



Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Observations to Cabinet on: 14-12-2021

The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee met on 08-12-2021 and considered the following documents:

- Report of the Portfolio Holder for Education and Property – Mount Steet Infant School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School.

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

Scrutiny made the following observations:

- The Committee commented that an option to merge the two Mount Street schools and then federate with Cradoc School had been considered as part of the wider catchment review of Brecon and then discounted. It was suggested that an explanation of this option and why it had been discounted should be included in the paper to Cabinet.
- The Committee noted that a lessons learned review exercise was being finalised in relation to the Welshpool Schools where three schools merged into one. It was suggested that any available information from this review should be provided as background information to the Cabinet.
- The Committee requested that:
 - the Welshpool schools lessons learned review paper once completed be submitted to the scrutiny committee for consideration.
 - the Cabinet be provided with indicative savings figures for the proposal based on the draft revised school funding formula.
- The Committee was assured by the commitment:
 - that once the pupils moved to the new school, the school catchment would be redefined to include the current Mount Street and Cradoc catchment areas for the purposes of the provision of school transport, rather than new pupils from the Cradoc area being required to attend Priory Street School as the nearest school.
 - that the numbers of early years places would not be reduced in the Brecon and Cradoc areas.
- The Committee was also assured:
 - that the authority would work with the local community in Cradoc to seek to retain facilities such as the playgroup.
 - that the Authority was confident that it could build a new school on the Penlan site and that it had mitigated the risks as far as it could at this stage of the project.
 - that as the Authority was intending to seek permission to use Band B funding for the proposal there was greater assurance around the financial viability of the project and also as it was also factored into the financial planning of the Council, although some risks continued to exist.
 - The Committee acknowledged:

- that this could be an exciting project, and that the school was only part of the development of the overall campus.
- that the case for the proposal had been made as long as it progressed to Phase 2.
- The Committee commended officers for their considered responses to consultation comments from the public.

Scrutiny's Recommendation	Accept (plus Action and timescale)	Partially Accept (plus Rationale and Action and timescale)	Reject (plus Rationale)
<p>1 that an explanation of the option to merge the two Mount Street Schools and federate with Cradoc School and why it had been discounted be included in the paper to Cabinet</p>	<p>The PBC considered by Cabinet identified a preferred way forward for the Brecon catchment, which is as follows:</p> <p>To invest in the development of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new 360 place English-medium primary school in Brecon, to replace Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street juniors School and Cradoc C.P. School, with a co-located Pupil Referral Unit and a community swimming pool – to be built on the site of the old Brecon High School <p>At the Cabinet meeting on the 29th September, Cabinet approved the submission of the PBC for the Brecon catchment to Welsh Government, and also approved that officers bring back a further report to Cabinet outlining the implementation steps required to achieve the new facilities.</p> <p>An option appraisal exercise was then</p>		

	<p>carried out, which considered a range of options in order to implement the preferred way forward as outlined above. The options appraisal considered a number of possible options in order to implement the preferred way forward, however the option to merge the Mount Street Schools and to federate the new school with Cradoc C.P. School was not identified as a way to implement the preferred way forward. The reason for this is that it would not be possible to federate the merged Mount Street school and Cradoc C.P. School until after a new Mount Streets school had been established, and a further process would be required in order to implement the federation. This would have an impact on the timescales for implementation of the proposals. It would also mean that there would still need to be a third process to merge the schools together in order to establish one school in a new building.</p> <p>Whilst the option to merge the Mount Street Schools and federate with Cradoc C.P. School was not identified and therefore considered in the options appraisal, a number of other options were considered, including federating the three schools, and other options which would result in retaining provision in Cradoc.</p>		
--	---	--	--

	<p>The consultation exercise provided an opportunity for further options to be suggested, and options suggested in the consultation responses received are assessed in the Consultation Report.</p> <p>Further options were suggested during the consultation period which were further assessed in the Consultation Report. Whilst the option to merge Mount Street Schools and federate with Cradoc C.P. School was not suggested during the consultation period, an option to Merge the Mount Street Schools and leave Cradoc as a separate school was suggested and is assessed in the Consultation Report. Federating the new Mount Streets school with Cradoc would be an extension of this option, however as indicated above, a further process would be required to federate the merged Mount Streets school and Cradoc C.P. School, and it would not be possible to commence this process until a new Mount Streets school had been established.</p>		
2 that the Welshpool schools lessons learned review paper once completed be submitted to the scrutiny committee for consideration	Accept. The report is due to be completed by March 2022.		
3 that the Cabinet be provided with indicative savings	The new estimated savings figure is £132,650 per annum,		

<p>figures for the proposal based on the draft revised school funding formula</p>	<p>which is just over £51,000 lower than the original savings figure.</p> <p>The calculation for the estimated savings is based on the new formula, if agreed, but all other factors are the same, so that it is on a like for like basis, i.e. the same pupil numbers and assumed the same change in the square meterage of the building and the grounds, and have taken account of the improvement in the building condition.</p> <p>The biggest reason for this is that the new formula channels most of the curriculum led funding through the per pupil allocation which would transfer to the new school. It's also impacted by no longer having the full steps of funding at each multiple of 30.</p>		
<p>4 that the Cabinet encourage the involvement of the economic development service to mitigate the impact of the proposal on the Cradoc Community especially in relation to the loss of a facility for early years provision, childcare offer and wrap around care.</p>	<p>Accept. If the proposal is approved by Cabinet, then discussions will take place with the regeneration team.</p>		

In accordance with Rule 7.27.2 the Cabinet is asked to provide a written response to the scrutiny report, including an action plan where appropriate, as soon as possible or at the latest within 2 months of the date of the Cabinet meeting i.e. by 14-02-2022

Membership of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee on 08-12-2021:

County Councillors:

P Roberts, S. Davies, A Jenner, D Meredith, J Berriman, L Roberts, E Roderick, D Jones, M Williams.

Co-Opted Members: S Davies, M Evitts, A Davies.