



Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Observations to Cabinet on Tuesday 26th September 2023:

The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee met on 20th September 2023 and considered the following documents:

Schools Transformation - Llanfyllin / North Welshpool Catchment Review

- Cabinet Paper – Llanfyllin Catchment Review
- Appendix A – Llanfyllin Engagement Report
- Appendix B – Llanfyllin Catchment Review June 2023 V2
- Appendix C – Llanfyllin Impact Assessment

The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee thank the Portfolio Holder for a Learning Powys and Finance and Corporate Transformation and officers for attending scrutiny.

Scrutiny made the following observations:

- The Committee requested that:
 - Assurance be given that pupils displaced, due to closures of small schools, would not be subject to further moves as the Transformation programme progressed. It would be less disruptive if planned changes all happened as one.
 - Clarification of the projected future numbers data included new builds, and that the information would be provided to the Scrutiny Committee.
 - That schools are not closed prior to proper consideration given of capital investment programmes.
 - Lessons learned from previous schools moved on the Welsh Medium Continuum, that the monitoring and evaluation information be shared with parents, learners, and schools to assist with future transitions.
 - Information be provided to the Scrutiny Committee on all subjects taught through the Medium of Welsh and English from Yr7 to Yr13 in every school, and that this be made available to parents and learners at the commencement of every academic year.
 - A clear timeline of investment in schools be made available.
 - Assurances be given for the provision and commitment for Cylch and Ti a Fi in the catchment area, to promote the early years learning through the medium of Welsh.
- The Committee remained unconvinced about:
 - The delay in commencement of the Llanfyllin Catchment Review and required the differences in outline from the October 2020 paper be highlighted.
 - The SWOT analysis provided, as it does not take into consideration the extensive flooding that occurs in the Bryn Hafren area.
 - The provision of clear data, to understand the pupil flow, the whole geography of an area must be understood.
 - The actual pace of transformation.

- The Committee expressed concern:
 - That this process had not given a sufficient timeframe for all issues to be addressed, nor for all Local Members to be appraised of documents to provide adequate response to parents, staff, and learners alike.
 - That all reference to Capital expenditure has been removed. It is important for Members to be made aware of the timeframe and when investment will be made, to provide our communities with clarity of plans and commitment by the Local Authority.
 - Due to the catastrophic backlog in maintenance projects, can Cabinet provide assurance that pupils will not be moved from a closed school to a school that has a lower condition grading.
 - That the Impact Assessment provided was reliant on new build projects. In reality 2 cohorts of Primary School children could have progressed through their education before new builds were completed, therefore the Impact Assessment would be deemed irrelevant.
 - That the Transport Policy is not in line with the Transformation programme, for example cross-border issues. There has to be consistency and equity within our policy for all schools.
 - Border schools need to have consistent transport policy across Powys, one that is not detrimental to Welsh Medium education. The Committee are unclear of School transport costs of transporting learners across the border.
 - There were no timescales for the pace of transformation programmes, recorded within any of the document provided, which is essential to keep members parents and schools informed.
 - If school closures are to happen, where and what is the capacity of other schools within the catchment area to receive these learners.
 - That the school transport policy was not in line with the proposal documents and catchment area maps.
 - New builds discussed need to have the capacity to deal with the proposals within the documents.
 - Needs more information to local members, realise the impact on other schools in the catchment area.
 - Of the lack of clarity within the proposals before the Committee of what the ultimate ambition is for Education within Powys.

Scrutiny's Recommendations to Cabinet are that:	Accept (plus Action and timescale)	Partially Accept (plus Rationale and Action and timescale)	Reject (plus Rationale)
1. The impact assessment provided was reliant on new build projects. In reality 2 cohorts of Primary School children could have progressed through their education before new builds			

<p>were completed, therefore the Impact Assessment would be deemed irrelevant.</p>			
<p>2. The border schools need to have consistent transport policy across Powys, one that is not detrimental to Welsh Medium education. The Committee are unclear of School transport costs of transporting learners across borders.</p>			
<p>3. If school closures are to happen, what and where is the capacity of other schools within the catchment area.</p>			
<p>4. The Committee require a response for the delay in commencement of the Llanfyllin Catchment Review and requested the differences in outline from the October 2020 paper be highlighted.</p>			
<p>5. The process had not given a sufficient timeframe for all issues to be addressed, nor for all Local Members to be appraised of documents to provide adequate response to parents, staff, and learners alike.</p>			
<p>6. Due to the catastrophic backlog</p>			

<p>in maintenance projects, can Cabinet provide assurance that pupils will not be moved from a closed school to a school that has a lower condition grading.</p>			
<p>7. The school transport policy was not in line with the proposal documents and catchment area maps. There has to be consistency and equity within our policy for all Powys schools.</p>			
<p>8. All reference to Capital expenditure has been removed. It is important for Members to be made aware of the timeframe and when investment will be made, to provide our communities with clarity of plans and commitment by the Local Authority.</p>			
<p>9. That any new build would be required to have the capacity to deal with the proposals noted within the documents.</p>			
<p>10. There were no timescales for the pace of transformation programmes, recorded within any of the documents provided, which is essential to keep Members,</p>			

Governing Bodies, parents, and schools informed.			
11. Of the lack of clarity within the proposals before the Committee and of what the ultimate ambition is for Education within Powys			

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 20th November 2023

Membership of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee on 20th September 2023:

County Councillors:

G. Thomas, G.D. Jones, D. Bebb, A.W. Davies, B. Davies, S. McNicholas, D. Meredith, L. Roberts,

Co-Opted Members:

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