



## Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee

The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee met on 18-01-2023 and considered the following documents:

- Catchment Consultation Outcome and Recommendations – Admissions
- Appendices A-G

The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee thanked the Portfolio Holders for a Learning Powys, Finance and officers for attending scrutiny.

Scrutiny made the following observations:

- The Committee welcomed:
  - I. The Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys' offer to review the recommendation for families and pupils from Llanfihangel yng Ngwynfa falling into Pont Robert catchment, therefore aligned with Bro Caereinion, whereas nearest secondary school is Ysgol Uwchradd Llanfyllin High School.
- The Committee noted:
  - I. That whilst a parent and young person may wish to attend a CIW or other denomination school, the current Transport Policy does not include any religious element.
  - II. That Ysgol Meifod has organically aligned itself from Bro Caereinion to Ysgol Llanfyllin, a decision which may have been influenced as the only English Medium school feeding Bro Caereinion. Scrutiny recognised the desire of the local community in this matter.
  - III. That the majority of Scrutiny Members are located in the North of the County, which makes decisions affecting schools, elsewhere in the County, difficult to judge, as geography, topography and road links may be unknown.
  - IV. Ystradfallte was not noted within the Catchment Admission paper as no comments had been received during the public consultation.
  - V. Officer assurance given that thorough engagement with communities, parents, pupils, grandparents, schools, and Governing Bodies had been sought prior and during the Consultation process. However, the Committee commented that where two catchments were adjoining, there was concern that the wider community may not realise in future they can access only one school.
- The Committee requested that:
  - I. The maps used are consistent, as the use of 2 versions, including GIS, can leave distances open to interpretation.
  - II. The impact on pupils of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon be reviewed following the transformation to Welsh medium education.

- III. The Transformation Service urgently review the Offer of Welsh Medium Education, as the County has seen a drop of Welsh Speakers from 19% to 16%. In particular, a review of subjects offered up to and including Yr 11 should be undertaken. Scrutiny would also request in respect to pupils leaving Dafydd Llwyd how many continue all subjects through the medium of Welsh to GCSE / Yr 11.
  - IV. Clarity be provided if options are limited to the nearest English medium school, and the pupil choice is for Welsh Medium, is there a categorisation of options available through the medium of Welsh.
  - V. Clarity be provided on the Transformation agenda and the implementation of the WESP, with reference to moving Dafydd Llwyd to an all-age school.
  - VI. A transparent and consistent Admissions policy without ambiguity or anomaly to be implemented across the County, to be aligned with a Transport policy with specific parameters to provide a consistent approach for communities.
- The Committee remained unconvinced about:
    - I. The separation of scrutinising the Catchment – Admissions policy and the Schools Transport Policy, as the two are intrinsically linked.
    - II. Whilst accepting the federation between Ysgol Gynradd Carno and Bro Hyddgen, Ysgol Uwchradd Llanidloes High School and Newtown High School are possibly nearer schools offering English and / or Welsh medium Education.
  - The Committee expressed concern:
    - I. That irregularities may exist throughout the report, with little consideration given to the current Education Policy of promoting All-Age schools, by recommending that pupils attend their nearest school.
    - II. Regarding continued reference to Catchment Areas as opposed to Nearest School, diverting a Catchment Area line does not remove the Council's legal responsibility to transport pupils to the nearest school.
    - III. That the outlined recommendations with reference to language medium, in particular pupils in Castle Caereinion, splits a community. English Medium pupils travel to Berriew, Welsh Medium to Bro Caereinion. The natural flow of pupils from Castle Caereinion has always been to Llanfair Caereinion, road links to both schools are equally narrow and as noted above does not promote the All–Age school policy. It was requested this decision be reviewed.
    - IV. That parity does not exist within the policy as the recommendations have noted an exception for Bwlch to retain a dual catchment option.

Scrutiny's Recommendation	Accept (plus Action and timescale)	Partially Accept (plus Rationale and Action and timescale)	Reject (plus Rationale)
1 That the recommendation of Llanfihangel yng Ngwyfa falling into	Accept  Reviewed and included in final;		

Pont Robert catchment be reviewed	papers to Cabinet on 07.02.23 (appendix G page 12 and 43)		
<b>2</b> That the Cabinet seek Assurance that engagement with communities, schools and Governing Bodies has been sought prior and during the Consultation process	Accept Identified in points 3.5 – 3.11 of final paper to Cabinet on 07.02.23.		
<b>3</b> That the maps used to show Catchments and nearest schools to be consistent and unambiguous.	Accept Appendix G submitted to Cabinet contained a consistent scale throughout.		
<b>4</b> That impact on pupils following schools transformation to Welsh medium be monitored	Accept This will be as part of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Local Authority WESP.		
<b>5</b> That the Transformation Service review the Offer of Welsh Medium Education under WESP	Accept This will be part of additional work by the transformation team in 2023/2024.		
<b>6</b> That a transparent and consistent Admissions policy without ambiguity or anomaly be implemented across the County, aligned with a Transport policy with specific parameters to provide a consistent approach for communities	Accept The admissions policy is consulted on annually as per the process outlined in the 'School admissions code' (005/2013)  The home to school transport policy is to be reviewed (date to be confirmed)		
<b>7</b> That a review be undertaken of Castle Caereinion pupils attending different schools in accordance to language preference. A decision that splits a community and does not promote the		Partially accept  Parents can make a preference for the school they feel most suitable for their child / children. This may be a Welsh or English medium school.	

<p>Council's All – Age school policy.</p>		<p>The catchment maps were drawn first and foremost on nearest suitable primary, however, due to the number of Welsh medium schools / stream available across Powys the catchment areas for Welsh medium education are larger.</p>	
<p>8. That continued reference to Catchment Areas, as opposed to Nearest School, diverting a Catchment Area line does not remove the Councils legal responsibility to transport pupils to the nearest school.</p>		<p>Partially accept</p> <p>The transport policy consulted and agreed on in 2020 references nearest suitable and catchment school.</p> <p>As part of the admissions oversubscription criteria, catchments are used to support strengthened transition links between the secondary and its feeder primary. This is discussed as part of the admissions forum and consulted on annually.</p>	
<p>9 That the Cabinet seek assurances for parity across the County</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>In line with Powys' Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020 - 2030, the Education Support Services department has identified the need for the admissions and transport teams to work alongside each other to improve the learner entitlement and experience whilst applying for a school</p>		

	<p>place and home to school transport.</p> <p>All primary catchment maps have been developed based on the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. nearest school</li> </ul> <p>with minor amendments for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii. natural transport routes and links</li> <li>iii. local geography and topography.</li> </ul> <p>To support and improve the transition from primary to secondary school, each secondary catchment map has been formed from the amalgamation of each of the secondary cluster feeder primary schools.</p>		
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In accordance with Rule 7.27.2 the Cabinet is asked to provide a written response to the scrutiny report, including an action plan where appropriate, as soon as possible or at the latest within 2 months of the date of the Cabinet meeting i.e. by 17<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Membership of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023:

County Councillors:

G. Thomas, G.D. Jones, D. Bebb, A Davies, C. Kenyon-Wade, D. Meredith, L. Roberts, L. Rijnenberg

Co-Opted Members:

K. Chedgzoy, S. Davies, M. Evitts.