

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.**

**CABINET EXECUTIVE  
12 October 2021**

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

**REPORT TITLE:** Ysgol Bro Hyddgen Language Category

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**REPORT FOR:** Decision

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021, the Council published a Statutory Notice proposing to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen from dual stream to Welsh-medium on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception in September 2022.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet members of the outcome of the statutory objection period.
- 1.3 The report includes a recommendation to proceed with implementation of the proposal on a phased basis from the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022.
- 1.4 The report is supported by the following appendices:
- **Appendix A** – Statutory Notice (Welsh)
  - **Appendix A** – Statutory Notice (English)
  - **Appendix B** – Objection Report
  - **Appendix C** – Updated Impact Assessments

**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. The Strategy sets out a new vision education in Powys, 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 new strategy also sets out a number of guiding principles which will underpin the transformation of education in Powys. These are as follows:

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

2.4 The new strategy sets out a number of Strategic Aims and Objectives, to shape the Council's work to transform the Powys education system over the coming years. One of the Strategic Aims of the Strategy is to '*improve Welsh-medium provision across all key stages.*' Within this aim, the Strategy sets out a Strategic Objective to '*Move schools along the language continuum*'.

2.5 On the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020, the Council's Cabinet considered an options appraisal paper in respect of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, and agreed to carry out consultation on the following:

- To make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Bro Hyddgen from Bilingual (dual-stream) to Welsh-medium

- This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception in September 2022.

### **The Consultation Period**

- 2.7 Consultation on the proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code (2018) from the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021.
- 2.8 A Consultation Report listing the issues raised during the consultation and the authority's response to them was published. This was considered by Cabinet on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
- 2.9 At the meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021, Cabinet agreed to proceed with the process to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen through the publication of a Statutory Notice.

### **Statutory Notice**

- 2.10 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021, the Council published a Statutory Notice proposing the following:
- i. *To make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, Machynlleth, Powys SY20 8DR from Dual Stream to Welsh-medium.*
  - ii. *This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception in September 2022.*

*The proposal will be introduced on a phase basis as the pupils joining the school's Reception class in September 2022 move through the school. The phasing of the implementation for each year group would be as follows:*

<b>Reception</b> – September 2022	<b>Year 4</b> – September 2026
<b>Year 1</b> – September 2023	<b>Year 5</b> – September 2027
<b>Year 2</b> – September 2024	<b>Year 6</b> – September 2028.'
<b>Year 3</b> – September 2025	

- 2.11 The Statutory Notice was published on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021 for a period of 28 days, in accordance with the guidance within the School Organisation Code (2018). A copy of the Statutory Notice is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.12 The objection period ended on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

### **Objections**

- 2.13 258 objections were received during the statutory objection period.

- 2.14 This included two petitions, one in support of the proposal which received 278 signatures and one against the proposal, which received 1,219 signatures.
- 2.14 Of the remaining 256 'objections' received, 4 were in support of the proposal.
- 2.14 Objections were received from the following:
- Parents of pupils at Ysgol Bro Hyddgen
  - Members of the community
  - Llanbrynmair Community Council
  - Machynlleth Golf Club
  - Machynlleth Bowling Club
  - Machynlleth Community Children's Project Ltd (MCCP)
  - Russell George MS
- 2.15 The issues raised in the objections to the statutory notice, are listed in the Objection report (Appendix B), along with the Council's response to these issues.
- 2.16 The Objections received relate to the following headings:
1. Positive comments about dual stream provision
  2. Comments about the need for choice
  3. Comments about Ysgol Bro Hyddgen
  4. Comments about funding for Ysgol Bro Hyddgen's new building
  5. Comments about the impact on pupils
  6. Comments about additional learning needs
  7. Concern about the impact on pupil numbers at Ysgol Bro Hyddgen
  8. Comments about alternative provision
  9. Comments about travel implications
  10. Comments about additional support that would be needed to support a change of language category
  11. Comments about the impact on the community
  12. Comments about the impact on local employment and businesses
  13. Comments about early years provision
  14. Comments about the use of Welsh in the local area
  15. Other comments about the Welsh language
  16. Comments about discrimination / equality
  17. Comments about the Council's approach to developing Welsh-medium provision
  18. Comments about other proposals
  19. Other options
  20. Criticism of Powys County Council
  21. Criticism of Welsh Government
  22. Comments about the process
  23. Comments about documentation
  24. Comments in support of the proposal

### **3 Advice**

3.1 Having considered the objections received, it is recommended that the Council proceeds with implementation of the proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen from dual stream to Welsh-medium on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception in September 2022, as outlined in the Statutory Notice (Appendix A).

3.2 The reasons for this are as follows:

i) To improve educational outcomes

- Children would no longer be taught in small mixed age classes
- There would be more pupils who are fluent and confident in using the Welsh and English language equally

ii) To improve educational provision

- Opportunities to develop a broader curriculum to meet the needs of pupils
- Having one language stream would make it easier to track and target the progress of pupils and their well-being

iii) To improve leadership and management

- The school's management team could work more efficiently

iv) To improve efficiency in the delivery of education

- Potential for the school to operate more efficiently through more efficient deployment of staff and resources

v) To increase the number of pupils accessing Welsh-medium education

- More pupils would be fluent in both Welsh and English, therefore contributing to the Welsh Government's aim to achieve a million Welsh speakers by the year 2050.

3.3 It must be noted that proceeding with the proposal to change the school's language category does not preclude that school from being a part of future reorganisation proposals.

### **4. Resource Implications**

- 4.1 Based on the current formula, the formula funding requirement will reduce as a result of these proposals and it is estimated that changing the school's language category would eventually result in annual revenue savings to the Council of approximately £184k per annum, once the school is fully single-stream. There would be no saving in the first year, and although there would be opportunities for savings as the phasing takes place, this would be dependent on pupil numbers. The effectiveness of a single-stream school is optimised in the secondary sector.

It is not anticipated that there would be an impact on transport costs, and there would be no capital costs.

- 4.2 Implementation of the proposal would require involvement from a number of service areas, including staff from the Schools Service, HR and Finance.
- 4.3 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the report and can support the recommendation.

## **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 Legal: The recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view.
- 5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services ( Monitoring Officer ) has commented as follows

## **6. Comment from local member(s)**

- 6.1 **Cllr Elwyn Vaughan:** Whatever the decision of Cabinet, we as Governors will do our utmost to deliver that vision. What is clear is that bilingualism is the norm in the world. Not only is it beneficial in it's own right, opening up opportunities and a wider understanding of the cultures and diversity of humankind, but also provides the basis to learn other languages and become truly multilingual – a important asset for the future. What we know is that the proposed model of education as recommended for Hyddgen is the best format for ensuring true bilingualism, and it's well known, that learning languages from an early age as proposed from foundation stage, is the best means of learning. Naturally, there will be some concerned about the inability to understand a different language, that is why the proposed Trochi provision and support mechanisms are welcomed and which have proved successful for a number of years in other counties. This model of delivery is the norm and indeed has been the norm for nearly 50 years to the north of the Dyfi river throughout Gwynedd, and will from 2022 also be the norm throughout Ceredigion to the South of Machynlleth. There is no logical reason therefore why this cannot equally be as successful and natural at Machynlleth.

## **7. Integrated Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 An initial impact assessment was considered by Cabinet on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020.
- 7.2 In addition, a range of draft impact assessments were produced as part of the consultation documentation. These included an Integrated Impact Assessment, an Equalities Impact Assessment, a Community Impact Assessment and a Welsh Language Impact Assessment.
- 7.3 The draft impact assessments were updated to reflect issues raised during the consultation period and the updated impact assessments were considered by Cabinet on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021 when considering whether or not to proceed with the publication of a statutory notice.
- 7.4 These have been further updated following the objection period, and the updated version is attached as Appendix C.

## **8. Recommendation**

- To receive the Objection Report in respect of changing the language category of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen.
- To approve the proposal to make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Bro Hyddgen from Dual Stream to Welsh-medium on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception in September 2022.

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