

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT COUNTY HALL AND ON ZOOM ON TUESDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2023

PRESENT

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)

County Councillors J Berriman, J Charlton, R Church, S Cox, S C Davies, M J Dorrance, P Roberts, D Selby and D A Thomas

In attendance: County Councillors A Davies, GD Jones, J Jones, P Lewington and G Thomas.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors J Brignell-Thorp (Cabinet Assistant) and A Kennerley (Cabinet Assistant) and from the Director of Social Services.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 10th and 11th October 2023 were agreed as correct records.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

County Councillor David Selby advised that he would be speaking as a local member on the report on Newtown Schools Review.

4. NEWTOWN SCHOOLS REVIEW

Cabinet considered the findings of an options appraisal exercise and the engagement exercise carried out on proposals on the potential enlargement of the new building for Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to accommodate pupils from other schools in Newtown.

Based on the findings of the exercises the advice of officers was that Cabinet approve commencing the statutory process to implement the following proposal:

Phase 1: Close Treowen C.P. School from 31 August 2025 and extend Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to include the former Treowen C.P. School site from 1 September 2025

Phase 2: Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to move to a new building located on the existing Ysgol Calon y Dderwen site during 2026/27, and the Treowen site closes.

The intention was that the new building for Ysgol Calon y Dderwen would be part of the North Well-being Programme's new Health and Well-being Campus. Whilst the preference would have been to have Maesyrrhandir CP School also on the campus, continuing uncertainty over the future of the North Wales Wellbeing Hub scheme meant that this could not be included at this time.

Cabinet also considered the comments of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee. The Chair of the Committee presented the recommendations and said they reflected the Committee concerns about the proposals. He suggested that the schools transformation policy needed to be updated.

County Councillor Joy Jones spoke as a local member and expanded on her comments that had been included in the report calling on the Cabinet not to close Treowen CP School.

County Councillor Pete Lewington spoke as a Newtown member and asked for a delay whilst a plan for the whole of Newtown was developed.

County Councillor Aled Davies spoke as leader of the opposition and whilst he accepted that there needed to be rationalisation in Newtown, he did not feel that what was proposed was the right solution.

County Councillor David Selby also spoke as a Newtown member in support of the proposals.

Officers explained that the rationalisation of schools in Newtown had to be phased. They confirmed that they had been working closely with colleagues at Powys Teaching Health Board on the development of the wellbeing hub and that any delay to the proposals would lead to delays to the hub project. It was also confirmed that an active travel plan would be developed.

Having considered the report and the comments made at the meeting it was

RESOLVED that Cabinet approves commencing the statutory process on the following proposal:

Phase 1: Close Treowen C.P. School from 31 August 2025 and extend Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to include the former Treowen C.P. School site from 1 September 2025

Phase 2: Ysgol Calon y Dderwen to move to a new building located on the existing Ysgol Calon y Dderwen site during 2026/27, and the Treowen site closes.

Cabinet further agreed that officers should have discussions with the Health Board on the development of the Hub and if necessary for the Leader to write to Welsh Government to press for a decision.

5.	IRFON VALLEY C.P. SCHOOL – PROPOSAL PAPER
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Cabinet was advised that after the governors of the school had approached the council to outline their concerns over low pupil numbers and financial viability, an options appraisal had been carried out. On the basis of that appraisal it was recommended that Irfon Valley C.P. School close, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools.

Council also noted the recommendations of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee and with regard to the potential future use of the site, it was confirmed that there would be a plan in place by the time the school closed.

County Councillor Aled Davies, the leader of the opposition, asked for more flexibility in the authority's admissions policy.

RESOLVED to close Irfon Valley C.P. School from the 31st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools.

6.	DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST MEETING
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Cabinet noted the delegated decisions taken by Cabinet members since the last meeting.

7.	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
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Cabinet noted the forward work programme. A paper on the future of the Local Development Plan and the Strategic Development Plan would be brought forward, date to be confirmed. A report on the car parking review would be brought forward in January.

County Councillor J Gibson-Watt (Chair)