



Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Observations to Cabinet on: 28-09-2021

The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee met on 22-09-2021 and considered the following documents:

- Report of the Portfolio Holder for Education and Property – Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School.

The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee thank the Portfolio Holder for Education and Property and officers for attending scrutiny.

Scrutiny made the following observations:

- The Committee was satisfied that the majority of the arguments set out in the document were justified on all grounds, with the exception of those in relation to federation and Welsh Language.
- The Committee considered that prior to the Cabinet taking a decision in relation to the proposal that the following areas be more fully explored and detailed in the report to Cabinet, as the Committee was not assured that the current proposal meets the requirements of the rural schools policy in respect of:
 - the opportunity for federating this school with another larger school.
 - the opportunity to move the school from an English Medium School to either a Dual Stream or Welsh Medium School and meet the aspiration of the WESP for a Welsh Medium Primary School in Mid Powys (East).
- The Committee suggested that the following additional information would have been of assistance in considering the report and would be of assistance to the Cabinet:
 - evidence or available research about the benefits of one or two year mixed age classes v the dis-benefits of multi-year mixed age classes, as this is a core argument for school transformation proposals and would assist future debates about individual proposals.
 - further evidence to support the rationale, why options were considered and accepted or rejected, or statements made in the report. This information is provided in response to questions and it would assist if it was available in the report.
 - the numbers from within and outside the school's catchment that are attending the school under review, and the same information for potential receiving schools.
- The Committee suggested:
 - that the school transport policy would need to be reviewed to take account of transformation proposals so that parental choice was not being limited by the authority's transport policy.
 - that should the school close, the authority would need to consider what support it could provide to retain the Cylch Meithrin currently on the school site.

Scrutiny's Recommendation	Accept (plus Action and timescale)	Partially Accept (plus Rationale and Action and timescale)	Reject (plus Rationale)
<p>1 That the following matters be more fully explored prior to consideration by Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federation; • Moving the school to a Welsh Medium School 			<p>The Council has explained in the Consultation Report that a formal federation cannot be established between a Church in Wales School and a Community Primary School. Therefore, the Council has therefore carried out a further assessment of options to establish a single governance arrangement between Llanelwedd C.i.W Primary School and Llanfihangel Rhydithion C.P School. A further assessment has also been carried out on options for establishing a Welsh-medium and dual-stream school in Dolau and this is included within the Consultation Report. These assessments comply with the requirements of the School Organisation Code in terms of assessing 'alternative reasonable options', which considers the impact on the quality and standards of education, impact on the community and impact on travel.</p>
<p>2 That the inclusion of additional information in proposal reports as set out above be approved.</p>		<p>Information relating to the numbers of pupils from within and outside the school's catchment that are attending the school under review and the potential receiving schools will</p>	

		<p>be provided to Cabinet.</p> <p>Evidence to support the rationale, options considered and assessed, and statements made in the report are all included within the documentation therefore no further information will be provided at this stage.</p> <p>Evidence of research about benefits of one or two year mixed aged classes vs multi-age classes – it is the view of primary experts within the Schools Service, from their extensive experience, that there are challenges in delivering education in very small multi-age classes and this is clearly explained within the Consultation Report.</p>	
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In accordance with Rule 7.27.2 the Cabinet is asked to provide a written response to the scrutiny report, including an action plan where appropriate, as soon as possible or at the latest within 2 months of the date of the Cabinet meeting i.e. by 28-11-2021

Membership of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee on 22-09-2021:
 County Councillors: P Roberts, D Meredith, C Mills, M Williams, E Roderick, A Jenner, J Berriman, L Roberts, G Thomas.
 Co-Opted Members: M Evitts and S Davies.