

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

26th January 2021

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Phyl Davies
Portfolio Holder for Education and Property**

**REPORT TITLE: Mount Street Infant School, Mount Street Junior School
and Cradoc CP School – Proposal Paper**

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1. On the 23rd December 2020, the Council's Cabinet considered a Proposal Paper in respect of Mount Street Infant School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School, and approved the following recommendation:

That Cabinet approves commencing the statutory process on the following proposal:

Phase 1

- To amalgamate Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School to create a new primary school that would operate from the current three sites
- The target date for establishing the new primary school is September 2022.

Phase 2

- To make a regulated alteration to transfer the school to a new school building on a new site in Brecon

- 1.2. Cabinet approved on 23rd December 2020 to proceed to consultation, however, additional information has been obtained from the three schools concerned. A Community Impact Assessment has been prepared based on this additional information. Cabinet are asked to re-consider whether or not to proceed with the recommendation approved on the 23rd December in light of the additional information contained in the Community Impact Assessment at Appendix C.

- 1.3 The report includes the following recommendations:

- i) To consider the Community Impact Assessment, and

- ii) To consider whether or not to proceed with the recommendation approved on the 23rd December in light of the Community Impact Assessment as follows:

‘That Cabinet approves commencing the statutory process on the following proposal

Phase 1

- *To amalgamate Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School to create a new primary school that would operate from the current three sites*
- *The target date for establishing the new primary school is September 2022.*

Phase 2

To make a regulated alteration to transfer the school to a new school building on a new site in Brecon’

- 1.4 The report is supported by the following appendices:

Appendix A – Options Appraisal – Mount Street Infants, Mount Street Juniors and Cradoc

Appendix B – Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix C – Community Impact Assessment

2. Background

Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys

- 2.1. On the 14th April 2020, a new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys was approved by the Leader via a delegated decision.

- 2.2. The Strategy was developed following extensive engagement with a range of stakeholders during two separate periods between October 2019 and March 2020.

- 2.3. The Strategy sets out a new vision for education in Powys, which is as follows:

‘All children and young people in Powys will experience a high quality, inspiring education to help develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that will enable them to become healthy, personally fulfilled, economically productive, socially responsible and globally engaged citizens of 21st century Wales.’

- 2.3 The Strategy also sets out a number of guiding principles which will underpin the transformation of education in Powys. These are as follows:

- *A world class rural education system that has learner entitlement at its core*
 - *Schools that are fully inclusive, with a culture of deep collaboration in order to improve learner outcomes and experience*
 - *A broad choice and high quality of provision for 14 – 19 year old learners, that includes both academic and vocational provision, meeting the needs of all learners, communities and the Powys economy*
 - *Welsh-medium provision that is accessible and provides a full curriculum in Welsh from Meithrin to age 19 and beyond*
 - *Provision for learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN)/Additional Learning Needs (ALN) that is accessible as near to home as is practicably possible, with the appropriate specialist teaching, support and facilities that enables every learner to meet their potential*
 - *A digitally-rich schools sector that enables all learners and staff to enhance their teaching and learning experience*
 - *Community-focused schools that are the central point for multi-agency services to support children, young people, families and the community*
 - *Early years provision that is designed to meet the needs of all children, mindful of their particular circumstances, language requirements or any special or additional learning needs*
 - *Financially and environmentally sustainable schools*
 - *The highest priority is given to staff wellbeing and professional development*
- 2.4. The new Strategy sets out a number of Strategic Aims and Objectives, to shape the Council's work to transform the Powys education system over the coming years. One of these Aims is to '*improve learner entitlement and experience*' and includes an objective to '*rationalise primary provision*'.

3. The Case for Change

3.1 The preferred way forward for the Mount Street schools and Cradoc CP School was outlined the Programme Business Case that was considered by Cabinet on the 29th September 2020. A number of options were considered and assessed, and further information was also included in the paper considered by Cabinet on the 23rd December 2020.

3.2 The following is a summary of the main challenges facing Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc CP School:

3.3 Mount Street Infants and Mount Street Juniors

i) Building condition

The current building condition of the two schools is as follows:

	Condition
Mount Street Infants School	C – Poor
Mount Street Junior School	C – Poor

There are issues with building condition in both schools, with the condition of both schools being rated as poor, with approximately £1.7m in backlog maintenance outstanding across the two sites.

ii) Last remaining infant and junior schools in Powys

School reorganisation in Powys has gradually moved to a model of ‘all-through’ provision in primary schools across the county. Mount Street Infant and Junior Schools represent the last remaining separate infant and junior schools within the County.

The advantages offered by single school provision for primary age pupils are well known and evidence based. Due in part to an increased critical mass of learners, ‘all-through’ primary schools are usually able to offer both enhanced continuity of provision and a curriculum which is more broad and balanced in content delivered in a continuous and coherent way from the Foundation Phase through to the end of Key Stage 2.

iii) Transition arrangements

Whilst the two schools work closely together to minimise disruption for pupils on transition from the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 in order to ensure that they can effectively move from one school to the other, the current arrangement does mean that there is an additional transition for pupils during their educational careers, which can cause disruption to pupils and their families.

iv) Staff development opportunities

The current arrangement provides the opportunity for staff to specialise in a particular educational phase – either Foundation Phase or Key Stage 2. However, this does mean that it is more difficult for them to gain experience across the primary age range.

3.4 Cradoc C.P. School

The following is a summary of the main challenges facing Cradoc C.P. School:

i) Decreasing pupil numbers¹

	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2015	Jan. 2016	Jan. 2017	Jan. 2018	Jan. 2019	Jan. 2020
Cradoc C.P. School	141	139	136	142	133	123	112

Pupil numbers have decreased significantly over the last five years. It has a capacity of 175 pupils² with 95 on roll, according to latest pupil data, although forecasting information suggests pupil numbers may increase.

ii) Building condition

The current building condition of the school is as follows:

	Condition
Cradoc C.P. School	C – Poor

There are issues with building condition at Cradoc C.P. School, with the condition of the school being rated as poor, with approximately £628k in backlog maintenance outstanding. The building is also not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

iii) Building configuration

The configuration of the school is problematic and creates safeguarding concerns. The school also utilises three aging demountable buildings, only one of which has toilet facilities; therefore children have to leave the classroom to enter the main building in order to use the toilets.

4. Information about Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School

The following is a summary of key data relating to the three schools:

	School Type	Language Category	Admission Number ³	Rural School? ⁴
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¹ PLASC

² Welsh Government School Places Return – August 2020

³ Powys Admissions Information and Arrangements 2011-22

⁴ Annex F of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2018)

(<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/school-organisation-code-second->

Mount Street Infants School	Community Infants School building owned by Powys County Council	English medium	43	No
Mount Street Junior School	Community Junior School building owned by Powys County Council	English medium	43	No
Cradoc C.P. School	Community Primary School building owned by Powys County Council	English medium	25	Yes

Pupil Numbers

i) Current pupil numbers⁵

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Mount Street Infants School	39	33	41					113
Mount Street Junior School				47	49	38	39	173
Cradoc C.P. School	13	10	12	19	14	13	14	95
TOTAL	52	43	53	66	63	51	53	381

ii) Historical pupil numbers⁶

[edition.pdf](#) includes a list of 'rural schools', to which the 'Presumption against the closure of rural schools' applies.

⁵ Finance NOR – 2020 Pupil Count Day (6th November 2020)

⁶ PLASC 2020

	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2015	Jan. 2016	Jan. 2017	Jan. 2018	Jan. 2019	Jan. 2020
Mount Street Infants School	159	176	191	187	179	171	150
Mount Street Junior School	153	124	138	139	145	143	152
Cradoc C.P. School	141	139	136	142	133	123	112
TOTAL	453	439	465	478	457	437	414

iii) Projected pupil numbers (Birth rate)⁷

	Jan. 2021	Jan. 2022	Jan. 2023	Jan. 2024	Jan. 2025
Mount Street Infants School	105	109	110	111	110
Mount Street Junior School	159	156	151	139	130
Cradoc C.P. School	98	98	99	99	94
TOTAL	362	363	360	349	334

iv) Projected pupil numbers (Finance projections)⁸

	Jan. 2022	Jan. 2023	Jan. 2024	Jan. 2025
Mount Street Infants School	113	112	N/A	N/A
Mount Street Junior School	173	178	N/A	N/A
Cradoc C.P. School	95	94	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	381	384	N/A	N/A

⁷ Powys Schools Service Projections (R – Yr6) based on PLASC 2020 & Birth Rates

⁸ Powys Finance Projections based on data provided by the school – November 2020

Building Capacity and Condition

i) Capacity

The following table provides information about the current capacities of school and the capacity:

	Current Capacity⁹	Currently Filled	Surplus Capacity
Mount Street Infants School	129	113 (87.6%)	16 (12.4%)
Mount Street Junior School	172	173 (100.6%)	-1 (0.5%)
Cradoc C.P. School	175	95 (54.3%)	80 (45.7%)

ii) Building condition

In 2009, Welsh Government carried out condition and suitability assessments of the school.

	Condition	Suitability	Access to hall on site
Mount Street Infants School	C Poor	B/C Good/Poor	Yes
Mount Street Junior School	C Poor	A/B Excellent/Good	Yes
Cradoc C.P. School	C Poor	B/C Good/Poor	Yes

Standards of Education

i) Estyn

	Mount Street Infants School
Date of Inspection	January 2020

⁹ Welsh Government School Places Return – August 2020

Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Excellent
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Excellent
Leadership and management	Good
Follow Up	School will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

	Mount Street Junior School
Date of Inspection	March 2016
Standards	Good
Wellbeing	Good
Learning experiences	Good
Teaching	Good
Care, support, and guidance	Good
Learning environment	Good
Leadership	Good
Improving quality	Good
Partnership working	Good
Resource management	Good
Follow Up	The school will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations

	Cradoc C.P. School
Date of Inspection	May 2017

Standards	Adequate
Wellbeing	Adequate
Learning experiences	Adequate
Teaching	Adequate
Care, support, and guidance	Adequate
Learning environment	Adequate
Leadership	Adequate
Improving quality	Adequate
Partnership working	Adequate
Resource management	Adequate
Follow Up	The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the schools progress

ii) School Categorisation¹⁰

	Standards Group	Improvement Capacity	Support Capacity
Mount Street Infants School	N/A	A	Green
Mount Street Junior School	N/A	C	Amber
Cradoc C.P. School	N/A	B	Yellow

Financial information

i) Cost per pupil¹¹ (Section 52 Budget Statement, 2020/2021)

¹⁰ 2019

¹¹ Section 52 Budget Statement 2020/2021

	Budget share per school	Budget share per pupil	Notional SEN budget	Non ISB funds devolved to the school
Mount Street Infants School	£526,000	£4,618	£44,000	£8,000
Mount Street Junior School	£558,000	£3,821	£67,000	£21,000
Cradoc C.P. School	£423,000	£4,226	£21,000	£5,000
Powys average (Primary)	N/A	£4,264	N/A	N/A

5. Statutory Process for School Organisation Proposals

5.1 The process for school organisation proposals is set out by the Welsh Government in the School Organisation Code (2018). The process is summarised below:

i) Consultation

Consultation would be carried out with stakeholders as required by the Code. This includes consultation with the pupils at both schools, to ensure that their views are taken into account, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Feedback from the consultation would be collated and summarised, and a report would be presented to the Cabinet. Cabinet will consider the report and the feedback received during the consultation period, and will decide whether to proceed with the proposal, to make changes to the proposal or to not proceed with the proposal.

If Cabinet decides not to proceed, that will be the end of this proposal.

ii) Statutory Notice

If Cabinet decides to proceed, a Statutory Notice would be published, which would give a period of 28 days for people to submit written objections.

If there were objections, the authority would publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and the authority's

response to them. A further report would be presented to the Cabinet, which they would consider alongside the objection report, in order to decide whether or not to approve the proposal.

iii) Implementation

If Cabinet approves the proposal, it would be implemented in accordance with the date given in the Statutory Notice or any subsequently modified date.

6. Presumption against closure of Rural Schools

The School Organisation Code (2018) includes special arrangements in regard to schools identified in Appendix F of the Code as rural schools, which require proposers to follow a more detailed set of procedures and requirements in formulating a rural school closure proposal and in consulting on and reaching a decision as to whether to implement a rural school closure proposal.

As indicated in the Code:

‘This does not mean that a rural school will never close but the case for closure must be strong and all viable alternatives to closure must have been conscientiously considered by the proposer, including federation.’

The School Organisation Code includes a number of steps required to be taken when formulating a rural school proposal which relate to the following headings:

- Formulating the proposal
- Identifying reasonable alternatives
- Preparing a proposal paper for the decision maker

As the School Organisation Code identified Cradoc C.P. School as a rural school, the additional requirements for rural schools have been addressed when developing the proposal paper.

7. Advice

7.1 Officers have carried out an options appraisal on possible options for these schools. This is attached to this report as Appendix A.

7.2 The options appraisal includes the following:

- Consideration of key data relating to the two schools
- Identification of options
- SWOT analysis of each option
- Initial financial appraisal of each option

- Assessment of each option against a number of critical success factors
- Identification of an emerging preferred option
- Further consideration of the emerging preferred option against factors listed in the School Organisation Code (2018) as factors to be taken into account when developing school organisation proposals, including the additional steps to be undertaken in respect of proposals to close rural schools.

7.3 Based on the options appraisal carried out and further consideration against the factors outlined in the School Organisation Code, the preferred option is as follows:

Merge Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc CP School to create a new primary school.

7.4 The reasons for this are:

- One new, larger school would be established which would offer enhanced opportunities for pupils
- Would enable staff expertise and good practice to be shared across the entire primary age range
- Fairer for staff – all staff at the three schools would have the opportunity to secure positions in the new school
- More flexibility and personal development opportunities for staff
- Parents of pupils currently attending Mount Street Infants would not have to re-apply for admission to junior phase
- Improved transition arrangements between Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 for pupils attending Mount Street Infants
- Potential to attract capital funding to provide a new building
- Would reduce the Council's surplus places in primary schools
- Would lead to rationalisation of the primary school estate
- Financial saving to the Council
- Meets all the Critical Success Factors

7.5 A Community Impact Assessment has been carried out on the preferred option, which considers the impact on the communities. This has been developed with input from the three affected schools. This is attached as Appendix C.

7.6 The Community Impact Assessment includes the following conclusion:

'It is clear that a wide range of extra curricular activities are available to pupils at the three affected schools. Should the proposal be implemented, a new school would initially be established on the existing sites of the three schools. It is expected that a similar range of activities would be provided to pupils on the existing sites. It is also possible that an increased range of activities and opportunities could be offered to

pupils, through the ability to share staff expertise and the ability to offer joint activities to a larger group of pupils. During the first phase of implementation, it is anticipated that the proposal's impact on the community would be minimal.

Eventually, the intention is that the new school would move to one new building located on the site of the old Brecon High School in Brecon, co-located with the PRU and a new community swimming pool. It is anticipated that the new building would have a range of community facilities, which would ensure that many of the activities which currently take place in the schools could continue, as well as providing the opportunity to offer new activities.

It is acknowledged, however that the move to one new building in Brecon would mean that there would be no school provision in the village of Cradoc. The information provided in section 4.3 of the Community Impact Assessment (Appendix C), indicates that there is currently extensive community use of the Cradoc building, and extensive links between the school and the local community. It is currently unclear where the facilities and services currently provided by the school could be provided should there be no school in Cradoc. However, should the Council proceed with the proposal, it would work with the community in Cradoc to identify a suitable alternative.

It is also acknowledged that implementation of the proposal would result in additional travel to school for pupils for whom Cradoc is currently their closest school. Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the home to school transport policy which is in operation at that time, it is acknowledged that there could be an impact on some pupils' ability to access after school activities, and there could be an impact on the ability of parents to take part in school events, meetings etc.

The move to one new building would also have some impact on pupils currently attending Mount Street Infants School and Mount Street Junior School, as the new school building would be located approximately 0.6/0.7 miles from the current school buildings, and would be located up a hill, which could mean that parents would be more likely to drive their children to school rather than walk / cycle. Active travel is a key consideration when developing new school buildings, therefore every effort would be made to encourage walking / cycling to school when developing the new building. As the proposed site for the new school was previously a school site, there are already good active travel links between the site and the town centre.'

- 7.7 It is advised that Cabinet approves a recommendation to commence the statutory process on the following proposal:

Phase 1

- To amalgamate Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School to create a new primary school that would operate from the current three sites
- The target date for establishing the new primary school is September 2022.

Phase 2

- To make a regulated alteration to transfer the school to a new school building on a new site in Brecon

7.8 Should the recommendation to commence the statutory process be approved, it is anticipated that consultation would commence in February 2021.

7.9 It must also be noted that implementation of this proposal does not preclude that school from being a part of future reorganisation proposals.

8. Resource Implications

8.1 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, the phased approach would deliver the following estimated annual revenue savings to the Council:

Phase 1: £16,181. There would be no additional transport costs associated with this phase, although there would be some additional set-up costs.

Phase 2: The move to a new building would result in additional estimated revenue savings in delegated funding amounting to £184,306 per annum and £35,760 for catering functions. It is currently projected that there would be no additional transport costs as current bus routes can accommodate this model.

8.2 In line with the Council's Scheme for Financing Schools, should a school be in a deficit budget position when closed the deficit is written off.

8.3 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 will consider the use of these powers of intervention where appropriate.

- 8.4 Development and 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 will be kept informed of the development of the proposal throughout the statutory process.
- 8.5 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the content of the report. If approval to commence the statutory process is given today, feasibility and preparatory work for the development of the new school and community facilities (Phase 2) will begin and costs will be incurred from the existing Band B programme. This work is undertaken at risk and should the project not proceed these costs will be ineligible for Capital Funding and would fall on the Council's revenue budget.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1 Legal: The recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view.
- 9.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report".

10. Comment from local member(s)

10.1

11. Integrated Impact Assessment

- 11.1 An initial impact assessment in respect of the recommendation is attached. The impact assessment considers the proposal's impact on the Welsh Government's well-being goals, as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
- 11.2 The summary of the impact assessment is as follows:

This impact assessment suggests that the impact is generally positive with some negative aspects, such as the requirement for some pupils to travel further than they currently do to school, and loss of provision in the village of Cradoc. Whilst the intention is to initially establish the new school on the three existing sites, eventually the intention is that the school would move to a new building. This would provide much improved buildings and facilities for pupils compared with the current poor condition buildings, ensuring that future pupils would be taught in facilities that are fit-for-purpose, improving their learner entitlement and

experience. The new facilities would be fully DDA compliant, supporting learners with disabilities.

- 11.3 Should Cabinet approve the commencement of the statutory process in respect of the recommendation, the impact assessment would be updated throughout the process, to take account of feedback received.

12. **Recommendation**

- i) To consider the Community Impact Assessment, and
- ii) To consider whether or not to proceed with the recommendation approved on the 23rd December in light of the Community Impact Assessment as follows:

That Cabinet approves commencing the statutory process on the following proposal

Phase 1

- *To amalgamate Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School to create a new primary school that would operate from the current three sites*
- *The target date for establishing the new primary school is September 2022.*

Phase 2

- *To make a regulated alteration to transfer the school to a new school building on a new site in Brecon'*

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