

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.**

**CABINET EXECUTIVE  
19 December 2023**

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Pete Roberts  
Portfolio Holder for a Learning Powys

**REPORT TITLE:** Llangedwyn C. in W. School – Consultation Report

---

**REPORT FOR:** Decision

---

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023, the Council has carried out consultation on the following proposal:
- To close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet members of the responses received to the consultation and to determine whether or not to proceed with the statutory process to close the school.
- 1.3 The report is supported by the following appendices:
- Appendix A – Consultation Document
  - Appendix B – Consultation Report
  - Appendix C – Minutes of meetings with Governors and Staff
  - Appendix D – Updated Impact Assessments

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Llangedwyn C. in W. School is a small English-medium primary school located in the village of Llangedwyn in the Llanfyllin catchment area of North Powys.
- 2.2 It currently operates as part of a formal federation with Llanfechain C. in W. School. Ffederasiwn Dwy Afon was established in 2018. The Federation has a single governing body and headteacher that are responsible for both schools.
- 2.3 Pupil numbers at Llangedwyn C. in W. School have decreased significantly over recent years. Current pupil numbers at the school are as follows<sup>1</sup>:

---

<sup>1</sup> Teacher Centre, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
<b>Llangedwyn C. in W. School</b>	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	7

- 2.4 In the Summer of 2022, the Council updated and relaunched its Strategy for Transforming Education<sup>2</sup>, and also published a work programme for Wave 2 of implementation of the Strategy. This includes a commitment to restart and conclude the review of the Llanfyllin / North Welshpool catchment, which commenced in 2020. This restarted in April 2023.
- 2.5 In September 2023, the Council’s Cabinet considered a paper which outlined the findings of the review and presented an indicative preferred way forward. The preferred way forward included the possible closure of Llangedwyn C. in W. School, however this would be subject to the Statutory Process as outlined in the School Organisation Code (2018).
- 2.6 The paper considered by Cabinet included a recommendation that a proposal paper is prepared in respect of the closure of Llangedwyn C. in W. School, for consideration by Cabinet in October 2023.
- 2.7 On the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023, Cabinet considered a proposal paper in respect of Llangedwyn C. in W. School, and approved the following recommendation:
- ‘It is recommended that Cabinet approves commencing the statutory process on the following proposal:
- To close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School.’
- 2.8 Consultation has subsequently been carried out, as agreed by Cabinet.

### **The Consultation Period**

- 2.9 Consultation on the proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School commenced on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2023 and ended on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2023.
- 2.10 The consultation document was available on the Council’s website throughout the consultation period. The document was also distributed to stakeholders as required by the School Organisation Code (2018). The consultation document that was issued is attached as Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> Available at <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/9344/Transforming-Education-Strategy>

- 2.11 Consultees were asked to respond to the consultation by either completing the online consultation form, filling in a paper copy of the form and returning it to the Transforming Education Team, or by writing to the Transforming Education Team.
- 2.12 During the consultation period, meetings were held with staff and governors of Llangedwyn C. in W. School. The minutes of these meetings are attached as Appendix C, and the issues raised in the meetings are included in the Consultation Report (Appendix B).
- 2.13 In addition, the Headteacher of Llangedwyn C. in W. School spoke with pupils about the proposal. Their comments are included in the Consultation Report (Appendix B).

### **Consultation Responses**

- 2.14 24 respondents completed the online response form which was available on the Council's website. In addition, 6 respondents completed paper versions of the response form. 3 other written responses were received, which included responses from Estyn and the Governing Body of Ffederasiwn Dwy Afon.
- 2.15 Estyn's response to the consultation is provided on page 13 of the Consultation Report (Appendix B).

### **Consultation Findings**

- 2.17 The findings of the consultation are provided in full in the Consultation Report (Appendix B) and are summarised below.
- 2.18 Of the 30 respondents that completed the online and paper version of the response form, 86.67% indicated that they were associated with Llangedwyn C. in W. School.
- 2.19 The issues raised in the written responses to the consultation and those raised in the consultation meetings are listed in the Consultation Report (Appendix B), from page 16 onwards, along with the Council's response to those issues.
- 2.20 The issues raised relate to the following headings:
1. Comments about Llangedwyn school
  2. Impact on pupils
  3. Impact on pupils belonging to protected characteristic groups
  4. Impact on staff
  5. Impact on the community
  6. Impact on families
  7. Comments about travel/transport arrangements
  8. Comments about Church in Wales provision

9. Comments about small/rural schools
10. Comments about other schools
11. Comments about finance / funding
12. Criticism of the Council's treatment of Llangedwyn School
13. Comments about the process
14. Comments about the presumption against closing rural schools
15. Comments about the documentation
16. Alternative options
17. Comments about impact on the Welsh language
18. Comments in support of the proposal
19. Other comments

### **Governing Body response**

2.21 The consultation response received from the Governing Body of Ffederasiwn Dwy Afon requested commitment to a number of aspects. These are included and responded to in the Consultation Report (Appendix B), but are also included here:

<b>Governing Body request</b>	<b>Council response</b>
<p>We have highlighted the value that Llangedwyn has provided to ALN pupils over many decades. There is little ALN provision in North Powys, hence the importance of the ALN support given by the school. The withdrawal of that should the school close will cause concern in the community. The Governing body seek assurances that the Authority have plans to address this shortfall and that it will feature in any recommendation made to the Cabinet.</p>	<p>Whilst recognising the support Llangedwyn C. in W. School has provided to pupils with ALN over the years, Llangedwyn is a mainstream school and does not have any specialist facilities to support children with additional learning needs compared with other mainstream schools.</p> <p>All schools are expected to cater to the needs and requirements of learners with Additional Learning Needs, while also ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and ensuring that learners are not discriminated against as per the directions in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Smaller schools with limited resources and personnel may be presented with challenges implementing responsibilities in line with the Equality Act – including providing diverse support systems, accommodations and bespoke services necessary to</p>

	<p>meet the diverse needs of learners. In addition, social interaction is key to development. In small classes, there are fewer opportunities for learners with ALN to interact with a diverse peer group, and experience role modelling from their peers. In essence, the effectiveness of an educational environment for learners with ALN depends on a holistic approach that includes both class size and the availability of appropriate resources and support.</p> <p>The Council recognises that, due to the geographic nature of the county, the current provision of specialist support for pupils with ALN may not be fully accessible to all pupils. To address this, the Council has started providing satellite provision of the main Special Schools in key strategic locations within the county where there is a lack of local provision. The Council's ALN Strategy will be reviewed in early 2024 in order to ensure that it is appropriate to meet the needs of pupils with ALN wherever they are located within the county.</p>
<p>The Authority's future plans indicate that they would wish to consider closing Ysgol Bro Cynllaith at some time in the future and that Ysgol Llanrhaeadr will move along the Welsh language continuum. Should this take place there will be no English primary provision in the Tanat valley. This will mean that parents may choose to take their children to England and in the long term may deter families from moving to the valley. The Governing Body wish to understand how officers</p>	<p>Whilst the Council's preferred way forward for the Llanfyllin catchment includes the closure of Ysgol Bro Cynllaith and supporting Ysgol Llanrhaeadr to move along the language continuum, there are statutory processes which would need to be undertaken to implement both of these changes. The impact on access to English-medium education would be considered at that time, if appropriate.</p>

<p>will deal with this issue in their recommendations to Cabinet.</p>	
<p>If pupils are to be transferred to Llanfechain the Governing Body seek assurance from officers that a commitment to fund additional classroom capacity at Llanfechain prior to the closure of Llangedwyn will be included in recommendations to the Cabinet.</p>	<p>The capacity of Llanfechain C. in W. School is 47, and they currently have 44 pupils on roll. However, Llanfechain have the largest numbers in years 5 and 6, and numbers thereafter per year group are lower.</p> <p>On the basis that projected pupil numbers for Llanfechain are also projected to decrease, we don't anticipate that any additional accommodation would be needed. However if needed, the Council would discuss with the school's governing body to understand how the pupils could be accommodated at the school.</p>
<p>Various Authority Transformation reports have highlighted the maintenance backlog at Llanfechain. Given that the Authority's current proposal for a new build would appear to at the best 5 years away, we would like to have assurance from the Authority that officers will commit to a detailed and funded programme to address the building condition at Llanfechain in their recommendations to Cabinet.</p>	<p>The Authority has a duty to maintain the building condition of all its schools. Llanfechain will be included in the Schools Major Improvements Programme as required. Work to provide additional fencing and lockable access gates is already being prioritised within the Programme.</p>

### 3. Advice

- 3.1 Based on the findings of the consultation, and further assessment of the options in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code in terms of the Presumption Against Closure of Rural Schools, the advice of officers is that the Council should proceed with the proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School by publishing a Statutory Notice.
- 3.2 The reasons for the proposal are:

- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers at Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School
  - Would increase pupil numbers at Llanfechain C. in W. School
  - Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
  - Revenue saving to the Council
  - The Council would no longer need to maintain the Llangedwyn building
  - Pupils would attend a larger school where they would be part of a larger cohort of pupils
  - Pupils would transfer to a school they are already familiar with
  - Pupils would continue to access Church in Wales provision
- 3.3 It is anticipated that the Statutory Notice would be published in January 2024, and that a further report, summarising any objections received, will be considered by Cabinet in March 2024.
- 3.4 The target date to implement the closure of Llangedwyn C. in W. School is 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024.

#### **4. Resource Implications**

- 4.1 The amount of funding provided to schools is driven by the funding formula. Any change to the formula funding provided will impact on the Council's revenue budget. Based on the current formula, it is estimated that implementation of the proposal would result in annual revenue savings to the Council of around £56.4k. This overall figure comprises a potential saving on Schools' delegated funding of over £91.0k and estimated additional transport costs of £34.6k. The proposal is expected to have no impact on the costs of delivering a catering service.
- 4.2 Llangedwyn C. in W. School is currently projecting a carry forward deficit of £31k at the end of financial year 2023-24 rising to a cumulative deficit of £177k by 31 March 2026.
- 4.3 The Scheme for Financing Schools also states the following in section 3.7.2:

'In order to ensure effective stewardship of the resources available to schools, the Authority may impose additional restrictions on a school scheduled to close, including but not limited to:

- Restriction of expenditure to agreed plans
- Removal of powers of virement'

The Council and the governing body of the school have been working on a draft agreement which includes spending restrictions. The budget position by September 2024 is estimated to be as follows:

	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>
<b>In year Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	(20,305)	(26,443)
<b>Bfwd Balance</b>	3,596	(16,709)
<b>Cfwd Balance</b>	(16,709)	(43,152)

- 4.4 Based on the current school condition data report it would cost approximately £90k to bring the building up to current standards, however this figure is expected to rise due to construction industry inflation experienced. If the proposal is implemented this cost would be avoided.
- 4.5 The building is in the ownership of the Diocese of St Asaph. It is likely that there may be some costs related to the building disposal service so that it can be transferred back to the Diocese. This would be in the region of £10k (based on costs of disposing other school buildings recently) and would be a one-off cost funded from the Council's Corporate Transformation budget.
- 4.6 Implementation of the proposal would require involvement from a number of service areas, including staff from the Schools Service, Finance, HR and ICT. These service areas will be kept informed of the development of the proposal throughout the statutory process.
- 4.7 Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the report and supports the recommendations. The spending restrictions included in the deficit recovery agreement will ensure that the deficit is limited as much as possible.

## **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 Legal: The recommendations can be supported from a legal point of view
- 5.2 The Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and support the recommendations."

## **6. Climate Change & Nature Implications**

- 6.1 Implementation of the proposal would impact on travel arrangements for pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. School. This could have a negative environmental impact, as additional home to school transport would need to be provided to transport pupils to their nearest alternative school. However, Llangedwyn is not currently the closest school for the majority of pupils attending the school, so the number of pupils impacted by this would be minimal – it is possible that there would be a reduction in travel for some pupils.



6.2 In addition, running a single school site would be more environmentally friendly than running two, due to a reduction in the use of heating and electricity amongst other factors.

7. **Data Protection**

N/A

8. **Comment from local member(s)**

Cllr Aled Davies, Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant / Llangedwyn / Llansilin:

It is always emotionally difficult for a small community when their school is under threat of closure and it is even more difficult when the Councils kicks all planned investment in local schools so far into the future it is impossible to see. This lack of investment will leave another generation of children in schools which are not fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century because of the backlog of maintenance issues and sub-standard facilities that they have. Generations of Llangedwyn children, parents, residents, governors, teachers and vicars have fought for the school over decades, to many to name all but I will mention a couple; John, Maureen, Peter, Debi, Catherine and more recently Norman, the community do thank you for your dedication.

I would like to thank the Head Teacher, Catherine Hart and Chair of Governors, Chris Richards for their leadership during this difficult time, they are passionate about protecting the wellbeing of the pupils and their staff. It is important that the minutes of the Governor/Powys CC officer meeting are noted, it is an honest discussion and assessment of the challenges that we all face. There are comments by the Director of Education about the impact of school size on the care, support and nurture of children and also comments on the provision of the 'national curriculum'. The funding formula is also referenced and its negative impact on Llangedwyn but the reality is that all schools currently face financial challenges, because the overall quantum of funding is insufficient for all of our schools. This was made significantly worse by the Cabinet's deliberate decision not to fund all the pressures within the delegated budget.

The criticism of staff and governors in one or two of the consultation comments are grossly unfair, and I know they are not shared by the majority of the community. There are criticisms made by Estyn flowing out of the consultations which haven't been fully addressed in the report. The analysis of the pupils travel patterns is also lacking.

But now it is time to accept the reality that there are simply not enough children in the Llangedwyn school catchment to sustain the school, with schools less than 4 miles away to the east and to the west, Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant and Llansilin and just over 4 miles away in

the Cain and Vyrnwy valleys there is provision in Llanfyllin, Llanfechain and Llansantffraid. In such a small school it is difficult to deliver the ideal education for our children and places an intolerable burden on the Leadership within that school. Even with financial support for each pupil 3 times the average within Powys it is still not possible to produce a balanced budget. I know change difficult but I have no doubt that such small numbers in a school is not beneficial for the children's education in the long term and that closure of Llangedwyn school is the right decision, I do support the recommendations.

The Cabinet in the previous Council pre May 2022 were committed to school transformation driven by investment in the schools. In the Llanfyllin catchment a series of new builds were planned, a new build in Ysgol Llanfyllin, additional ALN investment with a 'satellite Cedewain' based at Llanfyllin, a new build in Llansantffraid-ym Mechain to deliver extra CiW capacity, investment in the Welsh language. But now the current Liberal Democrat/Labour Cabinet have pulled that investment, where once there was a policy of 'investment and transformation' we now have a policy of 'slash and burn'.

Because of this negative attitude that the current Cabinet has towards education and my lack of trust that I have in the Cabinet who stood on an election platform less than 2 years ago with a promise of fighting for our small rural schools, it is difficult for me to support the recommendation, but it is the right decision as I do trust the analysis of the Education Officer team at Powys CC.

## **9. Impact Assessment**

- 9.1 An initial impact assessment was considered by Cabinet on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2023.
- 9.2 In addition, a range of draft impact assessments were produced as part of the consultation documentation. These included an Integrated Impact Assessment, an Equalities Impact Assessment, and a Community Impact Assessment.
- 9.3 These draft impact assessments have been updated to reflect issues raised during the consultation period, and are attached in Appendix D.
- 9.4 The Overall Summary from the Impact Assessment is as follows:

The aim of the proposal is to improve the educational provision for learners. However, whilst this impact assessment has identified some positive aspects, in particular relating to ensuring the best strategic management of the Powys schools estate, the assessment has also identified some negative aspects. These primarily relate to the impact on the community of Llangedwyn due to loss of educational provision from the village.

## 10. Recommendation

- i) To receive the Consultation Report in respect of the proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School
- ii) To approve the publication of a statutory notice proposing closure of Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School

Contact Officer:	Sarah Astley / Marianne Evans
Tel:	01597 826265 / 01597 826155
Email:	<a href="mailto:sarah.astley@powys.gov.uk">sarah.astley@powys.gov.uk</a> / <a href="mailto:marianne.evans@powys.gov.uk">marianne.evans@powys.gov.uk</a>
Head of Service:	Georgie Bevan
Corporate Director:	Lynette Lovell