

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD BY TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 28
SEPTEMBER 2021**

PRESENT

County Councillor M R Harris (Chair)

County Councillors MC Alexander, B Baynham, P Davies, A W Davies, H Hulme,
I McIntosh and R Powell

In attendance: County Councillors H Lewis and P Roberts

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from the Executive Director Economy and Environment.

2. MINUTES

The Leader was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 14th September as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

County Councillors Beverley Baynham and Rachel Powell declared personal and prejudicial interests in the following item, Llanfihangel Rhydithon CP School.

4. LLANFIHANGEL RHYDITHON CP SCHOOL
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County Councillors Beverley Baynham and Rachel Powell left the meeting for this item having declared personal and prejudicial interests in this item.

Cabinet considered the results of the consultation carried out on the proposal to close Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School from the 31st August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools. It was confirmed that the Cabinet had seen and read the correspondence received including the letter from the Governing body forwarded by County Councillor Hywel Lewis that morning.

County Councillor Pete Roberts, the Chair of the Learning and Skills Committee reported the Committee's findings. In addition to the recommendations from Scrutiny, Councillor Roberts noted that when Castle Caereinion school was closed, the Cabinet had offered assistance to help keep the hall open for the community. He hoped that this could be accepted as a principle and that support offered if Cabinet decided to close the school. He advised that the Scrutiny Committee was not assured that the current proposal met the requirements of the rural schools policy and had recommended that more consideration was given to

- 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).

County Councillor Hywel Lewis asked why federation with Llanelwedd was not being explored and argued that there was no evidence that mixed aged classes were detrimental to learning. He questioned why Scrutiny's recommendation that the opportunity for the school to become a Welsh medium school had been dismissed as three members of staff had attended the Welsh sabbatical scheme and one was a fluent Welsh speaker.

Cabinet noted that further assessments had been carried out in response to the recommendations from Scrutiny. These complied 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. It was confirmed that the council had carried out all the steps required under the Rural Schools Policy, and that having done so, officers remained of the opinion that the proposal was the correct one. Officers addressed the point raised about having mixed age learning groups noting that this added to teachers' workload taking more planning and preparation time.

Officers advised that in deciding where to site a Welsh medium or dual stream school, the authority would need to have regard to where there was a critical mass of learners and that it would be difficult to grow from a base of 36 pupils. The Welsh sabbatical scheme was intended to provide teachers with the language skills for the use of incidental Welsh in schools rather than enable them to teach through the medium of Welsh. Cabinet noted that to establish a dual-stream school the number of teachers in the school which would need to be doubled which would be hugely expensive and not a good use of scarce resources.

The Leader and Portfolio Holder thanked everyone who had taken part in the consultation and the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee and the local member for their comments.

RESOLVED

- 1. To receive the Consultation Report in respect of closing Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School.**
- 2. To approve the publication of a statutory notice to close Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School from the 31st August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools.**

County Councillors Baynham and Powell returned to the meeting.

This item was being deferred to 5th October 2021.

6.	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
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The Cabinet forward work programme was noted.

County Councillor M R Harris (Chair)