**Appendix C – Minutes of meetings with Staff, Governors and School Council**

# Contents


1. Consultation meeting with staff of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School..... 2
2. Consultation meeting with governors of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School .. 7
3. Meeting with the School Council of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School ..... 25

## 1. Consultation meeting with staff of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School

**4th May 2021**

**Present**

**Staff:**

Adam Shearman, Headteacher
Staff members of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School

**Officers:**

Emma Palmer, Head of Transformation and Communications
Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer
Marianne Evans, Service Manager Schools Transformation
Eurig Towns, Service Manager for School Improvement
Mari Thomas, Interim Schools Finance Manager
Sarah Christoforou, HR Business Manager (Schools)
Sarah Astley, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education

Emma Palmer welcomed all to the consultation meeting. All officers attending the meeting introduced themselves. Emma Palmer explained that the meeting would be recorded, for minuting purposes but will be deleted once completed.

Marianne Evans gave a Powerpoint presentation and explained that in February 2021, Cabinet gave approval to proceed with consulting on the proposal relating to Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P School. The consultation commenced on 14th April 2021 and will finish on 2nd June 2021.

Marianne explained that this part is extremely important, and that it's important that everyone's view is heard so that this will be considered by Cabinet when making their decision.

The proposal for Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School is:

- To close Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School from 31st Augusts 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools.

Emma Palmer invited staff to ask any questions or to make any comments they have on the matter.

**Staff:** The one main question staff have got is concerning the reason for closure, considering the school is green. Estyn have deemed us as good and comparing to other schools that aren't the subject of a consultation or being proposed to being closed, we are a higher standard rating than them. What therefore is the reason this

consultation is hitting us? Why us, and then sending our children to schools that are not green?

**Marianne Evans:** We have a strategic objective in the strategy to rationalise primary provision, and one of the big things that came out of the engagement that we did last year with schools is the fact that Powys has too many small schools. We have taken the approach of looking at the smallest schools – below 60 in pupil numbers – and will continue to do so going forward. We look at several issues, and one concern is the low pupil numbers – you have had numbers in the low 30s over the past few years. One of the next things we look at is the cost per pupil and how it compares against the Powys average. We look at leadership arrangements, and the fact that there are combined age classes in small schools.

**Lynette Lovell:** In terms of the schools, we know that the last categorisation was September 2019, and the categorisation was around the amount of support schools required. We know in relation to schools in the area that some were yellow, and we are not undertaking categorisation during Covid-19 and we can report that throughout this year the improvements in these schools are good. In terms of the standards going forward, we are confident from the reports this year.

**Eurig Towns:** The categorisation has not been in place since Autumn 2019, and schools are in a very different place to where they were at that point in time. Over the course of the lockdown period, I have worked with Adam at Llanfihangel Rhydithon and other schools, so I understand the levels of education that took place in that time. We have done visits in the autumn as well, so we are confident that schools are providing high quality education.

**Staff:** Obviously, there are several small schools in Powys, and we have found ourselves in this position again after only a few years since the council decided to keep us open. So, the question from the staff is why us again?

**Marianne Evans:** As I said, we are looking at a number of small schools, from the lowest numbers up. There have already been consultations started on other small schools, and more are planned for the autumn term. It is challenging for you having already been in this position five years ago, however we do have to take a view on the number of small schools that we have, and Welsh Governments definition of small schools is anything below 91 pupils. We have monitored your pupil numbers over the past few years and I know you are projected to increase over the next few years as well, but at the end of the day the council has to look strategically over the whole County, and look at those schools where there are issues.

**Staff:** The cost per pupil has obviously gone up because of the change to the funding formula. It would be interesting to compare the cost per pupil 2 years ago to the cost now, and I understand that is because of the funding formula that is in place but it is working against us now.

**Marianne Evans:** Thank you, I will take your point.

**Mari Thomas:** Yes, so you are right, the change in the funding formula has provided some protection for the smaller schools and that is showing through in the cost per pupil. We are now kicking off the next formula review, so we can get a funding formula that is fit for the whole of Powys schools after the transformation programme, so there could be significant changes around that. The current funding formula was put in place to try and ensure that all schools had that minimum level of funding they needed to operate and stabilise the current configuration of schools, as we found a few schools were heading into a deficit position before we made that change.

The formula is constantly under review, but that is what was behind that change, the need to stabilise the system rather than see a lot of small schools head into a deficit that they could not really avoid.

**Staff:** I think it would be good to look at what the cost per pupil was, as we weren't heading into a deficit, we were budgeting, which means we have got ourselves a very healthy surplus and we are now being penalised if one of the issues you've looked at is finance. I think that if the funding formula wasn't changed in that way, would we still be here now is the question. If we could look at our cost per pupil before and after that change, that would be great.

**Emma Palmer:** If I can just come in on there with regards to the strategic perspective. When we did the analysis of the data rather than looking at this as an individual school's perspective, we were looking at this across the county. Overall, from a financial perspective there's enough money in the envelope for education in Powys, when you compare our education with other authorities. The issue we have is the infrastructure that is in place which is basically too large. There are too many schools and what that then leads to is inequitable provision across the county, so some schools will fit very well financially, and others won't. The significant amount of primary schools we have comes at a cost to the secondary provision, so when the children are in primary they can be having excellent education and then what we are not able to do is have a sustainable secondary provision, because so much has gone into sustaining the infrastructure of the primary.

From a strategic perspective, we have had to look at the number of primary schools, the cost, and although within the report and proposal it says there is a saving, it isn't really a saving we will take away, we have had a commitment from Cabinet that with that money we will continue to fund the education of children in Powys, in line with the Welsh average which is a really positive statement from the Cabinet whereby they are not looking at closing schools and saving money. They will reinvest that into the children, into front line provision or alternatively if we find the funding is already at a surplus, that surplus will go into reduce the borrow from capital and create newer schools. Whilst this can feel very personal for you, the way the local authority is looking at this is not because your school has done anything wrong, and I want

you to be aware of that. The reality is when you look at this is that we have a number of schools within a commutable distance, but it is absolutely nothing personal it is far more a strategical picture.

**Staff:** How can the authority guarantee that the children will get the same level of provision and opportunities, such as extra curriculum trips, classroom support and the extra things you can give in a small school?

**Lynette Lovell**: In terms of that what we are looking to do, the vision across the whole of Powys is the new curriculum offering a broad experience for all of our children and it is an expectation that it is the norm going forward that we have all the extra activities, centres where we have wrap around care and provision for learners which we really want to embrace in Powys. One aspect around that is that it will be essential for further collaboration going forward, the new curriculum won't happen without collaboration. It Is our expectation to work with schools in the authority to ensure those extra activities and to be even better than we have now, so they can engage with better opportunities across Powys.

**Eurig Towns:** Again, it goes back to the work that we have done across the cluster, ensuring there is continuity in the blended learning we have provided. We have got a good working relationship between our schools, which we need to maintain and improve. We don't want any child to have a negative impact on their education, so if they do need to go to a new school, they have those opportunities there.

**Staff:** The consultation says the children will go to the nearest school, but that could see ours going to 6 or 7 different places. The concern is how will it work, what support will the children have in their move, as some will have one going to a school on their own, what provision will be put in place to support them?

**Marianne Evans:** Once a decision has been made and should the school close, parents will need to make the decision on where their children will go. As you say, there could be a variety of choices in the area. Once the application has been made to the school, we would work with the receiving schools to ensure they support the parents and pupils during that transition stage. We know how challenging it can be to both the parents and pupils when moves happen, but we have carried this out in the past and we work with the schools and the relationship between the receiving school and closing school is important, in terms of well-being.

**Staff:** Out of all the schools in the area, there are only two that aren't over capacity, so will they be allowed to go to their nearest schools that are over capacity or will they need to go elsewhere?

**Marianne Evans:** Yes, there are schools that are over capacity such as Llanbister, and we are working with them as they are growing and expecting them to grow further. When a pupil applies for a new school, the admissions process begins and if a pupil isn't given a place, there's an opportunity to appeal that decision. We believe

there is sufficient places in Crossgates and the majority of pupils are closest to Crossgates.

**Staff:** The feedback we are getting from quite a few of the parents is that they aren't wanting their children to go to Crossgates.

**Marianne Evans:** That is fine as it is a parental decision, and we will have to see what decisions they make should the proposal be supported.

**Staff:** Considering the class sizes children will be going into, they will find that tricky, and whilst you are working with Llanbister with them increasing their capacity which isn't that far apart, could we not work here or the two schools working together and maintaining the education across the two sites? I know the consultation document discounted that, but long-term teaching heads is a challenging role. The third issue is we have pupils struggling with Covid at the moment, and I think we need to be careful discussing with those and the school council.

**Marianne Evans:** Yes, it was an option, and the reason for it being discounted is included in the document. Because you are a rural school, when we bring back the report there are additional steps required which is to re-assess all the options which were put forward, and take account of anything that has come through strongly in the consultation, and consider whether or not the preferred option is still valid. If that is something you feel strongly about, make your case and we will have to consider all options again.

In terms of plans with Llanbister, the discussions started before any discussions on the future of Llanfihangel Rhydithon.

**Lynette Lovell:** I am just happy to come in there on class sizes, and just to say that we recognise that a class of 17 going to a class of 30 is a shock to many pupils. However, it will be right for me to say the average class size is 30 and there is an expectation that children are in a class of that size generally. With you mentioning the School Council, we have had this over the last few weeks with other schools and had the comment made around the well-being of staff and pupils, so we are doing everything we can to support you. In terms of the support, there is support for our learners in terms of well-being and if you have any concerns please contact us, but we are working within the legality of this and ensure that we do it as decently as possible, but we want to work with our schools in this process.

Emma brought the meeting to an end and thanked everyone very much for their thoughtfulness and comments. She explained they are more than welcome to respond to the consultation, through the response form, written responses or email.

## 2. Consultation meeting with governors of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School

**4th May 2021**

**Present**

**Governors:**

Kath Bufton (Chair of Governors)
Nigel Bufton (Parent Governor and Vice-chair of Governors)
Nikki Lawrence
Jo Bradford
Adam Shearman
Edward James (Parent Governor)
David Lewis (Community Council Representative
Mary Lomax

**Officers:**

Emma Palmer, Head of Transformation and Communications
Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer
Marianne Evans, Service Manager Schools Transformation
Eurig Towns, Service Manager for School Improvement
Mari Thomas, Interim Schools Finance Manager
Sarah Christoforou, HR Business Manager (Schools)
Sarah Astley, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education

**Others:**

Cllr Phyl Davies – Education Portfolio Holder (Observing)

Emma Palmer welcomed all to the consultation meeting. All officers attending the meeting introduced themselves. The governors of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P School introduced themselves. It was explained that there would be a brief presentation with an opportunity for discussion, comments, and questions for the officers. Emma explained that the meeting would be recorded, for minuting purposes but the recording would be deleted once completed.

Marianne Evans gave a Powerpoint presentation and explained that in February 2021, Cabinet gave approval to proceed with consulting on the proposal relating to Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P School. Marianne explained that this part is extremely important, and that it's important that everyone's view is heard so that this will be considered by Cabinet when making their decision.

The proposal is:

- To close Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P School from 31st August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools.

The consultation began on the 14th April, and will end on the 2nd June 2021.

Emma Palmer then gave governors the opportunity to ask any questions or make any comments they wished.

**Governor:** Why are you proposing to close a good, green school, when there are numerous schools in Powys failing, but you again are targeting a green school, with a good Estyn report which you are ignoring. Why after the last 5 years are you targeting us again when you have other schools which are spiralling out of control debt wise, with hundreds of thousands of pounds of debt. Why target us and not focus on these other schools which are losing you money?

**Marianne Evans:** When we engaged with schools and Governors in 2019/2020, it became clear that we have too many small schools. This was included in the strategy and as part of the work we needed to take forward. We are looking at all schools. We started work looking at the smallest schools and secondary provision, but in terms of the small schools we look at a number of issues. In Llanfihangel Rhydithon's case, we know there are no issues with the quality of education, but there are issues we need to take account of including low pupil numbers. We are looking at high cost per pupil, leadership arrangements and combined age classes. We are not targeting Llanfihangel Rhydithon, it is part of a wider programme, and we are looking at a number of schools.

**Governor:** We have been in consultation twice in five years, how many other schools have been in consultation twice in five years?

**Marianne Evans:** There are several schools which are coming up in the autumn which would have been part of a consultation previously. But on the issue around standards, with you being a green school and others yellow, Lynette would you like to come in on this point?

**Lynette Lovell:** Just to say, the point around the green schools, from September 2019 the national categorisation of schools has no longer existed. Over the last year we have been in a period of Covid lockdown, but we have been working very closely with the Calon Cymru cluster. The categorisation we know was the amount of support a school needed to be a self-improving school, the yellow schools as well were called self-improving schools. Over the last year the challenge advisors have been out monitoring the schools, and even though the national categorisation for schools no longer exists which was a Welsh Government decision, and they have produced a report on the provision for each school and in terms of the Calon Cymru cluster the provision in all schools has been good. The co-operation between schools has also been good.

Going forward, it is likely that there will be no classification and the things that were considered in the classification will be considered in other ways.

**Governor:** But it was there in 2019, which is what we judged our school's performance on. It will not matter of going forward if you carry on doing what you are. What I don't like is that you mention our dwindling pupil numbers. Our numbers are rising, our budget is healthy even without the extra load your funding formula put on our school, you can have that extra money back. We are not the eighth most expensive school in Radnor. We can run with the rest of them. I see this as a means to corner a small school by giving them more money. We can't win, can we?

**Emma Palmer:** In addition to providing your views tonight, we would encourage you to put your views in writing through the consultation process. We have a duty legally to consider the consultation responses, and they will be made available publicly in a document. The report then goes forward to Cabinet for them to consider when making their decision. The strategy for the organisation, and the way officers come at this isn't looking at an individual school, but I do realise this is governors and parents, this is emotive for you and your children in this school.

There are too many schools in Powys. There is enough money in the financial envelope for education in Powys, but it is spread too thinly because of the number of schools which means there is a difference in provision which isn't fair on our children. The Cabinet have given us a commitment not to take money out of education, so when we refer to savings it is savings that will be reinvested into education. The Cabinet have also made the commitment that they will fund each child in Powys equivalent to the average across Wales, and anything above that will be reinvested in capital so we can keep investing in the infrastructure and buildings for our children which will help with the new curriculum.

**Governor:** I would like to talk about capacity, and surplus school places. Crossgates School, they have a capacity of 210 and as you are all aware that they have a satellite class going into that school supporting Brecon and Newtown. That 210 capacity, does that include that satellite class, does it include the mobile that children will be taught in?

**Marianne Evans:** The 210 doesn't include the satellite class, but the satellite class will take 30 places out of the 210, therefore we are left with sufficient places for the children at Llanfihangel Rhydithon.

**Governor:** So, is that your intention, that they all go to Crossgates School?

**Marianne Evans:** No, parents can choose whichever school they wish.

**Governor:** As you know the children shouldn't be split, they should go as a unit, are they all going to Crossgates School?

**Marianne Evans:** All parents can choose whichever school they would wish their children to go to.

**Governor:** They choose to send their children to Dolau school but you are taking that choice away from them the alternative school will be Crossgates, is that right?

**Marianne Evans:** No, we are not naming a receiving school. The proposal states that children would go to their nearest alternative schools.

**Governor:** The satellite class is running for 12 months as a trial, what happens if it is a success, are you going to extend it to make it two classes? I feel it is a really good idea with where it is situated, as we do fail for those children in that area. So, what happens if you do want to grow that satellite class?

**Marianne Evans:** That is something we will need to look at, at that time. At the moment we are not expecting huge numbers in the satellite class, but we do need one classroom space for those pupils.

**Governor:** Will the 210 include the mobile classroom?

**Marianne Evans:** Yes, it does.

**Governor:** So, you are taking children out of solid buildings, and putting them into mobiles?

**Marianne Evans:** Well, if children chose to go to Crossgates that would be their choice, it is a good school.

**Governor:** I am talking about children going from solid buildings to mobiles.

**Marianne Evans:** There is one mobile classroom.

**Governor:** Is it a yes or no, are they going from a solid building to a mobile classroom?

**Marianne Evans:** Well, if they choose to go to Crossgates they will be attending a school that is categorised as a good building with one temporary classroom.

**Governor:** How many children do you transport at Dolau school?

**Marianne Evan**s: I have been told 11 pupils are being transported to Dolau school, that information came from the transport unit today.

**Governor:** So how many children will need transport should they need to go to their nearest alternative school?

**Marianne Evans:** Again, that depends on where parents choose to go.

**Governor:** In the worst-case scenario then, how many are you anticipating will need transport?

**Marianne Evans:** At the moment, more than half the pupils in Llanfihangel Rhydithon are closer to alternative schools, so until the time comes, where we know exactly where pupils will go to, we can only have an estimate, as we won't know, as they could go to any school.

**Governor:** We have calculated that there will be at least 24 children, in addition to what you say is 11 that will need transport. I know that there are buses already on those routes to other schools, however they are buses attached to secondary schools. There would therefore need to be buses that are for these children to go to their nearest alternative schools.

**Emma Palmer:** The logistics will be looked at with the transport department. Once we have looked at attendance and the transport requirements, the appropriate provision is put in place. Some families will choose to make their own arrangements to travel to school, but it will all be looked at.

**Governor:** So, basically you haven't calculated that, and there have been no calculations to say you will have those extra funds to run the children to their new alternative school?

**Marianne Evans:** At the moment, our estimation, as it says in the consultation document is that there won't be additional transport costs.

**Governor:** But in the consultation document you do contradict yourself quite a few times by saying there will be transport costs, there won't be transport costs. The other thing is, because of the school transport the children will not be allowed to have the after-school activities which they have now at Dolau school. Crossgates do not offer these after school clubs and because they are on school buses, they will not be able to use them as you are taking them home on school transport.

**Emma Palmer:** Have you got any questions, rather than statements?

**Governor:** Quite a lot of the time you do talk about larger schools, that children are being moved from rural schools to the larger schools because they will get a better education, equipment, and use of new curriculum ideas. Does that mean you are intending on closing all rural schools?

**Emma Palmer:** No.

**Lynette Lovell:** In terms of the vision for the future, with the new curriculum coming in we do see an enhanced provision throughout the county as part of our longer-term

strategy and plan. In terms of the wrap around care and after school activities, going forward there would be an expectation on our schools to have those experiences, and we want to invest in the future in providing better sports facilities and performing arts facilities, all the things that our Powys learners should have, the same as anyone in Wales. Our vision is to have schools offering a broad and balanced curriculum for all our children. That really forms a major part of our strategy for transformation in Powys over the next 10 years.

**Governor:** Just on your point of combined age classes, if combined age classes are so bad, why do Dolau pupils excel so well when going on to the high schools? 3 out of 10 members of Llandrindod High school council are from Dolau school, the pupils voice which is used for the curriculum there has 12 pupils and 3 of these are from Dolau school. Why are combined age classes so bad?

**Lynette Lovell:** You have already spoken about the school and the way it was categorised as green in 2019, part of the categorisation is standards, teaching and learning and leadership. If we think about teaching and learning, for combined classes it is more preparation for teachers, but skilled teachers are able to deal with that. I think as you say it is excellent that your pupils have gone on to represent the school council, it is encouraging and building confidence in our pupils which is what we want to do. In terms of the quality of teaching and learning it has already been identified at your school and others in the area. Single age classes are obviously easier to plan for, as the new curriculum is very much in stages and ages.

**Governor:** Can you name a school that doesn't have a combined age classroom that is on this consultation document – the alternative schools?

**Lynette Lovell:** In the Calon Cymru area?

**Governor:** No, on this consultation document, the alternative schools you are sending them to.

**Lynette Lovell:** What I am saying is not that. I am saying if you have good teaching and learning you can have combined classes, as you have. The difference is the class size, and the class sizes in your school are around 17, and not all schools are able to have classes of 17. It is about the quality of teaching and learning in those classes that actually makes the differences to those learners.

**Governor:** Why do you say in the consultation document about the shared headship with Llanelwedd, but then option 1 is status quo? We are a single school. Last time we were in consultation, Cabinet wanted to put forward a formal agreement to be put between us. We are still wanting to become a Church in Wales school so that we can federate with Llanelwedd to make it a stronger school. You continue, in this consultation document, not even to mention that it is happening. Just the fact that there is a shared head, and he cannot manage two schools on two sites. But, in the Estyn inspection they praise the fact we do that as it gives the teachers

encouragement to learn management skills. Why is that not in the consultation document, that we do have the shared head arrangement that we have had for the last 6 and a half years?

**Marianne Evans:** In terms of the options and arrangements with Llanelwedd, it is an arrangement to share the headteacher, it isn't a governance arrangement. We didn't include it in the options appraisal, as when we are looking at option to federate or merge with other school's we look at the geographical locality, and we would argue that Llanelwedd isn't in the geographical locality of Llanbister. One of the other issues why we didn't include it is, as you know, Llanelwedd is a Church in Wales school and we can't federate a community school with a Church in Wales school.

I will say, as part of the consultation, anybody can propose alternative options that they think may be better than what we are putting forward. As you are a rural school, we need to take further steps in the consultation and look at the concerns carefully that come through in the consultation responses. If that is something you think is valid and would help address the issues in Llanfihangel Rhydithon, then please put that forward, and we'd have to look at it.

**Governo**r: As Marianne highlighted, lots of our pupils at Dolau are in the Crossgates catchment. Why do you think people drive past Crossgates school to come to Dolau school?

**Marianne Evans:** I am not going to second guess why any parent chooses a particular school, but I would also say having been around this agenda for a long time, parents choose schools for a variety of different reasons. One being the size of a school, and the quality of education. Parents sometimes choose a school that is more rural, and that comes through a lot in our consultations. I would say it's a combination of those aspects. Why do you feel they drive past Crossgates to Dolau?

**Governor:** For many reasons, some of what you have highlighted. One reason is because of the community feel, the better education, the one on one they have and the support system such as the friends of Dolau school who are very supportive providing pretty much every child with a laptop, and after school clubs.

My second question is, if people are driving past these schools to get to our school, can you really expect them to go to your named receiving school? We all know it's Crossgates. If they are driving past it now and not taking the public transport because they can't, can you expect them to want to go to a larger school if they are already driving across country to a rural school with better standards and community feel?

**Marianne Evans:** That would be up to the individual parents in terms of where they chose, should there be no school in Dolau. Some parents won't want to go to Crossgates and some will, there are a whole range of opinions out there.

**Governor:** I find it confusing what Emma said, regarding there being plenty of money in the financial envelope for education. Firstly, if there is enough money there why close these schools? Secondly, you are saying this money that is proposed to be saved will help other schools develop. Are these other schools lacking? And a question for Lynette, you said there would be money for performing arts and sports. We have had these false promises in the past. For the last 20 years we have had support at Dolau by Dolau parents and volunteers for performing arts and after school clubs, football clubs and so forth, which has saved a lot of money for Powys and has worked very well. Why change this?

**Emma Palmer:** The financial envelope is a budget which is available for education in Powys. There is enough money in the system to support the provision of good education. The issue we have is it is spread too thinly because of the number of schools we have in Powys. What is happening, and I can say this after doing extensive analysis across the county, is that children are getting great provision in primary, but we are not seeing the same level of provision in secondary education because so much of the funding is going on primary schools.

It is not a financial saving; we want to continue to fund education on a par with the rest of Wales. If we can keep that total amount of money which is available for education over a smaller infrastructure, the money then isn't going to bricks and mortar, it is going into education.

We also heard from teachers, when we did our engagement in 2020, about how difficult it is going to be to provide the new curriculum in smaller schools. At the moment the infrastructure means we haven't got equality across the county, and the good education children have got in primary, is not happening in the secondary. We have to try and balance things so that children have a good education all the way through.

**Governor:** So, what you are saying is that there are sufficient funds in the primary sector, but not in the secondary is that correct?

**Emma Palme**r: No, there is sufficient funds in the budget for education, but a significant proportion is being spent on primary provision and small schools.

**Governor:** So, what you have just said there is sufficient funds in primary but not enough money in secondary to provide a good education? Correct?

**Emma Palmer:** No, the total budget and money in the pot is sufficient for education in Powys when you look at it on a county level. What we are seeing, is that a significant proportion of it is going into maintaining small schools, based on a definition given to us by Welsh Government. Welsh Government's definition of a small school is those with less than 91 pupils. The funding in those areas and good education in those areas is difficult to continue to provide when children are moving into secondary education. The current infrastructure we have in place is not

sustainable for the future. The number of pupils in the county is reducing, and we have already been challenged by Estyn to reduce the number of surplus places we have in schools. We need to reduce surplus places. We need to invest in less schools but ensure that we are investing in quality education for learners.

**Lynette Lovell:** In terms of your question regarding facilities, what we are looking to do as part of the vision document is to ensure pupils in Powys, in line with the new curriculum have the opportunities they are currently having in your own school. We want to see those opportunities enhanced across Powys as part of our vision statement. We know that we want pupils to have opportunities to be for example on school councils, having opportunities to be part of performing arts. I am a Powys person, having grown up in Radnorshire and my children have had education in Powys and there are facilities which I would have liked my children to have had the benefit of, be it performing art facilities, facilities for sport and having those opportunities enhanced across Powys, so that they can develop their own skills. Our vision statement for the next 10 years is about ensuring that our learners have the opportunities to develop their own skills and we need the infrastructure as well to be able to deliver that going forward and investment as part of our 10 year plan.

**Governor:** I can remember that Powys had these fantastic visions 20 years ago. What happened? 20 years is a long time.

**Lynette Lovell:** You are correct, 20 years is a long time, and Estyn said that we needed to change and transform in Powys to ensure that we have an estate that is fit for the future. We need to look towards the future now and actually do something this time. The Estyn report was very clear in that it expected the Council to be able to make these decisions and move things forward in Powys. We are 20 years behind and we need to move forward.

**Governor:** But if it hasn't happened in the last 20 years, how is it going to happen in the next 20 years? What guarantees have you got?

**Lynette Lovell:** It has to happen in the next 20 years.

**Governor:** Who says?

**Emma Palmer:** If we don't move forward as an organisation and the Cabinet don't make decisions, we are still under a form of monitoring with Estyn, and Estyn have the ability to call in the commissioners working with Welsh Government, so if the organisation itself does not move forward and make the changes that are needed in respect of education across the county – and the recommendations are quite broad, there is not one element of education that is not touched by this – they will actually come in and take over.

**Governor:** You focus very much on what Estyn tell you in relation to where you need to improve. But if you are looking to improve learning entitlement and experience,

why are you not looking at the Estyn inspection reports for the schools? Dolau school has a good Estyn inspection report, and all other schools are only adequate. So why move children from a good school to adequate schools. You are very focused on what Estyn is saying as part of your School Transformation Strategy, but when it comes to this consultation you ignore them.

**Eurig Towns:** Some of the schools in the area have had Estyn inspections more recently than Dolau. Llanbister had one in November 2019 and it was judged Good. Knighton has had a good inspection report. In 2013 Trefonnen had its inspection, and that school has changed considerably since that time. Cefnllys inspection report was some considerable time ago and that school has changed considerably under new leadership. Also, Crossgates had an Estyn report in 2016 and the headteacher was new in the post at the time and the school moved out of Estyn categories in 2018 and it is now classed by Powys in 2019 as a self-improving school.

We don't have any concerns since the time when Estyn have made those reports to where the schools are now. Those who had adequate reports are very much in different positions and the schools deemed as good, have maintained those levels.

**Marianne Evans:** We are required by the School Organisation Code to provide information in relation to the Estyn inspection reports of schools affected by the proposal and that's what you have in the consultation document, and they are at a point in time. So that's a requirement of the Code.

**Governor:** Do you think that capacity and space in other schools in the area is a justifiable reason to close our good rural school, just to fill another school. We have all the facilities that we need, and you really are not going to save any money by closing Dolau because of the transportation costs. Do you realise that between Crossgates and the eastern border there is no school at all to give people a rural school?

If you are going to remove these rural schools, how do you think it will affect families – will they stay or come to the area and enhance employment, and the community?

There is a survey which shows the demographics of each community which have lost their rural schools over the last 20 years have changed, and there are no children in those villages and that is worth much more than the £36,000 that you are going to save. That is everybody's rural life going down the drain.

**Marianne Evans:** I look forward to you submitting that piece of work. It will be useful in terms of providing evidence to the Cabinet as part of the consultation report.

Can I also thank the school for providing us with information around the impact of the school on the community and how the school operates within the community? That is a very key part of the documentation and that went to Cabinet at the start when Cabinet decided to proceed with the consultation. That very clearly states the impact

of the removal of Llanfihangel Rhydithon school on the community and the wider community and I think that we have included in the economic assessment as well, that having no school could have an economic impact as young families are not attracted to live in areas. That is information that we will use to populate the community impact assessment as we take matters to the next stage so that Cabinet has all the information and the full impact in front of them.

In terms of surplus places, that in itself isn't an issue for Llanfihangel Rhydithon school.

**Governor:** But it is in the school you want to move the children to.

**Marianne Evans:** We need to be sure when closing a school that there are sufficient places available for pupils in the geographical area. It would be difficult to take a proposal forward to close a school if nearby schools had no free places.

**Governor:** What I'm saying is do you think it is justifiable, seeing that Dolau school is not a failing school, is it justifiable to close it and to disrupt children and the whole community just to fill up another school.

**Marianne Evans:** I don't think that the reason behind the proposal to close Dolau school is just to fill in places.

**Governor:** What is the reason then, because nothing else is failing?

**Marianne Evans:** The reasons are there and include low pupil numbers.

**Governor:** There will be 43 pupils by next year. The cost of transporting children to another school is going to practically wipe out what you will save. The figures you have in front of you are not true.

**Emma Palmer:** Even if the figures rise to 40, anything under 91 is considered a small school by the Welsh Government.

**Governor:** But this is a rural area, isn't it?

**Emma Palmer:** The consultation document has additional requirements for small schools, in accordance with the School Organisation Code. The criteria that is used is set out by Welsh Government, and we have to address certain factors in relation to small schools. The Community Impact Assessment is very important and the Impact Assessment that is with the consultation documentation now is not the final one and what will happen, once all responses have been received, is that all of that documentation will continue to be updated until the point the matter goes to Cabinet.

If Cabinet then decides to proceed with the proposal and issue a Statutory Notice, there is then a 28 day period once the Statutory Notice is published for objections to

be made. Those objections need to be considered, and a further report goes to Cabinet together with a further updated assessment. Therefore, I just want to make you aware that any information you submit will be included when relooking at the options and in updated documentation before Cabinet.

**Governor:** I think that's very important. I recently did my own survey to establish how many schools have been closed in Radnorshire in the past 40 years since they first tried to close Dolau school. I have counted 19 schools that existed in the last 40 years which have now gone. If you look at the position of Dolau now, if Dolau closes it's another 6 miles to Crossgates – West. There is nothing between the border and us. Beguildy, Felindre, Bleddfa and Dolfor have all gone.

So many of the schools in the less populated areas have gone because naturally they are holding the least children. However, you have to remember that is a large chunk of our very rural County which constitutes the way the County is. Those villages are not community villages anymore.

**Governor:** If you close schools too close to the border you will lose pupils over the border. It's already happening, and it will happen more.

**Governor:** It's quite shocking when you add them up, when they go a little bit at a time, and your population in the area now just has to rise.

**Emma Palmer:** I hear what you say in relation to those schools. From memory we have dropped from 20,000 children to 16,000 children and I think in the next year or two it will drop further to 15,500 and even from then it reduces down again.

However, because of Covid, there might be an influx of population from the cities to rural areas. That's why we check the information and do an analysis constantly so that we understand what is happening in those areas.

**Governor:** My closest school already exceeds capacity. Are you therefore proposing that my child moves to a school that is already exceeding capacity?

Also, how can I reassure other parents that if their children move to other schools, that the children will have these additional opportunities for sport and performing arts.

**Marianne Evans:** If your closest school is full and is one of those named in the Consultation document – Llanbister is full and Trefonnen is full – when the time comes, should the proposal go forward, then you as a parent can decide to apply to whichever school you wish to apply to. If that school is full your application will be treated the same as any other parent applying for that school and then the admissions policy would kick in in terms of allocating places. Should you not have a place because the school is full, there is also the appeals process available.

**Lynette Lovell**:  As of September 2022, we will be starting the new curriculum. Even through Covid there has been no halt on that, and it is expected that all schools across Wales will be ready for the new curriculum from September 2020.

There is ambition in the Welsh curriculum and in the Powys vision statement about improving provision and ensuring that the new curriculum for Wales is delivered in all of our schools and in the secondary as well. In order to do that, all schools will have to ensure that they follow the four core purposes.

The work of the local authority then will be working with schools to ensure that they can provide those extended opportunities to all our learners throughout Powys in the new curriculum.

Our ambition is to make sure that all our learners in Powys have extended opportunities in line with the national curriculum and our vision statement.

In terms of our facilities and buildings to support this going forward that is also part of our vision. We haven't got all the facilities we need in all of our schools.

Having equity across the local authority is very important so that it isn't a postcode lottery, that where you live depends on what provision you have.

Our ambition is to make sure that all our learners have opportunities in line with the national curriculum and our vision statement, that they are entitled to and they have those experiences going forward in line with the new curriculum for Wales.

**Governor:** I just wanted to say that I am pleased to hear that your ambition is to provide those kinds of offerings to pupils in all schools. But I would still like to know when I talk to parents of children in Dolau school how can I specifically reassure them that when their children move to alternative schools, they will have these enhanced opportunities? To say that it is an aspiration is not good enough. For me to be able to persuade them that this is the correct thing for them to do, I have to be sure in my own mind that those opportunities are going to be there for their children when they move school. I can't do that simply on the basis of your aspiration.

**Lynetter Lovell:** I fully appreciate that. However, our aspirations and high expectations are there and that's what we're working towards in respect of schools in the area to ensure that there is equity and that there is assurance behind what we are saying in terms of those opportunities going forward.

**Eurig Towns:** It goes back to providing equity for all. We're trying to ensure that all of our schools across Powys provide a quality education. During the pandemic I have worked very closely with the Calon Cymru cluster, including Llanfihangel Rhydithon. I have been trying to work for that consistency of approach. We are a long way forward from where we used to be in relation to working collaboratively, but there is more to be done. But the foundation is there for us to build upon, and we are

aspiring to get people to work together and collaborate. That has had benefits over the pandemic period, and I'm hoping that we can build on that.

**Governor:** I just want to recap on the reason why Llanfihangel Rhydithon has been brought into this consultation. Number one is the low pupil numbers, and they continue to be low – is that correct?

**Emma Palmer:** Yes

**Governor:** Surplus capacity – so closing a small rural school to bump up the capacity of larger schools. Is that correct?

**Emma Palmer:** Yes, in terms of dealing with surplus capacity, but it's not just about closing rural schools in terms of the surplus capacity. We're working right the way across the county.

**Governor:** I'm talking about this consultation now, not about your other schools. So, this consultation now is about reducing the Council's overall surplus capacity, so closing a small rural school and putting it into a larger school.

Revenue saving to the Council?

**Marianne Evans:** Yes

**Governor:** Who actually defines our budget? **I**t is defined by the local authority and the fair funding formula. Is that correct?

**Marianne Evans:** Yes.

**Governor:** And that then governs our budget?

**Emma Palmer:** Yes. But it is dependent on the Revenue Support Grant from the Senedd.

**Governor:** Powys defines our budget. They are the one which have a fair funding formula which defines our budget and cost per pupil?

**Emma Palmer:** Yes.

**Governor:** And pupils would again attend a larger school because this would enhance their education?

**Marianne Evans:** Reading from the proposal **"**pupils would attend larger schools which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum and which could provide a wider range of extra-curricular activities". This is what's stated in the consultation document as a reason for the proposal.

**Governor:** So again, going to a larger school would give pupils a better education?

**Marianne Evans:** That's what we say is a reason for the proposal.

**Governor:** So again, you're saying that pupils would attend a larger school with a permanent headship. Is that correct?

**Marianne Evans:** Yes

**Governor:** If this proposal does go ahead, as a governing body, how can we recommend to parents which alternative school children should go to when you don't even look at the Estyn Inspections.

**Emma Palmer:** It is not for you to recommend the alternative school.

**Governor:** We have a duty of care to the children. They will speak to us because we are a community.

**Emma Palmer:** But it's not your role to recommend which school children go to.

**Governor:** Ok then, so we tell them to come back to you?

**Emma Palmer:** That's fine.

**Governor:** If you look at the consultation document and you mention the Estyn inspections and things like that, and a lot has happened since 2019. So, has anybody visited those schools now since Covid and when children have come back into school, and how they are doing and what their education levels are? We have had to rely on parents to do the digital online learning. Has anybody been monitoring that to make sure how that has been going? How has that happened in the larger schools? Have pupils had the same feedback that pupils have had in the smaller schools?

The rural school policy does say 91 is a small school, but it doesn't say that it should be discriminated and closed just because it is classified as a small rural school.

**Eurig Towns:** We have been working with our schools right through the pandemic. We have been very closely monitoring what has been happening, so we hopefully have a very clear understanding as to what has been happening in our schools. You should have received your Autumn term report. You should also have had a spring term report as well.

We have kept in regular contact with all schools in Powys and met up with the clusters as well in order to ensure consistency of approach and I would hope that there is no school in Powys where we are not aware of where they are at the

moment. As we have said before, although we don't classify schools, we are still very aware of their standards. So hopefully we have been able to provide a quality support but also an understanding so that we also know where our schools are.

**Governor:** If the children are going to have to transfer to another school and we decided to go to Crossgates, we would have large numbers in year groups, and I was just wondering how that is going to be accommodated if there are classes of 30 already.

**Lynette Lovell**: That will be a consideration. The way the funding formula works is that if class sizes go up there are certain cut off points in the current formula. Every 30 pupils for example kicks in for another teacher post. So, if there are 121 children in a school, that will kick in funding for that extra teacher.

**Governor:** So, you would be looking at two classes for one year group?

**Lynette Lovell:** Possibly, but there are other possibilities. It can be that you have a 5/6 class for year 6 and year 5. It really does depend on where the year groups are and where the year groups are bigger.

**Governor:** You say that you will be implementing the new curriculum in all of your schools from September 2022. We have been using the new curriculum as a template for a number of years. The curriculum suits small schools. I want you to know that is a reason why we have a very high standard school.

**Eurig Towns:** Yes, we understand that a lot of schools are working on it. The reason why we have set September 2022 is because that is when it officially becomes statutory. All primary schools are definitely working on that now, obviously at different stages.

**Governor:** What do I say to my 8 year old who wants to go to the same school to follow friendship groups to Crossgates. However, that school doesn't compare with Dolau, and the nearest alternative in terms of standards is Trefonnen which is full. What choice am I left with?

**Eurig Towns:** Actually, the standards at Crossgates are not inadequate now from the work we have done with them, I would not agree with that as a judgment. That was a judgment made by Estyn in 2016. Since then, there has been significant change at the school. In terms of classification when they were yellow in 2019 that is a self-improving school and that is not a school which is inadequate.

**Governor:** In the consultation papers it says adequate, inadequate, inadequate, so you have published something which you are saying is incorrect.

**Eurig Towns:** We have to publish that because it is the last Estyn report which is 2016. However, it is misleading in that respect as that school has moved on since that time. Similarly, in relation to Trefonnen, their Estyn inspection was in 2013, 8

years ago. There has been significant change there, but we have to publish the Estyn reports. So, it is unfair to those schools to say that they are at that point, and that's why we are happy to say that they are not at that point now. They are actually good schools.

**Governor:** Until I see the next Estyn inspection, that is the only thing I can go by. They are the only body in that role.

**Eurig Towns:** That is not the local authority's view.

**Governor:** That is Powys' opinion. Powys have been in special measures in the past haven't they, so what are we to go on?

**Eurig Towns:** We do the same categorisation and support for Llanfihangel Rhydithon as we would for other schools so we would categorise and support them in the same way, and I would say that we are consistent in our approach. I would hope that if you are willing to accept that we believe that you are a good school I would hope that you believe that we are judging the same schools with the same standards.

**Marianne Evans:** This is an issue which doesn't make the consultation process any easier. The fact is that the Code requires us to publish Estyn inspections which are at a point in time and things move on. Estyn will be sending in their response to this consultation as a statutory consultee, so they will be commenting on this proposal as well and this will be taken into account by Cabinet as part of the overall consultation report as well.

**Governor:** Are you happy therefore for friendship groups to be split up then as the school can't move as one group?

**Marianne Evans:** It will be up to parents to decide which school they want their children to attend.

Emma Palmer brought the meeting to an end and thanked everyone for their attendance and questions. She explained that everyone is encouraged to respond to the consultation, through the online response form, email or by writing. A consultation report will be published and made available and will form the next part of the process before the matter is considered by the Cabinet or a decision on the proposal.

**Governor:** The last time there was a mediator or a third party coming in to make sure that a fair and robust consultation was done. Will this happen this time?

**Marianne Evans:** No, not this time. The reason we had them before was because we were consulting on a large scale secondary consultation at the same time as the primary ones. The analysis will be done in-house by our team.

**Governor:** So, we will have nobody to make sure that we are having a fair and robust consultation?

**Marianne Evans:** We are not using a third party to do any analysis.

Emma Palmer thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

## 3. Meeting with the School Council of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School

**19th May 2021**

**Present**

Marianne Evans – Powys County Council
Sarah Astley – Powys County Council
Huw Rowlands – Powys County Council

Adam Shearman, Headteacher – Llanfihangel Rhydithon School
Mary Lomax, Governor – Llanfihangel Rhydithon School

Officers from Powys County Council met virtually via Microsoft Teams with representatives from the School Council of Llanfihangel Rhydithon School to discuss the consultation to close Llanfihangel Rhydithon school with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools.

The School Council group consisted of 7 pupils, one in year 2, two in year 3, two in year 4 and two in year 6.

Officers explained that Powys County Council was reviewing the future of Llanfihangel Rhydithon school and is wondering whether or not to close the school. It was explained that there was now a period of consultation where people were being asked what they thought. It was emphasised that this was only an idea at this time, and no final decision had been made. Hearing the views of pupils at Llanfihangel Rhydithon school is a very important part of the process.

The pupils were asked several questions and their responses are summarised below:

**Do you understand why we are here?**

- Yes

**Tell us about Dolau School. What do you like about Dolau school, what's good?**

- The education is really good here and there are lots of after school clubs as well – craft clubs, football, swimming galas, cross country, hockey team, eisteddfod, lots of outside activities
- Lots of education and attention by teachers because we are a small school and there are less pupils
- Lots of people here are nice
- Everyone gets along well with other pupils
- Everyone is really friendly

- Teachers help a lot
- Quality of the work is good
- We have ALN support for children with additional needs.

**Are you all friends, do you all know each other in school?**

- Yes, we are all friends.

**What about how the school works with the local community? Is there a good relationship between the school and the community?**

- Yes

**What kind of things happen between the school and the community?**

- There is a good relationship between the school and the local Community Hall and Church
- We have school plays in the Community Hall and the community come to watch, PE in the hall, also carols around the tree, harvest festival, choir, and lots of events such as tractor runs, fun rides

**There are lots of things you like about the school. What could be better? Is there anything you don't like?**

- No, it's a perfect school

**If the school would close and there was no school in Dolau, what would be different for you?**

- Not all the children would go to the same school, so their friendship groups would split
- The teachers wouldn't come with us, and we would have to get used to new teachers, different teaching methods
- New students

**How do you get to school? Do you go in the car or walk?**

- Some of us come to school on bus, others in cars

**How would you feel about going on a bus further to another school? How would it affect you?**

- If we had to go to a different school, I would have to travel further. My house is closer to this school than another school
- We could be running late for our classes and would have to catch up and travel further

- We live closer to Crossgates than Dolau but mum and dad have driven us to Dolau for 10 years. We would have to go on a bus to Crossgates, and more travel
- I would probably walk because I live closer to Crossgates
- We live within half a minute to Dolau but would have to get a bus and it would take much longer to go to another school.
- It only takes 5 minutes for me to go to Dolau school
- Lots walk to school.

**Crossgates is a larger school as are all other schools that could be available to you. What is good or bad being in a larger school**?

- In a smaller school, teachers have time to get around all of us in a lesson. In a larger school, if there are 30 pupils in a class it is much more difficult for the teacher to get around everyone
- In a bigger school, lots of people are talking and it's more difficult to concentrate.

**What are the good things about being in a larger school?**

- Nothing. No

**Would there be more opportunities to be part of sports clubs or not?**

- No
- If they have bronze ambassadors, there would be less chance of you being picked or if there is a class football trip, you would also be less likely to be picked.
- My cousin goes to Knighton and can't go to after-school clubs as they are all full
- More attention in smaller schools, and you learn quicker and better, I think that I will struggle more in larger school as less teacher attention.

**At the moment you are in mixed classes. If you were in a bigger school, the number of year groups would be smaller within a class. What do you think about that? Is that a good thing or are there problems with that?**

- I would rather mix with other years so I can talk to different pupils and it's good to mix and work together with younger groups, for example if doing a class project
- Might get bored, as there wouldn't be people to help you
- Will not know everyone in school, here with a mixed age class, we know everyone in school

**What would be different for the community if there was no school?**

- There would not be as many events on, and less children attending community things. Not every child could attend, and there would be less knowledge of things on**.**
- Things such as the tractor run would not happen, as the school helps to organise them.

**If there was no school at Dolau, what impact would that have on teachers and staff?**

- They enjoy teaching us here. They would not know everyone in a bigger school as well, so they wouldn't enjoy as much.

**Is there anything else concerning you about these plans, or do you have any other questions?**

- Is there ALN in other schools?

**Yes.**

- Can you guarantee enough supplies and pencils and pens in different schools?

**Yes, every school would have enough supplies.**

- In our class we have a laptop each e.g. if playing a spelling game, but we probably wouldn't in a larger school

**There would be IT equipment in a larger school, but I can't say for definite that there would be one each.**

- Can you guarantee that teachers can get around all pupils in one lesson and would we be ready for high school?

**All the schools around you are good schools, performing at the same level, so yes you would be ready for high school.**

**When the Council has to look at the future of schools and changes, it can be a very difficult time. How do you feel about all of this?**

- Upsetting, angry, community won't be the same without Dolau school. Dolau school keeps families in the community. It's a family community.
- Some people live next door to the school, so it's easier to get here than other schools
- In a bigger school could we have an induction week?

**If the plans did go forward, then whichever school you went to, you could go to the school and meet the teachers at the schools and your classmates.**

- Do other schools have swimming lessons as well?

**Yes.**

- Would you have to share equipment like pens and pencils in a bigger school?

**There would be enough pens and pencils for everybody.**

- Would there be someone to support pupils with dyslexia?

**Yes, there would be teachers and staff in the school to support pupils with dyslexia and other matters.**

- In bigger schools would there be as much opportunities to do outdoor activities and trips?

**There would still be opportunities in larger schools as well. The one issue that you have mentioned is that if you live further away from school, it may be more difficult to go to after-school activities. That's something we think is an issue. Do you think that's an issue?**

- Yes
- In Dolau we also have sports people coming in e.g. to teach tennis and hocky. Will that happen in other schools?

**That would happen in other schools as well.**

- Would there be more bullies in a bigger school?

**There wouldn't be more bullies. Is that something you would be worried about?**

- Would you know everyone in the school and would you have as much equipment if you moved to a bigger school?

**If it was a bigger school, I'm not sure that you would know everybody in the school, but you would know people in your class, your friends and people from Dolau, you would know quite a lot.**

- So you're saying that we wouldn't know as much people in a different school?

**It depends which school you would go to. If it's a larger school you might not know everyone, it would depend on the size of the school.**

- The year 4's, if the school did close, they would have to get used to the new school and they would be year 6 by then and would have to get used to their new high school

**There's a kind of double impact on them, because they will have moved once and they will have to move again? Is that what you're saying?**

- Yes
- We want to go to the best school and we think that Dolau is the best school
- There are lots of lovely people in Dolau school

**From what you tell us, the fact that you are in a small school gives you more of a family feel?**

- If we are upset we feel that we can tell the teachers, anyone, because we are basically one big happy family

**Do you feel well supported in Dolau school**?

- Yes
- We also have buddies
- If we were in a bigger school, would we have a buddy?

**It would depend on the school, but I would expect that there would be some kind of buddy system in every school.**

**Is there anything else you would like to say? What you tell us is very important. We need to listen to your views.**

- If we move to a different school, not all our friends would be with us, and we would feel upset about that
- It would take us a while to make more friends
- I am concerned that if we move school we would have to move to high school again soon, and it could be overwhelming

**What you're telling us is that there would be a big impact on you if you moved to a bigger school?**

- Little ones would be upset and not understand what's going on, and they'd be leaving their friends
- Reception class pupils would just have settled at Dolau and will have to move again

**Officers explained what happens next, and that at the moment, Powys County Council is asking what people think about Llanfihangel Rhydithon school**

**being closed. All of the information from parents, governors, staff and pupils would then be put in a report which would then be prepared and the Council would then consider the report and decide whether or not to carry on with the plan to close the school. There is no decision yet to close the school.**
**If it is decided not to carry on, then that would be the end of the matter.**
**If the Council do decide to carry on, then what's known as a Statutory Notice would have to be published. That is a notice put up outside the school telling everyone that the Council is planning to close the school. There is then another opportunity for people to say if they do not agree with that and why the school should not close. There would then be another report and the Council's Cabinet would consider this and make a final decision.**
**If we carry on with the process, a final decision would be made around December, and if the Council does decide to close the school it would close in September 2022.**

- If we moved to a different school could our teachers come with us?

**No, I don't think so. Is that something you would like to happen?**

- Yes

**Is there anything else you would like to say?**

- I don't think it's fair that the Council want to close our school because of its size. The education is really good. The Council needs to judge on the education and not the size of the school
- The letter you sent to us to try and explain things is not child friendly and we couldn't understand it. There were some long words.

**That's a document that we've always used for meetings with pupils, but the important thing is that we're here to explain to you and hear your views.**

**We've had lots of useful comments from you today, but if after today there is anything else you or your friends think of, you can send them to us by 2nd of June. Your teachers will be happy to arrange to pass things on.**

- In a bigger school would we get the chance to get to know postcodes and would we get a chance to write a letter to our teachers.

**Teachers would be able to mark all your work, yes.**

- If a teacher had a baby, how long would it take to get a replacement?

**That would depend on the school and the situation and a lot of things would have to be taken into account. Is that something you are worried about?**

- Kind of
- We are also worried about leaving our teachers and school behind
- Even if two or three children moved school with us it wouldn't be the same because you would only know three people in the school
- The school has been under threat before, and it's almost a hundred years old
- Education here is around everybody, that's not possible in a bigger school
- Would there be enough sports equipment in a bigger school?
- We play lots of sports

**Can you describe the outdoor spaces you have in Dolau school?**

- Climbing frame, slide, grass, Teletubby house, a little shop, a space to play on with a basketball hoop, around the front a football pitch, a map of the UK on the floor, hopscotch, building blocks, sand pit,
- The younger class have an outdoor pen
- We have a conservation area and a pond
- A clock
- Would we have enough pegs for our bags and coats in a bigger school?

**Yes, there would be enough pegs for everyone.**

**If you went to a larger school what do you think would be the impact on you in terms of sports activities and equipment?**

- It would be worse because there would not be a chance to play on the play equipment every playtime
- Sports activities would all be full
- We have a choir and a Christmas play
- In Dolau school we have clubs such as a School Council and every single child in the school has a chance to go to each club and pick which one
- In a bigger school would there be lots of friendly people or would they be mean people?

**Every school would be different. A larger school doesn't mean that everyone is mean.**

- Everyone in our school gets to be on the School Council and coding club while in a larger school there wouldn't be that opportunity because of more pupils
- In a bigger school could you guarantee that we would have as good a quality education

**In your area, the education in all the schools is good.**

**We have to be sure that all your opinions go the Council Cabinet, who make the decisions, so it's important that we tell the Cabinet what you think, and the Council will need to read your views before making a decision.**

**What you're telling us is that you have more opportunities in a smaller school?**

- Yes
- Dolau school is the heart of our community
- In a bigger school would you have the opportunity for a whole school and class photo

**Yes, you would have the opportunity of a whole school photo and a class photo.**

- Would you have sibling photos?

**Yes, you would have sibling photos.**

- Would you have a breakfast club and after school club?

**Yes, but it would depend which school you go to.**

- Would you have a pom pom reward system in a larger school

**Yes, a lot of schools have awards for good work and good behaviour.**

- Would there be an assistant that would help everyone and could you pour water into glasses?

**In all the schools there would be dinner-ladies helping children at dinner time. It will depend on the school what the actual arrangements are.**

**The children were thanked for their contribution, and reminded again that if they thought of anything else to send them to Powys County Council via their teachers.**