

# CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

## CABINET REPORT 6th June 2011

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Senior Manager, Central Support Services

**SUBJECT:** Closure of Aberhafesp Community Primary School

---

**REPORT FOR:** Decision

---

### **Summary**

Following a review of small schools in Powys by the Council's Learning in the Community Programme Board earlier in the year, on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2011 the Council's Board approved the commencement of a consultation process to close Aberhafesp CP School and to proceed to statutory notices for its closure. At the time of that Board report the school was projected to have 7 pupils by the start of the next academic year. The school is in Special Measures following an Estyn inspection in November 2010.

At the time of writing there are 12 pupils at the school. 4 of these will transfer to High School next year and a further 5 have applied to transfer to other schools in September leaving a maximum of 3 pupils on roll at that time. It is quite likely that the school will have no pupils by September 2011.

A consultation meeting with staff, governors and the community was held on 14<sup>th</sup> April where the proposals were explained; this included a timetable explaining that the school could be formally closed by Christmas 2011. The Council must give one term's notice to a school proposed for closure as well as undertaking the formal statutory notice procedure.

The closing date for comments to be received on the proposals outlined at the 14<sup>th</sup> April meeting is 31<sup>st</sup> May. The only comment received by the deadline was from the Aberhafesp Community Association who have made representations about retaining the community's use of the community hall but have not objected to the school closure itself.

Statutory notices need to be published for one month and are subject to Assembly Government regulations. They must be displayed at all school entrances and published in at least one local newspaper as well as other prominent public places. If one objection to a statutory notice is received, the decision falls to the Minister at the Assembly Government to determine. The Council must make its comments on the objections received and send them to the Assembly Government within two weeks of the end of the objection period.

### **Proposal**

To publish statutory notices for the closure of Aberhafesp CP School on 16<sup>th</sup> June with the closing date for objections being 16<sup>th</sup> July. There should be a managed transfer of the remaining pupils at the school with Caersws CP School named as the receiving school.

### **Corporate Improvement Plan**

A priority of the Corporate Improvement Plan is to provide high quality educational opportunities for all.

### **Options Considered/Available**

The school could remain open but this would be a very inefficient use of resources and the number of pupils is so low that it would be extremely difficult for a reasonable standard of education to be provided.

### **Preferred Choice and Reasons**

It is in the best interests of the pupils in the school that statutory notices for closure are published as soon as possible.

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

The closure of the school will inevitably have a detrimental impact on a community which falls within the Severn Valley Strategic Regeneration Programme Area. The community hall is also the venue for many community activities and the Council will endeavour to support the village's ambition to retain the community hall for community use.

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

All necessary steps will be taken to minimise the impact of these proposals on the education and welfare of the pupils at the school. This will be done through a supported transfer to the receiving school or a school of the parents' choice.

### **Local Member(s)**

Councillor Joy Shearer has commented as follows:

The school and Community of Aberhafesp have gone through a very difficult period in the last six months since the Estyn inspection. As the local member I will continue to support of the parents and local community, but it is essential that the learning outcomes for the children of the community are central to the decisions made over the future of the school. I trust that the interests of The Community Association are taken into consideration and will be given as much support as possible, so that the thriving user groups may continue into the future safeguarding the community spirit that is present in Aberhafesp and the surrounding area.

### **Other Front Line Services**

No implications identified.

### **Support Services (Legal, Finance, HR, ICT, BPU)**

The Principal Accountant for Community Skills and Learning comments that Appendix A provides details of the estimated savings and costs if closure were to be approved at the end of the Autumn Term 2011. The figures quoted are based on the maximum costs and in year 1 the costs associated with staff severance are higher than the expected savings in the three months ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012. The revenue savings from year 2 onwards are projected to be £102k per annum would be achieved. The payback period of meeting the redundancy and severance costs is 5.82 months.

As stated the figures are based on the maximum costs for a school closure on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012, officers are expecting that the school will have no children from

September and the projected additional costs for the 2010/11 year may reduce due to this factor.

The Schools budget has a surplus balance of £30,218 at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011, the budget proposal for 2011/2012 based on current staffing levels is projecting an in year deficit of £36,300. If the school closes from 31<sup>st</sup> December it is projected to have a surplus at closure of approximately £3,000. If the school were to remain open action would be required to significantly reduce staffing levels in order to bring the budget back in line, this would incur approximately £8,000 of the severance costs included in the above costings.

### **Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc**

No implications identified.

### **Statutory Officers**

The Strategic Director, Law & Governance (Monitoring Officer) has commented:-

The proposals need to follow the normal procedures for school closure and advice from Legal Services obtained as necessary.

The Strategic Director, Finance & Infrastructure (Section 151 Officer) has commented:-

I note there is a slight cost in the first year and significant savings thereafter.

### **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.

### **Future Status of the Report**

Members are invited to consider the future status of this report and whether it can be made available to the press and public either immediately following the meeting or at some specified point in the future.

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>Reason for Recommendation:</b>
<b>To publish statutory notices for the closure of Aberhafesp CP School as soon as possible with the closing date for objections being before the end of the school year.</b>	<b>To ensure efficient use of resources within the schools service and to provide the best possible standard of education for local children.</b>

<b>Relevant Policy (ies):</b>	
<b>Within Policy:</b>	<b>Y</b>
<b>Within Budget:</b>	<b>Y</b>

<b>Relevant Local Member(s):</b>	<b>Councillor Joy Shearer</b>
----------------------------------	-------------------------------

<b>Person(s) To Implement Decision:</b>	<b>Head of Schools</b>
<b>Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> December 2011</b>

<b>Contact Officer Name:</b>	<b>Tel:</b>	<b>Fax:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
Owen James	01597 826709		Owen.james@powys.gov.uk

### **Background Papers used to prepare Report:**

Aberhafesp Consultation paper 14<sup>th</sup> April 2011  
 Aberhafesp Community Impact Assessment May 2011