)

The following list sets out the types of uses that the Welsh Government does not consider to be retail, leisure or hospitality use for the purpose of this relief and which would not be deemed eligible for the relief. However, it will be for local authorities to determine if hereditaments are similar in nature to those listed and if they would not be eligible for relief under the scheme.

Hereditaments that are being used wholly or mainly for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public

- Financial services (eg banks, building societies, cash points, ATMs, bureaux de change, payday lenders, betting shops, pawnbrokers)
- Medical services (eg vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors)
- Professional services (eg solicitors, accountants, insurance agents, financial advisers, tutors)
- Post Office sorting offices
- Day nurseries

- Kennels and catteries
- Casinos and gambling clubs
- Show homes and marketing suites
- Employment agencies

Hereditaments that are not reasonably accessible to visiting members of the public

If a hereditament is not usually reasonably accessible to visiting members of the public, it will be ineligible for relief under the scheme, even if there is ancillary use of the hereditament that might be considered to fall within the descriptions listed under *Which properties will benefit from relief?*

Hereditaments that are not occupied

Properties that are not occupied on 1 April 2024 should be excluded from this relief. However, under the mandatory Empty Property Rates Relief scheme, empty properties will receive a 100% reduction in rates for the first three months (and in certain cases, six months) of being empty.

Hereditaments that are owned, rented or managed by a local authority

Hereditaments owned, rented or managed by a local authority, such as visitor centres, tourist information shops and council-run coffee shops or gift shops attached to historic buildings, are exempt from this scheme.

[How much relief will be available?](#)

The total amount of government funded relief available for each property under this scheme for 2024-25 is 40% of the relevant bill. This is subject to a cap of £110,000 per business across all their properties in Wales.

The relief should be applied to the net bill remaining after mandatory reliefs (including discretionary elements that are fully or partly local authority funded) and other discretionary reliefs funded by section 31 grants have been applied (excluding those where local authorities have used their wider discretionary relief powers introduced by the Localism Act 2011, which are not funded by section 31 grants). The reliefs to be applied before Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief include

categories of discretionary relief available prior to the Localism Act 2011 (eg rates relief for charities, community amateur sports clubs, non-profit organisations, hardship, empty properties). Local authorities may use their wider discretionary powers to offer further discounts outside this scheme or additional relief to hereditaments within the scheme. Where a local authority applies a locally funded relief under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, this should be applied after the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief.

The eligibility for the relief and the relief itself will be assessed and calculated on a daily basis. The following formula should be used to determine the amount of relief to be granted for a particular hereditament in the financial year:

- Amount of relief to be granted = $V \times 0.4$, where
- V is the daily charge for the hereditament for the chargeable day after the application of any mandatory relief and any other discretionary reliefs (excluding those where local authorities have used their discretionary relief powers introduced by the Localism Act 2011, which are not funded by section 31 grants).

This should be calculated ignoring any prior-year adjustments in liabilities which fall to be liable on the day.

Businesses that occupy more than one property will be entitled to Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief for each of their eligible properties, within the cap of £110,000 per business across Wales.

A business with a single property with a remaining liability (after reliefs) greater than £275,000 can use the entire allocation of relief. No other properties owned by that business will be eligible for the scheme.

Retail, leisure and hospitality properties which are excluded from Small Business Rates Relief due to the multiple occupation rule are eligible for this relief scheme, subject to the cap being applied.

[Changes to existing hereditaments, including change in occupier](#)

Empty properties becoming occupied after 1 April 2024 will qualify for this relief from the time of occupation.

If there is a change in occupier part way through the financial year, after relief has already been provided to the hereditament, the new occupier will qualify for the relief if they operate in the retail, leisure or hospitality sectors, on a pro-rata basis. This will

be calculated based on the remaining days of occupation using the formula used in the section titled *How much relief will be available?*

The discount should be applied on a day-to-day basis using the formula set out above. A new hereditament created as a result of a split or merger during the financial year, or where there is a change of use, should be considered afresh for the discount on that day.

The cash cap and subsidy control

No ratepayer can, in any circumstances, exceed the £110,000 cash cap across all of their hereditaments in Wales. Where a ratepayer has a qualifying connection with another ratepayer, those ratepayers should be considered as one ratepayer for the purposes of the cash caps. A ratepayer shall be treated as having a qualifying connection with another where:

- both ratepayers are companies and one is a subsidiary of the other, or both are subsidiaries of the same company; or
- only one ratepayer is a company and the other ratepayer has such an interest in that company as would, if the other ratepayer were a company, result in its being the holding company of the other.

As of 4 January 2023, the new UK subsidy control regime commenced with the coming into force of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. The Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme is likely to be a subsidy under the new regime. Any relief provided by local authorities under this scheme will need to comply with the UK's domestic and international subsidy control obligations.

To the extent that a local authority is seeking to provide relief that falls below the Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) thresholds, the Subsidy Control Act 2022 allows an economic actor (eg a holding company and its subsidiaries) to receive up to £315,000 in a 3-year period (consisting of the 2024-25 year and the two previous financial years). Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief schemes in Wales prior to 2023-24 were not provided as a subsidy. Local authorities should ask the ratepayers, on a self-assessment basis, to declare as part of their application for RLHRR that they are not in breach of the cash cap or MFA limit.

It is the responsibility of the local authority to comply with all relevant subsidy control provisions, including MFA procedure and transparency requirements. More information is available in the UK statutory subsidy control [guidance](#) from the UK Government.

For further advice, the Subsidy Control Unit at the Welsh Government can be contacted at:

Subsidy Control Unit
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Email: SubsidyControlUnit@gov.wales

The Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief Scheme is available to qualifying businesses who operate in the retail, leisure, and hospitality sectors. The aim of the relief is to support these sectors to improve their chances of recovery from the economic challenges which have affected them in recent years. Eligible businesses will receive a 40% reduction to their non-domestic rates net liability in 2024-25. The maximum cash value of the rates relief allowed, across all properties in Wales occupied by the same business, should not exceed £110,000.

The relief will be provided as a subsidy by way of Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA). The same business must not claim more than £315,000 in total of MFA over three years (including 2024-25). RLHRR schemes in Wales prior to 2023-24 were not provided as a subsidy and should not be counted towards the MFA limit. The gross value of relief claimed by the same business must, therefore, not exceed £110,000 in Wales for 2024-25 (to comply with the terms of this scheme) or £315,000 from 2022-23 to 2024-25 inclusive (to comply with subsidy control requirements). Businesses claiming the relief must declare that the amount being claimed does not exceed those limits, before the relief can be awarded.

Businesses are required to declare that they meet the eligibility criteria set out in this guidance document and state which properties they seek to claim relief on. Where 40% of liability across a business's properties exceeds £110,000 or the MFA limit, businesses are required to specify which properties they would like the relief to apply to. Businesses may choose which properties they seek relief for. Where the total relief allowed for other properties is close to the maximum amount of £110,000 or the MFA limit, an amount of relief of less than 40% may be allowed for a further eligible property.

An application form must be submitted to each local authority from which a business is seeking to claim relief for a property in that authority's area. Each form must include details of all properties for which relief is being sought throughout Wales. If an application is not made, then relief cannot be awarded.

Any attempt by a business to deliberately claim in excess of £110,000 relief will risk the withdrawal of relief granted under the scheme to that business by any local authority in Wales. Information on relief claimed under the scheme will be shared with other local authorities and the Welsh Government, enabling any aggregate claims in excess of £110,000 to be identified and if necessary, acted upon.

The Welsh Government and Powys County Council will not tolerate any business falsifying their records or providing false evidence to gain this discount, including claiming support above the £110,000 cap or the exemption threshold. A business that falsely applies for any relief or provides false information or makes false representation in order to gain relief may be guilty of fraud under the Fraud Act 2006 and subject to legal action, in addition to having all Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief removed from all of their properties for the 2024-25 scheme.

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.**CABINET EXECUTIVE**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Jackie Charlton and County Councillor Richard Church

REPORT TITLE: Severn Valley Water Management Scheme Update

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the Council, in its capacity as Lead Local Flood Risk Management Authority (LLFA) and as Chair of the River Severn Partnership, to support the Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales and Shropshire Council in jointly overseeing a programme of public consultation on the approach to developing the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme ("SVWMS"). (See Appendix A – Project Background/Vision Document).

2. Background

- 2.1 The Shropshire Plan's Healthy Environment priority highlights the importance of investment and joint working to tackle climate change and maintain, protect and enhance our outstanding natural environment.
- 2.2 Further to recommendations approved in the report to Cabinet on 18th November 2019 entitled 'River Severn Partnership', officers have been working with the Environment Agency, through the River Severn Partnership, to identify a joint approach to climate resilience. This has included early work to inform £10million of Government investment, awarded to the Environment Agency through ministerial direction in 2020, to progress work on a catchment based approach to water management in the upper Severn (Severn Valley Water Management Scheme).
- 2.3 Over the past 24 months, the Environment Agency have led the initial stages of the Severn Valley Water Management (SVWM) project, creating the tools and frameworks necessary to develop a technical solution of the scale required to address the significant climate challenges faced by the catchment.
- 2.4 Whilst Powys County Council has been supporting these early stages, it is recognised that co-development of the strategy and supporting programme is now required. This will ensure that the full benefits

anticipated by the scheme for communities, places and the environment across the upper Severn are realised.

- 2.5 The Environment Agency has invited both Shropshire Council and Powys County Council to form part of the Joint Project Board, along with Natural Resources Wales. The Board will help to shape the strategic direction of the project and its future delivery. A further paper will be brought to Cabinet to in relation to the establishment of a Joint Project Board.
- 2.6 In addition to proposing the establishment of a Joint Project Board, the Environment Agency has requested Powys County Council supports the first stage of public consultation. This will focus on providing opportunity for partners and members of the community to comment on the technical approach that has been undertaken by the Environment Agency to date and to provide feedback on how different water management options should be evaluated in the development of the future strategy.
- 2.7 This consultation will not focus on specific options at this stage, but rather set out the approach that will be taken. It will ensure that future identified options are both engaged upon appropriately and assessed against environmental, social and economic indices to enable maximum benefits to be achieved through future delivery.
- 2.8 The SVWM scheme is an ambitious project developing innovative, holistic approaches to sustainable water management across the upper River Severn catchment. The approach focuses on how the natural landscape and natural processes, may be used to contribute to community resilience and improved wellbeing in the face of climate change and future flood risk.
- 2.9 Flood risk on the River Severn is not an issue that observes the border. Communities and infrastructure in England and Wales need a coherent approach to the management of water. For that to be successful it is essential that a joint approach between English and Welsh authorities is enabled and supported. The SVWM seeks to provide such an integrated approach to catchment management.
- 2.10 Over the past 24 months the Environment Agency has led the initial stages of the project, creating the tools and frameworks necessary to develop a technical solution of the scale required to address the significant climate challenges faced by the catchment. This work has been used to identify “the art of the possible” and to understand the potential degree of intervention that might be required across Shropshire and Powys to mitigate some of the substantial impacts experienced from flooding over the past few years.
- 2.11 The conclusion of this initial stage of analysis by the Environment Agency has informed an updated business case to Defra to secure funding for the

development of a formal strategy and delivery plan. The aim is for this next stage to be finalised and adopted by the end of 2025.

- 2.12 It is widely recognised that this next phase and development of the strategy requires significant input from local communities. The creation of a shared vision and co-created programme of interventions across the catchment is essential in providing far greater benefits and confidence in future delivery.
- 2.13 The initial work led by the Environment Agency provides a good basis for this public engagement, having been supported by a growing consortium of professional bodies and local partners, many of whom form part of the strategically influential [River Severn Partnership \(RSP\), of which Shropshire Council is the Joint Chair.](#) This network, with input from communities facilitated through the National Flood Forum (NFF), has been important in helping to shape early thinking on the SVWM project.
- 2.14 Whilst Local Authority partners have been involved in supporting the initial stages of the project, the Environment Agency recognises that the ongoing presence of Local Authorities in guiding and decision-making as part of a Joint Project Board is essential. This will ensure alignment with the Environment Agency and Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru / Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to join up strategic thinking and delivery on flood risk management matters.
- 2.15 To that end, both Shropshire Council and Powys County Council have been formally invited onto the Project Board (alongside the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales) to help shape the strategic direction of the project and its future delivery. A further paper will be brought to Cabinet in connection with the Council's participation on a Joint Partnership Board.
- 2.16 The Environment Agency has made funding available for Shropshire Council and Powys County Council to create the resource capacity needed to support a Joint Project Board and ensure that local place requirements are embedded in the development of the strategy and subsequent long-term delivery programme.
- 2.17 It is intended that the funding available will enable both Local Authorities to take a lead, and/or support with:
- Local political engagement and support;
 - Community engagement through town and parish councils and local resilience forums;
 - Strategic engagement with key stakeholders outside of water management E.g. DfT, health, visitor economy;
 - Ensuring alignment to local policy and processes E.g. Local Plans, Economic Growth Strategies, climate action plans, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Biodiversity Net Gain;

- Undertaking integrated benefits appraisal understanding impacts across environment, social and economic drivers;
- Developing value capture mechanisms to support partnership funding;
- Finding public sector funding models and opportunities;
- Development of a delivery vehicle to support blended finance approach;
- Overseeing water management, as the local authority areas, in capacity as Lead Local Flood Authority.

- 2.18 Given the recent work by both Shropshire and Powys Councils to create and launch the Marches Forward Partnership, both Shropshire Council and Powys County Council propose to progress involvement in the SVWM under this cross border strategic collaboration. The Marches Forward Partnership recognises the unique environmental assets and management needs across the Marches area and has established a focused working group around 'Nature, Energy and Climate Adaptation'. Work is already underway within this working group to look at policy and funding mechanisms to support environment management and the focus around SVWM therefore provides a strategic scale project to pilot and take forward this thinking.
- 2.19 As a Defra led strategic project, flexibility has deliberately been built into the SVWM to allow for innovation during the development phase. This is aimed at supporting the achievement of greater and multiple outcomes through an integrated approach to catchment management. The project programme therefore allows for evolution and refocus as part of the learning process and specific deliverables and outcomes may therefore change as the strategy is developed with local communities. Learning will be gathered by the Environment Agency to inform Defra ministers as well as with the wider River Severn Partnership, in the Council's role as Joint Chair, to support wider scale up of delivery across the Severn and Wye catchment.
- 2.20 Significant opportunity is provided by the £10million Defra monies for the development of a water management strategy for the upper Severn catchment. This strategy (Severn Valley Water Management Scheme) will enable development of a strategic view of flood, water resource, and water quality and develop a response to the challenges of climate change.
- 2.21 As the funding for the SVWM scheme is led by the Environment Agency, delivery and expenditure on the project will be monitored by the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency will be responsible for managing the project risks and meeting the ministerial requirements associated with the use of the funds.
- 2.22 In line with the formal statutory role of Powys County Council, as the LLFA, and in capacity as the Chair of the River Severn Partnership, the Council's role will be in guiding decision making on the project to

maximise benefits to the local community and to help unlock funding to enable future delivery.

2.23 The Environment Agency have made an initial sum of funding available for both Shropshire Council and Powys County Council to support the resource capacity needs at this early stage in the strategy development. This funding will support the initial stages of public consultation.

2.24 Powys County Council has already been working with Shropshire Council on a joint resource plan to ensure efficiencies in the local authority involvement. This will involve hosting the work within the newly formed Marches Forward Partnership as one of the significant cross border projects across the Marches area.

3 Advice

3.1 Development of the SVWM scheme will test nature based responses to climate resilience and adaptation. It will help harness the natural and cultural value of the upper River Seven, as the headwaters of the UK's longest river system, and provide the catalyst for community resilience and economic prosperity in the face of climate change and a nature emergency.

3.2 The role of the local authority in the early public consultation will ensure collaborative delivery with Powys communities from the outset and enable community level shaping and ongoing learning to be shared.

3.3 The SVWM will help provide a strategic framework for supporting landowning communities to understand the value of environmental management within farm businesses and enable testing of new financial mechanisms for delivery.

3.4 The Powys Plan recognises the climate change challenge and need for urgent action both by the Council and working with external partners such as Defra. Developing the SVWM will improve the natural environment for future generations and secure economic and community resilience in the face of climate uncertainty.

4. Resource Implications

4.1 The £10million funding for development of the SVWM scheme has already been agreed in principle by the Environment Agency with Defra. The Environment Agency has secured agreement to commence spend of a portion of this overall funding, following completion of a business case with Defra. This is aimed at supporting the initial stages of the project's development and includes a £312,000 allocation for local authority support.

4.2 The financial implications for Powys County Council are associated with resourcing the project development. This is addressed through the

funding support for the two local authorities (Shropshire and Powys). A grant funding agreement between the Environment Agency and Powys County Council will enable transfer of the funding to be received by Powys County Council as a lump sum. This will enable effective resource allocation into the project from the outset, without additional cost implication to the Council.

- 4.3 Any funding approved for the Council will need to be reflected in the Councils budget in line with the requirements of the financial regulations.
- 4.4 The Section 151 Officer (Head of Finance) notes the report and the potential funding available. Finance will need to assist in the development of any funding agreement and it will require sign off by the Section 151 Officer.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Legal: The recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view.
- 5.2 The Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and support the recommendation".

6. Climate Change & Nature Implications

- 6.1 The SVWM scheme and wider work of the River Severn Partnership is aimed at providing a strategic and integrated response to the challenges of climate change across the River Severn catchment area.
- 6.2 The project development seeks to pilot and test how an integrated approach to water management unlocks opportunities for growth and improved wellbeing. Focused initially on the upper Severn catchment area, the project programme involves a suite of nature based measures to address climate change and its impacts, working with water companies, Wildlife Trusts, Severn Rivers Trust, landowners and many others.
- 6.3 In addition to the SVWM scheme, the River Severn Partnership is one of four national pilots identified by Defra to develop, deliver and test an 'adaptive planning' approach. This new thinking by Defra is aimed at ensuring a more resilient and adaptive approach to the challenges faced as a result of climate change.
- 6.4 Adaptive planning offers the ability to respond to new information as it becomes available, such as relating to rising water levels and more frequent flood events. The approach identifies and evaluates different climate scenarios and subsequently identifies potential adaptation actions that can be implemented over time, to directly respond to climate changes; such actions may include increasing or reducing floor levels,

utilising public open space for water storage or investment in flood management projects. Adaptive planning provides the flexibility to 'adapt' actions based on what the climate is actually doing and therefore enables the most effective and resilient response.

- 6.5 An adaptive planning approach allows for a long-term plan to be developed, providing a range of options for which the Council can respond accordingly, implementing the most appropriate and effective actions at the right time and in the right way. It also avoids unnecessary over investment or unsuitable design parameters, thereby enabling better decision making and use of money at all stages of a project's delivery. The approach creates a clear plan to manage flood risk, providing confidence for investors.
- 6.6 Although at an initial stage, the wider adaptive planning thinking and approach will help inform the SVWM scheme, where possible, supporting thinking and learning. It will help embed climate resilience thinking and learning in our future ways of working and is already shaping other work within the Council, such as the Riverside redevelopment.
- 6.7 As part of a drive towards integrated infrastructure delivery, the SVWM scheme and adaptive planning approach will include consideration of multiple benefits. The aim is to understand and assess how future flood risk management provides co-benefits for carbon capture and storage, biodiversity, health and wellbeing and economic growth.
- 6.8 Development and delivery of the SVWM scheme, as a strategic scale initiative, offers potential to scale up multiple benefits across the entire Severn and Wye catchment.

7. Data Protection

- 7.1 Any consultation exercise must comply with Data Protection Legislation in terms of its use of information which identifies individuals, and also the controller relationships between the organisations referred to within the proposal when undertaking any public consultation.

8. Comment from local member(s)

- 8.1 Local members comments will be considered as part of the engagement process commencing March 2024.

9. Impact Assessment

- 9.1 The information gained during the engagement process will provide the evidence required to understand impact on Powys communities.

10. Recommendation

- 10.1 Approve the Council's role in supporting public consultation for the SVWM scheme.

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CABINET REPORT NEW TEMPLATE VERSION 4

9

Working Group Report to the Governance and Audit Committee.

Working Group:	Governance and Audit Heart of Wales Property Services (HoWPS) Working Group
Meetings Held:	From February to September 2023

Matters Considered

The Working Group carried out a deep dive into the transition of the council to HoWPS.

ToR Purpose:

To learn lessons which will inform the Council's decision making and governance of the establishment and operation of any future commercial enterprises with partners (private, public or third sector).

1. Arrangements underpinning the formal establishment of the HoWPS Ltd.
2. HoWPS Ltd Board establishment and oversight of the company by the Board, including financial and operational oversight, performance management and decision making.
3. The effectiveness of operational management arrangements below Board level.
4. Contractual arrangements between Powys CC, Kier and HoWPS, including but not exclusively, contract specification, contract management, off-contract decision making.
5. Inter-company financial decision making and reporting.
6. Operational and financial implications of IT systems interfaces.
7. Kier's wider commercial and financial relationship with the Council, in relationship to the capital programme.
8. Partner cultural fit.

Outcomes / Observations:

Concerns:

- The Council was pioneering this new way of working with only a few English local Authorities operating on these lines. It was early days, and no independent evaluations were available to draw on.
- The potential for attracting third parties to contract for HoWPS was based on cursory requests for expressions of interest from organisations such as the National Park Authority and Local Health Board. However, this was not followed up and nothing materialised. This was one of the reasons for setting up the new body in such a manner which had major shortcomings.
- There were issues with the procurement process, e.g. broadening the scope of the contract from a repairs and maintenance service to include the provision of professional services, in the hope of attracting more bidders.
- With other Local Authorities procuring similar contracts were Keir spreading their resources too thinly as they won more contracts. Is this something that could have been covered in the Council's due diligence process?
- Should and could have the procurement exercise been pulled at the eleventh hour through a 'cold towel' final appraisal of the project's risks and value for money? Had inertia set in?
- More investigative aspects could have been carried out into Kier before the contract was awarded as several of Kier Companies were failing.

Working Group Report to the Governance and Audit Committee.

- Once operational there was a silo approach adopted by the various Keir companies with individual business plans. As a result, this did not lead to expected synergies from which the Council could have benefitted from.
- A better service provision could have been provided by Kier if the teams were placed in the Repairs and Maintenance company and not in Kier Facilities company. It was evident to the Working Group that the Consultancy Team were a late bolt on to the Repairs and Maintenance specification originally planned by PCC.
- The Working Group were concerned that the Council was and intelligent customer and believe a Shadow/interim independent chairperson with specialist knowledge in this field should have been appointed at the outset as a critical friend and needs to have been part of the development of the MNA's.
- Having Senior Council Officers as Board Members as well as being line managers of HoWPS was clear conflict of interest. The Council provided very little training for staff having to deal with conflicts of interest in this subordinate role.
- The overall process was extremely slow and took almost 3 years to go live.
- Financial penalties incurred by PCC in numerous ways including:
additional resource for 'Step In' procedures,
TUPE staff back to the council.
also, additional financial contributions made when HoWPS were failing.
- Fundamentally, HoWPS was not fully and thoroughly conceived and tested resulting in issues which were compounded through its procurement and operationalisation.
- the contract did not integrate specifics or mechanisms around, health and safety, ICT and staff time which would have benefited the Council greatly on day-to-day operations and improvements that could have been made before transition.

Lessons learned

It was felt that if a project of this scale was undertaken again:

- An independent Chair from the initial development of a project would have benefited the project.
- Officers from the Contract Management Forum (CMF) could have been involved at Board level at a lot earlier stage for consistency.
- That the improved structure could have been introduced earlier.
- If internal problems had been resolved earlier, then a more refined package could have been offered for a joint venture partner.
- Staff skills – from a Council Officer moving to a Contract Manager in an external partnership demanded a different skill set.
- Investment in staff - training for a different relationships and dealing with conflict of interests in a subordinate role is essential.
- It was felt that staff could have been better prepared for relationships and roles between contract, partnership, and joint venture partnership.
- Problems should have been identified earlier and those responsible held to account. e.g. – poor data collected by HoWPS (compliance rates).
- Time and support provided to HoWPS to improve data was not worthwhile and the step in process needed to be more robust and substantial.
- ICT and data transfer would be set as a high risk if a further similar project was undertaken
- Development of systems caused a pressure on the transfer back to Powys.
- That contracts provide specifics or mechanisms around, health and safety, ICT and staff time.

Working Group Report to the Governance and Audit Committee.

Recommendations to the Governance and Audit Committee

Recommendations to the Cabinet

Scrutiny's Recommendation	Accept (plus Action and timescale)	Partially Accept (plus Rationale and Action and timescale)	Reject (plus Rationale)
1. If the Council wish to form a partnership/relationship with any outside body, issues raised in this document should be considered at the outset.			

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Working Group Report to the Governance and Audit Committee.

Working Group:	Governance and Audit Highways Transport and Recycling (HTR) Working Group
Meetings Held:	From February to June 2023

Matters Considered

The Working Group carried out a deep dive into 7 SWAP Internal Audit Reports with Action Plans being presented to the Working Group. The Reports:

1. Commissioning
2. Procurement
3. Monitoring and Delivery
4. Stock
5. Fleet
6. Non-standard Payments
7. Time Recording

Outcomes / Concerns / Observations:

- HTR were commended on the actions that had been implemented from the outcome of the audit reports.
- Reports would have been more informative had the HTR Department advised at the time of its commissioning of the classification of different types of resurfacing works. These range from filling potholes to area patching, to resurfacing of one or both sides of the highway to resurfacing trunk roads as agents for Welsh Government. this only became apparent through the officers' presentations and highlighted the work necessary for each type.
- Which raised a further concern that officers need to comment constructively on the terms of reference for Audit reports.
- Since the implementation of new policies and systems more robust monitoring methodologies were in place which is an essential element for a successful service. It was not evident that prior to this adequate monitoring was undertaken.
- The pace in which the Council undertook actions with the discovery of malpractice was disappointing and left the Council open to criticism. The Working Group felt that the reputation of the Council could be under threat if a future occurrence were to occur.
- Use of excess tarmac remains a concern due to the slow roll out of the AMX system, however, assurance was provided that new policies and procedures had been implemented to eradicate deficient performance.
- The Working Group stressed the importance of embedding improvements at all levels of the service and not to assume understanding. Senior staff members must hold responsibilities that staff are fulfilling their roles in the correct manner.
- The service being under resourced, raised concerns and may have health and safety implications to uphold and abide by current policies and regulations.
- The Working Group felt that the audit report did not always provide clarity and that Officers had to expand and provide more detail of common and specific procedural improvements the spectrum of road surfacing works ranging from filling in potholes to area patching to part and full carriageway planning and re-surfacing to major works on trunk roads undertaken as Agents for the Welsh Government.
- It was hoped that Contractor Days could be re-introduced on at least an annual basis to attract and engage with local contractors due to the lack of availability within the local area.

Working Group Report to the Governance and Audit Committee.

- Lastly but importantly, Data Map Wales presented a live layered database GIS system of real time works within Wales to the Working Group, they felt the need for a Council-wide policy on GIS and associated relational and interrogatable databases which would generate similar benefits for other Departments such as Planning and Property which should be taken up by the main Governance and Audit Committee.

Follow up SWAP Audit Report – November 2023

- The reports evidenced several Amber and Red status items including that the AMX Specialist role which had not begun and would commence until the 01st of February 2024.
 - It was emphasised that the need for critical posts must be recognised and safeguarded by the Council and emphasised that key roles must exist within the new sustainable Powys structure to provide resilience within the service.
 - The potential for attracting and retention of staff had proven difficult within the service and the recruitment of internal staff into a key role had led to a prolonged start date which was an uncomfortable compromise.
 - The vacant role left the service vulnerable, however the Working Group were reassured that a AMX Technician role was being advertised what would provide better resilience to the Service.
- The Working Group will meet in six months' time to review progress.

Recommendations to the Governance and Audit Committee:
Recommendations to the Cabinet:

Scrutiny's Recommendation	Accept (plus, Action and timescale)	Partially Accept (plus, Rationale and Action and timescale)	Reject (plus, Rationale)
1. Ensure the AMX Specialist Posts are fulfilled as soon as possible and ensure the AMX system continues to be fully supported for the service.	The AMX post is now in position.		
2. Data Map Wales presentation to be extended to CLT and Cabinet and ensure awareness and implementation responsibilities are allocated.		CLT/Cabinet have been given assurance that regular dialogue between the Highways Team and Data Map Wales continues to ensure all information is collated. This will be followed up with a briefing to CLT/Cabinet.	

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

For Cabinet 27th February 2024For Governance and Audit 1st March 2024For Health and Care Scrutiny 11th April 2024

REPORT AUTHOR: Nina Davies, Interim Director of Social Services and Housing

SUBJECT: Corporate Safeguarding Board Activity Update

REPORT FOR: Information

1. Introduction

1.1 Cabinet is asked to note this Activity Report from the Corporate Safeguarding Board on 14th December 2023.

2. Agenda discussions

2.1 Review of Progress against actions on Safeguarding Regulatory Tracker

The updates against the Actions in the Tracker were reviewed, noting all are blue/completed or green/on track.

2.2 Feedback from Cabinet, Scrutiny and Governance and Audit.

The Board were advised of the comments and feedback from these governance forums, which had noted the Board's progress.

2.3 Regional Safeguarding Board Annual Report.

The Board were provided a copy of the Regional Safeguarding Board's Annual Report and advised that it provides a strategic overview of Adults and Childrens Safeguarding in the Region. Within it, a snapshot of PCC' safeguarding work was provided, including Powys' Child Exploitation Strategy that has been rolled out in other Regions. The Board were advised that Powys has received awards for their Child Sexual Exploitation work.

2.4 Feedback on National Safeguarding Week (13-17th November 2023)

The Board were informed that many Officers put in considerable work to ensure that Powys' hosting of the Annual Safeguarding Conference went well. There were a wide range of themes across both Adult and Childrens safeguarding subject areas; it was

extremely well received and there was good attendance. Powys represented itself well and will host again in 2026.

The Board discussed the various presentations and speakers. Thanks were extended to all those involved for their hard work and commitment in making a very powerful, enjoyable, thought-provoking day which was a good mix of interacting and listening.

2.5 Child Performance Licensing and Child Work Permits Progress Update.

The Board was provided with a report outlining the number of Licences and Permits that had been awarded. The Board were advised that the team continues to address issues that arise, such as a child being employed without a permit. It was highlighted that that week's 'Spotlight on Safeguarding' focussed on Child Work Permits, directing readers to the 'Child Employment' section of the website.

[News Child employment \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Next steps are being progressed, including some targeted awareness raising communications about the Regulations where child licencing is relevant.

The Board learned that joint work with the Royal Welsh Show is underway to create a positive link and increase knowledge about this matter ahead of the 2024 Show. Next year the team will have a presence at the Show to promote conversations about Child Work Permits, and the Show organisers will make information and applications available to exhibitors and trade stands etc, so applications are made in advance.

2.6 Safeguarding VLOG for Members and Governors

The Board were provided links to a recorded PowerPoint and Talking Head Vlog that consider some of the regular and more unusual questions, alongside some myth busting around safeguarding to provide a problem-solving resource. This will be used to support Member and other's development, creating links to safeguarding. The Board were asked to view the resource and feedback to Education Services.

[Safeguarding Talking Heads](#)

[Safeguarding PowerPoint](#)

2.7 Education Safeguarding Action Plan

The Board considered a confidential report from the Head of Education.

2.8 Reports by Exception were provided as below:

a) Safeguarding in Housing including Young (16/17-year-olds) People's Housing. The Board were informed that the number of 16 and 17 year olds who became homeless had risen by 4 to 7 since the report for the agenda had been written. Reasons for this and outcome of cases were explained, and data back to Quarter 1 provided to show changes or patterns. Data showing homelessness of Powys' Care Experienced young people will be included in future reports.

The Board discussed the demand on Housing Services and the complexity of the work creating continued pressure; numbers in temporary accommodation and the duration of stay was shared.

The Board were advised that a Welsh Government Consultation around the proposals to amend the Homelessness Legislation and duties around homelessness in the

Social Services and Wellbeing Act is underway. The Consultation ends on 16th January 2024, and an update will be provided to the next Board in March 2024.

[White Paper on ending homelessness in Wales | GOV.WALES](#)

b) Safeguarding in Education, including Elective Home Education and Fixed Term Exclusions

The Board were informed that in the last year contact with Elective Home Educated children and their families has increased from 2% to 72%. The number of elective home educated learners who have never been in a school has increased from 7% to 25% in the last year. The Board discussed this, reasons for children becoming electively home educated, and the challenges around how electively home educated children become known if they have never attended a school. The Board were advised that Powys are taking part in a 'Children Missing Education' Pilot which will look at such matters.

The Board were informed that numbers of Fixed Term Exclusions continue to increase, mirroring the Welsh and UK picture and considered to be an impact of the pandemic. The majority of Exclusions are in secondary age learners, but with an increase in Exclusions for primary age learners. The most common reason is persistent disruption. The Board were informed that a Working Group of Head Teachers will develop a common approach in terms of threshold and data to drive change in this area, alongside consideration of how the Pupil Referral Unit can assist.

c) Mandatory Safeguarding Training, including VAWDASV

The Board were informed that compliance was 92.3%, and that increased compliance was seen in frontline services without access to IT, for example HTR showing 97% compliance.

The Board were informed that school staff's compliance with the VAWDASV Level1 training was low but had increased from 47% in Quarter 2 to 59.9% at end Quarter 3. The Board were advised that school's use of the (now) mandatory Training Matrix was improving compliance and that a deep dive had shown the non-compliant staff were largely occasional staff, and that more than one person in each school had been Level1 trained. Targeted comms will be issued in the New Year about this, and other work will progress to improve and maintain compliance.

The Board were informed that a Steering Group has been set up for VAWDASV Level3 trained staff to support their professional development and provide mutual support; and that the White Ribbon Walks in November were very positive, resulting in high number of hits on the White Ribbon Instagram page.

d) Adult Social Care Safeguarding Performance, including Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards.

The Board were taken through the report about Adult Safeguarding noting there was no significant shift in trends in safeguarding issues. Pressures continue around Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard work (DoLS) in terms of backlog, demand and capacity. Funding and Team structure are being interrogated aiming to increase capacity. Benchmarking data around DoLS work in other Welsh Authorities will be included in the next report to map against Powys data.

The Board were informed that on investigation, the higher number of safeguarding referrals from / about care home staff may be due to a gap in the referrer's knowledge understanding about what is or is not safeguarding, the context and situation. This can indicate a need for increased understanding or training about what abuse and neglect is; this is built into an Action Plan with Providers if / when themes and trends are picked up in the safeguarding process.

e) Childrens Social Services Safeguarding Performance

The Board were updated about the Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) completed in October and advised that it was an overall positive experience giving opportunity for reflection.

The Board were taken through the Childrens Safeguarding report, noting that 88% of referrals did not require statutory intervention, and that domestic abuse, and alcohol and substance misuse were key factors in most referrals. The Board were informed that numbers of children on the Child Protection Register was showing a downward trajectory, with 21 children being deregistered showing interventions had helped to reduce the level of risk.

Discussions were held about the reasons for changes in performance, such as numbers of referrals reducing in August when schools are out, increases in section 47 Safeguarding Assessments increasing in October following on from the spike in referrals from schools after the new term starts in September, completion of these assessments within timescales being impacted by WCCIS downtime/slowness, staff's reduced ability to complete the paperwork because they need to prioritise the direct work, manager ability to sign off the assessment.

3. Future Agenda Items, in addition to the standing agenda items, are currently to include:

The Board noted the Forward Plan and were informed that the Regional Safeguarding Board Quarterly Newsletter will be provided for each future meeting.

March 2024 – Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements Report

- Education Safeguarding Action Plan
- Spotlight on Safeguarding Progress update
- Safeguarding in Contract Management – Next Steps, incl case studies
- 23/24 Safeguarding Self Assessments
- Community Safety Partnership
- Workings of Builth Wells Safety Group

June 2024 - Preparations for National Safeguarding Week (annually, November)

- Annual Private Fostering Report
- Services' Safeguarding Audits in Self-Assessments
- Annual 'Spotlight on Safeguarding' programme

Sept 2024 – For Information - Director of Social Services Annual Report

- Child Employment at the Royal Welsh Show - update

4. Other business included:

4.1 The Board were provided with the Director of Social Services Annual Report 2022-23 for information, in both English and Welsh.

4.2 The Board were provided with the [Regional Safeguarding Board Quarterly \(autumn\) Newsletter](#) for information.

4.3 The Chair thanked the Councillors and officers for their work over the last year in driving the Board's work forward and making significant improvements in that regard. The Chair wished all Board members Nadolig llawen a blwyddyn newydd dda, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

3. Future Corporate Safeguarding Board Meetings

Future meetings are scheduled for 14th March 2024, 13th June 2024, 12th September 2024 and 12th December 2024.

4. Recommendation.

Cabinet receives this briefing as an update from the Chair of the Corporate Safeguarding Board, to ensure awareness of work to date.

Contact Officer:	Nina Davies, Interim Director of Social Services and Housing
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Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Members

1 February 2024	Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys	Considered representations made in respect of on street waiting and loading prohibitions at Llanidloes and approved a number of amendments.
6 February 2024	Cabinet Member for a More Prosperous Powys	Approved the purchase and installation of a replacement carpet pitch at Ystradgynlais Sports Centre.
7 February 2024	Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys	Approved the name of Ysgol Golwg Pen y Fan.

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Meeting	Report Title	Report Author(s)	Presenting Member(s)
Cabinet – 2024-03-19	Quarter 3 Performance Report	Catherine James	Councillor James Gibson-Watt
	Quarter 3 Strategic Risk Register	Jane Thomas	Councillor David Thomas
	HRA Thirty Year Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2024-2025.	Andy Thompson	Matthew Dorrance
	Irfon Valley School Consultation Report and Final Decision	Lynette Lovell	Councillor Pete Roberts
	Bro Caereinion Consultation report	Lynette Lovell	Councillor Pete Roberts
	Sustainable Communities for Learning – Strategic Outline Programme	Lynette Lovell	Councillor Pete Roberts
	Q3 Treasury Management Report	Jane Thomas	Councillor David Thomas
	Leisure Review Scrutiny recommendations	Jenny Ashton	Councillor David Selby
	Business Case Fostering	Sharon Powell	Councillor Sandra Davies
Cabinet – 2024-05-07	Corporate Safeguarding Board Activity Report	Nina Davies	
	Place Based Planning in Social Services	Nina Davies	Councillor Sian Cox
	Bryn Hafren Proposal Paper	Marianne Evans	Councillor Pete Roberts
	Bro Cynllaith Proposal Paper	Marianne Evans	Councillor Pete Roberts
	Newtown Consultation Report	Marianne Evans	Councillor Pete Roberts
	Food Waste	Jenny Ashton	Councillor Jake Berriman
	Powys RPB Strategic Capital Programme	Joe Wellard	Councillor Sian Cox
	Winter Service Review Phase 2 – Winter routes	Matt Perry	Councillor Jackie Charlton
	UK Government Levelling UP Fund (Brecon and Radnor Strategic Town Investment Project)	Diane Reynolds	Councillor David Selby
Cabinet – 2024-05-21	Post 16 Report	Marianne Evans	Councillor David Selby

	Enhanced Homelessness – approve business case for revenue funding	Andy Thompson	Councillor Matthew Dorrance
	Llanigon Site Transfer	Andy Thompson	Councillor Matthew Dorrance
	Recommendations to make available at zero or social value General Fund assets to support the development by the Council of affordable, secure homes	Andy Thompson	Councillor Matthew Dorrance
Cabinet – 2024-06-25	LDP Preferred Strategy & Revised Delivery Agreement	Peter Morris	Councillor Jake Berriman
Cabinet – 2024-07-09	Quarter 4 Strategic Risk Register	Jane Thomas	Councillor David Thomas
	Director of Social Services Annual Report	Nina Davies	
	Bro Caereinion Objection Report & Final Decision	Marianne Evans	Councillor Pete Roberts
	Newtown Objection Report & Final Decision	Marianne Evans	Councillor Pete Roberts
Cabinet 2024-07-30	Ysgol Calon y Dderwen SOC/OBC	Marianne Evans	Councillor Pete Roberts
	Ysgol Calon Cymru Proposal Paper	Marianne Evans	Councillor Pete Roberts
	Schools Cost Recovery	Jenny Ashton	Councillor David Selby
	Annual Self-Assessment Report	Catherine James	Councillor James Gobson-Watt
Cabinet – 2024-09-17	Corporate Safeguarding Board Activity Report	Nina Davies	
	Quarter 1 Performance Report	Catherine James	Councillor James Gibson-Watt
Cabinet – 2024-10-08	Quarter 1 Risk Register Report	Jane Thomas	Councillor David Thomas
Cabinet – 2024-12-10	Quarter 2 Risk Register Report	Jane Thomas	Councillor David Thomas

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