

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET EXECUTIVE

22nd June 2021

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Portfolio Holder for Education and Property

REPORT TITLE: Ysgol Calon Cymru

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1 On the 29th September 2020, the Council's Cabinet considered a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) which considered a range of options in order to address issues with the current operating model of Ysgol Calon Cymru, a dual stream secondary school which operates across two campuses in Mid Powys.
- 1.2 This is the **first phase** of the Ysgol Calon Cymru catchment transformation programme. The **second phase** will focus on reviewing primary and early years provision in the area.
- 1.3 Without requiring Cabinet to make a decision on the future operating model for Ysgol Calon Cymru, the SOC considered by Cabinet identified a 'preferred way forward', which is as follows:
 - A new 11-18 English-medium campus in Llandrindod Wells; plus
 - A new/remodelled 4-18 Welsh-medium all-through campus in Builth Wells.
- 1.4 This report requests Cabinet approval to commence **informal engagement** with stakeholders on the preferred way forward.

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*

3. The Case for Change

3.1 Ysgol Calon Cymru is a school that was established in September 2017, following the merger of Llandrindod High School and Builth Wells High School. It provides secondary education for pupils aged 11 – 18 across two campuses in both towns. The number on roll based on Teachers Centre data 11th May 2021 is 976. The school is a dual stream school with a small Welsh-medium stream delivered from the Builth Wells campus only. A new permanent headteacher was recently appointed, following a period of interim leadership arrangements.

	Stream	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total
Ysgol Calon Cymru Llandrindod Campus	Welsh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	English	93	89	89	86	89	29	30	505
Ysgol Calon Cymru Builth Campus	Welsh	13	30	21	21	28	16	10	139
	English	40	60	64	55	64	34	15	332
Total pupils		146	179	174	162	181	79	55	976

3.2 The following summarises the case for change included within the SOC for Ysgol Calon Cymru, which identified three key issues:

- i) The current arrangement does not meet the strategic aim of the Council to improve learner entitlement and experience. The current operating model is neither educationally effective, financially efficient nor sustainable. The school had a deficit of £173,450 as of 31 March 2021 (previously forecast to be over £400,000) and is forecasting that this will grow to over £750,000 by the end of this financial year.
- ii) There is a risk to the authority's budget if the school is unable to bring its budget back to a balanced position.
- iii) The condition of the Llandrindod campus, in particular, is very poor and in need of significant investment. Condition assessments of both campuses were undertaken in February 2021, which identified that the estimated cost of bringing Llandrindod campus up to the whole school up to a condition A standard was £2.7m, and the overall condition is categorised as C, with three blocks C-. The Builth Wells campus also has a condition rating of C, with an estimated cost of £1.7m.
- iv) There is a need to significantly improve the learning entitlement and experience for Welsh-medium pupils and expand the limited offer of provision currently available. There are currently 139 pupils in the Welsh stream on the Builth Wells campus, and pupils transfer to the Welsh stream from dual-stream primary schools in Builth Wells, Llandrindod Wells and Rhayader, with some pupils also travelling from further afield.

3.3 Officers have been considering and testing various ways of achieving the preferred way forward, due to the significant complexities, constraints and dependencies that need to be factored in. These include:

- Phasing of the programme, further complicated by legislative requirements, capital funding requirements, building design and construction requirements;
- Complexities of establishing a very small Welsh-medium all-age school in terms of governance, staffing and funding;
- Impact of overall whole-life costs of the programme.

3.4 Having considered these issues, it is the view of officers that the best way of achieving the preferred way forward is as follows. Please note that this is indicative at this stage and would be further refined following a period of informal engagement.

		2021	2022	2023	Sep-24	Sep-25	
Phase 1	Engagement & Feasibility						
Phase 2	Formal Consultation						
<i>All actions in Phase 3 are without prejudice to the decision of Cabinet following consultation</i>							
Phase 3	Implementation						
3a	Design & Build new Llandrindod campus*						
	Campus opens				★		
3b	Establish new all-age WM temp governing body						
	School opens for secondary pupils				★		
3c	Remodel Builth campus to become all-age						
	Primary WM pupils join					★	
3d	Builth CP becomes EM school					★	
	<i>*Cabinet has approved the release of funding to support initial feasibility up to completion of RIBA 2 (concept design) stage. If the project does not go forward after consultation, this cost will become abortive and be charged to revenue.</i>						

Explanatory note

Llandrindod Wells

- Ysgol Calon Cymru pupils would remain on the Builth and Llandrindod campuses until the new build in Llandrindod is completed, when all English-medium pupils would transfer to the new accommodation. Free home-to-school transport would be provided for eligible pupils to

attend the new campus in Llandrindod, subject to a revision of the Home-to-School Transport Policy.

- It is expected that the new campus in Llandrindod Wells would be sited on the current playing fields of Ysgol Calon Cymru. This would mean that access to alternative sports facilities would be needed during the construction phase.
- There would be a need to ensure the complete safety of pupils and staff during the construction period, and the need to minimise any disruption to the operational management of Ysgol Calon Cymru
- Staff would be consulted about any potential change of work location
- The new build campus in Llandrindod Wells would have capacity for 950 pupils.
- Ysgol Calon Cymru would no longer deliver subjects through the medium of Welsh, apart from Welsh as a subject.

Builth Wells

- A temporary governing body would be established from January 2023 to oversee the establishment of the new all-age Welsh-medium school. The temporary governing body would work closely with the governors and SLT of Ysgol Calon Cymru on the establishment of the school.
- The school would open for pupils in Years 7 to 11 in September 2024 and it is recognised that the school would be very small to begin with with approximately 133 pupils in years 7 to 11. Sixth form provision would also be provided but it is not possible to estimate these numbers. Assuming that all current pupils in Welsh medium streams in the feeder primary schools will transfer to the new Welsh medium secondary school in Builth Wells, the year group sizes are estimated to be as follows:

Estimated Pupil numbers based on November 2020 Count date rolled forward plus estimated primary intakes

Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11
12	39	37	31	14

- This is a similar position to many new Welsh-medium schools across Wales which start as small schools but in general these schools have grown over time as parents are reassured that there is a clear progression route for pupils through all key stages. As is common practice across Wales, immersion facilities will also be put in place to enable those pupils that have not attended Welsh medium provision prior to Key Stage 3 to join the Welsh Medium secondary provision
- The target size for the secondary phase would be 300, based on year group sizes of 60. This is a similar size to the secondary phase of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, Machynlleth.

- Builth Wells Primary School would become an English-medium primary school in September 2025, when the Welsh-medium primary pupils join the all-age school in Builth Wells.

The reasons for this are:

- Would retain secondary provision in both towns
- Would provide some stability in Llandrindod Wells as Ysgol Calon Cymru would remain as the provider
- Would provide a greater mass of English-medium learners on one campus
- Broader curriculum could be provided to English-medium learners
- Would be no need to duplicate English-medium provision across two sites
- Would improve post-16 offer by having a greater number of learners in one location
- A new Welsh-medium all-age school would be established which would provide an opportunity to 'rebrand' Welsh-medium provision in the Mid Powys area
- A Welsh-medium all-age school would provide an improved Welsh-medium experience
- Would provide access to designated Welsh-medium primary provision
- All-age Welsh-medium model would promote transition into Welsh-medium secondary provision
- Broader Welsh-medium curriculum could be provided
- Two separate schools which would be funded separately, therefore no requirement for one site to subsidise the other
- Would be more attractive to prospective headteachers
- Meets all the Critical Success Factors

7 Advice

- 7.1 It is therefore advised that Cabinet approves a period of informal engagement takes place. It is anticipated that this will take place during September and October 2021.
- 7.2 The reason for this is to ensure that all stakeholders would be able to contribute to the development of the strategic vision for transforming education in the area, and to inform the development of proposals that would then be subject to formal consultation. The complexity of the plans require further engagement to understand any potential issues that are currently unforeseen.
- 7.3 The informal engagement would take the form of focus groups with parents, governors, pupils and other stakeholders, and other means e.g. surveys etc. A report would then be produced for the consideration of Cabinet, and, if approved, formal consultation would then proceed.

8. Resource Implications

- 8.1 The estimated capital cost of the plans for the two campuses of Ysgol Calon Cymru as set out in the Strategic Outline Case amounted to £46 million, split between the Llandrindod Wells campus new build proposal at £28 million and a re-modelling of the Builth Wells campus at £18 million. These are high level estimates at this stage which will be refined further during the business case process. No capital funding has been identified for these projects at this time, however following the outcome of the consultation process, a strategic outline case will be submitted to Welsh Government 21st Century Schools Programme and will be included within the overarching financial strategy which is currently under development. If this were successful then the capital investment required of Powys County Council would be £16 million (£10 million at the Llandrindod Wells campus and £6 million at the Builth Wells campus). This capital investment would avoid the existing backlog maintenance costs totalling over £7 million identified in the SOC and highlighted in paragraph 1.3(b) above.
- 8.2 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. As set out in the previous report, the initial SOC for the entire scheme suggested an annual revenue saving to the Council's revenue budget of around £300,000 upon full implementation, however this was a high-level estimate based on the scheme as proposed at the time, excluding estimated transport costs. All costs / savings estimates will be further refined as plans are developed further.
- 8.3 The costings of the proposals set out in this report relate to phase 1 of the transformation for this catchment only and the savings identified in the SOC are anticipated to be delivered by the second phase of the overall scheme. The estimated costings to the Council based on the projected pupil numbers set out above are:
- A net effect on the delegated formula of an increase of around £150,000 per annum. This includes an initial estimate of £66,000 for additional rates charges for the new buildings.
 - An initial assessment of transport costs estimates an additional cost of approximately £350,000 per annum to provide home-to-school transport for pupils upon full implementation of the scheme, although this may be partially mitigated by co-ordinating the timings of the school day at the schools. It should also be noted that further work is required to develop the most cost effective and efficient school transport solution.
- 8.4 These costings do not include the revenue savings that would fall to Ysgol Calon Cymru itself, resulting in the avoidance of the recurring annual in-year deficit currently projected at between £370,000 and

£440,000. The Council will continue to work with Ysgol Calon Cymru to ensure that the school budgets comply with the scheme for financing schools and are within the funding envelope available and that any cumulative deficit is minimised. The initial SOC estimated that the schools themselves would also benefit from a reduction in their running costs when the proposals are fully implemented, although this would not impact directly on the Council's budget.

- 8.5 A virement of £500,000 to develop initial feasibilities for the Ysgol Calon Cymru Llandrindod campus scheme was approved by Cabinet on the 18th May 2021, and it is noted that this is carried out at risk should the project not go forward.
- 8.6 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 are kept informed of the development of the proposal throughout the statutory process.
- 8.7 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) states: *"The revenue funding to support the Schools funding formula is considered as part of the Council Budget process and the individual allocation to the new school will be recalculated at the point of opening. Confirmation of the funding for the scheme will be considered at Full Business Case submission and is not subject to approval at this stage."*

9. Legal implications

- 9.1 Legal: the recommendations can be accepted 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 integrated impact assessment has been carried out on the preferred way forward as part of the Programme Business Case considered by Cabinet on 29th September 2020.

12. Recommendation

- 12.1 It is recommended that:

- Cabinet approves the commencement of a period of **informal engagement** on the preferred way forward for Ysgol Calon Cymru
 - A new 11-18 English-medium campus in Llandrindod Wells; plus
 - A new/remodelled 4-18 Welsh-medium all-through campus in Builth Wells.

- The informal engagement will take place in September and October 2021, and an engagement report would then be produced for the consideration of Cabinet towards the end of the year and, if approved, formal consultation would then proceed as part of the statutory school reorganisation process.

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