

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

Draft

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1. Consultation meeting with staff of Mount Street Infants School

16th March 2021

Present

Staff:

Shan Kenchington
Sharron Jenkinson
Libby Hyde
Jo Smith
Vicky Holloway
Caroline Griffiths
Rhian Thomas
Helen Smith
Louise Jones
Sally Bond
Liz Hall
Stephanie Richards
Tina Hignett
Dafydd Edwards
Penny Hamilton
Ann-Marie Morgan
Corey Evans
Amy Price
Lizzie Stephens
Carly Hodson
Delyth Marshman
Clare Lloyd
Ceinwen Davies (Union)

Officers:

Geraint Rees, Strategic Lead for Education
Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer, Schools Service
Marianne Evans, Service Manager Schools Transformation
Sarah Christoforou, HR Business Manager (Schools)
Mari Thomas, Interim Schools Finance Manager
Sarah Astley, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education
Angharad Morgan, Programme Co-ordinator, Transforming Education (minutes)

Geraint Rees welcomed all to the meeting and noted that there will be opportunity for questions and discussion later and asked all attendees to remain on mute until the questions begin. Geraint thanked the staff for giving their time to join this consultation meeting as part of the consultation on proposals for Brecon. Geraint

introduced the Powys Officers and their roles and explained that the meeting will be recorded so that accurate minutes can be taken, and the recording will be deleted once the minutes are agreed.

Geraint Rees and Marianne Evans gave a short PowerPoint presentation to give an overview of the proposals and the consultation process. It was explained that the Council is consulting on the following proposals:

Phase 1

- To close Mount Street Infants, Mount Street Juniors and Cradoc C.P School
- To establish a new English-medium Primary School for Pupils aged 4-11 on the current sites of all three schools.
- The current target date is to close all three Schools on the 31st August 2022, and the new school to open on the 1st September 2022.

Phase 2

- To make a regulated alternation to transfer the new school to the new building on a new site in Brecon.
- The target date for this is September 2024 at the earliest.

Geraint Rees then invited questions / comments on the proposal.

Headteacher: The staff have collectively put some things together which are a combination of questions and comments of things that we would like clarity on from the document. There are several staff that will ask the questions from the whole staff body. If we do not manage to complete the comments could they be forwarded for a response?

Geraint Rees: Yes, no problem. I will hand over to you then.

Headteacher: I just want to start off by talking about Powys' strategy. This is an ambitious vision statement, for 'children and young people in Powys to experience a high quality, inspiring education to help develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that would enable them to become healthy, personally fulfilled, economically productive, socially responsible and globally engaged citizens of the 21st century.'

In January 2020 Estyn's inspection report on Mount Street Infants School included the following summary:

'The excellent quality of the school's care, support and guidance for pupils results in outstanding levels of wellbeing. The school has an exceptionally happy family atmosphere where nearly all pupils thrive. It provides an extensive range of imaginative learning experiences, both in class and in the stimulating outdoor environment, which results in nearly all pupils having very positive attitudes to learning and achieving well.'

A united team of committed teachers and support staff share the headteacher's enthusiastic and inspiring vision for the school, which has best foundation phase practice at its heart. They work very effectively together for the good of their pupils. As a result, nearly all pupils, including those learning English as an additional language and those with SEN, make good progress and achieve expected or better outcomes by the end of the foundation phase.'

They also state that our pupils have a good understanding of healthy living, demonstrate high levels of empathy, exceptional understanding of equality and fairness, are developing very well as ethical, informed citizens with a superb understanding of environmental issues and use highly developed entrepreneurial skills all before the age of 7.

We feel that the school is already achieving so much of Powys' ambitious vision statement and what we want is for our children to continue to have the very best options, the very best outcomes that we can provide for them. We just want some clarity about how what we are providing is going to be improved going forward, especially in this interim time where potentially we might have no head on the site and who knows if we will ever get to a new building. We feel we have an awful lot to lose and our pupils have an awful lot to lose.

Geraint Rees: Thank you for that. Those statements are not achieved through one week when Estyn's in, that is the fruit of a long period of consistent commitment to the children. I say that as a former headteacher myself. What I would say is that nobody is envisioning school transformation as a punishment. The whole purpose is to try and make what is currently not sustainable across the authority to become sustainable, and for what you give the children in what was captured there to become the universal expectation across all of Powys. The reality is that there is no universal right across Powys now, but the whole issue around the change management is not that it makes everybody as poor as the poorest aspects of whatever is being brought together, but to try and build it and to spread excellence across the board in facilities that make excellence a lot easier sometimes as well. It is not all about facilities and the quality of buildings and infrastructure, but it is a big help for schools, that is the ambition here. With the issue around leadership, there are two phases to the proposal and the first phase is that the three schools are under 1 banner for an interim period before the investment. There is something to look at in terms of modelling that to establish the best way of implementing this given the variety of schools that might be coming together. One of the reasons for consulting is to make sure that we are mindful of what the issues are, and if the proposal does go forward, that we try to make sure that any challenges are offset. We need to ensure that we do not wreck things that are perfectly good.

Marianne Evans: Just to add, when we look at the school reorganisation, we look at everything. So, in terms of your school and your capacity etc and then we look at Mount Street Juniors School and capacity, those things come into play. and we know

that both schools are nearly full, and we know the condition of the schools as well. We would love to give you a new school. That is what we are trying to do here – to give you and the learners that you have in your school and future pupils the best possible accommodation within the town of Brecon. Therefore we are looking at the education aspects and also what are the pressures on you and on the school and how can we address them.

Member of Staff: On page 28 it says when it is talking about the impact on the quality and standards of education, it states that all schools are good. That is not true though, is it? Because when you then go to your appendix, it says that we have got excellent. Another school is good, and another school is adequate. So, I have two questions. Why did you make a summative statement saying that all areas are good when they are not? And more importantly, how can one headteacher be able to improve provision for all the children in the new school when the three sites are starting from different points?

Marianne Evans: We say that the quality of education is good because we are bringing all three grades together, even though the Estyn grades are different. We were looking at the whole lot because we were looking at the three schools together so that is why it is a general statement.

Member of Staff: It is not obvious though, is it? If people only read the first bit, they think everybody is good and it is only if they go on for 40 odd pages that they realise that is not actually true.

Marianne Evans: OK, I take your point there.

Geraint Rees: Any questions and comments you make will be documented and the answers will be published. They will be available for the Cabinet when we go back to them, so that answer and explanation would be there. Lynette over to you around leadership and multi sites.

Lynette Lovell: Thank you for your question there. In terms of how you can make improvements when you are on three sites, we have got a precedent within Powys already. You may be aware that Welshpool Church in Wales School were in a similar position a few years ago, whereby three infant schools and one junior school amalgamated to become one Welsh-medium school and one English-medium school. The English-medium school has been operating across three sites for two or three years. When the school was formed, I was the Challenge Advisor at the school and the leadership that the headteacher provided across those three sites was exceptional, it was very very good. Actually, what has happened is that the arrangements have enabled leaders to grow, by working with the headteacher to develop their leadership skills and their potential for themselves to become headteachers of the future so this has been a benefit. I'm sure if you spoke to the headteacher there, she would say that obviously in many ways working across three sites has had its challenges and the headteacher can't be in all places at all times,

but from what we've heard about your inspection report, and I know that you are a good school, and you do have excellence in your school and from the statement that Shan just read out there around the united leadership at the school led capably by Shan. But the rest of you as well, working through your leadership skills, the three sites can work, and it does not just work to sustain, it can work to improve and we have evidence of that school improvement which has happened across three sites, with leadership developing effectively during that time as well. With a prospective new build as well, there is a lot of leadership required for the headteacher going forward. But it is possible for school improvement to happen and for standards to improve, for provision to improve, even though there are still the three sites during phase one.

Geraint Rees: If the proposal were to move ahead, a key part would be to get all three schools in a position by the time they are co-located that they are all able to do that comfortably, having developed from wherever they are now to be ready to be part of a larger school community that is from 4 to 11, so that would be the challenge for leadership. In that case, on top of everything that is the day job of current school leadership.

Member of Staff: That did not really answer my question because that was more about saying, well, it is possible, because you are going to have this head who is going to be like this super head. I have no doubt our head is more than capable of doing that. But it would mean she would not be in our school because obviously if you want the others to come up to our standards, not the other way round our head is not going to be with us. And the reason we are so good is because we have Shan with us. I mean, I have got another quote from Estyn which says that professional learning opportunities for the staff are excellent.

This is still the children at the heart, but it is for the people who are working there too. Nearly all teachers have visited other countries. We have been to Finland. We have been to Iceland. We have been to Romania. We have been to observe best practice in earliest childhood education, and we have been able to come back and share that with other schools in our area and beyond as sector leading schools. The only reason we could do that is because we had a very supportive head. In fact, it was Shan's idea that we do it, and we could only do that because she was there with us all the time and she would take our classes for us to be able to go.

Now, if we have got a head teacher looking after other schools and they are looking after other schools who are not as good as ours, we are not going to see her. So how are we going to maintain those standards? She is important and you are proposing that she is not with us. So, my question is, how can the headteacher visiting a school only once, maybe twice a week, maintain those current standards or never mind improve them just maintain them when she is not with us?

Lynette Lovell: Obviously with three sites you must be at different sites at different times, we also have another example of a head teacher on three sites within the

local authority and that is the Federation in Bro Hyddgen where there are three sites now, they are far apart as well. The head teacher is not always present on the site. But leadership is about your presence and the way that you bring up the leaders beneath you and I know that you have got that at the school. Not having to be onsite all the time but developing those leaders with you. So, what happens is the leaders, say the deputy head or assistant heads take on more of a role for the operational issues, but the strategic direction of the school where it comes to overseeing the school improvement and all of that is still the role very much so of the headteacher. What happens is you arrange to be on different sites on different days, and everybody knows where the head is, but the strategic direction of the school in terms of standards and provision still very much has the mark of the leader of the school on the whole school moving forward.

As I say, from our experience, in both those examples I quoted, and they are 2 examples where you got split sites. The Federation is a different set up obviously with one headteacher and three sites and it's had an excellent across the board inspection from Estyn, and the leadership and the strategic leadership with the school comes out very strong and the second school that was mentioned there, Welshpool Church in Wales, have improved not just sustained, but improved standards at the school. So those are examples I can give. The strategic leadership of the schools is key from that key headteacher going forward and it is more about the operational running of the school. It does develop the team during that period, and I mentioned there some examples for how it has worked successfully. But I take your points and obviously from your own inspection report Shan is a very good leader.

Headteacher: The next set of questions might be for Sarah from HR to answer.

Member of Staff: I do not think any of us are convinced that this process truly values the head's role, the vision, the input of leadership of an excellent school, or that it can be spread across three sites for what is apparently an unprescribed period of time. We are talking about at the earliest 2024, and I do not think we can put it in strong enough terms how utterly diabolical we feel as the staff team about the interim proposals. Destabilising three schools with no final destination or time scale is not fulfilling your duty of care. I am going to make that as a comment, and I want it recorded.

Having already been through staff reorganisation last year, and losing a class and staff, we as a staff team are extremely anxious around the security of our job. Can you clarify whether all jobs, management, teaching, teaching assistant, support staff, admin, and the three year plus setting will be ring fenced? And if so, will they stay as they are? Or will we be required to apply for those positions? Will staff be required to work across the three sites or indeed move to work at different sites? Will there be opportunities for voluntary redundancies if staff do not want to work in the new school or with a different head teacher?

Sarah Christoforou: I will try and take those questions one at a time. If the proposal does go ahead, the first thing that we do is to appoint a temporary governing body for the new school and we work with that temporary governing body advising them on the best way forward. It is the decision of that temporary governing body about which posts are ring fenced, but the HR advice is that we do ring fence current staff members. That is our advice that we give, but it is their decision.

It is a little bit different when we come to headship and deputy headships just because there are certain rules around those 2 levels of posts as they must have been nationally advertised and there must be a permanent member of staff in there. The HR management of change principles that we ask the temporary governing body to adopt and the governing bodies of the current schools, does ask that we ring fence where that is possible. I cannot give a definitive answer, but I can say that the advice that we give and thus far through all transformations that temporary governing bodies have heeded that advice thus far.

On the issue of moving between sites, Lynette earlier gave the example of Welshpool Church in Wales School and the head of the three sites would move between sites and there may be occasions when other senior leaders might be asked to move between sites, but it is very much you would have a home base. If you are currently a teacher on a certain site or a teaching assistant, or a clerical assistant, you would have a home base. The actual contracts would be to the new school with a home base, but there is an expectation that in some sort of emergencies you might be asked to move across sites if there was that need. Overall, teachers, teaching assistants and clerical staff stay on their home site for most of the time. It was mostly headteachers and senior leaders who needed to move between sites when there were absences.

And just to take your third point, voluntary redundancy. If we are in a situation where there would be any redundancies required, we always ask if there are volunteers first. There is either the voluntary severance scheme, which is out for schools, but as part of any management of change process, we always ask for any volunteers for redundancy, early retirement, and reduction of hours in the first instance if they are required. Obviously, if there are no redundancies required at all because of fixed term contracts, or temporary nature of contracts, then obviously it is not available. Those answers are only agreed if obviously the proposal goes ahead. Did you want to come back on something else?

Member of Staff: Yes, please on page 18, in the section marked advantages. This merger will be fairer to staff. All staff at the three schools would have the opportunity to secure positions in the new school. How is this an advantage when we already have a job in our present school? Would it only be an advantage if our positions were not secure by keeping the status quo? What will happen to staff with permanent contracts? What will happen to staff with temporary contracts for that matter?

Geraint Rees: I will just say something briefly before getting into the HR issues, but the reason why we have this is, in the period of change that Powys needs to go through to get to a point where we have a school estate that is fit for the 21st century, there is inevitably going to be change in different parts of Powys at different times. But the next decade is going to be quite a quite a period of change because the commitment to invest in schools is become such a prominent commitment from the top of the Council to ensure that the school estate is changed.

The security of being in a larger school is that there are a greater number of opportunities for people to work through leadership development. There is a whole range of things that can happen in larger schools that are sometimes less able to happen in smaller schools, and I think that is where the notion of there being a lot more resilience in larger schools. The budget formula generally favours small schools, but that cannot go on forever, because it must get to a point where we are able to sustain the schools that we that we have and that we are able to invest in schools that have long term viability to them. I will hand over to Sarah around the issues that you raised specifically there.

Member of Staff: Can I just come back straight away though because the position here is that we are talking about interim arrangement with a possible completion of 2024. We have not got capital funding for the new school and we have not got a plan site, or a time scale, and I think that is what is destabilising in this whole process.

Geraint Rees: In terms of capital funding, Marianne and team have been working on securing capital funding for a whole range of schools over the last decade and there are different processes is for securing that. Marianne do you want to give some assurances about how priorities come about and therefore delivery?

Marianne Evans: This is a difficult one in terms of the different processes. In order to draw that capital funding down from Welsh government, we need to present them with different business cases. Now we cannot present a business case to them until we have gone through this process, until there is a decision made to proceed. We are not planning on starting any work around a design of a new school until this process has been completed. As that would mean if the process did not go forward, we would have incurred a lot of costs in starting the design process.

Just jumping back to the point, you made about why the fairer for staff comment is in the advantages and in the table on page 18. That is in there because it is related to the fact that we are treating all three staff bodies in the same way and it is in comparison to some of the other options that were considered with say for example, Cradoc was a straightforward closure. It is fairer for all three staff bodies, so that is why it is in there.

Sarah Christoforou: Do you mind if you just recap on the on the couple of questions you had, what will happen to permanent staff and then what would happen to fixed term staff? Could you just recap on the questions for me?

Member of Staff: Yes, how is this an advantage when we already have a job in our present school? Would it only be an advantage if our positions were not secured by keeping the status quo? And what will happen to staff contracts?

Sarah Christoforou: I think Marianne has possibly answered the bit around the advantage question, because the advantage is that all staff are considered equally at the same time, so there isn't a takeover of one school to another school, so that is that advantage rather than it being an advantage to individuals, so hopefully that clarifies that.

The contract of employment is twofold, so you have a contract with your current school, Mount Street Infants and that would obviously cease to be if the school ceased and then you would have a contract with a new school, if you were successful in getting a post at the new school. Behind that is that you are employed by Powys, so things like continuity of service, sick pay, all those years of service are continued. There is no break there. So, from that point of view, pension, sickness, entitlement, holiday allowances that go up after certain number of years for support staff, all those things are continued because the overall employer is Powys. But there would be new contracts of employment with the new school.

In terms of temporary staff, it depends on how long members of staff have been employed. So those members of staff that have got fixed term contracts for under two years would have been taken on a fixed term contract and their contracts would be looked at, but obviously after permanent members of staff have been looked at first.

Those staff that have been temporary for over 2 years, but under 4 years are in a sort of a middle ground where they have got certain employment rights, so people are entitled to apply for voluntary redundancy because there is a payment and all that would be explained if this proposal went ahead, at a further staff consultation.

We are early in the process and there is plenty of time to ask around all those questions, have individual one to one meeting so that each individual person can ask questions all at that later stage. There is a very clear process, it would all be put into business cases with timelines. I think you mentioned you had been through a reorganisation within your staff group previously, so I think at that point you would have been given business case with timelines. So, all that would be documented again about what would happen through this process, so that kind of very individual detail of people's contracts etc would have opportunities at that time to speak either in group consultations or one to ones.

Geraint Rees: Powys has trade unions working on behalf of teachers and support staff across its schools. There is a very clear understanding of what the expectations are from the authorities and employer and the level of discussion and negotiation that goes on.

The authority could not be less than honourable and fair in it because of the nature of that relationship. It is a very honest one and we as a local authority always seek to do the right thing because there would not be any point in doing anything else.

We want to go through a significant investment program in schools and therefore ensuring that the people are treated properly right through is critical, otherwise we will end up in a worse place with new buildings rather than in a better place.

When you reorganise schools, you usually have the same number of children in a new environment and therefore the staffing levels you need as you go through a change process are different. However, there will be people who move on in any case, there will be others who choose that the change will be potentially at the end of their career and they wish to say goodbye to everybody at that point. Very often you go through a change process and then must recruit additional staff to be able to staff the new school. There is an immense amount of safety for school staff in the entire process, and the authorities are absolutely committed to make sure it is done properly.

This is early consultation around a proposal and there is a lot of water to go under the bridge. If this were to move to the next stage then we would be back then for a different kind of conversation with people.

Headteacher: If we move on to some other questions and come back to those as we have got some pressing ones further down that we might not get to and we can always send those in to the team.

I just want to go onto the buildings. It says in the document that between us and the Junior School we have £1.7 million in backlog across both sites and I just wonder for transparency whether we could have some information regarding what those backlogs are. If we are not talking about the new school being built until at least 2024 at the very earliest, is there some commitment from the LA to look at the £50 million the Welsh Government have pledged now for building works for school? Because we're still looking at our children being in that building for potentially at least three years, potentially much longer, and I think you know as an LA, when you're saying a building isn't fit for purpose, that's why we need to move on, so there is an opportunity because we might be there for a considerable amount of time and I just think that would be the right and fair thing to do.

Marianne Evans: The backlog maintenance is based on a calculation and we have to report every year to the Welsh Government on that. So, the calculation is based on the square meterage multiplied by the estimated cost based on the condition of the school. So, the higher estimated cost is given for schools in poor condition.

The school needs to be maintained and it needs to be kept up to the same standards that you have during any transition period to a new build, so we would not stop

spending on any of the schools. We would continue with our major improvements programme and I know you have got work scheduled this year so we would continue with that.

We have had the £2.2 million extra from Welsh Government, which means we have got a bit more to spend this next year. Keeping the schools maintained is a number one priority. There is no getting away from it, and as you say, we are saying 2024 at the earliest, and these things do take a long time, so we would be committed to that. In terms of the detail around what £1.7 million entails I can ask somebody else for that detail and we can get that to you.

Just to add, we did undertake a further condition assessment in the autumn term and the results of that have also come through. We have used the old 2009 condition data here because we were not able to do the same updated condition survey in Cradoc, so we felt it was only fair to use the same measure for all of them, but that updated condition assessment will also enable us to identify what the priority works out for the school.

Headteacher: Thank you Marianne. I have a few queries around practical elements that I am finding it difficult to get our head around, such as running the school with three sites potentially for two to four years. Things like how admissions are going to run as we are a transient school, so are pupils applying to the new school, or are they applying to a site within the school? As you know, we are quite often at our capacity of a number, so we could have a child that may be able to have a place at the Junior School because they have a class that is under capacity, but a younger sibling cannot come to our school, but in the new school there is a place at Cradoc. So, this new school is not full, but our site is full, and I think it is important that we really need to think about the big picture of how this works. If you were running a federated school and they are in different villages, that is very different. Nobody is going to want to go to the neighbouring villages 10 miles away, but they are real issues for us, and I think we need to acknowledge that they could be real issues, especially in a transient community like we are.

Marianne Evans: In the Welshpool situation where we went from 4 schools, 3 of them infants, one of them junior to two schools on an interim basis until new builds were ready. Initially, we allowed the admissions to the same site, so the pupils would be able to stay on the current sites just to keep the stability for the pupils. However, the school found that it was operationally too difficult to continue with that, so there were changes made, so that key Stage two were on certain sites and foundation phase stayed on different sites, just to manage the numbers and the teaching requirements. It is a complex one, but obviously we would need to make sure that the pupils are not destabilised, and that families can stay together on the same site as much as possible.

Headteacher: Ok, thank you Marianne. Another member of staff has a question around specialist provision.

Member of Staff: The document states that the provision currently on Mount St Infant and Mount St Junior will continue in phase one. However, the detail regarding specialist ALN provision for phase two is unclear. What assurances can you give to the school at the setting and the parents of the children who attend that there will be provision at the new school if it is built?

Marianne Evans: In all our new school buildings, we work closely with the Council's ALN team from the very beginning so that they are part of the discussions with the authority and the school around the requirements for ALN pupils and we develop all kinds of different approaches to it. In some schools we have nurture rooms, we have smaller group rooms, we have rooms for one to one and going forward, wellbeing is going to be such a key issue here that our new school designs need to be developed so that the wellbeing of the pupils is one of the most important things. There are lots of things happening within the school design world now to reflect not only the new curriculum but also the wellbeing of pupils. We will be working closely with the ALN team to provide what would be needed for in that new school to meet the needs of ALN pupils.

Geraint Rees: All our new builds must be inclusive settings in general, but you also have specialist facilities as well and every time we have an investment it is an opportunity to consider specialist facilities for a smaller number of learners who may need specialist education all through their education and how that fits. Inevitably a discussion must be had to ensure that sort of provision and that we can make sure that in the Brecon area we have a sustainable and effective place for that. You will not be left out of that dialogue.

Should this move ahead, then one of the key issues that the Cabinet would want to know is and what are you doing with specialist facilities and specialist centres? How does that look in the future for Brecon? You would need to be part of the proposal one way or another, but the opportunity for investment usually means good news for developing ALN facilities.

Headteacher: Thank you, Geraint. There are some questions from the three plus setting that obviously is very much part of our school that would like to ask some questions.

Pre School Setting Leader: Is there going to be one setting leader for each three-year-old setting or will there be a team leader in each setting?

Geraint Rees: As far as I can see, that is not something that will have been resolved or discussed at this point other than in the same way as the issue around what the leadership of the three schools looks like for the interim period has not been either. There is a whole range of things that come in from these meetings because headship is not a straightforward arrangement, nor is leadership of a pre-school

setting either. We need to look very carefully at what the configuration would be, that would best make it work for both the interim and once moving to a new site.

As Sarah said earlier on there are certain HR issues that you only take us to the part of the next phase if the proposal goes forward.

Sarah Christoforou: Just to reiterate that that level of detail - so what staffing structures look like and how many posts are here, would be something that would be looked at if the proposal goes ahead.

Staffing structure is one of the most important things that is looked at first, once a decision been made. But at this point we have not got any staffing structures or anything to share with you. But as I said, there would be lots of opportunity to talk to each of you as groups and as individuals at that point where staffing structures are emerging for you to look at and comment on then.

Headteacher: Can I just come in there Sarah? How would that work? Because governing bodies do not have control of three plus settings, so it would be a slightly different situation there. Our governing body oversee it and I am RI, but it is not actually the governing body that would be in control.

Sarah Christoforou: It would be different, and it would not be part of that staffing structure, but it would need to be reflective. Once we look at the bigger staffing structure then we would look at all the additional posts that need to feed into that, so you know settings, specialist centres. So, there would be slightly different processes because they are not all governing body based, but they cannot be done in isolation, they would need to be done in conjunction at that time together.

Headteacher: Who would be driving that, as if it will not be the interim governing body, who would it be?

Geraint Rees: One of the criticisms from Estyn was that the non-maintained sector and our pre-school sector was largely dependent on what was going on locally each time, without a clear plan from the local authority. One of the things we would need here is a clear plan from the local authority but essentially the governing body would need that as part of their work, but as you say they do not oversee it.

The local authority needs to ensure that this provision is available in Brecon and is as joined up as possible with the way the schools work as well. The local authority would have to own this bit as part of the planning, though inevitably there are different arrangements in different parts of the authority with different kinds of providers as well. It is making sure that we've got it right in terms of the sort of facility needed and the environment for people to work in. It needs to have a proper life as part of the lives of families growing through a school. We would have to be heavily involved as a local authority on that with any partners that we would have who specialise in pre-school settings.

Headteacher: OK, a lot of the other questions that we have got we are going to be in the same situation, I think we can send those in, but obviously they are going to be things that now that we cannot ask. Do you want to ask me about the possibility of the setting at the new school?

Pre School Setting Leader: There's very little detail about how the three plus setting will fit into the new build. Between the 2 settings, we can presently offer 75 places. This would need to be a substantial building to allow for the space required to meet CIW regulations. How is this being considered into the build cost or planning of the new building?

Marianne Evans: Yes, we have included it within the costs on all our new builds. It would be an integrated part of the primary school. If we go forward, discussions with yourselves, discussions with the school around how the design works is key, but some of the settings that we have in the new builds are nice spaces and we also have spaces for Flying Start in some of them as well so they are lovely places but would work with you on the detail.

Geraint Rees: Part of what the Council is trying to do is there has been over the years developments have been happening where there is a leisure development in a town and then a school gets a little bit of an extension, and then somebody sets up a nursery somewhere and the Council is desperately trying to make sure that when it brings an investment forward that it's big enough to be able to count on a range of fronts. And the questions you have just asked would be key to making sure that this is a provision that everybody can be proud of and is sustainable, and the Council does not need to come back and revisit investment in Brecon primary schools other than the ones who are not part of this for a good number of years.

Headteacher: It clearly says that the impact of not obtaining capital spending is high and the likelihood is medium. I think the authority is really acknowledging that it is a substantial risk. If we do not obtain capital funding, obviously in the current economic crisis there is not going to be a lot of spare money, but the authority has said that it could consider utilising alternative funding. Realistically what would be the option of that?

Geraint Rees: Given the condition of the economy, you can see already that the response from the Treasury has been to focus on capital spending as a way of trying to create jobs and to get the economy going through the dual hit of Brexit and Covid. Therefore, we may find that is better news to come on capital funding, which is why you need to put up more new buildings than we would have imagined because it might be the kick start for the economy that is needed, but the jury's out on it. But that's where Boris Johnson in the Treasury and Mark Drakeford in Cardiff are both clearly moving towards capital spending as a way of keeping things going. Over to Marianne as to what happens if not.

Marianne Evans: It is a huge risk as you said, so if not, we would need to look at whether the Council could afford it themselves. Obviously that's a big ask as well. We do have a good relationship with the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools team and we are already more than halfway through about a £200 million pound programme. The more we deliver, the more they will consider with additional funding, etc. It is all about continuing the dialogue with Welsh Government throughout everything because the other issue on a Powys wide scale is we cannot afford not to spend in our schools and invest in infrastructure, so there is a cost to doing nothing and there is a cost to going forward as well. So, all I can say is we continually discuss this with Welsh Government, and we make sure that they understand where we are headed, what we are delivering and then we can submit our business cases.

Geraint Rees: The record so far is of delivery when, once Welsh Government and the local authority agree on a package to spend on a school, they are getting the goods at the end of it as well, which the local authority and Welsh Government are both pleased with. So, Marianne's team have got that reputation in Welsh Government for getting things done once the go ahead is given, but clearly there is a long way to go on this one.

Headteacher: We have just got a few questions now around the proposal for the site.

Member of Staff: Our outdoor area has been nurtured and developed over a 20-year period. This was not funded by Powys County Council, but through our strong community links that we have encouraged. We have these with the Army, the PTA, the national parks, etc. A quote from our Estyn report reads an "excellent feature of the school's provision over many years is expert use of the outdoor environment to inspire and motivate pupils. Pupils work in the outdoor area in the extensive grounds and forest school has a powerful impact on their wellbeing and attitude to learning."

So, our question is, how can you replicate this provision on a barren site that has been proposed in phase two, and how can you guarantee that the powerful impact on wellbeing will be safeguarded and the community link will be maintained?

Marianne Evans: I have been around the site and it is a stunning outdoor play area that you have. When we develop new schools, we have to provide these outdoor facilities and with the new curriculum and outdoor learning being such a key feature of that, when we are designing our schools, we are ensuring that there's access from the classrooms to the outside so that outdoor learning is seamless, so that would be just something that we develop in accordance with the temporary governing body. We would endeavour to make sure that the feature of outdoor learning and that outdoor space is there for the school. So, you know, that's part of the whole new school design we are bringing forward.

What was the second part of the question?

Member of Staff: How can you guarantee that the powerful impact on wellbeing will be safeguarded and the community links will be maintained?

Marianne Evans: Wellbeing as I said before is a key part of the new school designs going forward, in terms of the outdoor areas as well. In terms of community links, are there any concerns that if we are building upon the Penlan site that we would lose community links? I think you are better placed to tell us that than we are.

Headteacher: I think you know for us a lot of our partners; the MOD especially have invested heavily in our school. We have been able to achieve so much of the excellence we have because of their support. Lots of the things that they have funded heavily in the outdoors will be lost because we will not be able to transport them with us and there are big issues. Lots of our children live in the military camp, they walk to school. We are taking the school out of the community. It is in the middle of the town. People come to work, they walk their children to school, and putting it up on the top of the hill is like putting it in an out of town campus.

Member of Staff: We have families from this area who have limited travel facilities or come to this school due to its central location. So, walking to the new site at the top of an extremely steep hill would put these families under extreme pressure, particularly those living on Derring Lines Army camp, the top of Pendre Hill or Cradoc Close, with many of these parents pushing their buggies, or sometimes two or three children in tow. So how is a school located out of town an improvement on a school located within the town for these families?

Marianne Evans: I note your point there. When we develop new school builds, we must ensure that there are active travel plans for part of the grants from Welsh Government. We must develop active travel plans and we encourage walking and cycling. I cannot do anything about the geography of Brecon. But we would need to work again with the school around facilitating the best way of supporting some of these families to be able to access the school. So that could be looking at whether there are ways of integrating public transport as there a lot of pupils already going to that site.

Geraint Rees: I was going to come back on the issue around community links and wellbeing. Ultimately those are two things that are nurtured by human beings, not by buildings. Buildings help with that, but it is you who will have generated as a school community those links and the well-being agenda that is so prominent in the school. There is no reason why they should not just be sustained but benefit from environments that are designed with different kinds of facilities that help with all of that and I think that is an important part as when new projects come on very often schools galvanise a whole range of their partners to help them see through the move to a new place and develop new relationships again on top of those. So, I think it is a question of not undervaluing the contribution that people make to it. The site is only part of it.

The second thing is new schools have facilities that can be more easily used by the community. They are far less likely to be closed at 6:00 o'clock in the evening. It becomes the call of the school and the governing body and the head what it is used for. But the new facilities, we would be hopeful that they have real benefits of a different kind that might help extend the community activities that you already have, but that is all to be worked out in design and everything else down the track.

Member of Staff: A lot of our community links are established because we walk our children to the dementia centre. We can walk them to the old people centre. Our links are made because we can take our children out and about and that will not be the case if we move to a new site.

Geraint Rees: The points are heard and will be documented. As Marianne said, inevitably, the local authority then needs to respond with what are the issues and what the distances are, and what are the active travel plans that could be put in place if the proposal goes ahead. So, your points clearly heard and well made.

Marianne Evans: One of the key pieces of information that goes back to Cabinet at the end of this process is an updated Community Impact Assessment, to which the school has already given us information about the impact on the community, but I think that's a key one, because that really shows how a school works within its community and what the impact is of removing the school from the community. I know we are talking about Brecon and the proposed site is not that far away, but as I said it is far away enough to be significant to some of your families, and I think we just need to recognise that.

Member of Staff: We can walk to the theatre. We can walk into the library. We can walk into museum. All that will be taken away from us because we will have to have travel costs.

Headteacher: I think an issue as well for us is we are talking about a significant amount of people going into one part of the town. So, we will have the college up there, we have got Brecon High School, we have got Ysgol y Bannau. We are talking about a 360 pupils school now but the pupils at the three schools is 400 pupils. We've got a huge new housing estate that is being put on the opposite side of the road. We have got a swimming pool. We have got 75 pupils coming to a pre-school setting. We are talking about a huge amount of people coming into one part of the town, and potentially lots of people walking as well. So, the safety of young children walking on the sides of roads. There are so many issues. I think we really need to think about that site. It is becoming like an out-of-town complex, it is not really in the town. If you know Brecon the site is not in Brecon, it is out of the town. And I think those are issues that we really need to think about.

Geraint Rees: OK, thank you and can I say if anybody has a proposal around an alternative site that would allow us to deliver, we are always open to new ideas around that as well, to get as many benefits as we can through change.

I realise time is flying, is there a final question that anybody would care to ask? And as we have said, any questions that come in on paper, we'll respond and then we will wrap up if that is OK with just outlining what the next bits of process could be and how the consultation works.

Headteacher: Can I just ask one question. We've talked about quite clearly Powys' plan to get rid of infant and junior schools and that that is the plan across Wales. I get that, I understand that, but we've been very fortunate in our school to visit lots of countries who deem foundation phase education in the way we like to think we do in our school who do keep those younger children separately who are sector leading in education, because they do they give their children that start in education there on separate sites. We like to think that we're aspiring to do that, and I get that this is the global plan and in the document it says there is evidence that it causes disruption to our pupils and families to move to the Junior School from our school.

Did you ask our pupils, and did you ask our families about that? Because most of them think it is a strength of the school because their children are in a school where foundation phase is embraced and the whole approach is what you would get in Finland with that immersion in early years. Children get responsibilities at year 2 that they would not have in primary school which was picked up with the inspector who said that she hadn't seen children with the confidence, children with entrepreneurial skills that they would not have in a primary school, because that will be given to children in year five and six.

I do think there's an opportunity for the authority to maybe to look outside the box a little bit and say, this is something that's really exciting, this is something that is sector leading and to see if that maybe is a strength that could be built on instead of that we must all look the same.

Geraint Rees: If we end up in a design situation down the track, there is the opportunity in that design process to look at, what the foundation phase area looks like? What does a key stage 2 look like, not that there will be a key stage 2 by then because with the new curriculum, it will be far less divided in that way.

There is the opportunity to look at all of that to see can it be stronger separate or all together. All of that is there for a discussion if we get to that point, and I think you are right to say, international lessons are ones that we are always mindful of learning from, and Finland is never a bad place to have picked up some of those tricks as well. So, the last thing we want to do is impose something that is a deterioration across the board for children in Brecon. This needs to capture the strengths and replicate them and grow them. In designs there is a lot that can be looked at there to capitalise on it.

Can I just say thank you to everybody for the questions and we are expecting more questions from you following tonight as well. Marianne and the team will make sure that they all must be pondered and addressed before we are able to do anything in terms of the next phase.

Moving on to the next steps, at the end of the consultation there will be a paper that will be put together just outlining everything that has been said tonight and other meetings as well. The cabinet then must consider it and work out how to proceed. If they decide to continue, a statutory notice will be published. When there is a statutory notice people can object at that point as well.

Moving ahead we must respond each time to objections and then the final decision is taken at that point afterwards in the light of all the opportunities people have had.

The 15th of April is the closing date for the consultation There's a consultation document available which you will all have seen, and you are free to write to us or email us.

Is there anything final from the team from County Hall?

Sarah Christoforou: There may have been a few questions that were not asked which were a little bit about the going forward and maybe the what if's. So, if there are any questions obviously to pop them in, but I am happy to come to another staff meeting an informal one where we just talk about the what if's if this consultation goes ahead, which are more pertinent to the staffing type questions before we enter any formal consultation. After this meeting if staff would like that, just get in touch and we can arrange a time.

Marianne Evans: Just to say thank you very much for your contribution this evening, thank you for all your comments, all issues, all concerns.

Geraint Rees: Thanks Shan for having everybody well organised for it to make sure the key questions have been asked. We have no intention of destroying anything though that's how it appears inevitably when there's a consultation, it's actually looking to make sure that for the next 2-3 generations there's something that is sustainable, challenging as it is, but thank you.

2. Consultation meeting with governors of Mount Street Infants School

16th March 2021

Present

Governors:

Leah Burnett
Liz Stephens
Joe Daggett (Chair)
Councillor Liz Rijnenberg
Shan Kenchington
Mitch Griffiths
Divina Gillard
Emma Bald
Sharron Davies
Gethin Adams
Fiona Coombs
Helen Smith

Apologies were given and accepted from John Symmons.

Officers:

Geraint Rees, Strategic Lead for Education
Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer, Schools Service
Marianne Evans, Service Manager Schools Transformation
Mari Thomas, Interim Schools Finance Manager
Sarah Astley, Programme Manager Transforming Education

Others:

Cllr Phyl Davies – Education Portfolio Holder (Observing)

Geraint Rees welcomed all to the consultation meeting. Geraint Rees introduced all officers attending the meeting. The governing body of Mount Street Infants introduced themselves. Geraint explained that there would be a brief presentation before an opportunity for discussion, comments, and questions for the officers.

Geraint Rees and Marianne Evans gave a short Powerpoint presentation giving an overview of the proposals and the consultation process.

The slides for this presentation are embedded below (double click on the image below):



It was explained that the Council is consulting on the following proposals:

Phase 1

- To close Mount Street Infants, Mount Street Juniors and Cradoc C.P School
- To establish a new English-medium Primary School for Pupils aged 4-11 on the current sites of all three schools.
- The current target date is to close all three Schools on the 31st August 2022, and the new school to open on the 1st September 2022.

Phase 2

- To make a regulated alternation to transfer the new school to the new building on a new site in Brecon.
- The target date for this is September 2024 at the earliest.

Geraint Rees then invited questions / comments on the proposals.

The Chair of Governors gave an opening statement before the questions began. He explained that there are very strong feelings on the timing of which this proposal has happened, due to many circumstances in these unprecedented times.

He made the officers aware that the governors do not feel that the proposal which has been put forward, will improve the outcomes for Mount Street Infants. The governors are concerned about losing the team and ethos of the School, with its focus on the outdoor learning which they have developed over the past decades. They feel the future has to focus on continuing to provide high quality child-centred learning, which is best delivered with what Mount Street Infants delivers.

“The excellent quality of the school's care, support and guidance for pupils results in outstanding levels of wellbeing. The school has an exceptionally happy family atmosphere where nearly all pupils thrive. It provides an extensive range of imaginative learning experiences, both in class and in the stimulating outdoor environment, which results in nearly all pupils having very positive attitudes to learning and achieving well.”

A united team of committed teachers and support staff share the headteacher's enthusiastic and inspiring vision for the school, which has best foundation phase practice at its heart. They work very effectively together for the good of their pupils. As a result, nearly all pupils, including those learning English as an additional language and those with SEN, make good progress and achieve expected or better outcomes by the end of the foundation phase."

- Estyn, January 2020

Their view is that Estyn's report of the school in January 2020 clearly indicates that Mount Street Infants is already meeting Powys' vision for Transforming Education. He stated that the school has a lot to loose from this proposal as the school is already contributing to the Powys' vision for Transforming Education.

He then invited other governors to ask questions / provide comments.

Governor: Will parents be given a formal opportunity to engage with the Local Authority? There is also a struggle with interpreting the information which is being provided for some of the ethnic minority children, in particular the Nepalese community, in the current format.

Geraint Rees: In terms of engagement, what we have found is that the level of engagement we have had through electronic media has been far far higher than we would have had previously.

However, you have identified a community there that we need to reach. When that request comes in, the Local Authority usually arranges to provide documents in the required language. If this is an issue for you, we will need to make sure the information is available for that community.

Marianne Evans: Just to add to that, if that is an issue we would need to make sure that the information is available to that community, and probably extend the consultation period also to ensure they have the chance to participate.

Marianne Evans: In terms of the parents being given an opportunity to engage with us like this, it is a difficult one. We have had non-statutory guidance from the Welsh Government, in terms that making sure the documentation is available to everybody, which you have already said is an issue for the Nepalese community. We wouldn't be proposing any formal meetings, the opportunity is there for people to provide their written responses, online and in writing. We analyse these responses in detail before we compile everything into a consultation report, so that is the only way we can take it forward at this stage.

Geraint Rees: I think the view in general is that this generation of parents are more adept with electronic communication than previous generations, as long as they have access to the facilities they need for that. We have found a higher response

rate but we will always be keeping an eye on it. Learner engagement is another aspect that is part of parcel of how proposals move throughout the system.

Governor: My question is, the Welsh Government has earmarked an extra £50 million in funding for large scale maintenance projects, will Powys CC apply for this spending now for Mount Street Infants in case you are not successful in receiving the bid for the new build?

Marianne Evans: We have already received the funding, we were allocated £2.2 million for the maintenance in schools. One of the questions asked in the staff meeting was around this, and we would absolutely continue to invest in the schools whilst any transitional time period is taking place. We can't allow any school to fall into a worse repair than they already are. I know there are works planned for Mount Street Infants this year, and we will continue with that.

Governor: My next question is, Mount Street Infants is an excellent school as previously reflected in the Estyn report. Why is Powys County Council proposing to close three Schools with an average of 127 pupils per school, and are only proposing to close 6 of the schools with less than 50 pupils? Why are you not following the principles in the strategy put out in Transforming Education in Powys for 2020-2030, and concentrate on closing more of the small schools?

Geraint Rees: Clearly the small schools is only part of our narrative across Powys, and we have also got schools, that may not be small schools, that are in building stock that needs to be renewed. We are trying to navigate a way around tackling the challenge with the small schools, as that will help with a range of things including a different distribution of funding across schools as currently there is inequity between how much it costs to educate in one school to another. The main issue about small schools is delivering the new curriculum and the breadth of education that learners need. However, we are not exclusively looking at small schools because we have also got to look at the quality of the estate we have, and the ability for that to be sustainable over the coming decades. 21st Century Schools, the Welsh Government's funding mechanism for education in Wales has been around for a long time, and whilst Powys has been able to secure funding from that, I think the question raised with Estyn was whether the level of ambition was sufficient, and whether there ought to be a rolling programme of renewal of the schools estate which is where we are here. There's a building maintenance backlog in your own school and in others in this equation. We faced a similar challenge in Welshpool and 4 schools there merged to become 2 schools – you'll probably see it on social media tomorrow as a small film has been created. We can't let things just keep running for schools to be safe, warm and weathertight when there may be opportunities for so much more. The big question which Cabinet will need to address is does this proposal offer that and much more and build on the fact that Shan and the team have done a great job. This is why we're not just looking at small schools. You'll know across Wales that the separation of infant and junior schools still exists, but this is the last in Powys.

Governor: RCT still has over 15 infants schools and it appears it's a political decision, one which is based on actual outcomes for the children. I am going back to Covid now as children have had a years-worth of disruption due to the pandemic. The preferred option from Powys County Council is going to provide further disruption to the pupils and staff if schools close and further down the line when they move to a new school building. They are also facing perhaps losing a very much loved and very well respected Headteacher. The process of amalgamating three schools is surely going to have an impact on how the children are taught, how the children benefit from the brilliant education they are used to. What research has Powys undertaken to make sure and evaluate the impact of the schools re-organisation during this pandemic, and how it is going to impact on the educational standards of the children and the well-being of the school community?

Lynnette Lovell: Thank you for your question, you are making some very valid points. It has been an extremely unprecedented year, and the reaction and response we have had to provide to the Covid situation has been relentless, and your school has played a major part in Powys. In Powys in general, we have evaluated our progress to date. We have evaluated it constantly through Scrutiny, Cabinet, Senedd members and regular meetings with staff. We fully appreciate that it has been an unprecedented year, and we realise our schools have worked extremely hard to ensure we have all the support there for our learners going forward. Estyn have been in to evaluate the work, and a report has gone out on our response to Covid.

In light to the questions you raised with regards to the further disruption to learners, we are in a situation where moving forward they are returning to schools. Moving forward this is still a consultation process and nothing has been decided, there have been other experiences where there has been a phased approach to a new school such as Welshpool C. in W. School. For the past 2-3 years we have been working closely with those schools in Welshpool which have been on 3 sites, there was a governing body set up and a headteacher appointed. It has worked effectively, the care and support the learners have received and the leadership capacity at the school has been excellent which has enabled the staff to develop their leadership. From my own personal experience, I have worked over 2 sites as a Headteacher, and that worked effectively.

We are really aware and have evaluated the impact on learners.

Geraint Rees: Clearly Welsh Government have had to grapple with what they are going to do with managing the whole issue with school re-organisation during a pandemic. Clearly the decision was to carry on with the proposals as the investment envelope is still open, and we do not know how long the pandemic will last. The need to invest in school buildings is an important feature and we are very aware of the issues raised in the Welsh Government's response, and the pandemic does make for additional issues to be considered.

Governor: The Welsh Government's non-statutory guidance does mention that considering lengthening the consultation period can be done and this has been done in Carmarthenshire. This would be useful for parents and difficulties of meetings. There is a duty of care for us as school governors to ensure staff mental health and well-being is being considered as well.

My next question is concerns having one head covering 3 sites, against a background of possibly continued Covid. All usual things will need to be done, such as ALN provision, new curriculum, 3 plus setting which isn't really mentioned at all – there's a thriving one at the infants and it's something that's crucial to the school. The military families are having difficulty during the Pandemic. We have got grants that have been awarded to the infants and we need to make sure these are spent on our children at the school, so I am unsure how that works going forward? How would you envisage, if Covid continues, that one headteacher can cover three sites to complete the complex task of being a headteacher for a split site school?

Geraint Rees: I speak as one who has Headed two secondary schools on different sites in the past.....

Governor: During Covid.....?

Geraint Rees: No, certainly not during Covid, and what I would say is how we configure the leadership is something that would need to be a recommendation going forward from the whole consultation process. Should we be in a position where this proposal goes to the next stage, essentially a new school in the locality, the question will be what is needed in terms of transition management to get there. If Covid is on-going, clearly that will lead us to us having one conversation around transition management. The bottom line is we must get to a point where all the children in the new school, should that be the outcome, need to be benefiting from that. It is not just a matter of the day-job of maintaining the schools that currently exist, it is the planning of the new building and the pulling together of forming a new school community. We are currently saying we are consulting on the principle; we need to look at how we make that work and what level of leadership is needed in each school as part of the transition is a very important thing. Different models in the authority, historically will have different approaches what you have to respond to is what is unique about the setting that we have and what needs to be in place. That then will become part of the proposal that we would take forward. Sarah Christoforou, in the previous meeting offered to the staff that she would be happy to arrange a meeting with them all to talk through a range of these issues which might actually include all the various options around how you manage the leadership and leadership for final destination as well. That is all to be resolved, this is a consultation around a phase towards a brand new school for Brecon.

Lynnette Lovell: I mentioned in the staff meeting about managing three sites during Covid and to say that we have at least two shared headships over three sites up until January. That was the Federation managing three sites through Covid and the sites

are quite a distance apart and that has been managed successfully. I just mentioned Welshpool Church in Wales School which opened in January, it was a Hub too. It had plenty of support by the LA as well. We do not underestimate the challenges during this period either but let's hope that things do get better with the Covid situation but I thought I would make that point, diolch.

Governor: Mount Street Infants is an excellent school with an excellent leadership team as evidenced by the Estyn report. Our children's experiences in Mount Street Infants does not tally with Powys County Council's views. In terms of the educational outcomes, to quote Geraint earlier 'there is so much more', I would ask the question how is there going to be more opportunity and how are we going to maintain the standard of teaching they get at this moment in time?

Geraint Rees: There is no reason to believe that moving into a new facility dilutes the quality of what is already in place. In fact, it can be quite the opposite because of the new technology that comes with it in 21st Century schools. There is an opportunity for quite a significant investment in technology which would be in addition to anything that you would have already experienced. Good teaching and learning only happens when its planned and when its led, and there are no reasons to believe that is not entirely possible moving to a new setting. The question is, can it be done? All three schools work in a way that leads them when they move into a new facility, can they all be excellent by time they get there? That will be the challenge for the leadership team, and there is no reason to believe it is not possible.

Governor: I totally agree with your point of it being possible however, as there are no guarantees in life, we really want to maintain the current level that we have currently. While technology etc. is great, things like forest school for example are giving children actual benefits. My son came downstairs today to tell me that he had forest school today and he loved it. This is a provision that Shan and her team have worked on which is amazing, as simple as that. Obviously, there is no plan for that kind of facility in the new building and I know you have mentioned new technology but there are certain things that can't be replaced.

Geraint Rees: One of the discussions we had earlier was around how as a school community did you manage to secure outdoor areas of high quality. Essentially, I would be expecting you to be setting Marianne and team the challenge of saying if we are going to a new facility, we expect it to be able it to allow us to carry on with the expectation that we already have. Our hope would be organisations who are attached to those schools often bolster the level of commitment they have as they are excited about the opportunities themselves. The whole design phase for the new school pulls in whoever from the school and the key players to ensure that the school can meet those aspirations of outdoor play of high quality linked to the indoors. This often can't happen in old schools, it may happen in your school I am not sure but the fact that classrooms have become seamless indoor and outdoor environments it is the key part of the design of new schools. The site that has been banded around is potentially a brown field site and would allow opportunities for a

range of developments on that site. If it needs an area cleared for a garden or forest school or whatever. I would expect you to be lobbying heavily for that. I see in a note there about forest school and I appreciate that that is not outdoor play, of course, but there is no reason why you would want to move to a new site without planning enhancement of what you have.

Lynette Lovell: I would like to just say I am a huge advocate for Forest Schools, I think it is essential and is something that should go right up through all ages. The opportunities for outdoor learning in the forest school's environment is something we want to progress with.

Governor: Can I quickly say, it took 20 years for the forest school to be developed it was not something that happened quickly with one design.

Governor: I completely agree with Gethin, and I feel that the great thing for MSI, it is not about the technology and things that you are promising with the proposal. I think that the nurturing and the teamwork and the spirit and ethos is what sets MSI apart and the solution that you are putting forward isn't, as far as I can see, going to benefit the infants.

Geraint Rees: I think that is the challenge that would be set in this context is that everything needs to be a spreading of excellence and to keep moving the next stage forward. It is the big challenge in change. It's been achieved successfully in other areas in Wales when schools come together. But we can't hide the fact that it is a challenge but that is the challenge of leadership. But what you do have though, in new designed schools, is facilities that help promote that. For example, we have a range of room size that can be deployed for certain things that are needed to support learning and wellbeing. You have also got facilities that become specialist for specialist centre children currently. You have children in both MSI and MSJ who have children with quite challenging ALN and SEN then that needs to be taken on and it becomes a core part when you design a new school to be inclusive to make sure that children can be supported with whatever specialisms they need. All of that carried on but ultimately it is the quality of the human beings that makes all that tick and you happen to be Governors of a school, not by chance, of a school where the humans have made it a very human place to be and very rewarding. We would be looking for that to be carried forward and to grow and flourish, nobody would want that to be restrained by the fact that there would be change.

Governor: I work at Brecon High School, we do not have a forest school environment and as a teacher I have ordered my own trees from the national trust. This has not been factored into the design process at the new high school. From working on the old Brecon High School site, I do not see how you would create a forest school as the grounds are very steep.

Governor: I think overall that it's indicating the site has some challenges in establishing that environment, sounds like some serious challenges.

Geraint Rees: I think it is all to do with what happens with the design brief that goes forward. It is clearly a very important part of any proposals going forward here, so we will take that into consideration going forward. As part of the design, it's important that crucial aspects are factored in and not forgotten about.

Marianne Evans: Yes, it is all part of the design. In terms of the Brecon High, I'm not sure if forest school was part of the brief but I think hearing from what you have to say here that it is a very, very important part of any proposals going forward here so we will take that into account. Yes, we haven't done any work, just to let you know, yet on the feasibility of the site. It is all about going through this process first before we can do any work on the site itself. Obviously, there are key decisions to be made in the meantime.

Geraint Rees: Can I just say, as part of the design, it is absolutely crucial that if important things do not become after thoughts. That actually when new schools are built, that you have factored in the priorities that you have and the competing areas need to be weighed up and in the design brief so that actually it captures everything that is needed to allow the new school to flourish. So if you don't ask for a forest school upfront, you do not end up with a facility that makes it easy to generate that over a period of time. So all of that would need to be negotiated if we get on this journey, then all of that needs to be properly put in place.

Governor: I wanted to pick up something on the transition between the infants and juniors. I found the proposal very negative about the transition between the infants and the juniors, you seem to be quite negative and you seem to be of the opinion that it is old fashioned or it's not 21st century. I find that quite frustrating because both my children went through that transition and they found it incredibly beneficial and I do think that it helped with the transition to High School. I found that the expectation for the year 2s, the responsibility they gained from being top of the school, was huge and I think it was a really positive thing. I found it quite frustrating that it was seen as a negative, this infant-junior separation because it was such a positive experience and they gained so much from it.

Geraint Rees: Can I just say two things. It is good to hear that because effective transition is not universal and transition points are one of the risk elements in the progress of children. If it's been well nailed, it is good news. What I want to say though is in terms of the management of any school, the opportunity then is for a new school to be able to set out what its expectations are in terms of what level of integration it seeks and what level of visible transition it wants. That is there for the leadership of the management to make use of. It would be fairly regrettable if the current kids in year 2 in MSI became also runs in a new school. It is up to the leadership of that new school to give them their due place and let them grow and flourish as they currently do. If you have that working as a good model then that model hopefully, would become the default in the new school so that year 2 are seen not to be at some mid-point in anonymity but to actually be allowed to have that level

of leadership over the other children in foundation phase. The vision going forward, the governors of the new school and then to gather their staff on that mission with them and hopefully these strengths, just as we were talking about the design briefs for a new building, you also have a community design for what is your dream school. What you don't want to lose and what you would quite happily lose, there may be things that you think well maybe, it would be good to see that gone, but there may not be but at least the newness will give the opportunity to say right, these are the non-negotiables. That is one of the great joys of headship is that set up of the new. We have to ensure that there is an effective transition to that as well and there is a key role to have there by all the current school leaders who we realise we are putting them under pressure with this and we need to make sure we look after them in that process.

Lynnette Lovell: It's really encouraging to hear there is good transition there, as we know they are key areas across the board. I was the head of a Key Stage 2 school where the links were good and various things but there are... it's important to hear those messages but also I have witnessed times when transition is an issue for children. So it's good to hear and it's really, really important that you mention that in the consultation.

Governor: Can I ask something? Marianne mentioned that the site survey has not been done. I think a lot of discussion that comes from the parents at school is around the new site being out of town. It is a very difficult to give an opinion on when that is such a key part of the decision for parents.

Marianne Evans: The processes are all interlinked but also separate. In order to pull down any capital funding or to start any work on feasibility work etc. we need to have a decision on the organisation proposals. We could theoretically start the design before we concluded the consultation but that would be pre-empting the outcome. We are very clear about this proposal, we do it in stages. If we consult on our plan to begin with, and only when this proposal has gone back to cabinet to make a decision and only then would we start on the design, only if it is approved. So we are taking it in stages and I think that is the right approach so that we can hear views from the community etc. before we go any further and spend any further funding. The issue did come up in the staff meeting about the site itself and being up a hill as being an issue and being away from the town is an issue and I asked the question, you tell us if that really is an issue, we hear it but we would like to know more about why that is seen to be problematic and if those things come through in consultation it will help cabinet to make a decision.

Governor: Is the plan to create a problem school on three sites so that it's easier to get the funding to build a new school?

Geraint Rees: A comment has appeared in the box saying the plan is to create a problem school over 3 sites so that it's easier to get the funding for a new one...that is certainly not the case but we will document it as a comment. The ambition is to

have 3 schools over three sites that become a thriving school for the town that have brand new facilities down the track. That is the ambition and that is the challenge set if this is the journey you go on.

Chair: I think we need to pull together those points. I think one of the major concerns if we move onto phase 2 is the risk and you have indicated in the proposal that there is a medium risk and high impact. We don't know and you don't know if you can get the funding. There is a real concern that you amalgamate these three schools and one of those school is quite geographically distant from the infant and junior schools. In terms of identity, I think that there are major issues there really. From our prospective if funding for phase 2 isn't secured there would be potential problems going forward.

Geraint Rees: In terms of securing funding, the surest way of securing funding with WG is to have a plan that you have consulted on, key issues have been considered, and that they can see a clear road ahead and their investment is delivered in a timely way and it all happens. The last thing that they want is to get engaged in speculative discussions with things that never happen because ultimately their ambition is to have as many new build schools and top facilities across Wales that they can look back on and say that that was their contribution. Their contribution is a significant one, it is 65% at the moment of the costs of any new build and there is a significant contribution from the council as well. Usually when the two parties are serious they can make things work and that is the track record so far. It has to be identified as a risk by officers but nevertheless it was a risk previously of schools that are now close to completion. It is a risk but it is a risk we work our way through. Is that fair enough Marianne?

Marianne Evans: Yes we recognise it as a risk that we work through as the process develops.

Governor: I have a question that is linked to this, so if Joe doesn't mind? I have walked around the site and there are multiple levels of very steep areas that are totally unusable. The edge of the school grounds is not where the fence is. The fence has to be within the grounds to allow for a safe route up to the swimming pool and so there is very little space and the complex proposal of the swimming pool and PRU, I just don't know how it will be feasible. I don't know how it is going to be a safe space. There are huge issues regarding traffic, the environmental impact. I don't know if National parks are involved as yet. Although you have done other school reorganisations further north in Powys, National Parks are very concerned and they may well have lots of restrictions that wouldn't happen elsewhere. Surely some planning regarding working with National Parks has already taken place.

Marianne Evans: There have been no discussions with the Brecon Beacons National Park Planning Authority yet, however we would have to work with them going forward. A traffic assessment is a key aspect within the planning. The volume of traffic and the number of children who would accumulate on this piece of ground

may be an issue that we need to consider. As I said we have not started any work on feasibilities or design. We would have to work with them; traffic assessment is a key part of the planning process. It is very important that we take these proposals through in stages. It was mentioned in the staff meeting about the volumes of traffic with the number of people and children who would congregate on this particular area of Brecon maybe an issue that we need to take into account.

Governor: It is in the same area where we have got a very well-developed site in Mount Street Infants, and a very strong feature of the provision is Forest Schools which strongly enhances the pupils' well-being. We need to be very confident as governors that our children don't get less than they have now. How are we able to be confident? What is the process in being involved, and what is the process for you? Have you visited the school even, have you seen the site?

Marianne Evans: Yes, I have been and Shan gave me a tour around the school. The process for design, if I could talk you through how this process was approved, how it would move on. If this proposal was approved and gone through consultation and then gone through the objection period, and a final decision is made. Next step is to establish a new Governing body, the temporary Governing body would oversee the transition to the new school. Once the temporary Governing Body was in place and we have the go-ahead to start work on design, we would involve the Governors very closely in the process. We have different ways of doing this. Sometimes the Governors delegate the responsibility to the head, sometimes as a small group or all of the Governors together. The Governors are key to all of our new builds and we wouldn't see this as any different.

Geraint Rees: Can I just say there are links to 21st Century schools programme, there are building bulletins from WAG that specify the minimum expectation around a whole range of things. You have got environmental opportunities for new schools to tick a lot of boxes, very very important, sustainability boxes which can also make a contribution to the education of the learners as well as being part of the design. There's a whole range of things there that Marianne would need to be mindful of and to draw people in on. We have 10mins left if there are any pressing things you want to talk about but we would expect you will write in more questions.

Governor: How is a 360-pupil new build school going to improve learner entitlement and experience for the pupils at mount street infants?

Geraint Rees: What you just said there does prove a very important thing, It's not just all about buildings and we've got to acknowledge that. It's about quality of leadership, teaching and learning, buildings are there to help. However, you mention that the LA have built a school before for 105 learners in the past and why won't they do the same again. I'm not sure if it was implied or whether I made that jump unfairly. Realistically, the challenge for Powys moving forward is and certainly in its town areas is ensure that the schools are of a size big enough to offer a whole range of things including ALN support but also can be part of a football team or the choirs and

whatever else that numbers help secure. But what you said is that it is not about buildings, in the end, it is about more than that but also we have buildings that won't be safe, warm and weather tight indefinitely. When the opportunity for investment is there, and the council is keen to move forward and try and get that done. Over to you Lynette.

Lynette Lovell: No I think you mentioned most of it there, it does, when you talk about your own inspection report and its down to the leadership and the teaching and learning in your school. When you talk about some of the other schools there and the new build but when it comes together when you've got good leadership, good teaching and learning, which you have at your school. You have excellence as well and we acknowledge that as Estyn have as well. When you've got excellence in teaching and learning, in the leadership, and when you have a fantastic learning environment, when those things come together, then you've got something that is really significant to ensure that the learners get that broad and balanced curriculum. Which you do in your current circumstance, I'm not taking that away but I am just saying that for the future and for the 21st Century learners that we want to have and citizens that are able to compete anywhere, as you already provide for the children in the situation that you have. But when we go forward and think of the next 10, 20 years, when we have excellence in leadership, teaching and learning, excellent standards and we have an excellent learning environment, then it is a win, win situation. No, it isn't all about the building but it does help.

Governor: I have just got a couple of concerns. One is that there is no guarantee with the money side of this, that you are going to get a new school. No disrespect to the school but looking at (*Mentioned a school but not clearly audible, believed to be Ysgol Calon Cymru*) in Llandrindod, and Builth have real concerns over how that goes forward. Also, as you say, the team are amazing but you are now trying to put 3 schools with 3 different ethos's, with three different teams. One is a rural school, two are town schools and you are putting a lot of pressure on a temporary Governor, temporary Governing unit and a new leadership team to try and move that forward and do better than currently, which is amazing with what they all doing. The last point I would say is that, given what the staff have gone through over the past year now with Covid, to put this on them as well is just asking too much. You know the staff wellbeing is really important and I think for them to go through this is just not fair. I just had to make that point.

Geraint Rees: Can I just come back on that? We are aware of that. We had a discussion in the meeting earlier on. The whole issue around change management is one that needs to be managed very, very carefully. Support put in place to make it as seamless as possible. What we do know is that if you ask staff, teachers and school leaders down in the Ystradgynlais area, would they rather have stayed where they were, in terms of 11 schools there becoming 5, they universally are saying that if you'd have asked them before the change, what did they want, the answer was no change. If you ask them since they have had their new schools, they are saying that they would happily go and speak to anybody, anywhere in Powys about the benefits

that they have had from that. That is universal and it has come back from all sorts of sources, the head teachers in those settings are saying that they wouldn't swap with what they did have at all anymore. That is really hard to assure before you go into change but I think that it is helpful to pick up the lessons of those who have gone through the experience. They are on our doorsteps, they are Powys Heads. They are not from some remote part of Greenland, they are local to us.

Around the security of the staff, we did say this at the staff meeting, when you combine schools, the number of learners that carry on in the new environment is broadly what you had in the previous configuration. What seems to happen and its happened in Llanfyllin when it went on to become an all age school last year, which was completed during a pandemic, they had their anxieties before they started but the move happened quite seamlessly. You have some people saying that I'll take this as my opportunity to retire. Other people will say, no, I am excited by what's to come and I want to be part of that and it will vary. Generally, when you do combine three schools, the staff broadly will move inline together, to form that new unit and you end up also advertising for additional posts because some people will have chosen the opportunity to retire or their family is moving on or whatever else. So the security of the staff, the Powys model that is being used is about as secure as anything that I've come across in various authorities. Sarah Christoforou will need to work with staff on this, she is a safe pair of hands and very human individual as well, to try and offer those assurances.

Governor: I keep hearing that the aging of the buildings and new technology and things. If that is the reason why we need this, to amalgamate the three schools in an out of town site.....the problem and the solution, to me, don't match. I heard from Marianne before that the new Governing Body will be able to contribute to the design but I didn't quite hear if whether there will be an opportunity for more consultation when we have more information about the site?

Marianne Evans: It wouldn't be part of this process, it would be part of the consultation on the design element, should we get to that position. Not as part of this consultation.

Geraint Rees: This consultation is essentially, is to ensure that information is out there and that it is being discussed with staff, and give yourselves as a Governing Body and the opportunity is there for anybody in the community to respond, they don't even have to live in Brecon. I have been involved with consultations in the past with people writing from Australia saying that they went to that school and I would like to contribute to the dialog. It's an open one that people can contribute to. The next phase on this will be.....there's a few things that was said this at the beginning, chair, for us to look at we will be looking to move ahead through the consultation, record faithfully the issues that were raised, answer questions that have been posed so when cabinet receive the report it'll be entirely transparent and those of you at this meeting will be able to recognise issues raised and answers given. Cabinet will test officers to whether the answers are adequate, whether what Emma just said, is this the solution to the problem that is posed? If not, what is the alternative? Does

there need to be an alternative? All of that is what goes into the mix at the end of the consultation.

Marianne Evans: I just wanted to come back in. It is a real chicken and egg situation isn't it? We could start the design work and then consult and then we would have pre-empted the outcome of the consultation. So that is why we are doing it at that stage and that is why there has been no work done on the design. Hope that clarifies that.

Governor: Well, I think just to sum up on that point. I think the concern is that you haven't even spoken to, I think the point was raised about National Park, and you've not talked to planning, how do you know you can even go ahead with development on that site? There is the uncertainty of what happens next. We are in agreement that it seems such an odd way to do it. We don't feel that the options will offer anything better for our children. How confident can you be without any feasibility without any exploration of possibility that it will go ahead. I don't see how you can be and it is a very high risk strategy.

Marianne Evans: It is a risk, we know the site is large enough, we have done that initial mapping of the size of the school required. We know there is a risk around the capital funding, we know we haven't secured the capital funding yet. Again, I do come back to this, in order not to pre-empt the outcome of the consultation, then we have to do it in this phased approach.

Geraint Rees: The site as it is needs something doing to it, no one is intending to do anything with it as it is.

Governor: My understanding is, the idea of creating a school upon the Penlan site is that it will be a community school and there will be other resources up there. Otherwise, it will just be a building shoved up there, a leisure centre, potentially a PRU and a swimming pool. There are developments in the town that are being planned, for example an early years centre on Cradoc Road. I'm just wondering what your vision is on making that site if you were to get the funding and it was to go ahead, How will it become a community school and what other resources, specific resources, will be up there other than leisure facilities.

Geraint Rees: That's an important question, the thing that has to be consulted upon is the educational aspect there is very strict guidance around, that is why we are doing this. However, should this go ahead, then there is a conversation to be had across other council services to say are there benefits of colocation of anything else here that would have spin offs for the local community and for the learners. That's the process you should be expecting from now on across the council. WG are increasingly interested in that as well, what else is there that adds value. It's not part of this consultation as this is essentially the future of education provision. The council would be foolish to go ahead without considering what other benefits it could have, so I would expect you to be holding us to account to ensure those conversations across Powys do go ahead. It might be the case with the leisure facilities, swimming

pool and everything else, it might not be appropriate to add more than that up there, on the other hand perhaps there could. I'm going to pull things to a close if that's okay, we have a meeting tomorrow with MSJ and expect probably the same and different questions and we will weigh up what we have then. I will say this, it is far easier consulting with a school that is in chaos, and where standards are a problem and everything else. It is far harder as we realise that your minimum expectation is that, the new is at least as good as what you have and that is the challenge that you pose because things are in good shape. We're hoping we can come back with a compelling case and if not we know what we can expect Cabinet to do with it.

Geraint Rees brought the meeting to an end and thanked everyone very much for their thoughtfulness and comments. A slide was shown explaining the next stage in the process, and reminding governors of the consultation details.

DRAFT

3. Meeting with the School Council of Mount Street Infants School

23rd March 2021

Present

Marianne Evans – Powys County Council

Sarah Astley – Powys County Council

Richard Williams – Powys County Council

Tara Rana – Mount Street Infants School

Officers from the Transforming Education Team met with Mount Street Infants School on the 23rd March 2021 to discuss the consultation on the future of Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School

One session was held with 7 pupils from the school council. The group were a combination of students from year 1 and 2.

The officers explained the proposals for the merging of Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School and explained the difference between other primary schools in the Brecon area compared to Mount Street Infant School and Mount Street Junior School as most primary schools educate from reception to Year 6.

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

1. What do you think is good about Mount Street Infants School?

- Brilliant and everything we want is here
- Our teachers help us when we need help
- Our teachers are friendly
- Our teachers always make us smile
- This is the best school I've ever been too
- I like the forest school – we roast marshmallows and play hide and seek
- Our school has lots of amazing people
- Our school makes me very happy
- This school is awesome!

2. Is there anything you don't like about Mount Street Infants School?

- Nothing
- No it's all really really really good here

Officers explained Phase 1 of the proposal. Pupils would continue to go to school where they are now, but with one headteacher for the new school.

3. What do you think would be different if this happened?

- There would only be one headteacher
- There would be a new name and new uniform

Officers explained there are lots of things to be decided if a new school was to be created, such as the school name, uniform and logo, which pupils usually get an opportunity to contribute to.

The session then moved onto Phase 2 of the proposal, where the school would move to a new school building, built on the site of the old Brecon High School.

5. Do you have any questions/comments about the new building?

- Will we have a swimming pool?

Officers explained the proposed features of the new building and said that there are plans for a new swimming pool.

- How long will it take to build / How old will we be when the new school is built?

Officers explained that the new building wouldn't open until September 2024 at the earliest.

- Will the new school have a new big field, a little field or no field?

Officers explained how there must be a certain amount of green space for children to play.

- Will Smarties come to our new school too?

Officers explained that the intention is that the new school will feature an early years setting (currently Smarties).

- Will we lose our green school award?

Officers explained that unfortunately yes, but as a new school there would be the chance to try for it again.

- Will teachers from Cradoc, Mount Street Infants and Mount Street Junior schools be in the new school?

Officers explained that when you establish a new school that teachers and staff are put into a pot and are able to apply for posts in the new school, but that some teachers/staff might decide to retire early and that when proposals have happened previously, most teachers and staff have secured a job in the new school.

- Will our new school have a library?

Officers explained that a library is usually included within the designs of new school buildings.

- Do you know which headteacher will be the headteacher?

Officers explained that who will become headteacher will be down to the Temporary Governing Body, which would be set up if the proposal was agreed by Cabinet.

- It will be too far to walk to the new building

Officers explained that if the school was built on top of the Penlan hill, and that they lived less than 2 miles away from the new school then you would be able to walk to school, if you lived more than 2 miles away then the Council would give you free transport up to the site.

- It is good for the environment to walk to school

6. Do you have any other additional comments?

- Worries about the headteachers losing their jobs

To conclude the session, the officers explained the next steps in the consultation process. It was explained that the consultation would close on the 12th May 2021, and the pupils were encouraged to send any further comments to the Transforming Education Team using the contact details on the pupil version of the consultation document, or to their teachers who would be able to arrange for them to be sent on.

4. Consultation meeting with staff of Mount Street Junior School

17th March 2021

Present

Staff:

N Mathews
C Woods
G Bowen
Julian Hopkins

Officers:

Geraint Rees, Strategic Lead for Education
Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer
Marianne Evans, Service Manager Schools Transformation
Sarah Christoforou, HR Manager Schools
Mari Thomas, Transformation Finance Business Partner
Sarah Astley, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education

Geraint Rees welcomed all to the consultation meeting. Geraint Rees introduced all officers attending the meeting. The Staff of Mount Street Juniors introduced themselves. Geraint explained that there will be a brief presentation with an opportunity for discussion, comments, and questions for the officers. Geraint explained that the meeting would be recorded, for minuting purposes but will be deleted once completed.

Geraint Rees and Marianne Evans gave a short PowerPoint presentation to give an overview of the proposals and the consultation process. It was explained that the Council is consulting on the following proposals:

Phase 1

- To close Mount Street Infants, Mount Street Juniors and Cradoc C.P School
- To establish a new English-medium Primary School for Pupils aged 4-11 on the current sites of all three schools.
- The current target date is to close all three Schools on the 31st August 2022, and the new school to open on the 1st September 2022.

Phase 2

- To make a regulated alternation to transfer the new school to the new building on a new site in Brecon.
- The target date for this is September 2024 at the earliest.

Geraint Rees then invited questions / comments on the proposal.

Geraint Rees then invited questions / comments from staff on the proposals.

Member of staff: I understand three headteachers will be going into one. If one was not interested in taking up any opportunity to apply for the post, is there an option with re-deployment?

Sarah Christoforou: Yes, I am happy to respond to that. We are really early on in the proposals and if they go ahead, there will be a further consultation that will go ahead for the staff around the staffing structure, and a temporary governing body will be set up in conjunction. There would be a staffing structure put in place and there would be a consultation on that. Every member of staff would be able to have a 1-1 about their position. What we would look for if there is a structure where people are at risk, we would look for volunteers who are wanting to perhaps retire, or re-deployment, but there would be plenty of support for that individual for their re-deployment. We are early in the process, but we would have the opportunity to talk about this with whoever once a final decision has been made. We want to support staff with securing posts where possible, either in the current school or other vacancies within Powys.

Geraint Rees: Can I just add, this is a consultation at the moment around the proposal to go from three to one with a phasing. Now, how that phasing would happen would become clearer going forward, when we get back to Cabinet if it is approved. We would need a HR plan and see what it looks like as they vary throughout Wales.

Member of staff: I have another question which is around the proposed time scale around the appointment of a new headteacher, is it summer 2022?

Geraint Rees: It all depends on the timing, if we were to end up in a situation of the school opening in September 2022, then a lot would need to happen before that.

Marianne Evans: The time scale in the consultation documents show when this process is expected to finish, it would need to go through Cabinet twice. The next stage would be to set up the temporary governing body. We say the first task of this governing body would be the recruitment of a headteacher for the new school, which we have said would be by December 2021 of this year which means it is a speedy process. It is all dependant on when decisions are made by Cabinet.

Member of staff: That makes more sense to me, because there is not an alignment of the financial and academic year. I may have made an assumption that appointing somebody in 2022, with a budget to be decided in the previous year makes a bit more sense from what you have just said there, providing everything goes to plan.

Member of staff: With regards to the specialist staff, at the moment we are working with two specialist centres, one in the infants and one in the juniors, what would be the proposal for the situation if the new school goes ahead?

Geraint Rees: You will be aware of the new ALN strategy for the whole of the County, and there is a commitment to developing centres. Every time we have a new build opportunity that is an opportunity to consider whether it should include a specialist centre, and what it should include. You can create different rooms for different purposes, and all of that would be part of the design brief further down the line. The local authority is committed to maintaining its special schools, having a network of specialist centres' and having a satellite from special schools where that is helpful in our remote areas.

Member of staff: At the moment we have two separate specialist centres, one in the Juniors and one in the Infants. Would this carry on?

Geraint Rees: You would need to configure that, are the two separate centres providing for the same kind of learners, do learners progress from one centre to another?

Member of staff: No, they still apply from the infants to come to our centre. We are a centre not just for the Brecon catchment, but for the Gwernyfed area too.

Geraint Rees: Ok, we would need to sit down and navigate a way around that. We have already had schools who have had a particular specialist centre historically, but are now looking at specialising in ASD for example, as that is the identified need for the next 5 years. We would sit down with you to work out what are the needs, and work alongside the design team. There is an absolute commitment to supporting the ALN agenda, which is a growing one and supporting specialism is a growing agenda too.

Member of staff: Also, as part of the specialist centre if the proposal was to go ahead would we have to reapply for our jobs?

Sarah Christoforou: What we normally do, the specialist centres are slightly different as they are managed through the local authority, we would work within the policies and look at the current structure and the staff, and the structure that may be in the new centres. Sometimes it is a process of consulting again with everybody, and looking at what the posts are, how many staff we have and what the process would be. We are too early on to say if there would be too many staff for too few posts, but it could be we are slotting and matching people into posts. It might be there are people who want to take reduction in hours, but we are really early on so I can't say what the process would be, but you will be consulted on the structure if this does go ahead. If everything goes ahead as planned, there would be consultation with you on the structures in early 2022.

Member of staff: If this goes ahead and we become one school from September 2022, currently we have 3 admin staff and 3 deputy heads over the three sites. If this does go ahead, would that be sustained until the opening of the new school? And then on the reopening of the new school, the same thing would happen similar to the headteacher roles? How would this be managed?

Geraint Rees: Each of those things you have identified there may be different, and it would depend on what the governing body and headteacher of the new arrangement would envisage. There may be a difference between what you need for the transition and what is needed for the new build school. As an example, you would expect to need some administrative hours in all of the schools, because each site has that and we have already got that in other schools which are across two sites. These would need to be looked at, each one in turn to see what plan is needed in short term and longer term. It is too early to do that yet, but Sarah has been involved in various consultations across Powys in similar situations.

Sarah Christoforou: Yes exactly, I think again it is early on. We would work with the temporary governing body to see what structure is needed over the three sites, and then moving to a single site later. It maybe that there is a different temporary structure in place until you are in the new building. Again, this would be consulted on with the staff to get everyone's views, not just the temporary governing body.

Member of staff: It is just that the needs of each individual even though you have become one school, the needs across the three sites will stay the same. In principle, we are talking about the same process for the new school with regards to the deputy head position and the admin positions, potentially that structure in the new school will not require that level of admin support? Are the same principles in place with regards to redeployment opportunities for these roles?

Sarah Christoforou: It would be the same, every member of staff would be consulted, everyone would be entitled to 1-1 meetings and we would work with them. There are different legal rules with heads and deputy heads, and sometimes the governing bodies have the ability to do something different due to the different rules around recruitment but they would still be consulted. We are not able to answer all the questions right now, but we have a legal obligation to have a consultation with each staff member when we will have much more information around the staffing structure.

Geraint Rees: Something like this is new to schools when they come to a consultation regarding change, people like Sarah are familiar with this and are always working with different schools going through situations like this. Secondly, the trade unions are actively engaged with the local authority to ensure things are done fairly. Thirdly, by being public servants in a local authority it means there are a set of expectations and rules, which the local authority has to comply faithfully with, which is a huge benefit for individuals working within a local authority.

Last year in Llanfyllin they were moving towards an all-through school, and these sorts of concerns would have been there with them too. Sarah, and team worked through this with them, until they started in the new school as a new body of staff. Whilst there was a lot of anxiety at the start of the process, people were pleased with the support they had from the team. If it does go to the next stage, we will keep working with you.

Member of staff: On the current projected number of a 360 place capacity school, I know there are thousands of houses which are planned for development in the area. This may suggest the proposed capacity wouldn't be sufficient in years to come. Would this be further considered as part of this process?

Marianne Evans: We know there are around 300 houses due to be built in Brecon over the next 5 years, so there is a rough calculation the planning team will use to estimate the pupils that could come from these houses. We are aware of housing developments in other areas around the catchment. We also try to future proof new builds, so that we can add on in the future if needed, but it is something we will review constantly.

Member of staff: My question is, at the moment you haven't secured funding for the building. Should the funding not get approved and we don't get the new building, are there any long term plans for the three schools, taking into account what would happen for the three schools in terms of funding for building improvements?

Marianne Evans: It is an issue, we haven't secured the funding, but we are at the very start of the process. If we did go down the route of sending business cases to Welsh Government and going forward on the design before we consulted, we would be accused of pre-determining the outcome of the consultation. What we have said in the consultation document is, if we cannot access the funding it will be up to the council to try and seek its own funding from its own, which could be borrowing or selling assets. The 21st century school funding is there to support the transformation of schools across Wales, and we have a very good relationship with their team, and they know about the project. They are very supportive, and we would be submitting the cases and getting the assurance from them sooner than later.

Member of staff: At what point in the process will we find out if we have secured that funding?

Marianne Evans: This process has to finish first, which is meant to happen by the autumn term. We would then start working on the designs and submitting the cases early 2022. There would then be a long process of submitting three business cases, and the first one would be Welsh government analysing the case and saying they like the idea. The funding is usually approved on the last business case, but if you get the first approval from them on the first case submitted, it means we are on the way to getting the funding.

Member of staff: If Welsh Government don't fund it, Powys will be funding?

Marianne Evans: That is something we would have to look at, because you have buildings that aren't in great condition, so we either don't do anything about that and just patch them up, or we find a suitable solution for the long term.

Geraint Rees: Over the years, the council has in some cases reorganised schools and built new ones, and in other cases just patched things up. We have a good amount of schools where there is a limit to how much patching up you can do, and secondly we have a new curriculum on the way, and having buildings that are built with this in mind is quite different to a building you'd have built a long time ago. The Welsh Government issue is, the proposed school isn't a small or large school either, this would be a 360 place school and would consider it as an effective size for a town like Brecon. You may have heard that the suggestion of a new swimming pool is something the local authority is looking at, but you may put forward if social services could have an area to work with as that is something needed, for example. If people can prove it's a waste of time, then we need to say this to the Cabinet as well, but we honestly believe that it is time for yourselves and all three schools, need brand new facilities.

Member of staff: Hopefully when we get funding for the new building, will staff members, parents and students be consulted on the design of the building, will we be able to give our own opinions and ideas?

Marianne Evans: We usually have a very collaborative approach to the design process, different schools do it differently, sometimes governors are involved or responsibility is delegated to the head. We do make sure however that all staff, wider community and pupils have an input on the design process, and it is very valuable to us.

Member of staff: With regards to the staffing structure, if you are consulting on a new structure which would align with the stage dates?

Sarah Christoforou: Any structure that is out for consultation will be coincide with the scheduled dates, so the structure would be implemented on the 1st September 2022. Anything that we are consulting on for that 2022, will be implemented in the September.

Member of staff: Starting in September 22, things will probably remain similar for most the staff and the administrator, what would be the timescale then before consulting on anything different? The new structure.

Sarah Christoforou: We don't know whether it would be exactly the same, we are too early in the consultation process, but we would need to look at what is needed for those sites in September 2022. It really depends then on how the Governors want to look at it, whether they want to reconsult. It could be that we look at early 2022 for

September 2022 and may need to look again when the new build is ready, in 2024. It may be during that period because of natural movements, that everyone will move into that new structure seamlessly. The head and the staff will work with the local authority, to protect those permanent members of staff as much as possible.

Geraint Rees: There is no underestimating the importance of good quality staff in schools today, during any transition and long term. Therefore having Sarah as a key part right through is important, to ensure we can do all we can. As some people may want to move on as they don't want the change, and there are some which will move on and it could result in recruiting more staff. We know we need to make this as supportive as possible and invest in it to ensure it doesn't all fall apart. Today's children need to be looked after, as much as tomorrow's children.

Member of staff: Just considering the proposal that the PRU will be built on the same site as the school. We all know that inclusion is central to everything we do so there is no issue with that, but there are a few things I would like to query. Is the suggestion that the PRU would be a building on the same site, or contained within the new school building itself? Because my thought process is predominantly the PRU provision is Key Stage 4 dominant, and very little Key Stage 2 provision. So, what would be the provision for Key Stage 2 learners?

Geraint Rees: It is the land that is available which is near to the secondary school which is available for development, and given we may develop that we can develop it for a swimming pool and PRU. The PRU and school would have to be absolutely clear that if children are in the PRU because they can't bear to be in school, we would have to work out how separate they will be, where access points are etc. I would be arguing the case here for the PRU to be a defined space, and that those learners are given the privilege that they are not part of any school. It does need a space of its own, with outdoor private space and the security that is needed for the safety of those there.

Marianne Evans: Yes, separate from the primary building, the site is large enough. We would make sure the space between the two ensures the safety of both the pupils in the primary, and the PRU.

Member of staff: With regards to capacity and our admission numbers with a new school, when we become a new school on three sites before the new building, would those numbers still stand when still on three sites?

Marianne Evans: When the three sites come together, there is a different capacity calculation, around 420 spaces. With the admissions, it would be treated the same way as admissions are treated now. Children would be able to apply for a new place at the new school. In Welshpool when we did this with one school on three sites, the admission process was the team working very closely with the school, ensuring children who would naturally go to that school would go to that site.

Member of staff: Children are at the heart of what we do, but moving into a new curriculum and the new ALN transformation, there is a lot of work going on behind the scenes creating plans and a vision for our school. As per guidance we have revisited our vision several times, and are busy working and aiding the staff in developing an understanding of the characteristics which sit under the four purposes that drive the curriculum. So, we are on that journey but come September 2022, the vision which we have developed, and design will be scrapped? My concern is for the well-being for the staff which have invested so much time into that. There will be a new vision needed for the new school. This work needs to carry on as we need to move towards the curriculum, but I'd like to hear your thoughts on this.

Lynnette Lovell: Thank you for that, and I hope that you won't have to scrap it at all and develop the new curriculum and the AOLES, as we will be expecting for everyone to be working on it. It is really important that as you are working on those AOLES, that short term you work as a cluster on some of that work, so that you have got that working together across the cluster. However, I take your point that you may have some bespoke elements to your school, but I would hope that knowing Key Stage 2, that the work you are doing is the quality that is good and can be adapted and amended in the new working arrangement that could happen in the future. I would say don't hold back on anything you are doing, and do a good job now where you are going with the curriculum. I think with the new curriculum because we have clear progression steps, and clear principles, as we go forward we will find people are working on similar ways of working. I am sure whatever the outcome of this proposal is, the work you are doing will not be put to waste and the work can be carried into whatever comes in the future.

Geraint Rees: The local authority position on this has been clear that we would be hopeful that cluster work is driving the new curriculum, as the pressure on the teachers is immense. Whilst we acknowledge every school needs its bespoke curriculum, cluster working is the one of the best ways to alleviate the pressure off staff.

Member of staff: A few of us are on temporary contracts, where do we stand in the recruitment process please?

Sarah Christoforou: Again, we would have to look at the staffing structure and what basis the temporary staff are on. We would need to speak with everyone individually, but those staff who are there for under 2 years, generally would be on fixed term contracts and we would see if there is any position for them at the end of the of any permanent process. We would need to look at those staff who have been there over four years and are considered permanent, and if there are positions available, we would look at the other staff.

Member of staff: That's ok, so that would go from the beginning of 2022?

Sarah Christoforou: Yes, again you would be involved with the process and we would consult with all staff. It may be that there are different levels of consultation depending on what contract you are on at that time.

Member of staff: If the proposals fall through, would there be a new proposal for the infants and juniors to merge?

Marianne Evans: If there is a new proposal after this, it would have to be subject to a new consultation process as there is only small modifications that can be done after this step such as changes to timescales, so a new proposal would have to be consulted again.

Member of staff: A lot of our pupils walk to school. The site of Brecon High School has been mentioned, are there any other sites that have been looked at?

Marianne Evans: We have only looked at Brecon High School site as we know it is available and in the Council's ownership. The issue of the site being up further than the middle of town has raised its head, and I am just wondering about how you feel about that?

Member of staff: I think being very much part of the community we use the town a lot, and the church. I feel being further away from town would have those challenges to use those facilities, with walking down from the hill but obviously that's something we would discuss with the staff.

Member of staff: We have set out a parental questionnaire, which asks about the disadvantages and advantages for pupils, the wider community and any general comments. I have to be careful, but my own personal views don't matter it is all about the children. My main concerns are, developing a world class building with facilities for children to take them forward. The second thing is, there are a lot of staff here who have had to deal with a lot and it has been extremely challenging over the past year. I have taken a personal decision to keep this under the radar, I just feel from our feedback on what has been shared with us from other schools it doesn't at the moment feel like there has been great support for this proposal and there has to be a very strong argument why this is going to benefit children? We are all sat here thinking what is this going to do for the children, I see a lot of benefits for the children but also a lot of things that need to be ironed out. As for the adults, my main concern is that having gone through a process it is people like Sarah and HR that are really going to earn their corn at this time as it can be a stressful time for those adults wanting to work in the new school.

The headteacher of Mount Street Juniors thanked Geraint and the team for their time.

Geraint Rees thanked the staff for the questions and the quality in which they were asked, and emphasised that the council understands the difficult time everyone is

going through right now. A slide was shown explaining the next stage in the process, and reminding staff of the consultation details.

DRAFT

5. Consultation meeting with governors of Mount Street Junior School

17th March 2021

Present

Governors:

Julian Hopkins
David Evans (Chair)
Steven Bald
Aysha Waghorn
Mrs Thomas
Grenville Ham
Deanna Leboff
Huw Evans

Officers:

Geraint Rees, Strategic Lead for Education
Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer
Marianne Evans, Service Manager Schools Transformation
Sarah Christoforou, HR Manager Schools
Mari Thomas, Transformation Finance Business Partner
Sarah Astley, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education

Others:

Cllr Phyl Davies – Education Portfolio Holder (Observing)

Geraint Rees welcomed all to the consultation meeting. Geraint Rees introduced the officers attending the meeting. The Governors of Mount Street Juniors who were in attendance introduced themselves.

It was explained that there would be a brief presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion, comments, and questions for the officers. Geraint Rees explained that the meeting would be recorded, for minuting purposes, but the recording will be deleted once completed.

Geraint Rees and Marianne Evans gave a short PowerPoint presentation to give an overview of the proposals and the consultation process.

The slides for this presentation are embedded below (double click the image):



It was explained that the Council is consulting on the following proposals:

Phase 1

- To close Mount Street Infants, Mount Street Juniors and Cradoc C.P School
- To establish a new English-medium Primary School for Pupils aged 4-11 on the current sites of all three schools.
- The current target date is to close all three Schools on the 31st August 2022, and the new school to open on the 1st September 2022.

Phase 2

- To make a regulated alternation to transfer the new school to the new building on a new site in Brecon.
- The target date for this is September 2024 at the earliest.

Geraint Rees then invited questions / comments on the proposal.

Governor: More information is requested as to how the three schools would close in practice. It sounds simple, but it probably isn't. What are the plans regarding this?

Geraint Rees: I agree it's not simple, and it needs to be planned, but we have done this recently in Powys.

Marianne Evans: If the proposal proceeds, then the first step is to establish a temporary governing body which is responsible for the transition to the new school.

The temporary governing body recruits the headteacher and then develops a staffing structure. Then there are a number of other issues to deal with for example the telephony between the different sites and the IT. We have gone through a few mergers in Powys over a number of years, so we are quite experienced as to what has to happen and when.

Other things to consider include the school name, that is quite often a contentious matter, and designing the school logo. So it can be a complex process, but we have an experienced team in County Hall to help with all of this.

Governor: I understand the process in terms of systems etc, but my concern is the actual practical application of systems and staffing to achieve a move. I would like you to consider how we physically achieve the move and what support is there to physically achieve the move.

Geraint Rees: There are two phases in this proposal, the first is to create a new school and everything remains as it is on three sites. Then there is the second phase of designing the destination site. So, you are looking at a phasing process which does not happen overnight.

Governor: I understand the phasing, but I want to know what happens when the school actually closes and the actual move to the new building, the actual process. How do you support the move and how is it done practically?

Marianne Evans: It is a challenging process, but we have a team which is experienced in the logistical arrangements of moving buildings. A plan will be developed and then communicated with the schools.

In terms of Welshpool Church in Wales school which opened in January, we had transition from three sites to one site, and that was during the pandemic. Officers from different departments will be there to help and we will work closely with the school as a team.

Geraint Rees: Extra capacity is put in as well, so we don't expect teachers to be lugging things around the place. In the case of Welshpool, they had some additional days as well in order to be able to carry out the move where staff were able to work without children.

Governor: I'm looking to understand what certainty we have in terms of retention of staff and also the long-term retention of their current salaries and salary bands. I imagine that there will be a reduction in the senior management team. Can you tell me what those guarantees are for our staff?

Sarah Christoforou: I can't give 100% guarantees because we're very early on in the process. As Geraint and Marianne said, we work really closely with the temporary governing body to look at a staffing structure based on the number of pupils and the number of classes needed.

Once that structure is developed with the help of the temporary governing body, staff are then consulted. We then have another consultation process that we legally have to go through with staff. This a fair and transparent open process with timelines that staff are made aware of. There are some safeguards in terms of safeguarding of teachers' terms and conditions, so they may apply in certain circumstances. The procedure isn't necessarily the same for support staff, but there are things like compensatory payments, for instance, if levels of TAs were affected.

Our objective is to support our permanent members of staff first. The transition to the new site is some years ahead, so we work with the schools throughout that time to look at opportunities there might be during natural turnover where staff may leave for promotion or for another role. If that was the case we would probably backfill such posts with temporary staff, so that would safeguard some of the permanent positions.

If we are in a situation with the staffing structure where there are leadership positions, one would see in the first phase that there would need to be quite a significant number of leadership roles over 3 three sites, and then we would work with those individuals over that period of time to decide whether we look at a different structure where we move to one site, to whether we look at redeployment or people may take the opportunity to retire early, so we can't 100% guarantee there would be no effects, but it's very much an open and transparent process and we work with the with the temporary governing body really closely for a considerable period of time. Unions are involved with that process as well so it does tend to be quite a significant process, but I think it's fair to say the ones that I've been involved in over the last five years we've had very few redundancy situations where people weren't volunteering to go.

So hopefully that gives you some guarantee of the way that we approach the process rather than being able to guarantee 100% security of all roles.

Geraint Rees: We are mindful of the fact you can't just randomly recruit great people. Looking after people that are currently in the system that are doing a good job is really important as well.

We need to ensure that we develop the trust between the HR team and the shadow governing body.

Governor: I just wanted to ask about the funding for this proposal. Is the funding secured, is there money there to proceed, because the last thing we want to do is to have all this worry regarding the consultation, and find there is no money to do it?

Marianne Evans: The money at the moment isn't there as explained in the consultation document, but we would apply to the Welsh Government for funding under their 21st Century Schools Programme.

The programme funds 65% of any new build and the Council the other 35%. However, we need to do the consultation first, before applying for any funding, because otherwise we could be accused of predetermining the proposal before the consultation had ended.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation we will then move forward and apply for the funding.

We're delivering £200 million worth of newbuilds in Powys. The Welsh Government team looking after the 21st century schools programme are aware of this project and they know that there is a need to deliver.

Geraint Rees: If the proposal does not proceed then something else has to happen. We can't just sit back and let school buildings deteriorate and often it makes more sense to build new than to patch up endlessly.

Both Mount Street Juniors and Infants have quite a significant need for spending on their buildings over the coming years

Governor: Will the funding that you apply for after the consultation apply to any of the options that were considered? Or is there something special about the current preferred option that would mean that it would be more likely to get funding?

Marianne Evans: We'd have to put forward a business case where we have to show the options that we've considered and that we have identified a preferred option, and that's the one that we request funding for. The criteria for Welsh Government funding is about improving schools, and so schools that are in building condition C&D, are ones which would be deemed in need of improvement.

The Welsh Government are also very keen that we bring forward proposals that look at community focused schools, so schools that incorporate more than just the education elements are looked upon favourably and we feel that this proposal fits well with that. So the proposal that you have in front of you, is one that fits the Welsh Government's criteria.

Governor: What would be the position if Cradoc school rejected the plan, but the Mount St schools wanted to go ahead?

Geraint Rees: The proposal we're consulting on is in relation to the three schools. Dealing with only the two Brecon schools would be a considerable change as to what is currently being consulted upon.

The proposal has been put together because it considers the merger of three schools. This is actually a pretty effective scale for a school to be working on and allows us to put in facilities that have wider benefit. Merging only two schools would not realise as many benefits.

The reasons why we're holding consultations are to get a feel for what is it that would benefit the learners? What are the things we need to take on board that actually can improve a proposal? Even if there is strong opposition, sometimes local authorities say, actually our view is better. It would be better for the children if we made it work because there was probably opposition when the current configuration was established.

At the end of the day it would be for the Cabinet to make a decision and they would test officers asking did you get all the views, have you have you got all the information, are you absolutely sure that the data is correct?

Marianne Evans: If the proposal was rejected by Cabinet as it currently stands, the Cabinet could direct us to start a new consultation. If it felt that it was to take just both Mount Street schools as a proposal, then we would have to go through the whole consultation again.

Governor: I'm assuming that in order to have a fair representation on the temporary governing body, there would be people from each school's governing body on the temporary governing body?

Would the temporary governing body be structured in the conventional style of governing body, for example a local authority representative, staff members, parent governors?

How are people elected into the temporary governing body, and would the temporary governing body run concurrently with the three existing governing bodies? Would the existing governing bodies then disband in September 2022 when the three schools would merge?

Once the head is appointed in September 2021 would there still be three existing heads on three separate sites. Is there a separate budget for that?

Geraint Rees: Yes there would be representatives from all three. Local authorities have to build in that there will be additional costs incurred through schools merging. Also, if this were to go ahead with, probably be very keen that the governing body and the staff would engage with somewhere like Welshpool Church in Wales school and potentially other schools that have been through a similar process. Because there is a wealth of experience in schools about the way they did it, including lessons they will have learned.

The transition phase would need to be considered very carefully between the governing body and the local authority to make sure there's enough capacity on each site. The last thing we would want is any of the schools to fall apart, simply because everybody is looking over the horizon and nobody is looking under their feet. The current generation of children in your care are the ones that need education today, making sure they got a future is important and we just need that discussion as to what the needs of each site in order to be able to sustain them to a point where the transition happens and people have been pulled together wisely. Because all of this needs to be managed, that's a discussion would be having and the transition costs then would be subject to discussion that we would need to have as a local authority. You can't manage change on thin air, it does need proper planning and support.

Lynette Lovell: Officers do attend the governing bodies throughout that year, for example challenge advisors attend those governing body meetings for the appointment of the head teacher and the deputy head.

There is a lot of support from local authority officers during that period.

Governor: How feasible is it for one head to look after three different sites during such a turbulent time?

Lynette Lovell: I have had experience of being head over 2 sites. They were about 12 miles apart and we have also got within the local authority now Welshpool Church in Wales school who have just recently moved into their new building, but they have been functioning well on three sites in Welshpool for the past two to three years, and they've experienced Covid during that time as well, which was an added challenge. During that time, the educational provision actually improved at the school because we know the provision isn't just about a building, it helps, but it's also about the quality of teaching and learning.

I was their Challenge Advisor when they became one school on three sites and I'm not saying it's an easy job, you know you are the head over the three schools, but I will say this that it does provide opportunities for leadership growth within your school. So when I went out to look after another school as well as my own, my deputy at the time is now the head of the school. It does therefore provide that leadership experience for those coming through underneath, and for those people who want to be having leadership opportunities.

But the point is, you can have an operational level manager in the school running the day-to-day matters, dealing with the parents, taking the assemblies etc, whilst the executive head is operating on a more strategic level.

Geraint Rees: Quite often, we end up obsessing about who the head is. Actually, what's important is the depth of leadership needed on each of the three sites to make sure that they can function properly, and that staff can be carried on the journey and looked after as well and the learners.

If the proposal goes forward, we then need to sit down with the shadow governing body and look at what the leadership needs are to make sure that neither school slips over during the transition period, they need to come through the transition period stronger than they went into it.

That would be the ambition, and you know that a challenge and it takes quite a lot of leaders to make that work.

We need to make sure that we support people with change, so not leaving people to get on with it on their own.

Governor: If the plan goes ahead, and it is decided that you are going to build a new school, how much input would there be with the existing schools as to the design of the new school?

Marianne Evans: We have a very collaborative approach to developing new designs, but it does happen differently in different schools. Sometimes the whole governing body is involved right from the beginning, or maybe the governing body delegates responsibility to smaller group or in some instances just the head. But we are very keen once the initial designs come through that we have dialogue with the staff so staff can see the designs and then input into it.

It's also important that views of the pupils are considered, so we share designs and also hold parents' meetings and wider community meetings. So it is really a truly collaborative approach and we really welcome feedback.

Geraint Rees: National guidelines apply which state how much space a school needs to give to learners and open space, so any new build has to comply with those requirements.

But then there's the issue of what are the unique characteristics that we need to make sure we address in a new build, and in the case of this development, the specialist units that we need to make sure are properly designed.

Governor: So two separate elements to discuss, one of which is on the basing of the numbers for 350. I'm not sure that you know, but within around about a kilometre and a half of the school site, there's a number of candidate sites in the Local Development Plan for the National Park. Under Welsh Government guidance that's up to 1700 homes within 1 1/2 kilometres. It's highly likely that most of those wouldn't be developed, but there's already another 150 homes that have been granted permission, so it could be that there's up to 1000 more homes within the direct catchment.

I'm slightly unnerved by the fact that you've got a number of people traveling from Cradoc and literally passing a primary school to get to their primary school. I am interested in energy stuff and I have spoken with the designers and developers. of a lot of schools that you've delivered. With Brecon High School, it was all bells and whistles, but a lot of things were engineered out, because the budget gets constrained, and this has happened with a lot of other projects. And it's just one of those sort of things that I personally believe it's vital that we actually ensure that they are one of the key things that aren't cut from the budgets and there is in the potential for a new build, for a combined heat and power system, combining a number of buildings, potentially supplying the heat on a heat mains. This involves working beyond just a simple remake of the school.

There is the potential there to collaborate with the broader community to do something quite transformational. I think we'll find that that sort of thing would be

commonplace in 15 years time. So let's not miss an opportunity to potentially deliver that if it is there.

Marianne Evans: In terms of new housing and impact on pupil places, we've settled on 360 places for now. We will review that as the design goes forward. I know there are housing developments and houses being constructed and planned for the next five years in Brecon.

When we build new schools, we do think about future proofing, so the designs are designed so that we can add to them if necessary. Welsh Government are likely to be announcing soon that all new builds will have to be carbon zero. Welshpool Church in Wales School is a Passivhaus school so it's a very energy efficient school, but it does come at a cost. There are opportunities there to look at this in a more transformative, more innovative way. So, we would be happy to look at that as well.

Governor:

You are correct because I've seen the heating system at the high school and it is compatible with being combined with other power sources.

Marianne Evans: It fits very nicely with our thinking around our new school designs anyway, so yes, we're happy to take all those on board.

Regarding travel, we've recognised that in the impact assessment, and I'm sure that will raise its head next week when we have our meetings with Cradoc school.

Geraint Rees: I hope that sort of gives you a sense that we are mindful that environmental concerns are not an afterthought.

Headteacher: I just wanted to think a little bit about my own experience in Ystradgynlais. I don't believe that this situation can't be as onerous as putting 11 schools into 4 schools as happened in Ystradgynlais, which had lot of impact on staff.

Logically, these children can have world class facilities, but there may be some high tension around this in the months to come. And making logical decisions is going to be paramount.

The other matter we need to consider is that of numbers, and the very transient nature of military children, and I just wonder if something like that has been taken into consideration.

My second point is my concern is for staff and whilst I can't see this process being as onerous as the Ystradgynlais experience, looking out at the individual colleagues and in terms of fixed term contracts etc which has been explained by Sarah this afternoon, I just wanted to point out to governors as well as that there are serious considerations here for the well-being of our colleagues.

Geraint Rees: Ultimately you're right, it's about the human beings in the mix here, and I think the approach that you've taken regarding staff is to be commended. We know that there can't be a completed new build before 2024, which does give people time. And because there is natural staff turnover over time, it's quite possible that additional staff will be needed by the time any new school opens. Therefore, in reality staff might not have to be so anxious as they think.

Sarah Christoforou: And that's exactly what's happened in my experience. A longer lead in time helps, and in my experience in Newtown of a school merger, there has been a lot of staff turnover in the interim. Of course, that might not happen every time, and it is in any event important that people's well being is considered. At any point in time people can contact Sharon, who's your HR business partner or myself. What we don't want is people worrying at night with questions or things that come to their mind at 3:00 o'clock in the morning and think I've got to wait 12 months time before asking these questions. If they've got questions, ask them now. We're trying to help and support as much as we can at this point because we don't want people being worried and anxious for a long time.

But we are really so early on in the journey that there is a lot of time for things to move and change as we go through the process.

Geraint Rees: The local authority knows you can't just find good teachers and support staff at the drop of a hat and we do need to look after people who have been doing a great job with children in their care and developing schools that we need to try and manage this so that we don't lose them in the on the journey.

Governor: Is there any research on the wellbeing and learning outcomes for pupils when moving into larger teaching environments? I am thinking particularly about the effect on vulnerable or children with learning, learning difficulties and the impact on them because at Mount Street we have a very successful ALN programme.

Lynette Lovell: We've set out a vision for learners in the 21st century. So as we move forward looking at those opportunities for learners is really important, be it creative opportunities, sporting opportunities, academic opportunities about developing the whole child. And I think that we're looking at those opportunities through children being able in larger schools to take part in larger group activities that are so essential for our children. There are greater opportunities to take part in choirs and teams. Larger schools give children so many more opportunities. I was talking earlier about my own children in primary school which had the benefit of going to national events in Wales as a group, which is always so much better than going as individuals.

You mentioned about the vulnerable pupils as well. Obviously that is a key focus I think that was mentioned in the meeting earlier with staff, around the fact that both the infant and junior schools have got units for vulnerable learners.

The inclusion agenda is very important and it is very important also in large schools where those children who are more vulnerable have the opportunities to be part of a larger group of children. Those learners with additional learning needs may be fully included into a larger school where they can be fully involved, fully active and play a part in the school Council.

Governor: Thank you. Can I just add a second question which is very different. I'm wondering if the proposal has taken into account or talked about the issues of transport infrastructure and road capacity?

There is a housing development of significant size that is in the process of opening. We also have the hospital and all of those are within approximately quarter mile of each other on a single carriageway road running into the centre of Brecon, which comes to a set of traffic lights and in normal times and even before the new housing development opens, that would back up around school hours. I can only see this proposal exacerbating the problem quite considerably. Has the issue been considered at all?

Marianne Evans: We will be considering the issue once we go forward, and will have to carry out traffic assessments etc. You're right to raise this, it was raised last night as well, in terms of the number of people all converging on that site.

Geraint Rees: Traffic impact assessments will be a key part of any proposal going forward and there be a whole range of issues and discussions around what entrances might look like and where they would be positioned to try and minimise that. Thankfully there's a fair bit of science around that as well that can be drawn upon in terms of modelling, but that is one of the challenges Marianne's team will have to address.

Governor: It's a follow up from early questions about the criteria for funding. It was mentioned that Welsh Government look at two main criteria which is looking at improving schools and the community focus.

I am just wondering what the arguments are for saying that this proposal is community focused. The pupils in the new school are going to be further away from the populations and the communities they exist in.

Marianne Evans: There are all kinds of things that we're looking at in terms of making the school not only an education provider, but the holistic provider of digital services for families and for the wider community, early years provision and that's the kind of model that we've got in our transformation strategy. And that's the kind of thing the Welsh Government is looking at as well.

Geraint Rees: I've been involved in school developments where the police have said they'd like an office based in a secondary school for a variety of reasons, and where

children, services and Barnardo's had office space in order to work with families. The priority is to ensure we have a school that's designed fit for its purpose, with benefits for the pupils, but engaging with other partners to see what else can be added makes sense.

Governor: I just wanted to say basically thank you very much for giving us this opportunity to be involved in the consultation. It is very much appreciated. I'm sure that as the weeks go on there will be more and more questions. I do feel a bit happier tonight that the process does seem to be sort of open and transparent and we are having opportunities to put our points of view forward. Thank you very much for meeting this evening.

Geraint Rees thanked officers and the governing body for attending the meeting, and the Headmaster of Mount Street Junior school also thanked everyone for attending.

DRAFT

6. Meeting with the School Council of Mount Street Junior School

23rd March 2021

Present

Marianne Evans – Powys County Council

Sarah Astley – Powys County Council

Richard Williams – Powys County Council

Officers from the Transforming Education Team met with Mount Street Junior School on the 23rd March 2021 to discuss the consultation on the future of Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School

One session was held with 10 pupils from the school council. The group were a combination of students from Year 3 to Year 6.

The officers explained the proposals for the merging of Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School.

The pupils were asked a number of questions, and their responses are summarised below:

1. What do you like about Mount Street Junior School? What's good about the school?

- Really fun and cool learning
- Jungle gym play equipment
- ICT rooms
- Chromebooks and iPads
- Library
- School dinners
- The school and everyone in it
- Teachers, pupils and friends
- PE lessons
- Playtime
- School trips

2. Is there anything you don't like about Mount Street Junior School?

- Have longer breaktimes
- Arguments
- Disagreements
- Have bigger portions for school dinners

3. What do you think about the idea to merge Mount Street Juniors, Mount Street Infants and Cradoc C.P. Schools?

- Keep the schools separate for memories for past pupils
- Big classrooms and more children, some children won't get the attention they need
- Jobs are going to be lost

The School Council had discussed the proposal with their classes and had prepared questions. The Chair of the School Council introduced all the members and asked questions to officers.

4. Questions from the School Council

- Will we still be in the same class with our friends?

Officers explained that in the first part of the proposals, that pupils would remain in their classes, and in the second part of the proposals that pupils could then be in same classes as other pupils.

- How long would it take to build?

Officers explained that the new building wouldn't open until September 2024 at the very earliest.

- Will we have a football pitch?

Officers explained that there would be a big field and additional areas such as Multi Use Games Areas.

- How big will the playground be?

Officers explained that the playground will have to be big enough to accommodate 360 pupils.

- Will there be a jungle gym?

Officers asked pupils if they would like a jungle gym to be incorporated into the new design – pupils said they would like one.

- Will Smarties be coming over as well?

Officers explained that there would be early years provision within the new school building.

- What will happen to this building?

Officers also explained that there are currently no plans for the existing building, and that it is usually offered to the community first, before being sold.

- How long have you been thinking of this idea?

Officers explained that the Council started thinking about Brecon early last year, after the adoption of the plan [Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-2030].

- Will some teachers and staff lose their jobs?

Officers explained that when you establish a new school that teachers and staff are put into a pot, and can apply for jobs in the new school, but some teachers/staff might decide to retire early and that when proposals have happened previously, most teachers and staff have secured a job at the new school.

- How will our school keep its good reputation?

Officers explained that the new school would need to be as good, if not better than the current school is.

- Will the school day change?

Officers explained that this decision would be for the new headteacher and Temporary Governing Body.

- Will we lose our school awards?

Officers explained that it would be a new school and that the new school would have to try for all school awards.

- Will there be a new school council?

Officers explained that there would be a new school council and that under the first part of the proposals, the new school council would be made up of pupils from the three sites and then when part two of the proposals went live a new school council would then be formed under the one building.

- What will the new school uniform look like and will there be a new logo?

Officers explained that, if Cabinet was to approve the proposals, then a Temporary Governing Body would be setup, which would make decisions around the new school name, uniform and logo, but usually pupils have an opportunity to contribute to these items.

- What will the layout of the new school be? How many classes?

Officers explained that the Council had not yet started looking at the design, but had recently built a new school in Welshpool for the same capacity. There would be classrooms, a hall, kitchen, wide open spaces for group work, one-to-one rooms, early years spaces, staff room, headteachers office, library and outside facilities.

- What will happen to the headteachers and how do you choose a new headteacher?

Officers explained that the Temporary Governing Body also decides who will be headteacher of the new school.

- Will there be a bus to get there?

Officers asked pupils if they walked, used a car or a bus to get to school. No pupils used a bus currently. Officers explained that if the school was built on top of the hill, and lived less than 2 miles away from the new school then you could walk to school, if you lived more than 2 miles away then the Council would give you free transport up to the site. Officers asked pupils if they thought it would be a problem to walk up the hill. The pupils responded that probably not for Mount Street Junior pupils, but it would be a problem for Cradoc C.P. School pupils and that Mount Street Junior pupils might have to get up a bit earlier.

- What will happen to the Mount Street Junior School Tree?

Officers asked about the tree. Pupils thought it was over 100 years old. Officers did not know what would happen to the tree.

- How much is it going to cost and where will the money come from?

Officers explained that the funding for the new building is from the Council and through the Welsh Governments 21st Century Schools and Colleges programme and will cost around £9 million.

- Will there be one big playground or separate playgrounds for infants and juniors?

Officers explained that there would probably be a big playground, but that the infant spaces are separate from the junior spaces.

- Will the old high school be there?

Officers explained that the new high school is coming down and being demolished as it is not safe and is empty.

- What technology will we have access to in the new school?

Officers explained that there would be Clevertouch screens, lots of iPads and laptops.

- How much budget will the new school have?

Officers explained that the budget for the new school has not yet been worked out and would be set when the Temporary Governing Body is established as the budget follows the number of pupils in the school.

- Will there be a specialist centre for the infants and juniors if the school merged?

Officers explained that the expectation is that the new building would contain facilities to meet the needs of children with ALN.

- At the moment we have nurture workshops – will we still have that in the new school?

Officers explained that there would be provision within the new school for nurture workshops.

5. Officers asked pupils for their questions and thoughts on the new school building

- It's not fair for those who have to drive a long way
- Larger classes means it will be harder to plan school trips and cost more money for equipment
- Leave Cradoc alone and merge just the Infants and the Juniors
- It would be crammed if we all merged
- If someone just moved to Brecon and they wanted to go to Cradoc, they wouldn't have a choice of which school to go to
- What would happen to the other two headteachers – would they lose their jobs?
- Will there be a pool in the new school?
- Our headteacher knows all our names, will the new headteacher know all our names?
- Will we have new books?

Officers explained the proposed features of the new building and how there must be a certain amount of green space for children to play.

To conclude the session, the officers explained the next steps in the consultation process. It was explained that the consultation would close on the 12th May 2021, and the pupils were encouraged to send any further comments to the Transforming Education Team using the contact details on the pupil version of the consultation document, or to their teachers who would be able to arrange for them to be sent on.

DRAFT

7. Consultation meeting with staff of Cradoc C.P. School

22nd March 2021

Present

Staff:

Judith Morris (Head)
Amanda Creamer
B Roberts
Carol Hughes
L Pyle
N Aldridge
T Davies

Officers:

Geraint Rees, Strategic Lead for Education
Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer, Schools Service
Marianne Evans, Service Manager Schools Transformation
Sarah Christoforou, HR Business Manager (Schools)
Mari Thomas, Interim Schools Finance Manager
Sarah Astley, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education
Amy Jones, Finance Business Partner

Geraint Rees welcomed all to the consultation meeting. Geraint Rees introduced the officers attending the meeting. It was explained that there would be a brief presentation with an opportunity for discussion, comments, and questions for the officers. Geraint explained that the meeting would be recorded, for minuting purposes but would be deleted once completed.

Geraint Rees and Marianne Evans gave a short PowerPoint presentation to give an overview of the proposals and the consultation process. It was explained that the Council is consulting on the following proposals:

Phase 1

- To close Mount Street Infants, Mount Street Juniors and Cradoc C.P School
- To establish a new English-medium Primary School for Pupils aged 4-11 on the current sites of all three schools.
- The current target date is to close all three Schools on the 31st August 2022, and the new school to open on the 1st September 2022.

Phase 2

- To make a regulated alternation to transfer the new school to the new building on a new site in Brecon.
- The target date for this is September 2024 at the earliest.

Geraint Rees then invited questions / comments on the proposal.

Member of staff: How confident are you that you are going to reach phase 2? I noticed in the consultation document that it is a medium risk. How likely is it that we are going to reach phase 2? That is one of the major concerns.

Geraint Rees: The whole point of phase 1 is to get things harmonised in order to reach phase 2 with a sense of purpose and unity to it. Phase 2 is absolutely crucial.

Marianne Evans: In terms of taking the whole of phase 1 and 2 going forward, it is necessary that we have this consultation first. We know there are a lot of concerns with regards to securing the funding, but we have to do this consultation first as we need a decision on the proposal before we are able to begin the design phase. Once we have got to that decision, we will start the work on the design and will submit 3 business cases in order to draw down the funding. In terms of guarantees, it is a phased process, and we have to take this one first, and have our decision from Cabinet, whether to proceed or not to proceed.

Geraint Rees: Welsh Government have had this capital funding grant going for almost a decade now and the proposals that you'll have been aware of in Hay and Ystradgynlais have gone through a process such as this where there is a proposal on the table and securing the capital funding is the next stage. The team in Welsh Government are aware what the local authority is proposing, even if it hasn't been put forward to them formally yet. We don't want to confuse this, it is important we consult on the principle and idea, to see whether it does hold water the way we present it, and if it doesn't what is wrong with it, and if it is capable of improvement, and the decision about capital comes later. If a decision about capital had been made by now, we could be accused of having pre-empted the process.

Member of staff: Leading on from that, how can you possibly make a final decision on the first stage if you can't guarantee that there is going to be money to go into the second stage? Does that then mean we have a school across three sites indefinitely?

Marianne Evans: It is a tricky one. Welsh Government require us to conclude everything before they approve the business case, so this consultation has to happen and the decision has to happen before we can put forward for the funding.

Geraint Rees: It is a matter of prioritising in these projects, in the local authority and Welsh Government. If the decision is to go ahead, then it is a high priority and it is those that they fund rather than low priority projects. If we go through this process, then the case for the next stage becomes a strong one.

Member of staff: What happens if we do not get the money? What is the plan if we are on our site with one Headteacher that we might see once a week over three really different schools? You said 2024 at the earliest, how long are we going to be sat in our school in that situation if we do not get the money?

Geraint Rees: The risk of not having the money is put down as a medium risk. There are also other sources of funding such as from the local authority. It has to be a compelling case before we get there which is why we are consulting, and we realise the response is going to be mixed. The local authority's commitment to having 21st Century Schools is a high one, and we do not want a backlog of schools that need help. I have worked with various authorities across Wales, and the Welsh Government once they are given a high priority project, they do all they can to help ensure it is achieved. Capital projects are likely to be the priority even in tough times.

Member of staff: Ok, so the new school is going to bring more jobs rather than losing jobs?

Geraint Rees: Building schools is an important contribution to the economy.

Member of staff: What about the staffing structure, will there be more jobs for staff? Will the new school be large enough to accommodate more children?

Geraint Rees: What usually happens is, if we go through the process successfully, we need to pin our figures quite clearly, and if it comes across that it needs to be a school of 420 instead of 360 then we take it back to Cabinet and adapt the proposal. In terms of staffing, it doesn't mean that every job that is currently available on all sites is then replicated on the new school site. It is challenging for heads and deputies, as the number of teachers stay relatively un-changed, but the number of support staff is likely to change, and front of house staff.

Sarah Christoforou: Just to go through the process, the first thing that would be done is that a temporary governing body would be set up and they would set up the structure for the new school. Today, we don't know how that would be made up or how many jobs there would be. There would be a separate consultation with staff talking about the proposed staffing structure, which would probably be very early in 2022. The temporary governing body would look at what comments have been made during the consultation process, and we would look at how we get the current staff into the new posts. We are so far away at the moment we can't be specific, but it wouldn't be until when you have that consultation with regards to the staffing structure, that you would find that information out. You would have the same opportunity to respond as you have now, and the unions would be involved. There are slightly different processes with regards to heads and deputies, so it may be they are dealt with slightly differently due to legal reasons.

Member of staff: On that, what about if heads and deputies have a teaching role?

Sarah Christoforou: If they have those roles, the staffing structure should determine what teaching role they may have.

Member of staff: So, for example, a head has a teaching role 4 days a week? If you are looking at redundancy situations, would that teaching position be ring fenced?

Sarah Christoforou: Once we have the staffing structure, and say that there is a deputy head post, we look at moving people into those posts, and ring fencing if we can. If someone was successful they would be placed into that position, and the post may have less teaching to it as it is a bigger school. If they weren't successful, then we would look at the next tier down and see if there is a suitable alternative position for that person, such as a teaching position or TLR. We work on levels, we look at heads first and go down the line. We wouldn't say just because you are a deputy head that you wouldn't necessarily keep your teaching position.

Member of staff: On behalf of the children, I am wondering how far your consultation with them is going? I am wondering if they decided they wanted to keep their school where it is, what would your options be there?

Marianne Evans: In terms of the pupils, all pupils will have received the young people's consultation document. When the views of children come back to Cabinet, the School Organisation Code specifies that the views of children must be heard so it will be in the consultation document for Cabinet to consider. There is a very strong emphasis that children's views are heard.

Geraint Rees: It is an important issue and a real challenge for the local authority. It doesn't always come down to numbers but it comes down to the strength of arguments put forward. There is very clear guidance we must follow, and the children's views will be taken into account.

Member of staff: Linked to that, I think there is a very strong argument to have an impact statement for each school. Cradoc School is a very different school compared to the other two in the proposal. Can I ask why the impact assessment has been written for all three schools together please, and is there a possibility that we could have an individual impact assessment for Cradoc?

Marianne Evans: It is one impact assessment as it is one proposal. We are very mindful in making sure the impact on the three schools individually is clearly indicated in the assessment. You will see the issues that affect Cradoc in a different way to the other two schools are highlighted in the impact assessment. Going forward, we have to take a view whether we can separate the impact assessments into three different assessments or not.

Member of staff: Are you saying there can't be three assessments, or at the moment there isn't?

Marianne Evans: At the moment, because it is one proposal there is one impact assessment.

Member of staff: Ok, but there is no reason why it couldn't be three separate impact assessments under one proposal?

Marianne Evans: What we will have to do is take a view on that, and speak to the legal team whether it is possible or not.

Member of staff: Thinking back to a question earlier, as a team you have obviously been through this process before so you have experience that we lack. Based on your experience, how heavily has the pupils voice affected the decisions that have been made up until this point? Where children have whole-heartedly come out and said no, has that had an impact on the decisions?

Marianne Evans: There have been decisions where Cabinet have not taken proposals forward, not that long ago. When we consult with pupils, there is a whole range of issues that come from children and we put those into the consultation report. In terms of proposals that haven't gone ahead, yes we have had that happen. We have also had proposals where children have raised issues and these have been implemented.

Geraint Rees: If we can't present a compelling case, it won't happen and it is as simple as that.

Member of staff: Why is the proposal not the same as the preferred way forward?

Marianne Evans: The business case is a business case for capital investment to identify the preferred way forward. This is a separate process, and we were asked to bring back a report to Cabinet on how to implement the preferred way forward. This consultation is on the organisation of the schools, rather than the preferred way forward. It is two different processes, one legal process and one process for capital funding. This legal process is the most important one, as if Cabinet decide against this then the preferred way forward doesn't get implemented.

Member of staff: I am very well aware that parents are confused that this consultation is purely phase 1, all three schools to merge and phase 2 to move to the new building, whereas the stuff that is coming out in the preferred way forward is talking about Swimming Pools etc which is confusing the issue hugely for parents. I appreciate that this is not what you are consulting on now, but parents still have that in their head?

Marianne Evans: Yes, I can see that. This is a legal process, and the other one, the capital, we have a wider vision, but I can understand.

Geraint Rees: Thank you for raising that, it is one of the difficulties we have because there is a code which we have to follow, and there are things we have to consult on and some things we don't have to consult on.

Member of staff: The consultation isn't clear for these parents, and it is actually confusing the consultation. They think although the legal documentation is stating what it is, that is three schools ultimately merging on one site, but because of the preferred way forward they have in their head that the consultation is including that and that means they don't understand what they are responding to. Parents are clearly responding to what they think is the consultation when it clearly isn't.

Marianne Evans: Ok, we will take that on-board, but our hands are tied by the legalities and the School Organisation Code that we follow.

Member of staff: Yes, I would just like that clearly minuted, that parents are responding to what they think is the consultation, but it isn't.

Marianne Evans: We can draw that out when we have the consultation process, and when we have all the responses we can highlight that issue.

Member of staff: Going back to the staffing again, it is an obvious situation that SLT are in. It is very likely that there are going to be job losses, is there going to be any severance schemes like we have had previously? You talked earlier about how people might volunteer to go for various reasons, have you thought about anything like that for the staff who are going to suffer from this merger?

Sarah Christoforou: There are two separate things you have mentioned there, so the voluntary severance scheme that is run annually and the next 12 months version has been approved. For schools that are going to go through transformation, there is a set of principles that we ask all governing bodies to sign up to so they are all acting in the same way. Part of this is the staffing structure that I spoke about earlier, and sometimes there are more posts than people. If we do get to a position where we have more staff than posts, we look for volunteers and ask if anyone would like voluntary redundancy or reduced hours. That has been very successful in proposals we have dealt with in the past. The voluntary severance scheme is separate to the transformation process.

Geraint Rees: What often happens with change processes like this because they are over a period of years, when the move happens you end up having to advertise for staff because of people moving on, or having been promoted elsewhere. The governing bodies usually commit to not appointing anybody outside to a permanent position, so that the permanent staff are the ones left with the entitlement.

Member of staff: With regards to three year old provision, we have very successful three year old provision here. The proposal currently only talks about the school, and

nothing to do with the three year old provision. Can you tell us about what will happen to those three year olds?

Marianne Evans: The consultation document does refer to the setting. In terms of the first phase nothing would happen to the settings in all three schools. In phase 2 of the proposal, we would build in space for early years provision within the new accommodation with the places that are available for all three schools. However, there would be an impact on Cradoc if the school is not in Cradoc so that is in the consultation document.

Member of staff: Could you please clarify what you mean by that?

Marianne Evans: Well, if the school is not in Cradoc there is an issue around the setting in Cradoc, so whether that transfers to the new building in Brecon or not then that is the issue.

Member of staff: That is my question and exactly my point, if there is no school in Cradoc there is no school in Mount Street so it is exactly the same for them. You said there is provision for early years, but is there provision for the three plus setting all the way to year 11 on the new site?

Marianne Evans: Yes absolutely.

Member of staff: I know there is discussion at the moment about a Flying Start setting going on Cradoc road, but would our children that would feed into our setting have provision at the new site guaranteed if it goes ahead?

Marianne Evans: Yes, for all our new builds we have early years provision in all projects. In our new school that has opened in Welshpool we have Flying Start, plus early years, plus primary plus community facilities as well. That is the model we have in Powys.

Member of staff: And that would be in addition to the 360 pupils in the school?

Marianne Evans: Yes

Member of staff: Obviously we have wrap around care provision here which is being used as a beacon of good practice by various governing bodies and we will lose that if we lose the school. What provision is intended for those families that have wrap-around care currently?

Marianne Evans: Built into the new builds we would want wrap-around care and it is one of the criteria for the funding.

Geraint Rees: One of the criticisms of the local authority in the Estyn inspection was around the non-maintained and post-16 education, and therefore when we bring

these proposals forward, they need to provide the best of what we can to see learners right through their education.

Also, we are very clear as a council that this is to do with schools, however it has to be more than that as if Welsh Government throws in £7-8 million it needs to have the facilities that can do more than that. One of the questions we need to ask is if the proposal goes ahead, we'll need to speak with Children's Services and ask if there are any family services that would benefit from being on the new site. If not, are there any other organisations for example Barnardo's which should be on the site.

Member of staff: It is undeniable that Cradoc children need a new build, can you explain clearly why a new build in Cradoc is not on the table please?

Geraint Rees: Powys has been through a period of new builds with rationalised school places, and you'll be right to say there are new builds with populations similar to Cradoc's current population. The question that must be asked is, was that a wise approach at that time, as we are in a different place now.

The total scale of the three schools we have in this proposal, make up just under the 2-form entry school and it is not a big school when all are combined. It ensures in terms of teaching, that people are working quite closely in age related classes where children are in the same group for no longer than 2 years and there are benefits in that. As you have a small school you will also see benefits in mixed aged teaching which gives the older children a sense of responsibility. It is swings and roundabouts, but if we are going to bring forward a significant investment proposal, it needs to achieve the things we are talking about.

I suppose you are asking why don't you go and build a new school for Mount Street Juniors and Infants and a new primary school in Cradoc. Clearly, when we get back to Cabinet with our report it will mention that people have raised this question, and we will have to make a case on why we aren't proposing that or a case changing to propose that.

Member of staff: I think that probably proves why it is very important to have an impact assessment for Cradoc specifically, not just for the children who attend here but the extremely strong community built around Cradoc school and how this change will impact them.

Geraint Rees: Can I just say, if you are able to find the time to articulate that in terms of what it means for the community and everything else it is hugely advantageous as the more evidence you give around that, the more the team has to consider and respond to.

Marianne Evans: The community impact assessment is a really important part of the consultation document, and I would like to thank you for sending the information

in and I'm sure it will only grow now as it goes forward. It will tell the Cabinet your views about the impact on the community and it is a really important document.

Member of staff: At that point can I just say how difficult it is to be in a situation where we can't engage with our community at the moment, because of Covid, as usually we would have a public meeting but we cannot do that at the moment. In terms of where we are, we know we are at a greater disadvantage as the one valley has huge internet problems, and there are people in our community who still do not know that this consultation is going on, not because we aren't trying to spread the word but because their internet is not working and they aren't attending community events. Our involvement with our community is affected because it is happening now, whereas if we were out of lockdown that would be a hugely different situation. There is particular concern for the older generation who are currently shielding, and they aren't planning to go out anywhere soon, even when shielding ends. It is important that this is noted and it is the wrong time to be doing this.

Geraint Rees: This is something we have had to give quite a lot of consideration to, but what is strange is in issues we have engaged with the public over the past year, it seems that Covid has triggered greater rates of responses than the local authority would have had previously. There have been responses in regards to blended learning, so we decided to do a survey in which we had 3,500 responses. We are mindful of what you are saying, we want people to know about this and have the opportunity to respond. We will be keeping a close eye on the number of responses.

Member of staff: With the greatest respect, those are the people who have internet access and are able to respond, and do know about it, but it is the people who haven't got internet access that we can't reach and so they are not aware of the consultation.

Member of staff: You just explained there has been a change in perspective from a place where schools the same size as Cradoc were being rebuilt and investigating this idea of larger schools. In your opinion, is this idea completely compatible with Welsh Government's guidelines of protecting rural schools, bearing in mind Powys is Wales' biggest rural area?

Geraint Rees: We do realise that there may be areas where we may need to be considering investing in new builds that aren't on this scale as the population is more rural and isn't near to a market town.

Lynette Lovell: It is an important question, and we know that, as we go back to the beginning of what we have talked about as regards to learner entitlement, and in terms of looking at the provision for example we have the whole child and new curriculum, leadership opportunities.

My two children went to larger schools and certainly had more opportunities than what I had. Looking at the primary curriculum and what can be offered is an essential part of having a 21st Century school.

What we are looking to do in this proposal is to provide those excellent facilities to go along with effective teaching, learning, and effective leadership.

In terms of the size of the school, there will be areas in Powys where schools are not very close at all to a larger facility, where educational provision can be combined. The proposal is over two phases, and we had a discussion in the other meeting with regards to the three sites. We know it isn't easy, but it develops effective leadership, and phasing is an interim solution over 2 years, but phasing has been proven to work effectively.

Member of staff: Just to clarify, in terms of the Welsh Government guidelines you are happy that these proposals are compatible and would be seen as good practice?

Lynette Lovell: Yes, certainly in terms of the proposals going forward and the new curriculum, for the aspiration we have in our vision statement, our proposals would be compatible with that and with the Welsh Government guidelines as well.

Member of staff: Going back to the pupil's voice, in this situation in particular it seems we don't know what the pupil voice is and it would be very easy to imagine the pupil voice at Mount Street could be very different to the voice at Cradoc. So the link between that and the single impact assessment, when it comes to making a decision on the pupil voice, how much differentiation will be taken into account to listen to the separate voices from the separate schools, or will the responses all be amalgamated together? Without having separate impact assessments, is that even possible?

Marianne Evans: We would present the pupil voices separate, so a section for each three schools separately.

Member of staff: But, if it went ahead as three separate impact assessments each one would be in their own?

Marianne Evans: If it went ahead as three separate impact assessments then yes.

Member of staff: Is there legalities behind why we couldn't have a separate impact assessment right now?

Geraint Rees: As Marianne said earlier, the impact assessment at the moment is around the proposal. When it becomes a Cabinet report, and the feedback from the three schools is drawn up, it would be a matter of seeking legal advice. The information that we gather from each of the three schools should be such that we would need to be mindful of the different nuance that each school brings to this.

When we take it back, we will have the outcome of three schools and the voice of the communities so the team will take advice on that. You should be able to read the thread of your schools' views, including the ones that come in electronically and it should be clear enough.

Member of staff: The difficulty we have got is that on the impact assessment that has gone out previously, it is saying there is medium risk, i.e. in the middle, whereas in fact the two different responses are poles apart. If you have got a 10 and 1, which will average out at 5 but that doesn't take into account the 10.

Geraint Rees: That is spot on, and when we report back it is not a matter of reporting averages it is a matter of saying that there are concerns in Cradoc around these issues, and Mount Street around these issues and they will be weighed up separately but it is things we can only know from having these meetings.

Member of staff: And you are guaranteeing that is what it is going to happen?

Geraint Rees: What I am saying that is in any report going back to Cabinet you should be able to see a thread of what has come back from each of the schools.

Member of staff: Ok, so if we can have your reassurances then that it is going to happen and we can have that minuted as it is very important for our children and families.

Geraint Rees: That is fine, and that would be the normal approach to report back.

Member of staff: Just on the impact assessment, I am wondering what the precedence are in terms of other school mergers across Powys and is it always the case that there is only one impact assessment with all schools involved or are there other cases where there has been more than one?

Marianne Evans: It is usually one impact assessment, for example where we merged 4 schools into 2 in Welshpool there was only one impact assessment, although I appreciate that the facts in Welshpool in relation to the 4 schools were more similar than they are here. We do show the different issues in relation to each school and you will see the views on Cradoc, and both Mount Streets quite clearly.

Geraint Rees: In relation to consultation on the Llanfyllin all-age school, although there was a primary and secondary school, there was only one impact assessment, but the views of both schools were fed back in the consultation report.

Member of staff: In Llanfyllin, although primary and secondary were separate they were all the same families, in the same location with the same issues, so it was not quite the same scenario as in our situation here.

Member of staff: I was just wondering if it's been taken into consideration at all the impact that it will have on our current intake rates? The uncertainty with the phase 1 and 2, as a parent I think 'well do I want to send her to one of those schools with that uncertainty?' We know it is already affecting our school now.

Geraint Rees: It is imperative that the consultation and gathering of information is collected accurately and that this takes place quickly so that Cabinet can decide sooner rather than later, as that level of uncertainty is no good to anyone. On the other hand, other people might be excited about a brand-new facility when they see what is available. This has both positive and negative issues for people, and we realise it causes a range of emotions in people.

Staff: With regards to the impact and effect on travel for our children, as we have quite a few children that travel 9-10 miles to school and will need to go further, and with four year olds, what is the situation with increased travel distances?

Geraint Rees: We realise that this was going to be a significant issue and it will need to be addressed. For some people there will be more travelling, for others will be less, but we need to gather all of the information together and consider the matter.

Member of staff: There has been discussion somewhere about children going over to Builth? If you look at the terrain, going over the Epynt to Builth there aren't any families that will be doing that as sometimes winter months it is impassable. So I feel that is something you need to look at when you are looking at numbers too.

Geraint Rees: Ok, thank you for that and it will have a response when we report to Cabinet.

Geraint Rees brought the meeting to an end and thanked everyone very much for their thoughtfulness and comments. A slide was shown explaining the next stage in the process, and reminding staff of the consultation details.

8. Consultation meeting with governors of Cradoc C.P. School

22nd March 2021

Present

Governors:

Sue Goodhead, Chair of Governors
Judith Morris, Headteacher
Beth Roberts, Teacher Governor
Cllr Iain McIntosh, Local Councillor
Donna Morgan, Parent Governor
Jan Owen, LA Governor
Katy Cherrington, Community Governor
Kevin Williams, Merthyr Cynog community Council
Rhian Dillon, Parent Governor
Rebecca Watkins, LA Governor
Elaine Davies, Community Governor

Apologies: Sam Puddy, Non-Teaching Governor
Jessica Williams, Parent Governor

Officers:

Geraint Rees, Strategic Lead for Education
Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer, Schools Service
Marianne Evans, Service Manager Schools Transformation
Sarah Christoforou, HR Business Manager (Schools)
Mari Thomas, Interim Schools Finance Manager
Sarah Astley, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education
Amy Jones, Schools Finance Business Partner

Others:

In attendance: Cllr Phyl Davies, Portfolio Holder for Education

Geraint Rees welcomed all to the consultation meeting. The Chair of Governors introduced all members of the governing body. Geraint Rees introduced all officers attending the meeting.

Geraint Rees stated that there had been an excellent meeting with the body of staff who obviously prepared thoroughly. We do not underestimate the level of emotion that is often involved in proposals such as this and very appreciative of the professionalism of the dialogue we had.

Geraint discussed the format of the evenings meeting with a brief presentation on the proposal followed by a question-and-answer section.

Governor (ED): Please can I just clarify a point before we do start? Can I just check will we receive a copy of the recording so we can check it against the notes?

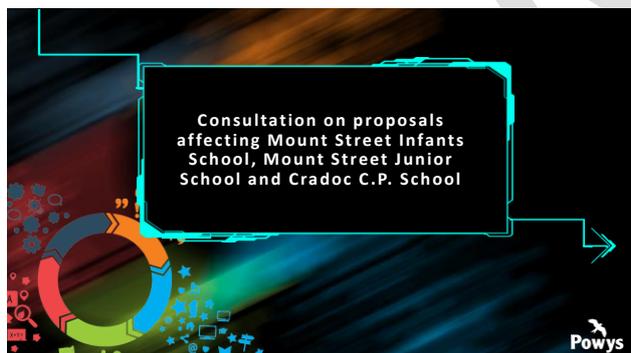
Geraint Rees: I do not see reason why not, but it will be important that it remains within this group until the minutes are written up. But I can assure you the notes will be faithful to it. It is a prerequisite for those in that kind of role and because of the legal status of such consultations. I will leave that to be resolved between yourselves and Marianne and Sarah.

Governor (ED): Yes, I wasn't suggesting that it wouldn't be, it is just that it is helpful that we have that reminder of conversations as well as yourselves, I felt.

Geraint Rees: No problem, you will have a copy of the notes of the meeting also.

Geraint Rees and Marianne Evans gave a short PowerPoint presentation to give an overview of the proposals and the consultation process.

The slides for this presentation are embedded below:



During the presentation, it was explained that education finance in the County was adequate but the challenge was the over the distribution of the finance over the number of schools and the flexibility of staff and Governors to use the money. In the winter of 2019 -20 there were a significant number of engagement events held with teachers, governors, learners and elected members in order to develop a new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys. These proposals include a new building in Brecon, with the development of a PRU and a Community Swimming Pool on the same site.

It was explained that the Council is consulting on the following proposals:

Phase 1

- To close Mount Street Infants, Mount Street Juniors and Cradoc C.P School
- To establish a new English-medium Primary School for Pupils aged 4-11 on the current sites of all three schools.
- The current target date is to close all three Schools on the 31st August 2022, and the new school to open on the 1st September 2022.

Phase 2

- To make a regulated alternation to transfer the new school to the new building on a new site in Brecon.
- The target date for this is September 2024 at the earliest.

Geraint Rees: As we said, everything will be documented and then taken as a Cabinet report. It will then go to Cabinet where they can accept, reject or stop the process at any time. What we as officers are required to do is to ensure that we report accurately and respond accurately as well.

Geraint then invited comments / questions on the proposals.

Governor (IM): I think there are going to be quite a few questions that will be raised. I have narrowed mine down to about five or six, really, but I will give them all in one go and then they can be discussed further. I believe they are 6 of the more core issues.

The first question is over the lack of an individual impact assessment for Cradoc school. I think that Powys' response is that because the three schools are part of 1 project, we only must do one consultation for the project, but the three schools are entirely different. Cradoc is a rural school even have different things taken into consideration to adhere to the new code that was bought out in 2017, by the Welsh government. I am not sure why we have to have a separate impact assessment where many of the things that impact Cradoc school are not on the radar because they are not considered as being having the same impact on the other two schools, so that is the first one. Would you like to come back on that one or for me to go through the questions?

Geraint Rees: I think it might be easier for us to come back one by one, if your content, and the issue around the impact assessment. Marianne can elaborate further if needed on this, but it is an impact assessment as it stands on the proposal and the proposal involves three schools. When we report back, clearly people will have raised a whole range of different issues for each of the schools and therefore when we report back, there will be a line of sight that you will be able to see, as to what were the issues that were raised by Cradoc, issues raised by Mount Street Infants and the Juniors. This goes from a proposal with some infrastructure and bones to it to a far more comprehensive report back. It is an impact assessment on the proposal that we have now, which is slightly different for each school as you say, and that needs to be clear when we report it.

Marianne Evans: We have used a single integrated impact assessment for the whole proposal. It was raised in the staff meeting. The impact assessment we have includes different issues relating to different schools and you know the issues raised in Cradoc are very distinctive to the issues facing the other schools. However, as I said to the staff, we will take a view on whether when we come back to Cabinet with an updated impact assessment and set of papers at the end of the process, whether we break it down into three different impact assessments. The issues are the scoring, taking an aggregate score across three schools where maybe the issues related to one school are significantly different to the others, so we will take that on board and will have a conversation with our legal department to see whether it is procedurally OK to do that.

Governor (IM): I was just going to say on the point you just raised there about when this comes to Cabinet. Obviously, I am not going to be taking part in this decision, because I have declared an interest. So, it is 7 cabinet members who will be deciding on this, but I just want to make sure that they are cited on the impact this is going to make to Cradoc separate to the other schools, and if they are just looking at one impact assessment for the whole cluster, it is just going to go over their heads and they won't even aware what some of the concerns are.

Geraint Rees: Largely the impact assessments start with officers working out what the possible impacts are. You have some conversations around it to try and make sure you have captured them, but we reasonably expect, during consultation to be exposed to a lot more local information and therefore the impact assessment grows as you go through a consultation and therefore when reporting back there will be things there that were not in the first impact assessment.

Governor (IM): OK, thank you. The second question then is around environmental issues. You will be aware that a motion went through Council in September that myself and one of the other members put forward where Powys is going to try and aim to be carbon net zero by 2030. Now if we were to build a new school separate to the way that any new school is built and what environmental targets must be set to that.

I'm concerned about the message that we will be sending if a new school is built in Brecon and we're forcing more people to travel further with their children to take them to school, which will effectively be the case for a rural ward like the Yscir ward. They haven't got far to travel because Cradoc is a lot closer to the community, whereas if they had to travel into Brecon, there will be more vehicle movement which is obviously going to have an adverse impact on the environment. So that needs to be taken into account in any proposals going forward really, and I think when it comes to the time where people must make a decision on this on this, they need to be aware of that and that it could be contravening the objective that we are trying to get towards for 2030.

Geraint Rees: With the environmental impact, it does include transport, and as you say, you know it's 2 1/2 miles from Cradoc to the secondary school site as it is now, but it also includes quality of heating systems, other systems in a new build, there is a whole range of things that need to be considered, aggregated and weighed up properly.

Governor (IM): I have no doubt that any new school is going to adhere to new environmental targets. It seems strange that we would be concentrating so much on doing that whilst counteracting the local people filling the air with exhaust fumes.

On the same sort of subject really on school transport. I think this is something that has been raised before but there has been no response or justification. Free school transport must be put on for pupils to be taken to their nearest school. However, if a new school is built on the site of the old high school in Brecon it will not be the nearest school for the residents of Yscir. It is clear their nearest school will either be Priory school, by the cathedral, or Llanfaes school. So how are we going to be putting on free school transport to those pupils to get to this new school?

Marianne Evans: The policy currently says transport to the closest or catchment school. So, I think the answer here would be that we would need to define the catchment of the new school in Brecon – should the proposal go ahead, obviously. We would define that catchment area to include the Cradoc area and then we would have to consult on a change to the home to school transport policy as well. That is how we would address that one.

Geraint Rees: Could I just say with the home to school transport policy that already has built into it an expectation of regular review, because if Powys is to go through a significant investment program across its schools, it needs a transport policy that compliments that all the time – you cannot have the two things pulling against each other. That is an expectation that Cabinet would realistically have – that each time there is a proposal there needs to be clarity about what that means for the transport policy. That is something that would need to be in the mix.

Governor: From my point of view and probably from a legal point of view at the time when Cabinet must make the decision at that point in time, they will not be sure whether this will be in place or not, so they will be taking a bit of a punt really on the chances that it could be brought into place, whereas at the same time it might not. So that is something I think Cabinet members need to be aware of, really.

The next question is still regarding phase 2, which I understand isn't a dead certainty and we hope to be able to get the right funding in place from the Welsh Government to proceed to build a new school, but if it doesn't, and this is voted to go ahead when it comes to Cabinet in a few months' time or a few weeks' time, then Cradoc school at the moment is in a pretty bad state. If they are going to be waiting indefinitely for a new school to be built for two, three or four years, and then a decision is made not to

go ahead. For those few years, pupils in Cradoc will be having a substandard education because the school certainly does not meet the criteria set in the new curriculum and it could last even longer as we could be back to square one.

So again, I think it is a bit unfair for Cabinet members to be voting on something that isn't certain and might not happen. How certain are we that this is going to happen or not?

Marianne Evans: This issue has been raised quite a lot. We must consult on this phase of the proposal before we can go forward to develop our business cases around the build. There has been no work done on designs or feasibilities or anything because that would be pre-empting the decision which is to be made after this consultation. But in terms of the funding itself, we have a very good relationship with the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools' team, they know about this project.

What they want to see is Powys delivering. We are halfway through our £200,000,000 program of delivering new schools, so they need the confidence to see that we are delivering, and that the programme is being met and fulfilled. What we would do is keep Welsh Government colleagues updated about where we are with things. But in terms of the technicalities around it all, we must do this consultation first before we can then start the business case process with them. We need an outcome on this first before we go forward again.

Geraint Rees: Yes, it is not uncommon to be in these situations and it all comes down to the strength of proposals and the certainty with which it becomes a priority or not a priority for the Council. There's lots of issues that get resolved as things work their way through.

Governor (IM): On predicted pupil numbers, if you look at what the predicted pupil numbers are, they are not considering the number of new houses which will likely get built in Brecon and the surrounding areas. There is a bit of a question there over capacity and whether knocking down Cradoc School could put us in the position where we are not going to have enough school places.

Secondly, If the ambition is to try and sort of consolidate schools into one, then there are too many schools in Brecon town itself, and you should perhaps be concentrating on one of the other ones in Brecon rather than Cradoc because we will still end up with too many schools in Brecon even with the new one being built.

Geraint Rees: I will take the last ones as statements really, but I can assure you that there are models that are used by local authorities around the link between new houses and the likely number of children depending on house values and the sizes of the building developments. Marianne and team are obliged to ensure that new developments are considered as part of this. Also, when local authorities build new schools, if the site is big enough, they tend to build them with the potential of

additions to the building without disrupting the education of all the children there, as opposed to 1960s and 1970s builds where they built a school and then if you needed to put anything else it was a separate building to walk through the rain to get to. There are lots of tricks that are used in the construction industry and in partnership with local authorities around them. These are factored in in the report

Governor (KW): I was wondering about the impact assessment which would be made on the other communities which serve the school, areas such as Battle, Merthyr Cynog, Pontfaen, Llanfihangel Nant Bran, Upper Chapel, Lower Chapel and the Yscir ward and what assessments have been made on these.

Also, as community councillor Looking at the consultation on page 6 the map is at best inadequate and at worst, and I hope not, but deliberately vague and possibly deceitful. It shows Cradoc school located in a small village just outside Brecon. Actually, it not only serves Cradoc village but a huge rural area that stretches up to 8 miles of the valleys up towards the Epynt Ranges. I feel that these areas should have been inputted into the map.

I hope this map is not designed to give a false impression to councillors, the Cabinet members, and to the public who do not know the area and the background history of the school. As the school was originally an amalgamation of six small village schools and was sited in this current location as it was at the bottom of the three valleys, which now serves all that area. Why was the catchment area of the school not shown on the on the map? As some pupils are already travelling up to 8 miles to get to Cradoc school.

Geraint Rees: What the map shows is the location of the schools themselves rather than the catchment areas. There would not have been an intention to deceive, but Marianne, did you want to comment?

Marianne Evans: What we will do when we take the report back to Cabinet, we will have a map showing the whole catchment and the different wards within the catchment. I think that would then help Cabinet understand the area much more.

In terms of the Community Impact Assessment and the wider wards within the Cradoc area. The Community Impact Assessment is important, and we have already received information back from the school on the potential impact that they feel of the closure of Cradoc, not only on the school, but on the wider community. As we go through this process and responses are received that Community Impact Assessment will only grow and that should then show the impact on the wider areas in the catchment.

Geraint Rees: Thanks for raising that. We will make sure we report on that and that picture and that we more than just show the locations of the schools.

Headteacher: One of the things that was mentioned in the staff discussion earlier is

the acknowledgement of the very different impact that that will be had on Cradoc compared to the other Mount Street schools, and the fact that as far as the officers are aware, there is no legal reason why three separate impact assessments cannot be done. Marianne was going to go back and take a view from the legal team as to whether that should happen. We talked at some length really in our staff meeting about how the responses for the impact assessment would be different, with Mount Street being at one, perhaps Cradoc being at 10 and coming out as a 5 showing no impact. That is not the case, although there would probably be a positive impact for Mount Street, there may very well be a very negative one for Cradoc, and we need to make sure that that becomes very clear. I said it in the staff meeting and I think the governors would be with me on this. We really do want a separate impact assessment for Cradoc, and I think it is important that happens because we are in a very different situation than the Mount Street schools.

Geraint Rees: As we have said, there is a single impact assessment as it is a single proposal. When we feedback, my expectation is that you will be able to see clearly what was raised by each of the schools. If all the information is clearly articulated, then you will be able to see that the issues you have raised have been faithfully reported and replied to, and then we will work out what the other bits, according to the legal advice given then around that.

Headteacher: Can I ask again, if it is legally possible to have them separated, I think certainly from our staff in point of view, we have made it clear we would like to see that, and I think the governors would agree with that.

Geraint Rees: Thank you, we will follow up according to the protocols as they stand, but there will be absolute clarity of what the views of Cradoc are, they will be articulated very clearly uniquely in the report as well.

Governor (RD): My concern during this Covid pandemic which is having a huge impact on our day-to-day life, particularly on our community, is for some of the generations within our community and extended community who are not in a position where they can access sufficient Internet or Wi-Fi and haven't got the opportunity to speak about the concerns of the consultation.

I am concerned for the well-being of our children, our staff, teaching staff and non-teaching staff during this time. Speaking from a teaching background myself, just the day to day of ensuring that our children have had adequate education through Teams, to then put unnecessary stress on the well-being of children, whether they will all go to the same school as their friend, the teachers whether there will be jobs available for them. Are we doing it at the right time during a worldwide pandemic?

Geraint Rees: Clearly this is something that we will have discussed because nobody is underestimating the significance of it all. Welsh Government has issued revised guidance as they have given some additional information, and to ensure that we accommodate some of the issues that otherwise might be ignored.

What I can say is the investment process, the funding available has not gone away. You have got both Whitehall and the Welsh Parliament all now looking to manage economic recovery through investment and much of it in public works. Schools and hospitals are likely to be part of the recipients on that.

There has been no slowing down in that process and we have had to consider how to do this, and the decision as it stands to fail to bring forth improvements to the school estate, with secondary, primary and special. How long might this last? And we have quite a significant need in Powys for that investment in schools. Now you are right to point out that it adds a tier of insecurity to things, but in our discussions with head teachers are regularly around, how can we get to a point where - this spending that the authority makes into its schools is fully reflected in the budget for each school that allows them to be ambitious in what they want for their children, and because of what I said at the beginning of the meeting, which is for the local authorities spending good money on schools - that is not a problem, the way it reaches across the entire school estate is as there are so many. It is 97 schools at the moment. This is leading to a whole range of issues at schools where too many schools feel they do not have enough budget to make things work. That is a challenge, if we leave it for another couple of years until we are out of the other side of this, we will have lost the investment opportunity but also, we have just compounded further, the problems that are already there. It is a challenge that the inspectorate have thrown up as a challenge to make sure every learner can get the curriculum they need at all ages, post-16 and younger than that.

We are mindful of the challenges of the pandemic; we also know that we are getting higher levels of responses now to things the local authority is asking people to express a view on than we would have had in the days when people were going to public meetings in village halls and in school halls. We are keeping an eye on it and it is something that we do need to be respectful of the issue that you raise and need to be sure that we can do this properly.

Governor (RD): I do believe there is a generation out there who do not have Internet access or are not confident with it. They would want the opportunity to speak in a public meeting if we did have one. Seeing and answering people face to face is a lot different from a Zoom meeting or a Teams' meeting. And I just feel that we are not providing that opportunity for all.

I appreciate you saying the responses are possibly higher in this manner, but it is not giving an opportunity for all, such as the generation before us. I am a past pupil of Cradoc who wanted to send their child there and are very much part of that community from years gone by.

Geraint Rees: OK, we can note what you have raised and can see that it is heartfelt. We are mindful that it is more likely that the generation of parents, current and future, and the learners themselves, many of them will find it easier to do this than to be

able to come to a meeting in a hall for an evening, for example, especially if they have small children. We are mindful of it and your points are being logged, I think that is all I can say now, but we will be evaluating each consultation as they meet to a close to see whether we have a good selection of views that help us with planning the future for schools.

Governor (RD): Thank you for your answer but remember they are not a forgotten generation either.

Governor (KW): Looking at your first slide that you presented earlier regarding the vision. I think the second paragraph discusses the capital investment and the opportunities that a school can bring to a wider community in the activities that it can bring. If we are thinking about Cradoc, losing that in the village of Cradoc diminishes the opportunity for communities in the adjoining areas. So, I just wondered if you were able to answer if Cradoc was to close, where that fits within your vision?

Geraint Rees: I think what you have articulated there is the very challenge of how you locate education provision, present and future, matching it to the population present and future, and that is the challenge that Cabinet will need to address when the report gets back to them – whether they believe that the benefits of relocating Cradoc into a new school a couple of miles away may outweigh the disadvantages. It will be a matter for them to determine that at that point.

The proposal we are bringing forward is based on the presumption that a school of around about 360 learners, plus provision for preschool, whether that can be a stronger provision than the current provision across the three different schools and that will be what the weighing up will need to do properly at the end of the process. You are right to raise the issue and it will be the heart any decision-making that will be required at a later point.

Governor (KC): Just to follow that up, I think that again highlights the need that we do need that separate impact assessment and that is what we are definitely asking for, because that will collate all those views that can be presented to the Cabinet.

Geraint Rees: The commitment we have made is there will be a clear line of sight through all the impact comments that are being made. You will be able to see those referenced uniquely to Cradoc as opposed to either of the other two schools. How the impact assessment itself is framed will require the legal advice.

Governor (DM): All I wanted to state was when it was spoken about the global pandemic, I would have thought that as a minimum the consultation period should be extended so that everyone can put their views and opinions forward due to the difficulties we find ourselves in currently.

Marianne Evans: We have extended the consultation, in terms of the minimum

requirement is 6 weeks/42 days. We have given 7 weeks to give more time for people to input into the conversation. We have taken that into account.

Governor (KC): Regarding the wellbeing of the pupils, where does that fit within your Powys wellbeing plan?

Geraint Rees: Managing wellbeing at the moment involves a whole range of things and crucially, one of the key things the local authority can do is to provide support for the teachers and the support staff who work with the pupils every day, because managing wellbeing is very often an issue for the adults, both parents and the professionals in school to try and ensure that there's sufficient guidance and support available. There are a whole range of things that are available there.

Lynette Lovell: You are probably aware that throughout the pandemic we have had a wellbeing workstream, and we have been working on, first of all, the team around the hub when we had the 13 locations, moved to 15 locations throughout that part of the pandemic. The Health Board, Children's Services and Education were involved, and that has now become a team around the cluster, which is the model now for the multi-agency working on the wellbeing plan in Powys.

So, we have just heard today about funding, that working together with the Health Board, Children's Services and ourselves, in the work we have provided over this last year through the whole pandemic, and indeed the current period that there's an increased level of counselling. We are looking at teams around the cluster working with those vulnerable learners with those children who are experiencing difficulties, with the teachers, the head teachers, etc.

We have a wellbeing workstream, and Estyn came in January to look at the work we had undertaken around wellbeing as a local authority during this period and were pleased with what they saw in the support for wellbeing. We know there is more to do though. We know it is a difficult time with everything that is going on and so we will be looking further now to look at the funding that has come in today to local authorities around the strategy. We know as well that this week the emotional health and wellbeing guidance from Welsh Government has been sent through, so we are working on a plan as we move forward there around wellbeing strategy and mental health.

We have a mental health and wellbeing strategy as a local authority in every school, somebody is responsible for that in each school. So, we have really been ahead of the game looking at wellbeing within our schools, there is a lot going on and you know wellbeing is at the heart of what we are doing, and it is an important consideration for us in all this as well. It is a work stream that we are really working hard to ensure we are putting in that provision for our schools and forward.

Governor (KC): I am hearing that you are providing the provision due to the pandemic, and obviously there is a significant amount of support that is being offered

to both the pupils, the teachers, and parents of young people at this moment in time, so that demonstrates to me that there is a need for that. My question, really, was relating to the wellbeing of the pupils during this process. Have you considered the impact of the additional distress that is causing the pupils at Cradoc school at this moment in time?

Geraint Rees: If this were to be a proposal that gets through, how do you go from 3 separate schools that all need investment in them to being in a brand-new site? There are all sorts of models that that you can look at. One of the key issues here is that from the child's perspective there would be very little change in the immediate future. The report says clearly there would not be a new school before September 2024. That is what is being articulated, and therefore in the short term, the children would be going to their local school, and in the meantime, there would be a new governing body overseeing that arrangement, a new leadership team, and a key part of what they would be charged with would be not just design and looking at what needs to be done but minimising threats and everything else to the children during that period. That is a key part of the work that is done during transition management. That is why the proposal appears the way it does now. One of the rationales for that would be it allows you to work through and develop a sense of community across three schools, and plan that by the time they get there for the older ones, so they do not turn up as complete strangers to each other.

I have been through the process of bringing together secondary schools, and by the time you invest in certain activities the learners end up looking forward to meeting on the 1st of September in the same new school with people who were strangers before the process started. Lynette has also been through the process of working with different schools on different sites. It needs to be a conscious professional input that the local authority would also need to support so it's not a shock when it happens, but learner wellbeing needs to be central to this. We accept this is a difficult time for families, but the local authority, if this goes ahead, needs to work closely with everybody concerned to make it work.

Written Response from Lynette Lovell in the teams Chat

"The Team around the cluster approach is a key part of the emotional wellbeing support during this period around all aspects that pupils need support with."

Governor (ED): So, the Council's vision for 2025 states that it is your expectation that schools become a focal point within their communities. Many schools are already used extensively within their communities and have strong links with the communities in which they are located. So how can closing Cradoc, a community which has lost post offices, public transport links, shops and pubs over the years, how can closing Cradoc school fit with that vision? In addition to that, if you are going to do this while efforts, are you going to make to invest in that community to allow them to have some sort of Community Centre or hub?

Geraint Rees: Well, clearly what is at the heart of what you are raising here is how we define community. How local is it that people belong, the nature of belonging, all

of that is complex. I live in the village where I was brought up, there has never been a school in the village, but it has a very valuable sense of community. Sometimes there are villages where there is a school where there is no sense of community and sometimes there are villages with schools that have a huge sense of community. It is complex and there would be need for consideration about how that proceeds should it be an eventuality. But that would be a challenge for people who have leadership roles in the community.

The issue that we must address is how do we ensure the provision of education for children in each community? Clearly, we need school facilities and other spin off facilities for people more widely. One thing we do know is new schools and modern bright environments do tend to be used more widely than some of the building stock that we have. Only you know what the extent of that might be in Cradoc, but we owe it to the children for them to be in a vibrant, attractive environment in addition to whatever teachers and head teachers are able to do to add value. The proposal is that this, we believe, would offer that. I would expect you to make a case as to what the value of the community is that would be lost if the proposal goes ahead as part of your response on this.

Governor (ED): I do not think that you have considered there the fact of a child and their sense of belonging. You are going to make it a lot harder for children to attend after school clubs because they are much further from their home. I think all of that again signals that Cradoc needs its own impact assessment. I do not think that you have represented Cradoc fully or fairly, and those things that we are raising, do need to be considered.

But in addition to that, just whilst we are talking about the building of Cradoc School, if you are successful and you close the school, can I please ask what are your plans for that school area?

Marianne Evans: If the proposal is supported and the school would ultimately close. Then we would engage with the community and community councils in the area to see if there's any potential alternative use for the school building, whether there is a potential for community asset transfer, to see whether there is life for that building going forward, and then if that isn't the case, the Council would have the opportunity to sell the building because it owns the building. That would then result in a capital receipt that would be ploughed back into the Council's corporate funds and would support the education programme going forward.

Comment from Governor (KW) in the Teams' Chat

"Geraint mentioned that there will be minimal impact on the pupils in the short term. I disagree. As soon as the decision is made, parents will make their choices and friendships will start falling apart. Parents chose Cradoc for a reason; they wanted a rural school, and they will now choose an alternative such as Sennybridge."

Geraint Rees: Can I just come back on the point raised in the chat in terms of minimal impact in the short term. That requires careful management for there to be

minimal impact, but linking that with the community issue, the size of school that is being proposed, it is not a particularly large school by standards across Wales, including you know rural authorities in Wales. The proposal on the table now is a school of 360ish and that would be something that through the consultation we would tease out whether it needs to be a little bit bigger or a little bit smaller than that, but that is the size of school. Single form of entry is 30 children per school year, which gives you a primary of 210. A dual form entry gives you 420. There are three forms of entry in in many places in Wales, and they come in at 630 children in a primary school, plus your nursery facilities. So, a 360-population school, whilst it is not a particularly large school, it is big enough to be able to secure sports teams, choirs, a whole range of activities that sometimes are more challenging in smaller schools, but these are the trade-offs that such a consultation like this is trying to tease out and how they themselves as well also generate their own sense of community. I and notice a Governor saying that they do that well now. Fair enough, that is not universally the case across Powys, but these are the things we hope you will come back to us with.

Comments from the Teams Chat

Governor: *We can do that well now*

Governor: *Totally Agree*

Governor: *Cradoc is unique. We have a choir, we have sports teams, we have clubs. What we do not have is new buildings.*

Governor (ED): Can I just come back about the land then please. Are you giving us an undertaking that you will not sell that land for development?

Marianne Evans: We need to have a conversation with the community about whether there is an alternative use for the school building, so that would be our first step.

Governor: It is possible that you would sell it for development, thereby increasing the number of children in the area, thereby increasing the number of children that would need to travel and the amount of traffic on the roads. So that is a possibility?

Marianne Evans: It is difficult to say for certain now, we are right at the beginning of the process.

Governor (ED): But it is a possibility.

Geraint Rees: We would be foolish to rule out anything at this point. What would happen to the building would be determined elsewhere if the proposal goes through, as part of a policy process that needs to be resolved. What we would be doing if you are articulating that you are concerned about what may happen to the school site, then that is a comment that will appear in our feedback from the consultation that you may want some clarity around that, which we would then need to state in the report what those what those options might be, but there is quite a wide range.

Sometimes local communities want to take over school buildings as part of community projects. Sometimes it is the last thing they want to do, because they do not want to be paying for a new roof within two years. So, all those considerations need to be real ones as part of this. We have quarter of an hour left. We appreciate all the questions and we will be reporting accurately.

Governor (BR): If we get through the first phase and we become one school with regards to headteacher, assuming none of our headteachers will be ring fenced, it will go out to a national advert. Then the new governing body would appoint a new headteacher. Am I right?

Geraint Rees: I'll hand that over to Sarah Christoforou as she is mindful of HR protocols.

Sarah Christoforou: In terms of headship and deputy headships as I mentioned in the staff meeting, there are some slightly different rules. A temporary governing body can ring fence, so it can make the decision to ring fence the headship and deputy headship, if there is a permanent head in one of the positions currently. If they were all acting, for instance, they would not be able to do it. The temporary governing body can choose not to advertise because there would have been a national advert at some point. But they can also choose under the legislation to go out to national adverts. So, it is a choice for that temporary governing body when they consider who is in the mix, who might be interested, they will have some discretion.

Governor (BR): We have 3 head in permanent positions, how would that work?

Sarah Christoforou: All 3 heads could be ringfenced to that role. Ring fenced means they are put in the pot for the job and then the Head of the new school would be recruited from those three only.

Governor: And the same for the deputies?

Sarah Christoforou: Correct.

Governor (BR): So there is a lot of movement - because like you said or there will not be a short term there, be no worry for the children or anything, but I know it could be anytime when you have got a new head coming in, but with everything else going on in there and suddenly and maybe a different ethos been instilled suddenly into the school, things change in different ideas. I think it could really affect them, we have had children in tears now when Mrs. Morris had to deliver the news via Teams and I was still thinking it is detrimental to their wellbeing.

The other thing I am saying is, you will say in 2024 at the earliest. Does there come a point where something must be done? Because if the money is not available, we are not going to sit like we are for indefinite number of years, that is my worry and having one head in three places if it goes that far.

Comment from the Teams Chat noted by Geraint Rees

Governor: *absolutely agree there – Cradoc could still be in the school in 5-6 years with the school falling around its ears!*

Geraint Rees: I think we just need to be careful about the notion of 1 head in three places. It is a different kind of leadership that is generated when you go through a change process and you end up with empowered leadership on each site.

Lynette Lovell: We've got several schools that are currently on two sites and we have some that are on three. As I mentioned in the staff meeting, I have also been head over 2 sites myself and that does create an opportunity for leadership growth within the schools. We have the example now of Welshpool Church in Wales School, where the school has just moved to their new build and over the last 2-3 years where they have been on three separate sites, they have managed to pull the school together to become one school very successfully. The headteacher, the leadership team, and the governing body there decided to have a leadership team in each of the sites. They really managed the school on an operational level on a day-to-day basis and that has really developed leadership within the school.

When you are looking at standards of teaching and learning, which is vitally important, as we all know, that has been able to grow over that time. Standards have improved at the school, and that was over three sites.

We do have other schools that are over three sites. We have the Federation in the north of the county. In terms of leadership capacity and building that expertise, it really is a successful model in the primary sector, particularly over the sites that we have had. It does develop that leadership for leaders coming through the system as well on the site on a daily basis, managing the parents, taking assemblies, sorting things out there, and then the leader of the school is a more executive, strategic leader. Over those three sites, it has been successful.

Comments from the Teams Chat

Governor: *If Cabinet pass the consultation to go ahead, is it possible to delay the statutory notice to merge the three schools until funding is secured for phase 2. If funding is not forthcoming the notice need not be served?*

Governor: *I agree too. We could lose excellent staff during the uncertain time.*

Governor (BR): If the Headteacher is a teaching head, would we have to employ someone else or does the teacher move from one of the other schools or do we then get more money in our budget to replace that teacher?

Geraint Rees: There is a whole range of things that the governing body would need to resolve at that point. And as we said in the staff meeting earlier on when change process is happened, children do not generally evaporate they end up in new setups and you need teachers, you need support staff to work across the schools. How the

leadership emerges is down to the governing body. Sarah Christoforou has raised the various possibilities.

If things do not move ahead, do you just end up in the same place where the school is falling around your ears? That is a really important issue for us. The fact that there are risks of schools falling around pupils' ears is why this proposal is on the table. It is not a question of putting a patch on, this is about actually jumping two generations straightaway into totally renewed facilities, and that that cannot be underestimated.

We know what the challenges are, but we also know what the prize is and somehow what the local authority must do is make sure that the prize is worth it, and the challenges do not become so big that the prize does not feel it was worth having and that is the challenge around leadership.

Can I just say there is no doubting the challenges this throws to the head and the deputy in each of the schools – it is significant and local authorities owe it to look after the people who tried to lead through a period of change like this to make sure that they are valued properly. Everything we have as a current estate arose from change – whatever that change was things were not like that before we had what we have. The challenge is, is this change worth it? And that is why the proposals are on the table, because of a belief that whilst the money is available nationally, that it is an opportunity that we should not let slip. Whether the Cabinet agree with that based on a report written is another matter altogether, but as officers, that is where we are coming at it. Managing the short term, managing the long term is a big responsibility, and that's where leadership is so crucial and the quality of the teachers and the support staff who oversee the children on the journey.

Comments from the Chat

Governor: *We are already seeing children evaporate to other schools, due to the insecurity. However, we are oversubscribed in our 3+ setting and turning people away! There are enough children here, but we need to provide them with good facilities in a strong community.*

Governor (RW): It has been helpful listening tonight. Yes, it is emotive, and it is very hard to remove yourself from that being very emotive subject, but we are also, sensible people we do understand. You guys must do something, but it does feel wrong in this point. Cradoc does offer something completely different to any of the other schools. You know, we are a community. My son is only 9 but I can tell you for sure he is a future farmer. He is going to be in this community for the rest of his life, his children, if he is lucky to have them, will be in this community as well, and that is sad. Thinking that his children will not be able to go to the school he goes through and have that life that he has. He loves seeing tractors driving up and down the road. He will not get that in Brecon. He will not see able to see what goes on at playtime, seeing the other neighbours that you know. It might seem little, but this is a huge thing for somebody that is going to grow up and be in this farming community, of which we are. School is very, very much at the heart of our community and I am trying to be balanced. I have worked in the Council, I get what is going on, but I

cannot see other than a new building, what opportunities this will give to people like my son who is like I said a farmer.

That is the reason why I chose this school. Because the opportunities within that, he flourishes. I know it is difficult, and I know I am emotive, but this is personal, I know you understand that.

Geraint Rees: Thanks for that. We will take it on board what you said

Governor (RD): Geraint, you referred to it as a prize. I am not sure if it is a prize and that is coming from an emotive parent. Again, we are talking about walking distance for pupils who live on the furthest point of Brecon will be expected to walk along a main road, cross 2 main roads, increased traffic load up the main Cerrigcochion hill, which now has several new housing estates a route to the public highway. You have a leisure centre, Brecon High School, the hospital, that trunk road where people are coming into Brecon from the Felinfach area to use the supermarket and you have a bus station. I am just questioning about the safety of our children. You know these are potentially 5-year-olds and lower, walking over 1.7 miles at the start and the end of the day. I am just concerned about the safety element this new build.

Marianne Evans: Any new builds we would have to subject to a full traffic assessment. The other thing we must do as well is we have to consider active travel routes as part of the conditions of funding plus safe routes to school would also be part of what we need to look at, we need to look at the whole site and it has been picked up already in earlier consultation meetings about how many more people will be accessing that site. And that is something we will have to take account of, and we will take account of all that.

Comments from the Team Chat

Governor: *We have children cycling to school now and arriving on horseback. They will not be able to do that if the school is Brecon.*

Governor: *Can I thank the officers for confirming that there will also be a 3+ setting on the new site. However, this will also impact on the number of cars that will be visiting the site, particularly if a family have several children – they will not walk.*

Governor (RD): There are going to be parents with pushchairs holding onto one child. We have lost the lollipop supervisors. I am concerned about children walking that distance and their safety.

Marianne Evans: Safe routes to school is a key factor when with any building project, so we would have to ensure that they were there.

Governor (RD): Do you believe it is a safe route for them to travel?

Marianne Evans: We shall investigate it all once we get to the next stage. As I said, we have not started the design stage, so we would look at that.

Governor (RD): But would you say it is a safe route? Yes or no?

Marianne Evans: I am taking your view as a local person. You can tell me if it is a safe route.

Governor (RD): It is not a safe route.

Geraint Rees: When Marianne refers to safe route it is a whole national policy around how local authorities can help generate safe routes to school. There is an investment relationship with that as well because safety is important, there is no avoiding that. So just to say that would be something that needs to be looked at.

Comments from the Teams Chat

Governor (KW): Why isn't rebuilding Cradoc School one of the options in the consultation? What enquiries have been made into the availability for funding of investment in Cradoc School?

Geraint Rees: Just to say in terms of investment and scale and sustainability of schools, the ability to deliver the new curriculum with teaching, where children are, within a year of each other in the class, all those issues are part of bringing forward the proposal. And that is why now there is not a proposal to rebuild Cradoc. You have raised the issue and concern around what happens if the investment does not come along. Well, the investment needed to build a new Cradoc and to build a new Mount St Juniors and Infants on the new location would be on a different scale again. So, there is a whole range of things there and the combined strength of these schools would be a school of 360 which is a medium sized primary school that allows all sorts of things to happen in terms of social mixing in terms of the social dynamics and the benefits of teaching to very strongly age-appropriate groups. That is for people to dispute as part of the consultation, so do feel free to come back on that. That's part of why there is not a specific proposal just to carry on with Cradoc as a stand-alone school and to bring forward investment in a new building for that even though that's something you may want to put forward.

Geraint Rees: We're now short of time ...

Governor (KW): Going back to the consultation document it mentions Cradoc as a rural school on page 7 but then does not mention it until page 45 in the appendices. Is it the intention of Powys to close the school against its own rural school policy? I hope they are not merging the school with the Mount Street schools to close Cradoc School to get around the Rural Schools' policy to close Cradoc by the back door?

Marianne Evans: Cradoc is defined as a rural school according to the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code. So, what we must do is to consider additional steps if a school is a rural school. We have considered these as part of the process for Cradoc.

Governor: First, on the point that Sarah raised over ring fencing and a position for permanent current headteachers. If this proposal gets the go ahead, will the three current headteachers roles not be deemed as temporary and therefore not permanent to be eligible to be classed as being ring fenced?

Sarah Christoforou: The permanency is from their current contracts, so then it would be moving to the to the new single headteacher of the new school. They would not move from permanent to temporary.

Governor (IM): If this does go ahead and for whatever reason phase two doesn't go ahead, for some reason, then revert back to the preferred option of having a new school building in Cradoc, but I'm just wondering if that can be considered whether there's perhaps there's a time frame or a time restraint which is put on this so that we don't go on in no man's land with a rotten school in Cradoc with pupils that are just waiting for a response for 12 months or 2 years. I think there needs to be something in place so that if a decision is made, we know how far we are going to go before we then revert to the first choice really. So, if you can take that on board and I think that was it would be a very fair way of doing it.

And one last one it is about the impact assessment. I do not think I have really had a clear indication of whether we think we are going to get one. You said you are going to go back and get legal advice, but is that legal advice to find out if you can give us one or if you have to give us one?

Marianne Evans: If we can give you one, I think is the answer.

Geraint Rees: What I was saying was the components that will make up whatever Risk assessment will be clearly identified for each school in any case. So, if they can be separately reported on a separate as an impact assessment, that is fine. But even if it ends up as a composite impact assessment, what is attributed to each of the schools and their different settings should be clear.

Governor (IM): Do we know how long it will be until the decision is made? Roughly speaking how long are we talking before this goes to the next phase?

Marianne Evans: The next stage would be consultation analysis once the consultation period has ended. We expect quite a significant number of responses to come in on this proposal so it would depend on how long the analysis would take, and then how long it would take to prepare the consultation report and the impact assessments and for everything to come back to Cabinet.

Governor (IM): How long would it be before it comes to Cabinet for a decision?

Marianne Evans: Probably early autumn – but don't hold me to this.

Comment from the Team Chat

As Sennybridge is also part of the transformation process, why was it not suggested that Cradoc and Sennybridge merged instead, as we are both rural schools?

Geraint Rees: There is one comment in the chat box about Sennybridge, I think it's implied that Sennybridge could be bigger? So, Cradoc children go to Sennybridge and therefore the Brecon proposal would be smaller is what's implied. This is something we will make sure we are mindful of and we will report on what the rationale would have been for that not to be on the proposal, where Cradoc would be subsumed into Sennybridge (school) instead of Mount Street (schools).

Comment from the teams Chat

Governor: Merged rather than subsumed though!

Marianne Evans: Everybody can put in an alternative option as part of the consultation feedback and we would have to assess all those options as well. So just to highlight that as part of the procedure going forward. It will be reported faithfully including any Sennybridge proposal. There's the opportunity for extensive comments and input and everything will be respected.

Governor (SG):

I put this in the chat but I'm not looking for a response but would like it noted. Can I refer the Council to the Rural Research report where rural schools achieved quite high scores in wellbeing, in wanting to learn, and the Council took part in it themselves because it was an ERW report July 21st, 2019. I am not asking for a comment, I am just asking for it to be noted.

Geraint Rees: Thank you very much, I just say thanks from those of us who have come along tonight. Thanks for the spirit in which you have engaged. We owe it to come back seriously to you with a meaningful report. So thank you, very much and best wishes over the coming months. And if Judith could thank colleagues in the morning as well for the previous meeting as well, thank you very much hugely appreciated.

9. Meeting with the School Council of Cradoc C.P. School

24th March 2021

Present

Marianne Evans – Powys County Council
Sarah Astley – Powys County Council
Richard Williams – Powys County Council

Officers from the Transforming Education Team met with Mount Street Infants School on the 24th March 2021 to discuss the consultation on the future of Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School

One session was held with 12 pupils from the school council. The group were a combination of students from Year 1 to Year 6.

The officers explained the proposals for the merging of Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School.

The pupils were asked a number of questions, and their responses are summarised below:

2. What do you like about Cradoc C.P. School? What's good about the school?

- Lots of outdoor space and outside playground
- Learning new things and doing lots of activities
- Good community and really nice hills and views
- Teachers are really nice and the lessons are fun
- Seeing my friends in reception class
- After school, breakfast club and holiday club
- School dinners are nice and lush – best part of the school day
- Fishfinger Fridays
- The teachers are really nice and they support you with problems in and outside of school
- Going to a bigger school might lose your sense of family
- Going to a school in town means I might not be able to see my friends in reception

2. Is there anything you don't like about Cradoc C.P. School?

- Lessons can a little bit boring
- Recently we've had boiler problems in our classroom and the carpet was wet
- There are computers glitches sometimes
- Lots of people boss me around when playing

- We don't have enough computers and iPads

Officers outlined the proposals and the phasing of the proposals.

3. What do you think about the idea to merge Mount Street Juniors, Mount Street Infants and Cradoc C.P. Schools in the current buildings (Phase 1)?

- If we move schools we might not know the teachers and the younger pupils might lose their friends
- We've just had a huge lockdown and education has been affected and we came back to school and now we find out our school will be knocked down
- We might lose some of the teachers we like and might have to get to know them in a new school
- The Welsh Government set guidelines about saving rural schools and shutting our school will mean there is no rural schools left in our area

Officers asked pupils to describe the area they live in.

- There are lots of hills, hill forts, farming, fields, forests and beautiful landscapes
- Lots of pupils come from a farming background so we love to run around and play farming and in town, we wouldn't be able to look at the tractors passing the school
- Some pupils already travel a long way and feel sad about traveling further
- I want to bring up my children to attend a rural school
- Everything is lovely here and we don't want it to change

4. Question and answer session with officers

- If this goes ahead, what will the old site be used for?

Officers explained that the Council would have discussions with everyone in the community about the building, such as making it a community hall, if that can't happen then the Council could possibly sell the site.

- What made you come to this decision?

Officers explained that the Council has been looking at the whole Brecon catchment and one of the big issues facing the catchment, is that the buildings are not in a good condition. Officers explained if the Council built a new school for Mount Street Infants, Juniors and Cradoc C.P. School then this will ensure that pupils from the three schools will go to a new school building. Officers also explained that Mount Street Infants and Juniors is the last remaining infant/junior split in Powys.

- Have you considered other options? / Can we just build a new school in Cradoc?

Officers explained that a lot of options were considered. Any options submitted to the Council during the consultation process would be considered.

- Could Mount Street Infants and Junior Schools be merged and Cradoc re-built and what would the budget be?

Officers explained that the whole budget for the proposals is between £9m and £10m. Officers explained that they would have to compare what it would cost to build a new school for Mount Street Infants, Juniors and Cradoc C.P. Schools and what it would cost for two new schools for Mount Street Infants & Juniors and a separate new school for Cradoc C.P. School.

- What will the new uniform be like?

Officers explained there are lots of things to be decided if a new school was to be created, such as the new school name, uniform and logo, which pupils usually get an opportunity to contribute to.

- Have you considered how it will affect the mental health of students, especially young children?

Officers agreed it had been a difficult time for students and that the Council had considered this before making these proposals.

5. Officers asked pupils for their questions and thoughts on the new school building

- We might go swimming and do more sports if we are closer to the leisure centre
- At the moment I have to travel far to Rugby and if I went to the new school it would be quicker
- In town there will be more noise with traffic and this will affect the environment and it will be harder to concentrate
- When we picked our forever home we picked here because it was close to Cradoc school
- Chance to make new friends, see old friends and there will be more equipment
- The Council has already closed Battle School and other rural schools and now is proposing to close Cradoc – history is repeating itself
- The school is the heart of the community
- If the school was sold and became houses nobody would buy the houses – Cradoc would turn into a ghost town

- We wouldn't be able to have a forest school in the middle of town and we wouldn't be able to see the wildlife
- The community has volunteered to help us learn about nature
- In town it wouldn't be a proper forest
- It is so important that we are in the country and rural area
- A lot more pollution and big carbon footprint when the new school was built due to more people traveling.

Officers explained that when the Council designs the new school that a forest school area would be looked at being incorporated into the design and layout.

To conclude the session, the officers explained the next steps in the consultation process. It was explained that the consultation would close on the 12th May 2021, and the pupils were encouraged to send any further comments to the Transforming Education Team using the contact details on the pupil version of the consultation document, or to their teachers who would be able to arrange for them to be sent on.

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