

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

14th March 2017

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Arwel Jones
Portfolio Holder for Education**

SUBJECT: Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School

REPORT FOR: Decision

Summary

1. Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 27th September 2016, the authority has carried out formal consultation on the following proposal:

“To close the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School from the 31st August 2017, with Brecon High School becoming an English-medium school from the 1st September 2017.”

2. The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet members of the responses received to the consultation and to determine whether or not to proceed with the statutory process to close the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School, through the publication of a Statutory Notice.
3. The report is supported by the following appendices:
 - **Appendix A** – Consultation Document
 - **Appendix B** – Consultation Report
 - **Appendix C** – Minutes of meetings with School Council, staff, governors and parents / community
 - **Appendix D** – Impact Assessments

Background

The Consultation Period

4. On the 27th September 2016, Cabinet considered consultation reports in respect of proposals to reorganise secondary provision in mid and south Powys, involving Builth Wells High School, Llandrindod High School, Brecon High School and Gwernyfed High School. At this meeting, Cabinet determined the following:
 - To publish a statutory notice for the closure of Builth Wells and Llandrindod High Schools on the 31st August 2018 and the establishment of 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

- To abandon the elements of the proposal with regard to Brecon High School and Gwernyfed High School relating to closure of the two schools and the establishment of a new 11-16 school, and to re-consult on the closure of the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School from September 2017.
5. Consultation on the proposal to close the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School commenced on the 21st November 2016 and ended on the 9th January 2017.
 6. The consultation document was available on the council's website throughout the consultation period. The document was also distributed to stakeholders as required by the School Organisation Code (2013). The consultation document that was issued is attached as Appendix A.
 7. Consultees were invited to respond to the consultation by either completing the online consultation form, filling in a paper copy of the form and returning it to the School Transformation Team, or by writing to the School Transformation Team.
 8. During the consultation period, meetings were also held with the following:
 - Staff of Brecon High School
 - Governors of Brecon High School
 - Parents of pupils at Brecon High School and Ysgol y Bannau
 - Welsh-medium pupils at Brecon High School
 - English-medium pupils at Brecon High School
 - Ysgol y Bannau School Council
 - Sennybridge CP School Council
 9. The minutes of these meetings are attached as Appendix C, and the issues raised in the meetings are included in the Consultation Report (Appendix B).

Consultation Responses

10. A total of 237 written responses were received to the consultation, including responses submitted using the online response form, via e-mail and other written responses. However, of these responses, 71 responses were received from one individual respondent, and another 26 were received from another individual respondent. In addition, during the consultation period, individuals were encouraged to e-mail the council with the statement 'All I want for Christmas is for the Welsh stream to stay open in Brecon High School'. 39 responses were received which only included this statement.

11. In addition to the written responses, a copy of an online petition was received, which was signed by 236 people and which included 67 written comments.
12. The written responses received included a response by Estyn, which is provided in full on page 13 of the Consultation Report (Appendix B). Estyn's response includes the following summary / conclusion:

'It is Estyn's view that the proposer appears to have suitably demonstrated that, given the small numbers of pupils in the Welsh medium stream, that overall the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards of education in the area.'
13. All issues raised during the consultation period, including those raised in all responses received and those raised in the consultation meetings, are listed in the Consultation Report (Appendix B), along with the authority's response to these issues.

Comments from Full Council – 7th March 2017

16. This issue was discussed by Full Council on the 7th March 2017. At the meeting, Full Council decided not to support the recommendation to approve the publication of a statutory notice in respect of this proposal.
17. Members of the Cabinet will have been present during the course of the debate in Full Council, and a draft copy of the Minutes of that meeting will be made available to members before a decision is made.

Proposal

18. The proposal to Cabinet is as follows:
 - i) To receive the Consultation Report in respect of the proposal outlined in 1 above.
 - ii) To approve the publication of a Statutory Notice in respect of this proposal.
19. A financial analysis of the draft recommendation was carried out, and details were included in the Consultation Document (Appendix A). Based on this analysis, it is estimated that implementation of the proposal would lead to an annual saving of £58,475.

One Powys Plan

20. 'Transforming Learning and Skills' is one of the priorities within the One Powys Plan. Within this priority, the Plan states that '*We need to re-organise schools (primary, secondary and post 16) to ensure affordability, sustainability and appropriate leadership capacity.*'

Options Considered/Available

21. As stated in the consultation document in respect of this proposal (Appendix A), consideration of the future of the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School has taken place over a number of years. The council previously carried out consultation on closure of the stream during the summer of 2015, and a range of possible options were listed in the consultation document issued at this time.
22. This proposal was not published within the period of 26 weeks following the end of the consultation period required by the School Organisation Code, therefore the initial proposal to close the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School lapsed.
23. Subsequently, a number of options for providing Welsh-medium education in mid and south Powys were evaluated as part of the wider reviews of secondary provision in mid and south Powys. This review concluded that the most appropriate option at the current time is to centralise Welsh-medium secondary provision in mid and south Powys.
24. The authority has recently concluded the statutory process to close Builth Wells High School and Llandrindod Wells High School and establish a new secondary school across two sites. This process resulted in a decision by Cabinet on the 28th February 2017 to establish a new dual sited, dual stream school, with the current dual stream provision being retained on the Builth Wells site.
25. With this in mind, the only option available to the authority in relation to the Welsh-medium provision at Brecon High School is whether or not to retain this provision. The strengths and weaknesses of these two options are considered on pages 19-21 of the consultation document in respect of this proposal (Appendix A).
26. A number of alternative options were also suggested during the consultation period. These are listed on pages 148-158 in the Consultation Report (Appendix B), along with the authority's response.

Preferred Choice and Reasons

27. Having considered the responses received to the consultation on this proposal, the preferred choice is to proceed with the proposal as outlined in the consultation document.
28. The reason for the proposal are as follows:
 - Low pupil numbers in the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School
 - Need to ensure robust linguistic progression and appropriate curriculum choice for Welsh-medium pupils throughout all key stages of education

Sustainability and Environmental Issues/Equalities/Crime and Disorder,/Welsh Language/Other Policies etc

A range of impact assessments were produced as part of the consultation on closure of the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School. These include a Single Integrated Impact Assessment, an Equalities Impact Assessment, a Community Impact Assessment and a Welsh Language Impact Assessment.

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

The authority's Single Integrated Impact Assessment considers the impact of any proposal against a number of criteria, which includes the wellbeing goals of The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2016.

Children and Young People's Impact Statement - Safeguarding and Wellbeing

The authority's Schools Transformation Programme is intended to improve educational outcomes for children and young people. This aligns with the aspiration to improve safeguarding and well-being for children and young people.

Local Member(s)

No comments received

Other Front Line Services

N/A

Support Services (Legal, Finance, Corporate Property, HR, ICT, Business Services)

Finance: The Schools Finance manager notes the contents of the report. The estimated savings included within the consultation document and Cabinet report are based on the 2016-17 funding formula, the £58,475 saving stated is as a result of the removal of funding for the language uplift.

Legal: The recommendations can be supported from a legal point of view.

Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc

N/A

Corporate Communications

Communications Comment: The report is of considerable public interest and requires the use of a news release and appropriate social media to publicise the decision.

Statutory Officers

The **Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer)** has commented as follows: I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report.

The **Strategic Director Resources (Section 151 Officer)** notes the comments made by finance:

Members' Interests

The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If Members have an interest they should declare it at the start of the meeting and complete the relevant notification form.

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
i) To note the Consultation Report and the views of Full Council in respect of the proposal to close the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School from the 31st August 2017	To understand the issues raised during the consultation period.
ii) To approve the publication of a statutory notice in respect of this proposal.	To provide a more sustainable, educationally and linguistically viable model of Welsh-medium secondary education.

Relevant Policy (ies):	School Transformation Policy, Welsh in Education Strategic Plan		
Within Policy:	Y	Within Budget:	Y

Relevant Local Member(s):	All local members serving the catchment area of the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School.
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Marianne Evans
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	End of March 2017

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Background Papers used to prepare Report: