

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

**CABINET EXECUTIVE
15th December 2015**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Arwel Jones
Portfolio Holder for Education

SUBJECT: Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol Dolafon

REPORT FOR: Decision

Summary

This report recommends the commencement of formal consultation on the closure of the Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol Dolafon, Llanwrtyd Wells from the 31st August 2016, with the school to be re-categorised as an English-medium school from the 1st September 2016.

The report is supported by the following appendices:

- Appendix A – Data sheet for Ysgol Dolafon
- Appendix B – Draft Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix C – Draft Community and Welsh Language Impact Assessments
- Appendix D – Financial Assessment

Background

On the 11th November 2014, Cabinet approved a new Powys School Transformation Policy, which set out the Council's vision and process for the transformation of primary and secondary schools in the county.

The Policy includes:

- a range of criteria to be used to determine which schools would be reviewed
- the establishment of a School Organisation Review Panel (SORP) to carry out reviews of schools
- the establishment of a School Review Process to be used to review schools

In December 2014, the SORP carried out an Initial Assessment of Schools in accordance with Stage 1 of the School Review Process, during which data for all schools was considered. Schools were also ranked against the criteria outlined in the School Transformation Policy. As a result of this Initial Assessment of Schools, the SORP agreed to carry out a detailed review of a

number of schools, which included the Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol Dolafon, Llanwrtyd Wells.

Ysgol Dolafon met the following criteria:

- Capacity: The percentage of surplus places in a school is higher than 15%
- Financial: The cost per pupil is more than 120% of the council's average for the sector
- Pupil Numbers: There have been fewer than 25 pupils in the Welsh-medium stream for the three previous years

Dialogue has taken place with the governing body, headteacher and local member during 2015 in accordance with Stage 2 of the School Review Process as described in the School Transformation Policy. This has included:

- An initial meeting to agree data in respect of the school and to discuss future options relating to the Welsh-medium stream at the school
- An opportunity for the governing body to provide feedback on the options presented to them
- A SORP meeting to agree a draft recommendation in respect of the school
- A further meeting to discuss the draft recommendation to be considered by Cabinet and to give the governing body a further opportunity to present additional evidence.

Following consideration of the data agreed with the school (attached at Appendix A) and the feedback received from the school, the SORP's draft recommendation in respect of the Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol Dolafon is closure of the stream from the 31st August 2016, with the school to be re-categorised as an English-medium school.

In accordance with the School Transformation Policy, Cabinet is required to consider draft impact assessments assessing equality issues, impact on the community and on the Welsh-language when deciding whether or not to approve the SORP's draft recommendation. Draft impact assessment documents are attached as Appendix B and Appendix C.

Proposal

- i) That Cabinet receive the SORP's draft recommendation in respect of Ysgol Dolafon, Llanwrtyd Wells, which is as follows:

Closure of the Welsh-medium stream from the 31st August 2016, with the school to be re-categorised as an English-medium school. Builth Wells CP School to be named as the receiving school for Welsh-medium pupils.

- ii) That Cabinet approves the commencement of formal consultation in accordance with the School Organisation Code in respect of the closure of the Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol Dolafon from the 31st August 2016.

A financial analysis of the draft recommendation has been carried out, details of which are attached as Appendix D. It is estimated that implementation of this draft recommendation would lead to annual savings of £16,624.

One Powys Plan

‘Transforming Learning and Skills’ is a key priority within the One Powys Plan, and the Authority’s aim is to ensure that ‘all children and young people are supported to achieve their potential’. The plan states that the Authority needs to ‘reorganise schools (primary, secondary and post 16) to ensure affordability, sustainability and appropriate leadership capacity’.

Options Considered/Available

The SORP discussed a number of possible options with the Governing Body of Ysgol Dolafon. These are outlined below, as well as an analysis of the Advantages and Disadvantages of each.

i) Status Quo

Advantages	Disadvantages
No additional transport or travel required	Does not address the size of the Welsh-medium stream
Maintains Welsh-medium provision in Llanwrtyd Wells	Does not improve the financial viability of the Welsh-medium stream
	Based on the current number of pupils at the Welsh-medium stream, the authority’s funding formula does not provide sufficient funding to enable the school to have an appropriate teaching structure in the Welsh-medium stream.

ii) Status Quo for a period of 2 years to monitor growth in Welsh-medium pupil numbers

Advantages	Disadvantages
No additional transport or travel	Does not address the size of the

required	Welsh-medium stream in the short term
Maintains Welsh-medium provision in Llanwrtyd Wells in the short term	<p>Does not improve the financial viability of the Welsh-medium stream in the short term</p> <p>Based on the current number of pupils at the Welsh-medium stream, the authority's funding formula does not provide sufficient funding to enable the school to have an appropriate teaching structure in the Welsh-medium stream in the short term</p> <p>The Welsh-medium stream is unlikely to grow significantly in 2 years</p> <p>The school's financial position is likely to worsen over the 2 years</p>

iii) **Closure of the Welsh-medium stream, school to be re-categorised as an English-medium school**

Advantages	Disadvantages
The majority of current pupils at the school choose to access English-medium education	No Welsh-medium provision would be available in Llanwrtyd Wells
Would provide a more positive learning experience for Welsh-medium pupils as they would be in classes with a larger number of pupils	Increased travel for pupils wishing to access Welsh-medium education
Would provide a more positive learning experience for Welsh-medium pupils as they would be in classes with a smaller age range	May have a negative impact on the bilingual skills of English-medium pupils
Would enable Ysgol Dolafon to run more efficiently as a single stream school	

iv) **Closure of the Welsh-medium stream, school to be re-categorised as a bilingual school**

Advantages	Disadvantages
All pupils in the school would have the opportunity to enhance their bilingual skills	Majority of the current pupils choose to access English-medium education
Would enable Ysgol Dolafon to run more efficiently as a single stream school	No Welsh-medium provision would be available in Llanwrtyd Wells
Would enable the school to retain its bilingual identity	This would not be Welsh-medium education, therefore there would be additional travel for Welsh-medium pupils
Would provide a more positive learning experience for Welsh-medium pupils as they would be in classes with a larger number of pupils	As this model is not currently utilised in Powys, it is unclear what the funding implications would be
Would provide a more positive learning experience for Welsh-medium pupils as they would be in classes with a smaller age range	As this model is not currently utilised in Powys, it is unclear what the impact on standards would be

Preferred Choice and Reasons

Following consideration of each of the options and the feedback received from the Governing Body of Ysgol Dolafon on each of the options, the SORP's view is that option (iii), closure of the Welsh-medium stream and re-categorisation of the school as an English-medium school is the most suitable way forward.

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

A draft Equality Impact Assessment has been produced and is attached as Appendix B. In addition, a draft Community Impact Assessment and Welsh Language Impact Assessment have been produced, these are attached as Appendix C.

The impact assessments will be updated following any formal consultation period to include qualitative information based on the responses received to the consultation.

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)

Other Front Line Services

N/A

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

Legal: Legal advice has been sought throughout the SORP process in respect of the Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol Dolafon.

Finance: "The Finance Business Partner for Schools confirms the estimated savings in the report, but notes that figures do not include an estimate of any redundancy costs at this stage."

HR: The Schools' HR Team continues to work closely with the Schools' Service with the aim of providing timely advice and support regarding any HR processes which may be required as a result of the proposal detailed in this report.

Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc

N/A

Corporate Communications

Communications Comment: 'The report is of public interest and requires a proactive news release and use of social media to publicise the recommendation.'

Statutory Officers

The Strategic Director Resources (S151 Officer) notes the comments made by finance and notes that funding is in place to meet any redundancy costs.

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

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:
1. To receive the SORP's draft recommendation in respect of the Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol Dolafon, Llanwrtyd Wells.	To ensure future sustainability of primary education.
2. To approve the commencement of formal consultation with stakeholders in accordance with the School Organisation Code on the closure of the Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol Dolafon from the 31st August 2016, with Builth Wells CP School to be named as the receiving school for Welsh-medium pupils.	

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

Relevant Local Member(s):	Cllr T J Van-Rees
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	School Transformation Team
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	31 st January 2016

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Background Papers used to prepare Report: