

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON TUESDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2016

PRESENT

County Councillor W B Thomas (Chair)

County Councillors R G Brown, J H Brunt, M R Harris, S M Hayes, E A Jones, W T Jones, W J T Powell and E A York

In attendance: County Councillors KW Curry (morning only), AW Davies, SC Davies, DO Evans (morning only), WJ Evans (morning only), CJ Gibson-Watt, DR Jones, H Lewis, PJ Medlicott, DW Meredith (afternoon only), GD Price (morning only), KF Tampin (morning only), GSI Williams (morning only)

The Leader referred to the recent death of County Councillor Ann Holloway and said that tributes would be made at the next Council meeting. Members and officers stood for a minutes silence as a mark of respect.

1.	APOLOGIES	C177- 2016
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Apologies for absence were received from the Chief Executive and Strategic Director – Resources who were on other Council business.

2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	C178- 2016
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County Councillor WJT Powell declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Llandrindod High School and Crossgates CP School. County Councillor JH Brunt declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Llanbister CP School and a governor of Neath Port Talbot College.

County Councillor EA York declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Builth Wells High School.

County Councillor GSI Williams declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Llandrindod High School.

County Councillor KF Tampin declared a personal non pecuniary interest as an LEA appointed governor of Llandrindod High School.

3.	LLANBISTER C.P. SCHOOL AND LLANFIHANGEL RHYDITHON C.P. SCHOOL	C179- 2016
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County Councillor John Brunt explained that he would be acting as a local member and would not vote on this matter.

The Portfolio Holder for Education outlined the consultation that had been undertaken in respect of the proposed closure of Llanbister CP School and Llanfihangel Rhydithon CP School. He explained that having taken into account a projected rise in pupil numbers and significant travel time for some pupils, he was proposing to abandon his recommendation to Cabinet that Llanbister CP School close and would instead come back to Cabinet with draft recommendations by November 2016.

The Portfolio Holder for Education explained that he had taken account of the recommendation passed by Council on 8th September that Llanfihangel Rhydithon CP School be allowed to federate with another school and was therefore proposing to abandon the proposal and to bring a new report back to Cabinet with draft recommendations for the school in accordance with the Schools Reorganisation Policy 2015, by no later than the end of November 2016.

County Councillor Hywel Lewis speaking as local Member for Llanfihangel Rhydithon CP School thanked the Portfolio Holder for listening to Council and urged him to engage with the school to find a solution. He argued that the school was a model of successful collaboration and that there shouldn't be any obstacle to federation.

County Councillor John Brunt speaking as local Member for Llanbister CP School welcomed the recommendation to abandon the proposal to close the school. He paid tribute to the governors, parents and community for their campaign to save the school and he asked Cabinet to support the recommendation.

County Councillor David Jones, Chair of the People Scrutiny Committee reminded Cabinet of the Council's policy to reduce surplus places and pointed out that both schools met the criteria for review. He questioned the evidence for rising pupil numbers and noted that the spend per pupil was over the Powys average and impacted all schools. He felt that nothing had come out of the consultation that persuaded him that the Cabinet should set aside the School Reorganisation Policy.

The Portfolio Holder answered questions from the Chair of the People Scrutiny Committee and the opposition group leaders. He advised that there were no plans to review the School Reorganisation Policy and that he felt it was only right for the Cabinet to take into account information that had come in during the consultation. He advised that another consultation would be required and confirmed that they would be engaging with schools and local stakeholders.

A number of Cabinet members expressed reservations over the proposals and advised that they expected the reports to come back in November to address the issues that had led to both schools being reviewed before they were persuaded to set aside the Schools Reorganisation Policy. The Portfolio Holder for Finance referred to the Cabinet's decision to close Nantmel Church in Wales Primary School and the need to apply the policy consistently. Others felt it was right for the rurality of the area to be taken into consideration when considering the future of the schools.

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
<p data-bbox="229 1816 821 1995">1. To receive and consider the Consultation Reports in respect of the Proposals to close Llanbister C.P. School and Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. Schools</p> <p data-bbox="229 2033 821 2067">2. To abandon the Proposal in</p>	<p data-bbox="847 1816 1350 1888">To provide a sustainable model of primary education</p>

<p>respect of Llanbister C.P. School and bring a new report back to Cabinet with draft recommendations for Llanbister C.P. School in accordance with the Schools Reorganisation Policy 2015, by no later than the end of November 2016.</p> <p>3. To abandon the Proposal in respect of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School and bring a new report back to Cabinet with draft recommendations for Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School in accordance with the Schools Reorganisation Policy 2015, by no later than the end of November 2016.</p>	
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4.	SECONDARY SCHOOL REORGANISATION PROGRAMME - BUILTH WELLS AND LLANDRINDOD HIGH SCHOOLS	C180- 2016
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The Portfolio Holder for Education outlined the consultation process. He referred to the debate at Council on 8th September and to the recommendation passed at that meeting that the proposals for Builth Wells High School and Llandrindod High school be abandoned for a period of up to 2 years to allow the leadership teams of both schools to work together on joint proposals to raise standards. The Portfolio Holder did not feel that this recommendation addressed the issues facing the schools and therefore he was proposing the closure of Builth Wells and Llandrindod High Schools on the 31st August 2018 and to establish a new dual-sited dual-stream 11 - 18 school that will operate on the current campuses of Builth Wells and Llandrindod High Schools with effect from 1st September 2018. This was one year later than originally consulted on to give the new governing body time to put staffing structures in place. He felt that the establishment of a new school on two sites was the best way of addressing issues facing the schools and referred to the example when the authority had established a new school on two sites at Newtown and John Beddoes which had seen standards improve.

County Councillor Gary Price spoke as a local member for Llandrindod High School. He noted that 32 members including members of independent groups had voted for the alternative proposal and questioned why the Portfolio Holder had rejected the alternative for reasons that could also be applied to Brecon and Gwernyfed High Schools.

County Councillor Gwilym Williams spoke as a local member for Llandrindod High School. He sought and received an assurance from the Leader and

Portfolio Holder that officers were not working to identify a site for the new school. The Leader said his administration had no plans to do so. He was also advised that it would be for the new shadow governing body to appoint a Headteacher and to agree the staffing structure and that it was permissible to ring fence posts to existing staff.

County Councillor Kelvyn Curry spoke as a local member for Llandrindod High School also referred to the recommendation from Council and asked that the leadership teams in both schools be given an opportunity to collaborate. He felt that the only concession of an extra year would bring uncertainty. He questioned the Cabinet's priorities and noted that savings could be found through other means such as the closure of a household waste recycling centre.

County Councillor Keith Tampin spoke as a local member for Llandrindod High School argued that the proposals put the education of the pupils in both schools in jeopardy and would make the recruitment and retention of staff harder. He referred to Estyn's comments that the proposals did not demonstrate how the changes would lead to improved standards.

County Councillor David Jones, Chair of the People Scrutiny Committee, noted that both schools had lost 200 pupils in the last 6 years and that there was evidence of pupils moving out of the county for 6th form education. He was concerned that Estyn were not convinced that the proposals would improve standards and he urged the Cabinet to do more to improve standards. He asked that the amalgamation date be brought forward but the Portfolio Holder explained that this would not be achievable.

County Councillor James Gibson-Watt, leader of the Liberal Democrat group, argued for a collaboration model rather than merger and referred to Estyn's assessment that standards may be put at risk. The Portfolio Holder for Education explained that he took the Estyn comment as a criticism that there had not been enough detail in the consultation document.

County Councillor Aled Davies, leader of the Conservative group, argued that the case had not been made for the merger of two schools.

County Councillor Sandra Davies, leader of the Labour group, was not reassured that the proposals would raise standards.

The Cabinet confirmed that they had read the report and appendices. Cabinet members spoke about the need to improve standards and to improve the offer to pupils so they did not leave the county particularly for 6th form education. It was noted that in 2011 a collaborative model was introduced but that despite that pupil numbers continued to fall. They noted that the low numbers of pupil particularly in 6th form reduced Welsh Government funding pushing schools into deficit. The Portfolio Holder for Finance confirmed that there was approximately £19m capital allocated for secondary schools in mid Powys. Cabinet noted that by creating a critical mass of pupils it would be easier to recruit specialist teachers, and to allow heads of departments more non-contact time to coach and mentor teachers in their departments which would contribute to a rise in teaching standards.

The Leader in summing up thanked both schools for allowing the Cabinet to visit. He noted that the proposal for one school on two sites gave the opportunity for standards to improve.

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider the Consultation Report and Responses Report; • To publish a statutory notice for <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the closure of Builth Wells and Llandrindod High Schools on the 31st August 2018;and 2. to establish a new dual-sited dual-stream 11 - 18 school that will operate on the current campuses of Builth Wells and Llandrindod High Schools with effect from 1st September 2018; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the issues raised during consultation; • To establish a sustainable model of secondary education, which can deliver high-quality education. • To provide sufficient time to establish the new school.

5.	SECONDARY SCHOOL REORGANISATION PROGRAMME - BRECON AND GWERNYFED HIGH SCHOOLS	C181- 2016
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County Councillor Gillian Thomas declared a personal non pecuniary interest as a local authority appointed governor of Ysgol y Bannau.

County Councillor David Meredith declared a personal non pecuniary interest as a local authority appointed governor and Chair of Governors at Brecon High School.

The Portfolio Holder for Education outlined the consultation process and explained that having considered issues raised in the consultation he was changing his recommendation to the following:

- To abandon elements A, B and D of the Proposal and to bring a new report back to Cabinet with draft recommendations for Brecon and Gwernyfed High Schools, in accordance with the Schools Reorganisation Policy 2015;
- To re-consult on element C of the Proposal, i.e. the closure of the Welsh-stream at Brecon High School from September 2017;
- To submit a revised Outline Business Case to Welsh Government's 21st C Schools Programme for capital investment in both campuses. This will

include a new build 11 – 18 campus in Brecon and improvements to the Gwernyfed campus.

County Councillor David Meredith speaking as a local member for Brecon High School and Chair of Governors welcomed the proposal but advised that he would continue to fight for the retention of Welsh medium education in the school. He referred to the 9% improvement in pupils achieving level 2 plus standard GCSEs and put on record his congratulations to the Headteacher, staff and pupils. He advised that the proposal to transfer Welsh medium education to Builth Wells was already affecting numbers pursuing secondary education in the medium of Welsh and that it would affect numbers attending Ysgol y Bannau.

County Councillor Gillian Thomas speaking as a local member for Brecon High School was concerned that elements A, B and D were going to be abandoned. She wanted to see an end to uncertainty and argued that it made no sense to move Welsh medium education to Builth Wells when there was a Welsh medium primary school in Brecon. She noted that this would involve long journey times for pupils. The Portfolio Holder for Education reminded members that at key stage 4 there were only 3 or 4 subjects available in Brecon compared to 12 in Builth Wells.

Comments from County Councillor Matthew Dorrance were read out in in which he urged the Cabinet to think again about moving Welsh medium provision to Builth Wells.

County Councillor David Jones, the Chair of the People Scrutiny Committee, noted that over 300 pupils had been lost in the last 6 years and that there were 36% surplus places in Brecon and 20% surplus places in Gwernyfed. He referred to the condition of the buildings at both schools and the deficit at Brecon High School. He asked why there had to be further consultation on Welsh medium education when the Cabinet had already allowed free transport from Brecon to Builth Wells. He referred to the Schools Modernisation Policy and said he wasn't convinced that enough things had changed to warrant another consultation or of the logic of a different approach in Brecon and Gwernyfed and Builth Wells and Llandrindod.

The Portfolio Holder advised that he had taken account of the strong feeling of the community that had been apparent in the consultation events. He explained that legal advice was that there would have to be a further consultation on proposals for Welsh language provision. He noted that the precedent to give free transport had been set some years earlier by allowing on appeal free transport to Ystalyfera on the grounds that provision in Brecon was not deemed to be as good.

County Councillor Sandra Davies, leader of the Labour group questioned why transport was not to the nearest school and it was explained that it was because of the difference in provision between the schools. She welcomed Welsh Government investment to build a new school in Brecon which should lead to improvements as had been evidenced by the new school in Ystradgynlais.

County Councillor James Gibson-Watt, leader of the Liberal Democrat group noted that there were differences in the situation between Builth Wells and Llandrindod and Brecon and Gwernyfed. In welcoming the proposal to retain

both schools he said that trust had to be re-established with communities and he asked that all stakeholders were consulted before any further proposals came back to Cabinet. He argued that if Welsh medium education was to be concentrated in one area it should be in Brecon where there was a Welsh medium primary school. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that they would be entering into dialogue with the schools and local community.

County Councillor Aled Davies, leader of the Conservative group, argued that Welsh medium primary and secondary provision needed to be in the same catchment. He asked about the debt of Brecon High School and was advised that the school would have to balance the deficit through a debt recovery plan. He asked about where post 16 education would be sited and was advised that the schools service would be engaging with the schools and local members on options and a report would come back to Cabinet.

The Leader sought and received confirmation from the Cabinet that they had read the report and appendices. Cabinet debated the proposals with a number of members expressing concerns that they did not go far enough to address the issues of low pupil numbers and reducing finances. Members acknowledged the very poor condition of the buildings at Brecon High School and the need to take advantage of Welsh Government funding. Members were reminded that Builth Wells Primary School was one of the largest primary schools in the county and that over a third of the pupils there were educated in the medium of Welsh. Members sought clarification over the timescales involved and advice on whether decisions could be made in the purdah period before the local government elections in May 2017 and the Head of Schools agreed to bring a report to Cabinet on 1st November. The Leader thanked both schools for allowing the Cabinet to visit which the Cabinet had found very worthwhile.

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="236 1308 826 1379">1. To consider the Consultation Report and Responses Report <li data-bbox="236 1417 826 1671">2. To abandon elements A,B, and D of the Proposal and to bring a new report back to Cabinet with draft recommendations for Brecon and Gwernyfed High Schools, in accordance with the Schools Reorganisation Policy 2015; <li data-bbox="236 1709 826 1850">3. To re-consult on element C of the Proposal, i.e. the closure of the Welsh-stream at Brecon High School from September 2017; <li data-bbox="236 1888 826 2067">4. To submit a revised Outline Business Case to Welsh Government's 21st C Schools Programme for capital investment in both campuses and to increase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="852 1308 1401 1379">• To understand the issues raised during consultation; <li data-bbox="852 1417 1401 1603">• To enable officers to bring forward alternative options that will address the challenges faced by the secondary school sector in Powys; <li data-bbox="852 1677 1401 1827">• To provide a more sustainable, educationally and linguistically viable model of Welsh-medium secondary education; <li data-bbox="852 1865 1401 2045">• Submitting a revised OBC will enable the Council to draw down Welsh Government funding to support a capital investment in both campuses.

<p>the budget for the Project by £8m financed by a Welsh Government capital grant and Prudential Borrowing. This will include a new build 11 – 18 campus in Brecon and improvements to the Gwernyfed campus.</p> <p>5. To bring a further report to Cabinet on 1st November setting out the timeline for consideration of draft recommendations.</p>	
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County Councillor W B Thomas (Chair)