

Appendix C – Minutes of meetings with Staff, Governors and Pupils

Contents:

Consultation meeting with Staff of Ysgol Bro Caereinion	2
Consultation meeting with Governors of Ysgol Bro Caereinion	23
Meetings with pupils at Ysgol Bro Caereinion.....	42
Consultation meeting with Staff of Ysgol Rhiw Bechan	49
Consultation meeting with Governors of Ysgol Rhiw Bechan.....	62
A meeting with pupils at Ysgol Rhiw Bechan.....	81

Consultation meeting with Staff of Ysgol Bro Caereinion

22 November 2023

Present:

Staff:

Huw Lloyd-Jones, Headteacher
Rachel Ashton-Roberts, Teacher (High School)
Emma Fitzgerald, Cover Supervisor
Sioned Myles, Teacher (High School)
Fflur Gottschalk, Teacher (High School)
Catrin Jones, Teacher (High School)
Ed Baldwin, Teacher / Deputy Headteacher
Delyth Ellis, Teacher (High School)
Alison Evans, Teacher (Primary School)
Laura Jones, Assistant Head
Naomi King, Teacher
Ffion Evans, Teaching Assistant
Llyr Williams, Teacher – Leader of Learning
Nicky Lewis, Cover Teacher
Ann Lloyd, Teaching Assistant
Glyn Lloyd, Caretaker
Sioned Chapman Jones, Teacher – Assistant Head of Phase
Mirain Jones, Teacher
Nia Ellis, Teacher (Primary School)
Rowena Huxley, Teaching Assistant / Higher Level Teaching Assistant
Ffion Williams, Teaching Assistant
Eluned Davies, Clerical / Administration Finance
Beth King, Teaching Assistant
Gwen Edwards, Teaching Assistant
Meinir Jones, Teacher (High School)
Catherine Evans, Teacher – Leader of Learning
Rhodri Davies, Teacher – Leader of Learning – Science and Technology
Elain Micah Evans, Lead – Cymraeg (Maternity Cover) / Teacher
Elen Griffiths, Teacher
Liws Merrigan, Teacher – Leader of Learning
Ffion Morgan, Teacher
Christopher Davies, Teacher
Sam Andrew, Teacher – Teacher – Assistant Phase Leader
Shan Hughes, Teacher – Leader of Learning
Mike Humphreys, Leader of Expressive Arts
Greg Jenkins, Assistant Headteacher
Rhian Mills, Assistant Head

Officers:

Lynette Lovell, Director of Education and Children

Georgie Bevan, Head of Education

Marianne Evans, Service Manager Schools Transformation

Sarah Jones, HR Business Partner (Schools)

Ffion Williams, Senior HR Advisor (Schools)

Sarah Astley, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education

Ffion Evans, Transforming Education Co-ordinator

Nancy Owen, Schools Finance Manager

Bethan Price, Cymraeg Lead

Lynette Lovell welcomed all to the meeting. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves.

It was explained that there would be a brief presentation, followed by an opportunity for discussion, comments, and questions to the officers. It was explained that the meeting would be recorded for minuting purposes but the recording would be deleted once the minutes had been completed and agreed.

Sarah Astley gave a Powerpoint presentation which outlined the background to the current proposal and the process.

The proposal is:

- To make a regulated change to the language category of Ysgol Bro Caereinion to be a Welsh medium school, to be implemented gradually commencing with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025.

It was explained that the consultation was due to close on 30 November but has been extended to 7 December, 2023.

Following the presentation, staff were given the opportunity to ask any questions or to make any comments in relation to the matter.

Member of Staff: Why is the consultation period being extended?

Marianne Evans: We had to rearrange a meeting with another school in the catchment. That meeting is now being held next week.

Marianne Evans indicated that officers had met with four groups of pupils both secondary and primary today, who had raised a number of observations and concerns. Around 120 pupils in total attending the meetings.

Member of Staff: In relation to Option 5b – to change the school's language category just starting with Reception, which was the model followed in Bro Hyddgen,

why was a different model selected here? Wouldn't it have been fairer to use the same model here?

Marianne Evans: All the options that were considered are included in the Consultation Document. In this area though, we have had pressure for a number of years about the need to improve Welsh medium secondary provision and the need for a Welsh medium secondary school. It was a different situation to Bro Hyddgen. This is why the proposal is to introduce it in Year 7 at the same time as Reception, to speed up the process of achieving the vision to have Welsh-medium secondary provision. We know though that it's the Year 7 transition that's causing people the most concern and we knew this would be the case, but we had to put it out there otherwise it would not be implemented until the 2030's if we followed the Bro Hyddgen model, starting with Reception and phasing in over 12 or 13 years. We understand that this is an area of concern, but Trochi support would be available for those who want it to support transition from the primary into the secondary. Bethan can provide information about that Trochi support.

Bethan Price: Many of you familiar with the idea of immersion education. Different types of immersion have been undertaken in Powys for a number of years. We were planning to centralise immersion here in any case as this is an obvious area for growth. The intention is that there would be a member of staff here who would teach immersion lessons at the centre in the school, which would give opportunities for those currently in the English stream, not from necessity in this catchment, but who wish to transfer to Welsh medium education later in their careers to be able to do so with intensive support from a Council staff member. Usually they work with the centre for a period of 12 weeks and pupils receive intensive provision to ensure that their Welsh language skills increase to such a point that they can join the main Welsh-medium stream following that. The support then continues for a year, to ensure that everyone feels confident in their classes. We have seen great success with the provision so far where it has been implemented in Powys and research from many countries has shown that we are in the forefront with regard to immersion education. This would mean that those pupils wishing to stay in Bro Caereinion would have the opportunity to do so. Are there any specific questions about immersion?

Member of Staff: I know that immersion does work, but my concern is around the numbers and how it will be staffed. You may not know the answer to this yet, but this is what parents will ask and what we need to ask as staff on behalf of our pupils. How will this be staffed, how will this be funded, is there funding if there are 50 pupils wanting this provision? There are children in Rhiw Bechan and Bro Caereinion and this will have an effect on them. What will that mean as if this is agreed it will have the greatest impact on pupils from year 5 currently. Perhaps some children will continue in English, but I just want to know if it's possible for 50 children. I don't think it is possible.

Bethan Price: I agree that immersion for 50 at the same time might not be possible, but it is a process which would happen over a number of years. It may be that we would need to focus on Year 5 first, or ask for expressions of interest initially, but we would hope to be able to offer the provision for anyone that wants it.

Marianne Evans: With regard to finance, for this to succeed we have to spend on immersion, we have to spend on supporting staff. This is something we have raised with Welsh Government because what we are doing here, our vision as a Council implements the vision of the Welsh Government. Therefore, we are putting pressure on them to support us as this is a new model for Powys and for it to succeed it needs to be supported.

Member of Staff: Can I just go back to the timing and understanding the need for pushing this along at such speed. From a few conversations, there is a strong feeling that everything to do with establishing Ysgol Bro Caereinion has been a bit of a rush in terms of appointments to the school and trying to get everything done. I would not want to go on without it being done properly. I worry about the speed of 2025 – basically we have a year to get everything sorted to a point in September 2025 where we're fully staffed and ready to run. I don't want to be in the position where it's rushed through and we have to pick up and get things sorted as we go along.

Member of Staff: We've already been through a transition with Ysgol Bro Caereinion. I thought there was a clause so that the school was protected in these situations?

Marianne Evans: There is no clause. There is a myth that there is a clause, however with all school transformation proposals, we do say in the papers that this does not mean that a school won't be subject to another school reorganisation proposal at another point.

I hear what you are saying about the timing and the fact that Ysgol Bro Caereinion has just been established. I expect that will come through in the consultation responses. When this comes back to Cabinet, they will have a duty to consider the consultation report and everything that's come through the consultation. At that point they could say let's abandon this proposal, let's go forward with the proposal as it stands, or they could modify the proposal, which can mean changing the implementation date or something along those lines. We're hearing through the consultation that Year 7 in September 2025 may be too soon, so that will need to be taken into consideration.

Member of Staff: A lot of the students that I'm speaking to, are very worried, they're concerned about the mental well-being of the students, they are worried about their younger siblings being split, going to two different schools, some of the parents having to move as they cannot be in two places at the same time. From my perspective I think this has been very rushed. When the proposal came out to change to an all through school why was it not stated that this was going to be

happening in a very short period of time? Members of staff have joined this school, they've left other jobs to come to this school to potentially be without a job in the near future and that's something which is very concerning. As well as the mental well-being of the children, there's the mental well-being of the members of staff as well, because we've been through a very challenging year and then straight away we've got this. I'm not saying that this is necessarily a bad thing this change, but the speed at which its going is highly detrimental to my well-being as a member of staff and certainly to the pupils that I teach, its toxic in school at the moment with some of the pupils that I'm teaching, they're in tears, they're really suffering.

Marianne Evans: I understand that, as I said we've spoken with pupils today. In terms of the speed, even though it looks as if it's coming in really quickly, when we did the Bro Caereinion merger, the documents issued at that time said that we would be continuing to work with the school to develop a vision for Welsh medium and that if there was a decision to formally move the school along the language continuum there would be another process, so it was clear back in 2020 what the Council's vision was. Our ambition to move Ysgol Bro Caereinion or Caereinion High School at the time along the language continuum has also been in our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for a number of years. So it has been in our plans for a long time, but I can appreciate that you've only recently opened as an all through school and are still settling in, and then straight after the summer holidays we've come out with this proposal. However on the other hand wearing the local authority / Council hat, we are tasked by the Welsh Government to increase the numbers of Welsh-medium, that is a target that the Welsh Government has given us, so we have to look at what's happening in your catchment and your cluster and the fact that the numbers in Welsh-medium in the primary sector are on the up.

We also have to be mindful that we've heard for many years that there is a need for a Welsh medium secondary school and that's not going away, that's an issue we need to consider.

Welsh Government has also changed the way they define schools by Welsh medium education. There are new language categories, and Welsh Government are moving to make these a legal requirement, so the whole national arena around Welsh medium schools is changing, and we as a local authority have to respond to that, but I do take your point and well-being of pupils is key.

In terms of support for staff, Sarah from HR is here, and has been in school recently too. I understand about the impact on some of you who are not Welsh speakers, although obviously because it's a phased proposal we would not see it happening overnight and there's a discussion to be had around that Year 7 transition. The fact that its phased will allow you as staff to have time to understand what the requirements are, and we will provide support for staff training etc if needed.

Lynette Lovell: In terms of support for staff, we will take that on board. We're really aware of the impact that all the proposals have on staff and children, we do not take

that lightly and we do provide support. We have an independent person called Kath Thomas who is a former Headteacher. She does not work for the local authority but we've asked her to work for us to support any schools going through any change. Sometimes this has involved talking to the children as Marianne and Sarah have done today. HR are also available to provide support for staff through any consultation process.

Member of Staff: It's important to note that it is not only English medium teachers who are affected by this process, there is uncertainty for all members of staff.

You mentioned that the immersion programme was being funded by Welsh Government, what will be the funding to Ysgol Bro Caereinion moving forward if this happens in 2025? What is the plan for funding the school?

Marianne Evans: Regarding the funding of the school, Nancy Owen is here from the Finance Team. With regard to support, we have to ensure we can fund the immersion and the support for staff. I know there will also be a question later from governors regarding capital funding for the building. These are things I will be looking at. Regarding the budget itself, I'll pass over to Nancy.

Nancy Owen: If I separate out immersion as this is funded by a grant. The authority has to set its budget overall for schools at the beginning of the financial year, that's done through a process, through Council meetings. The Cabinet decides its budget and that process then goes through to our County Councillors and they effectively decide how they're going to carve up the pie that comes through from Welsh Government money, Council Tax and any other money that we generate, but primarily Welsh Government and our Council Tax as most of us are aware.

What happens after that is that once we've got the pie and the piece of the pie for the schools budget we have to have a way of getting that to you. Welsh Government funding regulations 2010 dictate that money comes through to all our schools via a set of principles, we call it the schools funding formula. We have funding formulas in place for our primary schools, all age, secondary and a special schools formula as well. Its quite detailed, but the principles are worked through by working groups which include headteachers and governors, we have a forum that oversees that and ultimately it's the Council's decision what funding formula it puts in place to fund its schools.

What's key here in terms of funding Ysgol Bro Caereinion and any dual stream schools is that they are funded as if they are two separate schools, so the Welsh and English streams equally. If the process was to proceed, the modelling has been done based on assuming the change happens in Reception and into Year 7, and that's where the savings have come through in the report. However, most of the funding formula is driven by pupil numbers so the savings are linked to additional top-ups that we give to small schools or small streams. So a lot of the savings in the report are coming from the top-up that we need to provide this school in particular with its

dual stream element. If it moves along the continuum you would be funded as a Welsh stream school in line with all other Welsh stream schools, primary and secondary.

Member of Staff: Say if this goes ahead and our numbers in a year group drop, say from 70 to 35 if we lose pupils, we would lose funding. What do we do then to prevent staff redundancies? We cannot help that our numbers have dropped, we've moved along the Welsh continuum, but how are we then meant to stay afloat?

Nancy Owen: Most of the funding sent through to you is based on pupil funding so is a set amount for different phases of education. What the funding formula allows for is a top up for those schools. For example if you were a small school, say the primary site was 86 as an example, we would need to top you up to the next class. There are a lot of extra top-ups in the formula over and above the pupil numbers. We have to recognise the ratios in our funding formula, so if you're 86 we cannot say you have to have 2 and a bit teachers, we top you up to be that third class. There are small stream top-ups in there as well as teaching and learning top-ups. So its not as clear cut as you've lost 35 children and so you've lost £4k per pupil. The funding formula will look at whether the school needs any top-ups in line with the funding principles set out in our funding formula. It all depends on how your numbers land when you're funded, but there are top-ups in place and we have a description of the funding formula that's available for anybody. We have to have it, and we need to make sure that schools have that information when we have our budget rounds and then we work with schools on that in terms of their budget once they receive their funding.

Member of Staff: My concern is that we lose staff in the short term, but then need to be looking for staff in five, six, seven, eight years time, when we've lost good staff in that dip period through the transition.

Member of Staff: Is there extra funding to support a school going through this process?

Georgie Bevan: In relation to the WESP, we need to provide support so that we can achieve our vision for Welsh medium education. What Nancy's referring to with the top-ups, we hold that money for other elements so that we can support schools at different points in the transition journey. From our perspective as Marianne said it's a national initiative, its our vision for Welsh education for Powys and we have a very aspirational WESP, so the discussion we've had at Scrutiny is around how we use our funding as effectively as possible to support those transitions. One of the things we are doing at the moment is supporting the financial element of the work in the school as we appreciate you're still growing as a school as you're transitioning on the 3 to 18 continuum anyway.

Marianne Evans: There's a misunderstanding maybe that the English stream will disappear overnight. That's not the case, and we want every child who chooses to

come to Bro Caereinion to stay in Bro Caereinion, we don't want any child to go away to English medium provision, we want them to stay here and take the opportunity to become fully bilingual, to have both languages, and we need to work with you to make sure that's the message that gets out there, that the offer is there for every child regardless of whether they come from Welsh speaking homes or non-Welsh speaking homes. That is their entitlement, to have fully Welsh medium education in order to give them the benefits and opportunities of having two languages, and what that means for them as they move forward in life. So that's the message, it's not about expecting them to go to Welshpool or Newtown instead.

Going back to the point about pupil numbers, some parents may make the choice to move, some may not if some are staying. There's time for parents to understand what it's all about, to understand more about Welsh medium education, we can build that in. However if you look at the numbers in your cluster primary schools, currently you only have Bro Caereinion and Rhiw Bechan that have English-medium primary provision. Look what's happening, families are choosing Welsh medium education and the numbers are increasing. If every child in your cluster primary schools comes to Bro Caereinion you will have a sustainable school moving forward. What we as an authority need to do, if this process goes through is to make sure that there is an understanding out there, that work is done to raise awareness and to make sure that access to a Welsh medium school in Bro Caereinion is as easy as possible to as many pupils as possible. By that I mean we will have to look at our transport policy to ensure that pupils can come to Bro Caereinion. The case I will be making at some point is there is a difference between a dual stream school and a designated Welsh medium school and I think that needs to be reflected in our Council policy.

Member of Staff: In the consultation document it says that a lack of Welsh medium secondary provision has a notable impact on pupil transfer. Obviously we try our hardest in terms of Ysgol Gymraeg y Trallwng and Dafydd Llwyd and have a transition programme. Is there any data to support that?

Marianne Evans: Where pupils transfer to has changed in recent years. Historically the majority of pupils from Dafydd Llwyd or Newtown transferred to Caereinion, however the pattern is very different now. The data is there but we also know anecdotally that parents are choosing to go into secondary English medium provision from Welsh medium primary, we know one of the issues is they cannot see the progression, they're taking the risk of putting the child into Cylch Meithrin or Welsh medium primary, but the issue is we need every parent / family to see there is dedicated Welsh medium provision right through. That has not been clear in Powys over the last three, four, five years in particular. That needs to be addressed.

If the school becomes the Welsh medium provider this school will provide that clarity not only for your cluster but also for the wider area, this will be the provider for north east Powys in terms of dedicated Welsh medium provision.

Member of Staff: There is no data that reflects that in the consultation document. From conversations with parents at Ysgol Gymraeg y Trallwng is the reason they have not come here is that they live in Welshpool and the ease of walking to school.

Marianne Evans: We'll include the data in the consultation report.

Member of Staff: Obviously quite a number of Dafydd Llwyd pupils are attending Llanidloes High School. Is the Council thinking of doing something to encourage those pupils to come here?

Marianne Evans: Dafydd Llwyd is a feeder school for both Bro Caereinion and Llanidloes.

Member of Staff: They are in our cluster and come to our cluster meetings.

Marianne Evans: If a parent from Dafydd Llwyd wants their child to go to Llanidloes and there's room in Llanidloes then they are offered a place. And if that child is closer to Llanidloes and that's their closest school then they have free transport. That's the situation there currently. What we need to do if this goes forward is ensure that there's clarity around which school Dafydd Llwyd feeds. In the past it's been Bro Caereinion but recently it's been Llanidloes and Bro Caereinion, so that's something we'll need to be look, at because for this to succeed we need to make it as accessible to as many pupils as possible.

Member of Staff: There are two different elements to that question. It's making sure that obviously enough Welsh medium pupils are coming to the school to make this feasible, but from another point of view it means that if you have an English medium pupil and their parents decide no longer to send them to this school, that they have space to go somewhere like Llanidloes, because at the moment its deemed to be full and nobody can access it. But in the consultation document it's the only school that comes out as being good across all categories based on the last Estyn inspection. If I was a parent reading that I'd be thinking if I did not want my child to attend this school and wanted them to go to Llanidloes I can't because its full and there's no capacity. It does not seem that Powys County Council want to make that school any larger.

Georgie Bevan: I think one of the biggest challenges is parental choice, national guidance says that parents are entitled to parental choice. What I would say is that we work really closely with admissions so we are really clear around catchments and things like that, the transport policy mirrors that at the moment, we're looking at that as a step to support this moving forwards. At times there are perceptions in communities around schools, and actually what that comes down to is cluster working and that's beginning to really improve, I know that from the work the team's being doing around support for the Curriculum for Wales. From our perspective children don't get places if there are no places available, that is it and the size of that school fits its catchment size, in terms of the places and the cluster. What we do

need to focus on now is the Welsh-medium pathway that Marianne mentioned, and from primary to secondary so from 3 to 18, how that transition begins and that long game of what that looks like for a child on that education pathway. The process around admissions is really clear, it's a statutory process. If there is no space in a school and you are not within the catchment you cannot get a place in that school.

Member of Staff: How does that work for example if you are an English medium pupil, and lets say you have a child in primary in Year 5 and you decide to send them to Welshpool. Would they get transport if they live in Llanfair? Welshpool would then be their designated English medium school, would they get the transport.

Marianne Evans: The transport policy as it currently stands states that a child is entitled to free transport to their closest school if they live more than 2 miles away from the school at primary age, or more than 3 miles away for secondary. So if parents who live in Llanfair Caereinion decided they did not want their child to come to Bro Caereinion if it became a Welsh medium school, and they decided they wanted them to go to Welshpool, then they would not have free home to school transport because the transport policy does not differentiate between the languages. I'll bring Sarah in here.

Sarah Astley: Yes that's right, it's transport to the closest school regardless of language, but if the closest school does not provide Welsh-medium education then there would be transport to the closest Welsh medium provider. However the current transport policy doesn't include the same provision to access the closest English-medium provider if the closest school is a Welsh medium school.

Member of Staff: So say you move from the Midlands to Llanerfyl in a few years time, if this goes through would you have transport to an English-medium school?

Sarah Astley: Based on the current transport policy no. But transport is something that's come through strongly in the consultation response, so it is something we'll have to look at if this goes forward. Also the current transport policy was written in a time when we did not have Welsh medium secondary schools so it wasn't an issue, but now as things have started to change its something that needs looking at again maybe.

Member of Staff: In my form I have pupils that have moved from Derbyshire and the Midlands and have been living in a caravan park and they're thinking of buying or renting a house and obviously they need to know. These are big decisions for families aren't they? There is more to this than just the school itself.

Georgie Bevan: We have had similar situations in Bro Hyddgen's catchment, people moving during the pandemic, people moving up from London and cities to live but then that support has been provided to the family through the Trochi programme, and they've come in and wanted to embrace the Welsh medium education offer and that has been successful, and that support is available. It's not that you have to go

into an English medium school when you come in from outside, there is support to help you transition into Welsh medium education as well. It's a case by case situation, but we are aware of the concerns around the transport policy.

Member of Staff: Is that not discriminatory, because you have a right to send your children to be taught in the language that you chose but if you've chosen to send your children to an English school and that's not available you are then discriminating if you're not providing them with transport to the language of their choice where you are providing transport for Welsh children.

Marianne Evans: The transport policy is based on legislation – the Learner Travel Wales Measure 2007 – and is aligned with the national guidance for providing school transport, so it's transport to your closest school so also includes the requirement for local authorities to promote access to Welsh medium provision, that's why our transport policy changed in 2020 to reflect that guidance. That guidance is available for anyone to look at.

The current transport policy as it currently stands from 2020 went out to consultation and there was a clear decision making process, so if we were to go and review or revise the transport policy again which we may do as part of this development we would then need to consult on it and take it to formal consultation. If a challenge comes then it would be a legal challenge that would come after the decision on the transport policy rather than any other decision.

Member of Staff: Don't you think you're going to be getting a lot of those claims coming through?

Marianne Evans: It's been running for three years now. We didn't get that much of a challenge or accusations of it being discriminatory during the consultation. We did have people that saw it as a positive move for a Council such as Powys that has not supported Welsh medium provision for a long time.

Member of Staff: That's probably what the argument and the worry is. One of the biggest concerns when schools go through transformation is about the support that goes with that, and that includes transport and all the other things that we've discussed. We don't know how local parents might feel, and maybe they don't know that their children could go through Trochi, so for them having that transport is important if Powys can consider that. Obviously it would not be for the long term because it would not be needed for the long term, just for the first few years or something. It's that support that's going to be there for those families and those learners that don't go along the language continuum, but that they are still supported by Powys and their needs are met elsewhere, if you know what I mean.

Marianne Evans: Yes I understand, it's about providing that support during the transition, and not necessarily setting it in stone forever.

Member of Staff: It doesn't need setting in stone you know, it's just in the years that the transformation is proceeding.

Marianne Evans: Yes, good point.

Member of Staff: Staff well-being is key. What is the provision for well-being because this is an intensely stressful time, particular in terms of national curriculum and building relationships. What provision and support is there for staff well-being?

Member of Staff: I need to know that my job is secure. That's the support I need.

Marianne Evans: At the moment its difficult as we're in this consultation process so no decisions have been made. We take on board everybody's worries, everybody has worries and people deal with changes in different ways. There's a process to go through here to get to a point where we know if it's going ahead or not or if there's a change. There's a process we need to go through, and we need to make sure it's done correctly. It's our duty to make sure that the process is as sound as possible so that we can get to the right decision.

I understand the concerns about your current positions, because it will take quite a long time to implement. In terms of individual positions, if this moves forward and is phased in from 2025 it's difficult to know how pupil numbers will land, what capacity the primary school will need, how this will be taken forward, what the impacts are for teachers, what staffing structure will be required, and because its phased it will be quite an evolving process, that's what Nancy and the team are dealing with as well, they are transitioning year by year which is impacting on staffing requirements.

Georgie Bevan: From our perspective our role is to support the school collectively throughout the process. As Lynette said earlier, we have Kath there to support members of staff.

Member of Staff: Sorry in what way will support be provided to members of staff, that is what I'm asking really.

Marianne Evans: The first thing is that you just have someone to talk to. No decision will be made for quite a while and exact pupil numbers, staffing, finance, the details won't be known for quite a while. But if you need someone to talk to now, we can provide this either through HR or other means, so that you can voice and share the concerns. We may not have answers and that's the reality and disadvantage of not knowing specific situations, but we know the general approach.

Georgie Bevan: As part of your general support in the school you will have members of staff that have worked with other members of staff to support through that as well. We can provide support either for group conversations or one on one, but obviously you've got your own senior leadership team too doing the same.

Member of Staff: I'm not so convinced about what's in the school, but its not school its what Powys will provide anyway.

Sarah Jones: I was here yesterday, and we're very much dealing with the processes that would take place if this was to happen. We talk through the processes, what it would look like if the decision was made that it will happen. I know it doesn't answer the question specifically in terms of personal circumstances but it gives you an idea of what processes will be in place and how that looks. We can have one to ones with staff and provide support. We have the employee support programme 'Vivup' which is available to you, or we can signpost you to different areas depending on what your concerns are. We may not be able to answer your exact questions, but we can go through what the policies are and what the process would look like. Once this current process is over, if the decision is made to proceed, then it would be over to the school then, and there would be further consultation with you as staff about the impact on you and the school, so there would be more consultations and one to ones and more in depth discussions on how that impacts you and your role and the wider school, so we would have lots of meetings and consultations depending on what stage we are in the processes.

Member of Staff: In terms of the conversations you referred to with staff, would the structure, the staffing, the responsibilities, contracts be changed?

Sarah Jones: There is a potential that there would be changes, there always is when you're talking about restructures, and maybe if we need to look at job descriptions that are Welsh desirable at the moment needing to be Welsh essential, then there's a contractual change. So there is a possibility, I can't say that there isn't, and the degree of change would be dependent on what proposal is taken forward, how it's taken forward and the decision between the headteacher and the governors as to what that will look like. So we can't say that there won't be any changes, but we won't know the degree of change until we know what the decision is.

Member of Staff: Going forward we haven't got a Welsh Maths teacher. How are you going to provide Welsh-medium lessons for pupils? How are you going to be able to provide or guarantee there will be a Welsh teacher for every subject? There is a shortage of Welsh-medium teachers in the country. How are we going to become a Welsh-medium school if we haven't got Welsh teachers?

Marianne Evans: That's come up quite a lot with pupils today. It's a national problem not a problem that is specific to this school. The Welsh Government are working on this area of Welsh medium teachers, they're working very hard on this. As part of our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan we've also got a section on workforce, so we're looking at that and developing our own Welsh-medium workforce in the county.

I also think there's far more to do in terms of schools collaborating together. Ysgol Bro Hyddgen are moving along the continuum, if this proposal goes forward Bro

Caereinion would also be moving along the continuum, so there are possibilities there. I think we have to be innovative because at the moment we know the Welsh Government has its vision which we're buying into and delivering on their behalf, but we also know that they've got a lot of work to do to develop the workforce to meet that ambition.

Lynette Lovell: This is an issue and I totally appreciate that, but it isn't a reason at this point for us to stop thinking about that pathway right the way through. I myself am not a Welsh speaker, many of you will know that I sent my children through Welsh medium education here at Llanfair Caereinion High School as the secondary. It was made very clear to me when my children started school by the then headteacher at Dafydd Llwyd that if I was thinking of sending my children for Welsh medium education it needed to be all the way through.

What we've seen in recent years, which has already been talked about, is a significant drop off in terms of Welsh medium children and parents accessing Welsh medium at secondary school. That has happened in the last few years quite significantly. A number of children from Dafydd Llwyd now go to Newtown High School for their secondary education, Ysgol Gymraeg Y Trallwng is growing at pace and our vision for the future is to have secondary Welsh-medium education here in this part of Montgomeryshire so that parents are choosing that pathway all the way through. Maths teaching at Key Stage 3 and 4 through the medium of Welsh is essential to achieving this, but we can't stop doing this because there isn't currently a teacher here, it's a chicken and egg situation. I do understand though that this is an issue.

Within the Council, we've set up a Working Group, what we want to do is attract teachers to come to Mid Wales. We currently have teachers who are moving back to more Welsh speaking areas or other areas to access Welsh-medium secondary provision for their children, as they don't think we have the correct provision in place as there isn't a designated Welsh medium secondary school. We need to make sure that we are attracting teachers to Montgomeryshire because their children as well will get a really good education through the medium of Welsh all the way through and they'll have that pathway.

We need to be able to attract teachers, but in the short term we've set up a Working Group which HR is leading on to look at any Welsh speaking people within Powys say who have a maths degree or a science degree and are not trained teachers to see whether or not we can have our own strategy in Powys for putting them through the PGCE so that we are growing our own Welsh medium teachers in those subjects, especially where we've got shortages. And we do have shortages, we've got shortages across our primary schools and supply is short in Welsh medium. It is a huge issue for Welsh Government this area around workforce.

In answer to your question it is an issue absolutely, children have the right when they start Welsh medium education to have that all the way through in the medium of

Welsh in all subjects. We're not there yet but it shouldn't stop us having aspirations to get there.

Member of Staff: Pupils in the Welsh stream have that right now, and it's not just maths.

Member of Staff: It is an issue, and I'm not against the changes, but if there's a lack of teachers now, and then you end up still struggling to get those Welsh teachers once the school has changed to Welsh-medium, what are you going to do then?

Lynette Lovell: Hopefully I've answered that by saying making it more attractive to get people here. We've got our own strategy to work through.

Member of Staff: But in a year to come if that still isn't working the school is going to need to change again if you can't get those staff.

Lynette Lovell: It is a challenge and it's something we have to address going forward, and we're doing everything we can to address that.

Member of Staff: On the back of that, you could potentially be losing quite a lot of talented English medium staff as well who may jump ship thinking this could impact me, let's go before I'm pushed. A lot of us have trained for several years to do our jobs, it's not as if hoards are people want to go into teaching. I'm going back to the mental well-being, it's a really tough job, I've been doing it for 31 years and to stick with it, you know, it is a vocation. There are better paid jobs out there but we're doing it because we care, and Powys have got to be very careful here they don't lose good staff, both in Welsh medium and English medium.

Lynette Lovell: We don't want to lose any good staff.

Marianne Evans: That's why we're introducing this on this phased basis which will help with that, there is time to develop it, it won't be fully implemented for a number of years, it would be on a phased basis. We know the Year 7 change is an issue which we will need to look at. But the key to this is the support that we can provide to all staff. If the school is on this language journey, then we need to offer those packages of support for any staff who wants to learn Welsh or improve their fluency. That is something we will be offering too. I take your point about the staffing, but I think it's a two pronged approach, it has to be taken forward by Welsh Government, and we need to be putting pressure on Welsh Government, but we also need to be developing our own so that it's a two pronged approach.

Member of Staff: It's a positive thing to develop Welsh medium education in North Powys, this is important to remember. For years there has been a need to develop Welsh medium education. It's been in the WESP since 2016, but this has been going on for decades. If this is not the place to support and develop the language what is

our future then please? If this provision doesn't happen here to meet the commitments in the WESP, what will happen to us then?

Marianne Evans: Good question. You will know that for a period there was talk of establishing a new Welsh medium secondary school in Newtown or in the Severn Valley as the most strategic location to be able to attract everyone centrally. There are problems with that. If a new Welsh school was established in Newtown or elsewhere in the area, we're back to the question of how would you staff it? The second question is where would the pupils come from. Third would be what would be the effect on Ysgol Bro Caereinion in terms of pupil numbers. With regard to developing Welsh medium education in the county there is no choice other than doing this within the structure that we have. Financially the Council like all other Councils is facing a challenging position moving forwards. We cannot add another new high school as we can't afford it. Therefore, we have to develop from within the current structure. Being really honest, if there was a development in Newtown or the Severn Valley, I would say it would be a threat to Bro Caereinion, there's no doubt about that. That's why it's important to develop this here, as this is where the provision is currently, the best Welsh-medium provision we have, this is where we have the numbers, so strategically this is the answer to the problem.

Member of Staff: If the result of the consultation is not to move forward, what happens then? Will the WESP need to be rewritten?

Marianne Evans: Yes, it's likely that the WESP would need to be revised and rewritten. We would have to go back to Welsh Government and explain why we're not going forwards in this direction. The Welsh Government is likely to be concerned that more time has been wasted in Powys in moving forward with this, but at the end of the day we would still need to be moving to having a dedicated Welsh medium secondary school in North East Powys and we would have to look at where we would locate it.

Sarah Astley: The pressure to establish designated Welsh-medium secondary provision is not going to go away. If not here in Bro Caereinion, we would have to look again at other options, and those other options would likely have an impact on Ysgol Bro Caereinion.

Member of Staff: As a mother of two children who have been through education in Caereinion High School the standard of education through the Welsh medium was brilliant, and for me every primary school which is in the cluster or catchment can offer Welsh medium education to every child. The choice is here already, is it not? If you go to a Welsh stream you come to Bro Caereinion and you go into the Welsh stream and you receive your education through the Welsh medium. The Welsh and English get along with each other and we have to remember that this area is bilingual and there is not much population. The children want to live with everyone else. In my view my children have had a brilliant education in Caereinion school. Welsh medium education was open to everyone but parents had a choice. If you

spoke Welsh in Rhiw Bechan, Ysgol Gymraeg y Trallwng or Ardwyn school at the time, or other schools such as Pontrobert had provision through the Welsh medium. The majority of the schools in this catchment provide education in Welsh. Therefore you're saying that your going to improve Welsh education but it was here previously and the children from Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd did come here. The standard of education is brilliant and the Welsh was brilliant.

I'm very concerned for the standard of Welsh language and the standard of the English language is also weak and what is going to happen to the children with special needs. They will not be able to cope with two languages. If their parents wish them to, they will not be able to that is a fact. I'm not targeting anyone but you have to be quite intelligent to be able to cope with two languages. Over the years while my children were in school there was no Welsh teacher for some subjects. They were taught in English, exams were in Welsh, I don't remember now, but it was not good enough at that time and there were many attempts to get a Welsh teacher. I know it's a national problem but the Government also needs to think about how we're going to provide the best Welsh language education as we need to remember that the standard of Welsh language is important.

Marianne Evans: What you're saying is very sensible. If we move forward with the proposal we do not want a sub-standard Welsh education. We need Welsh education of the highest standard.

Member of Staff: I agree. But the standard of the Welsh language is diminishing and so is the standard of English I suspect.

Marianne Evans: This is an opportunity for Bro Caereinion to be the provider not only for the cluster but also the Welsh provider for a wider area. We're not taking anything away from the education that has been provided here, Lynette knows as her children have been here, also other things – Ysgol Bro Caereinion has been prominent with Urdd activities over the years. However, the point is coming when we have to look at whether the dual stream model that we have is sustainable, does it provide what families and parents need and this comes into it. Ysgol Bro Caereinion is not a big school anyway and within the school there are two streams. The same problem exists in Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, a small school and small streams.

Member of Staff: In 2010 it used to be a large school of 660 pupils and due to a change in the transport policy with buses we lost English pupils from Newtown. So the two streams were sustainable. 660 pupils were in the secondary school. If you included the primary school it would be close to 1000 pupils.

Marianne Evans: However, the numbers in schools across the county has fallen

Member of Staff: But Llanidloes has shot up to over 700 pupils according to Llanidloes staff.

Marianne Evans: Llanidloes has increased but overall numbers have dropped.

Member of Staff: The Assistant Head last week said they were almost at the maximum of their numbers.

Member of Staff: They are not as large as they were in the early 2000s. They have reduced because the number of buildings on the site has decreased. Therefore the numbers are dropping.

Regarding Dafydd Llwyd this is different, some of the children going there are not from Newtown, they come from other areas, so these pupils will always go to other schools, but we need to increase the numbers coming here. In Reception they have 38 children. We have to attract these and change the attitude of parents towards Caereinion, as many of them have been hoping for secondary provision in Newtown instead.

Member of Staff: I've heard occasionally the school being called a 3 to 18 school, but schools here in Wales do not accept pre-school children. Is a change going to come, because that's a way to get children into Welsh-medium education is to start them at pre-school.

Lynette Lovell: You're right, the 3 year old provision in Powys is in our settings. We've got a really good Estyn profile in terms of our settings. In terms of Welsh medium we're working really closely with Cylch Meithrin because you're absolutely right, that's when you need the children. We're working on getting that 3 year old provision in place, and the Cylch Meithrin is absolutely right for that pathway.

Member of Staff: There are some parents who cannot send their children to Cylch Meithrin because of work hours. But they could send them to schools due to breakfast club and after school club, and they did have Welsh medium education in pre-school. Powys is the only county in Wales where this is different, you say you want to increase Welsh education, however children do not have Welsh education as other counties in pre-school.

Lynette Lovell: That's a really good point.

Marianne Evans: The admissions to schools policy changed from 2007 to the September after the child is 4 years old. I don't think there are plans to change this back at this point. If there is no provision in the school the partnership with Mudiad Meithrin is important and we're working with Mudiad and in places like Dafydd Llwyd a large number of children attend. There is a Cylch Meithrin in Welshpool which is growing. Its important that the Cylchoedd Meithrin are part of this discussion and part of the pathway, so the support of Mudiad is very important. Some children start before the Cylchoedd straight from the cradle, and we have to get parents into Ti a Fi groups. This development is not solely for Bro Caereinion but it is for Bro Caereinion, the cluster and the wider area, from the cradle to the end of the period in school.

Lynette Lovell: This proposal is for the whole area. We've got two schools, Ysgol Gymraeg y Trallwng that is growing with numbers up to a hundred there, and Dafydd Llwyd which is still growing. Currently the drop off rate there at Key Stage 2 is significant, they go all different ways, I think the transition at the moment is to 8 schools which is ridiculous. In terms of the provision going forwards when it comes to the transport policy as well if this proposal were to go ahead and the Welsh medium provision, yes parents can chose any school, as parental choice is parental choice so they may still choose to go to different places. In terms of transport, at the moment in terms of Welsh medium provision, both Llanidloes and Bro Caereinion dual stream, so offer a similar type of Welsh-medium provision. You may not agree that they are similar, but in terms of the percentage they can offer through the medium of Welsh, it is similar. If this were to become the Welsh-medium school, that puts a very different perspective on it, because you'd have a dual stream and you'd have a Welsh medium school offering fully Welsh-medium provision for the wider cluster, so including Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd, Ysgol Gymraeg Y Trallwng, your cluster schools, and the numbers are growing there.

In terms of the point earlier about the fact that to meet the aims of our WESP we do need to develop a Welsh medium secondary school in the north east of Powys. If Caereinion wasn't to be that school then there would be looking at other sites. This is an opportunity here to develop a Welsh medium secondary school that we want to use as a flagship school for our local authority, that's the vision behind all of this.

I know its complex and I know there are thoughts but that is the vision. The Trochi point is absolutely essential and what was said about transport for English-medium pupils, I think that's something we're going to have to take back and provide support with going forward. In terms of Trochi, we've successfully integrated Year 6 pupils already through our Trochi programme who have done their primary provision in English up to Year 6 and are now in Welsh medium secondary provision. It is effective but we will need to bear in mind the points made earlier about the numbers, so there is a lot to consider.

In terms of the vision around this, the proposal is a positive opportunity to ensure that we have that continuum for our young people in the north east of Montgomeryshire, and that includes Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd and Ysgol Gymraeg Y Trallwng.

Member of Staff: Is there a plan to extend the transport entitlement, because Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon in Trefeglwys is Welsh medium. Would they eventually become part of the cluster and come here instead of Llanidloes?

Lynette Lovell: That is something certainly up for consideration. I remember back in the day when Dafydd Llwyd became a standalone school rather than a Welsh-medium of Hafren School, it was in the Newtown cluster. When it became a Welsh

medium school in its own right, the governing body requested for it to be part of the Welsh medium cluster here at Caereinion and that's what happened to date.

That would be a decision for the governing body as to whether or not they chose to move to a different cluster, it doesn't matter about distance, its where a school wants to work and where they feel they would have that pathway. It could be something going forward that school would want to consider, we don't know.

Member of Staff: Lynette you've made it plain now that everyone understands the Welsh provision argument, we've known that as governors, everyone in the room understands that. But in terms of the wider picture, Tregynon parents don't know that, Dafydd Llwyd parents don't know that, and they need to know because there could be knock on effects within those schools. There could be children that may want to move, but the long term is there will be a bright picture and we will know where we stand. As a school we'll be better off in that case.

Lynette Lovell: Absolutely and that's why for us we're doing the extra meeting as part of the consultation. As it stands the only English medium is the Bro Caereinion English stream and Rhiw Bechan all of the others are Welsh medium schools as Meifod has gone into the Llanfyllin cluster. Within your cluster Rhiw Bechan English medium parents in particular have got concerns, so that's an extra meeting that we're doing with them on Tuesday night for that very reason, to explain all of this behind the proposal.

Marianne Evans: If the decision is taken to move forward, there's a job of work for the Council to do with its partner organisations to raise awareness, raise the understanding out there with parents. That's something we would really need to deliver at pace should this go forward because as you say parents need to know don't they, they need to know what's happening, they need to know what the path is and have that certainty. We are in uncertain times and that's the nature of some of these proposals, but once we know where we're headed then we can provide communication.

Member of Staff: If the school changes language category and there is no other Welsh medium school close by, and no school which children can go to does it mean that school won't be able to close?

Marianne Evans: The debate then is how different is a Welsh medium school to a bilingual school. If we create a Welsh medium school, it's very difficult to move back from that afterwards after we have set the foundation, unless the same type of provision is available.

Member of Staff: You mentioned the Trochi for pupils. Is there going to be any Trochi for staff members? I'm English first language speaker but very confident second language. Is there any provision for me?

Bethan Price: Welsh Government have organised a secondment scheme for primary school teachers I think it was open to any teacher but it didn't really work for the structure of secondary school teachers as it was hard to backfill. That's not to say there will be no provision, I know Welsh Government are still looking at how they can offer that to secondary teachers. In the meantime, yes there would certainly be support for teachers wishing to learn Welsh. Welsh lessons are currently free for education staff so if you are interested you can have free lessons. If this proposal goes ahead then there will be a package of support for children and teachers can have lessons as well.

Member of Staff: There are some staff who need to learn from scratch, but it's the access to gloywi iaith that just doesn't exist for staff that have some Welsh. I've been on several courses in the past, but they don't focus on what we need it to from our perspective as school staff. Like you say there's lot of courses which are free if I'm a beginner, but there isn't that gloywi iaith access for us as teachers using Welsh, and I'm not as confident teaching in Welsh as I am teaching in English. It's that access that we need as well.

Bethan Price: If the proposal goes ahead, then yes we will look to deliver that bespoke training that you need.

Member of Staff: Would that be whilst being paid and taken out of education to get to that standard?

Bethan Price: If that's what is needed. There are different arrangements that can be made depending on the situation.

Lynette Lovell: It's a really good point when you're talking about Trochi its immersion isn't it and it's important that we can provide that for teachers as well, that immersive experience that those universities were offering us, things like that.

Member of Staff: Whatever is offered, it has to be related to the world of education, it can't just be talking about the weather.

Lynette Lovell: That's a really good point. To speak Welsh and be able to teach through the medium of Welsh is different as well, its being able to teach and deliver through the medium of Welsh, which is a different skill again.

Consultation meeting with Governors of Ysgol Bro Caereinion

22nd November 2023

Present

Governors:

Gareth Jones, Chair of Governors
Julie Jones, Governor
Eleri Mills, LEA Governor
Myfanwy Alexander, LEA Governor
Sian Pugh, Community Governor
Ruth Bates, Parent Governor
Dan Morris, Parent Governor
Glyn Lloyd, Staff Governor
Margaret Jones, Community Governor
Laura Jones, Teacher Governor
Trudi Bates, Parent Governor
Nia Pryce, Parent Governor
Cllr Ian Harrison, LEA Governor

Officers:

Lynette Lovell, Director of Education
Marianne Evans, Service Manager Schools Transformation
Georgie Bevan, Head of Education
Sarah Astley, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education
Bethan Price, Lead for Welsh
Nancy Owen, Powys Schools Finance Manager
Sarah Jones, HR Business Partner (Schools)
Ffion Williams, Senior HR Advisor (Schools)

Lynette Lovell welcomed all to the meeting. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves.

It was explained that there would be a brief presentation with an opportunity for discussion, comments, and questions to the officers afterwards. It was explained that the meeting would be recorded for minuting purposes but the recording would be deleted once the minutes had been completed and agreed.

Sarah Astley gave a Powerpoint presentation which outlined the background to the current proposal and explained that in September 2023, Cabinet agreed to proceed to consultation on changing the language category of Ysgol Bro Caereinion. The consultation commenced on the 19th October 2023 and was originally due to end on the 30th November 2023, however it has now been extended by a week to the 7th December 2023.

The proposal is:

- To make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Bro Caereinion to Welsh-Medium. This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025.

Following the presentation, governors were given the opportunity to ask any questions or to make any comments in relation to the matter.

Marianne Evans: I just want to thank you for how you've managed and handled this as a governing body. I know it's been tough and it will probably continue to be tough for a while. What I've seen here is a very responsible, forward looking governing body who have come with us on the journey to move the school along the language continuum. You had your parents meeting last night and I think you've been very responsible and brave. From the authority's perspective, thank you for how you've worked with us to get to this position.

I know last night there were a number of questions from parents and you have sent them through to us. If we can answer them tonight that's fine, if not we'll provide responses in the consultation report. Over to you now.

Chair of Governors: There are a number of questions that are going to arise and we want confirmation on. I'll start by saying we have got a strong governing body here, but in the last few weeks there has been an element of doubt in a lot of us. You've been through it all in Bro Hyddgen, it's a very emotive subject, it puts a lot of pressure on us all, all of our well-being and everything else.

As you mentioned at the beginning we've just been establishing Ysgol Bro Caereinion. That in itself has been a journey that has put a great deal of pressure not just on the governors but the staff who we really feel for and also the learners and the community. There's questions coming to me all of the time 'when is it going to stop'. You've got a bunch of governors here who are willing to come on this journey with you but I'll start off by saying we need a commitment in writing from you all that there will be financial support to get us through this transition period. The numbers are inevitably going to drop, we're going to be struggling with teachers leaving in the English stream because they know there isn't going to be a job for them potentially in the future. But there was a question that was raised last night about how can we maintain a high standard of education when this period is going on? The numbers are dropping. We've mentioned about applying for new builds but we need something in black and white, so we can confidently turn to our communities when we start on the engagement process. We need to bring these people who are on the fence, who are uncertain, we need to bring them with us. Otherwise the school is going to be set up to fail before we start, I'm not sure if anybody wants to add anything before we start?

Governor: I just want to start about the well-being. It's not only the transformation process we've been through as a school in the last 18 months. There was a bus crash and then losing three members of staff last year, it's been a tough 18 months, that's just something for Powys to consider. I know there's a process but like I said about that support being there, it's been very challenging.

Governor: Can I comment on well-being as well from the children's perspective because obviously with the bus crash they've had an awful time. When the bus crash happened, we did have some external support, psychological support coming in and I'm thinking they probably need that again.

Marianne Evans: That is something we can look at arranging. We will speak with the Head and see what we can put into place. We also spoke in the staff meeting about support for the staff and what type of support can be provided. At the moment support is the main thing because we are in this transition phase, no decision has been made. The support is that one to one, having someone to listen to, to go through what the process would be if this happens. Some people just want somebody to listen to them. We'll discuss with HR what we can do to help support that.

Governor: I am a great believer in leadership and being authentic and listening. Last night, the vast majority were challenging around not only the language but the lack of understanding about the direction, and quite rightly, the finances. I agree that we are likely to see a dip in numbers. We're being supportive of the Council and I think that's right because we did have our vision and we know the context, but ultimately we are a governing body for the school and we need to also take the best interests and balance those, we need a carrot otherwise it's a tough sell.

Governor: The other issue is about the STEM subjects. One of the questions that crops up again and again in governing body meetings and also last night. Where are we going to get and how are we going to be able to provide sixth form provision? Where are we going to get Welsh Speaking Maths teachers from? Parents are quite rightly asking those fundamental questions, we're very much aware that Ceredigion are making rather significant decisions about sixth form provision, but we can't ignore the fact that this community, like other communities which are relatively small, and the implications on parents lives, is significant. If we find ourselves having to consolidate sixth form provision in an area like this, it's a huge decision to make. People are very worried about that.

Marianne Evans: We'll start with the finances, then we'll come onto the staffing.

Governor: Just one more point to add, we need a strategic steer as well because people have said to me many times recently that if dual stream education doesn't work in Llanfair Caereinion why does it work in Llanfyllin and Llanidloes? It's moving quickly away from dual stream education. People are saying to me that their children are in Pontrobert, they want them to go to a dual stream school in the Welsh stream

so will send them to Llanfyllin. I've recently been doing a Welsh language project in Llanfyllin and you would be appalled at the amount of lack of knowledge about the Welsh culture that I found among the young people there. I'm not disagreeing with the trend, I'm just saying how do I answer someone who says dual stream is succeeding in Llanfyllin and Llanidloes, but it's a disaster in Llanfair Caereinion. I can't answer that.

Governor: I would like to pick up on that as well. I mingled a lot last night after the meeting, there is a perception that a dual stream school is a safety net for those pupils that can't cope in Welsh and there is the option for them to transfer to the English stream. In an area like this where we're going to be dependent on a lot of the English speaking families choosing Welsh education, I think there's an awful lot of information needed to convince them that this is the right option. One of the messages I took away again from last night was about the information needed to dispel the myths, perceptions, all sorts of things that are out there. Given that this is the formal consultation, we have asked for an engagement plan, it's not enough to just consult on something. In my opinion, there ought to have been an engagement PR campaign sustained over a long period of time to support this move and transition. It's not too late, I think we can still do it, but I really would urge you as a Council to have that in place and active.

Governor: A number of parents in Llanfair Caereinion want information regarding immersion and transition, when is this going to happen, is it after Christmas or when? I agree that there are reasonable parents who are saying that we do not know, but there are others who think that a bilingual school is one which has an English and Welsh stream without realising that the only bilingual children are those in the Welsh stream. There were only two parents who spoke in support of the proposal. One really, and one from Welshpool who was asking if we do not get education in Llanfair where would it be as Bro Hyddgen is of no benefit to people from here. The same point as Myfanwy made about Llanfyllin was made about Llanidloes, they go there thinking they are offered Welsh-medium education, do these pupils get transport for free to Llanidloes? We've mentioned transport, and if this is the place for Welsh education, this is where transport for free should be to, because the provision is not there in Llanfyllin and Llanidloes, especially if we're to retain or depend so much on Newtown children as we've done over many years.

Even if you move forward with changing Year 7 in 2025, and even that sounds difficult as we won't know the outcome until April, but it will then take seven years from then, that's a very long time. We have to be strong and brave if we're doing this, seven years is the period for children in the school and the cluster is important, that is what people last night also did not realise.

I know we have to answer their questions and every question last night came from the heart from people who were worrying and therefore we should be worrying for them and giving them answers. However, even the cluster at the bottom will not come if we do not get our act together here.

Governor: There has been plenty of doubt about this school over a period and this creates uncertainty and I worry when it is like this numbers are going to decrease. People are going to make snap decisions, I've been looking at Facebook today, some will move children from this school due to the fact of this uncertainty.

Governor: I don't think we can really discount that uncertainty drives people to make immediate decisions that have a consequence on this school and it really does worry me.

Governor: I'd like to add as well, obviously about the seven years, as a governing body we need to consider all of our learners that are currently in the school. There are learners currently that this is going to affect. I just want everybody to consider that. We've had the pupil engagement today and that was emotional, learners in the Welsh stream are wondering what's going to happen to those learners in the English stream and learners in the English stream are in tears because they don't know what's going to happen. Because you're not in school you wouldn't necessarily know that and perhaps without us talking about it now, you wouldn't know how emotional it can be in school currently for the learners.

Chair of Governors: Can we have a couple of answers for where we are now and then we'll come back to more questions again?

Marianne Evans: We will start with finance. This is a huge strategic step for the authority. This is the most significant transformation step that this Council has ever taken. As a result there is a responsibility on us to provide support through the transformation, through this difficult period and in the future. There are a number of ways we can do this. Immersion is essential if we are to move Year 7 in 2025, this is what is coming through as the greatest concern. This is the date that we are currently proposing, but if this is what is making it difficult to move this forwards, this is something we will have to look at and see where we go. However, whatever we do we have to offer Immersion, as this is essential and it's a commitment by us to offer that provision. Bethan is working hard on Immersion. We have been in discussion with Welsh Government regarding this as it's an important step for the Council, we have raised the point regarding finance for Immersion, and to develop staff. These are all things we are putting pressure on the Government about. In relation to the school budget, the delegated budget, this is something for Georgie and Nancy to explain. The school must be funded in accordance with the funding formula, but we need to recognise that the school is going through a transitional change, that is one of the key strategic moves for us as a Council.

Nancy Owen: If I start with the delegated budget as there are a couple of things in the consultation document where it refers to funding and changes to funding. As I explained to staff before, the funding formula is the methodology for providing the money to our schools in Powys and we pushed more recently with our Cabinet for a per pupil funding system, so as you drive through learners, there's more of it. It's

more reflective of pupils and where other local authorities are going for their formulas. That being said, in Powys we have different make ups of schools and we have to address that through our formula. Currently Ysgol Bro Caereinion is effectively being funded as two separate schools, so that's flowing through our formula and what that does at the moment for you in this school is it provides top up in the respect of a dual language top up. Because some of our schools and our streams are small, the per pupil amount that's driving through the formula for the core block one isn't sufficient for the classes that you need. We look at 1 to 30 in terms of the primary sector, so we'd need to top up then, we've got top ups in the formula to top you up to the next class. What's happening here with this proposal is there is a saving coming out because we're not funding or wouldn't be funding if the proposal went through two separate languages and two separate streams. However, what does kick in, and it's kicking in more in the secondary, is the need to top up for recognising a small school, so we give top ups per pupil then depending on the numbers of pupils in each key stage. What's driving through is a top up into that formula. Some of the concerns were that you're just going to lose pupils. One of the concerns before was around pupil numbers. I'm not saying for definite when I run things through the formula there won't be changes in your funding formula, what I'm trying to say is that depending on how your numbers fall, there are certain protection elements within that formula, that's just not reflective of a dual stream school. We've got small Welsh stream schools in the primary and other make ups and configurations in Powys, we can only fund you in relation to that formula through the delegated budget.

There's the other element then where the transformation team come in and provide financial support to help with transition, the dip in the primary section on teachers and the need to look at protection around that, that would come through a different mechanism of funding. In terms of Ysgol Bro Caereinion being dual or Welsh stream or if you're an English stream school, the funding formula applies to you the same as any other school and then it's about working with the wider schools transformation budget.

Governor: If this is such a huge step forward for the authority, going back to the concerns raised last night and the concerns we have about financing a successful school, there should be a commitment from the authority to protect what you're trying to set up. I've no idea where this money is coming but if you've been in contact with Welsh Government and this is linked to their strategy for a million Welsh speakers, surely there is some mechanism to trigger some extra money. Historically funding within this school, like many, isn't good enough. I don't understand why there is no money there.

Chair of Governors: I was in a meeting with some of you on Friday afternoon. We are in a difficult position and you're asking all of us to go into our community to back this. We need a commitment from the Education department that there is going to be additional money to see us through this, not just top ups. I know Marianne you spoke

to the Welsh Government about Trochi and the extra support, what does that relate to in figures?

Marianne Evans: At the moment it's £100,000 a year.

Governors: Surely that should be used on Trochi and not used to help support the school through the transformation?

Marianne Evans: That is purely for Trochi, however we do have another budget, which is the corporate transformation budget. That supports all of the transformation work. We have to submit a bid every year for this funding. However if the Council wants change to happen in schools there are costs that go with it, even closing a small school there are costs attached. I don't think it's anything we can formally commit to tonight, but it will be minuted. When we go back and collate all of the information into the consultation report, we put that in front of the Cabinet because that's where any commitments need to be made. You're making your strong case, we can't commit to anything tonight but you make the case.

Governor: Can I just make a request for us to have some information? If you look at new Welsh-medium schools like Gwent-is-Coed and Ysgol Gymraeg y Barri I know people who are governors in both of those schools. They started with 100 odd pupils in year 7 and a full complement of staff. I think we have got a very strong case here that we are creating a new provision here and the same sort of latitude should be allowed budget wise, otherwise we are going to end up with a situation where we can offer the core subjects and only one option because we won't be able to afford the staff.

Governor: I understand Nancy's predicaments and that's the current funding model and I accept that. I accept that you can't give us the commitments here, but I think we're on a hiding to nothing. We're a non-starter unless you make additional money available to support this school because we if can't provide the range of subjects, people will not come here, they'll choose to do it in English somewhere else unless we offer the whole provision, the whole curriculum through the medium of Welsh from day one. I think we have to accept the number of pupils will not deliver and fund that, so I am reinforcing all of the points. We need an additional pot of money over a period of time, it won't be just for one or two years it's got to come over a period of time.

Marianne Evans: We hear that and you make the case strongly, we'll reflect that in the documentation.

Governor: We've got very valuable Welsh medium teachers here, which they have not got in other areas. The plan would be that if it's a Welsh medium school, we would attract more Welsh medium teachers. We've also got English first language who I am extremely proud of, they need to come on that journey as well.

Governor: There was a precedent in Welshpool when we went through the transition, special arrangements were made so that we had full staff provision, even though the original pupil numbers were low. This was quite fundamental, otherwise we were planning for failure and we can't afford to do that.

Governor: I think we're talking a 10 year vision. Coming from an NHS background we've been stuck with pots of money, now we're over staffed from a budget perspective and now we're having to claw back money to come in on budget. As a school, we cannot and wouldn't want to be in a similar situation, which could happen because all of these uncertain pots of money will could then abruptly end. I think at least 10 years, this is a new journey we need a completely new financial forecast.

Governor: If I could make a point also on capital spending, I'm constantly hearing from parents 'Llanfyllin doesn't have to change in anyway and they are getting a brand new £10 million school'. If my child is in Pontrobert and I'm an English medium parent why don't I get a safety net for the language by sending them to the Welsh stream in Llanfyllin and they are going to have a brand new school built. Whereas, I could just take a massive leap in the dark to Llanfair Caereinion where there's never going to be a new school. We are arguing with our friends about this, people we've known all of our lives, people we were in school with. We are trying to make a point and we are honestly one club golfers at the moment. If a statement could be made to say there will be no new school in Llanfyllin unless they've undertaken transformational change would suit us perfectly. There was a discussion of the fact that capital should be a reward for the transformation, that should be the case throughout the county. Strategically, we've lost Meifod and one reason why we've lost Meifod is because parents are saying we can have the status quo that we like in Llanfyllin, rather than a risk in Llanfair Caereinion.

Marianne Evans: It's mentioned in the consultation document, we do have an opportunity to submit our new requirements for capital finance. We have to submit our new nine year programme by March, so that will be coming through Cabinet. We'll be working on finalising that draft programme by the end of the year.

Governor: What scope do you have to amend your current programme to reflect on the commitments to this school, to bring forward investment? It would send a really important message.

Marianne Evans: The new programme includes the development of Welsh Medium education, it includes community focussed schools and surplus places. We will be looking at that now. There will be three phases. The first three years will be projects that have gone through consultation processes already. The middle will be those projects that are undergoing change currently, and the last will be those that are further away. We'll be looking at how that programme stacks up in terms of what's needed where. We will be mindful that we've already got projects from the previous band that are currently still going forward.

Governor: What I am saying is, if this is such a transformational project, it's your key project, investment is needed to support this.

Marianne Evans: We did walk around the school with Huw today. We went down to the primary school, and it's not until you walk around that you get a feel of what's needed here. There is distance between the primary and secondary, and possibly the all-age element could be improved if there was a reconfiguration.

Going back to the list we started with, I want to move onto staffing. Staffing came up in the meetings with pupils and staff. The question was how are we going to find the Welsh staff? The response is, it's a national problem that we need Welsh Government to be working on with us, but there is also a local element that we need to be working on as well.

Lynette Lovell: We are currently losing Welsh medium teachers because they're all going to other local authorities because they want Welsh medium education for their own children, we don't have that secondary provision here. It is our vision for the Council to have a Welsh medium designated school in the North. You're aware that I sent my children through Welsh medium education, they actually came here. The head of Dafydd Llwyd at the time made it very clear to me when I started the journey when they were age four going into School, that it was a whole pathway. What we are seeing currently is a drop off, a significant drop off at key stage two. We've got drop off for the children that have started their education in Welsh medium and then are dropping off and having the rest of their education through the medium of English. We need to change that.

In terms of staffing, I know there is an issue here currently about maths teachers. I know it's really important to have teachers teaching through the medium of Welsh. But we need an attractive place for people to come and teach, a Welsh medium school is an attractive place for people can come and teach. We need to do some work around all of that, promoting the Welsh medium provision. It is a national issue like Marianne has said, the Director of Education for Wales is very concerned about this and it is the one thing that keeps him awake at night. The Government recognise that staffing is a barrier to increasing Welsh-medium provision, they have put in a number for initiatives like sabbaticals to try and increase all of that. Locally we've set up a working group to look at whether we can attract Welsh speakers locally into the teaching profession by looking at people who have got degrees in Maths, Science etc and seeing whether we can fund them to go through Aberystwyth University. We're trying to look at local answers as well, and the staff before gave a really good example about our sixth formers who are in school now and whether or not we can attract them to come and work in Powys and teach in Powys and provide them with support to get those qualifications. We do need to have a local strategy around all of this as well, that's where we're at the minute, we certainly do need to increase the number of teachers.

Governor: I'm just thinking of creative ways of getting people into Powys. I know certainly schools pay for subject shortages etc. But couldn't we do something slightly different? Could we not offer accommodation at a discounted rate or some sort of package? I'm not from around here, I don't think if I would have known I would have got on that train from Bangor and come down here, but honestly it's the best thing I've ever done. I think we need to look at strategies like that, and train our own, because you can do that. Possibly use bursaries for those students in sixth form to get them through university with a clause that they train and come back. We have to be very creative in terms of how we think about this.

Lynette Lovell: This has been a really successful strategy for Children Services in Powys. We've currently got a grow your own strategy where we take young people, students, well-being workers, teaching assistants etc through their social work degree and by the end of 2026 we're looking at having no agency staff and all grow your own newly qualified social workers. There is something around that we need to look at as a council.

Governor: We had a lot of promises when we went through the transformation process to establish the all-through school of funding and other support from the County, but it then proved quite challenging to actually get support, and the start of the opening of the new school wasn't ideal. Could we have some reassurance? Could you help us now rather than at the end of the consultation, can you help us now to try and get a Maths teacher so we can prove to parents that Caereinion is an inviting place. What can the County do to help us and make us feel better about coming along this route?

Georgie Bevan: One of the biggest challenges is not just finding the Welsh medium teachers it's maths and science teachers generally as well. As I've been listening through the last few hours, we have got connections to other Welsh medium schools and whether we can use those connections to train up a teacher we have or potentially people that we have within the school that are Welsh speakers but need that development to be a Maths teacher. In my previous role, I successfully trained up unqualified Maths teachers who were good with young people and have those interpersonal skills. You could be a good teacher, but I taught them how to teach the Maths, that's something we can potentially explore. We have got the connection with the Mid Wales Education Partnership where they do have Welsh medium support for Maths in particular, because a member of staff there has helped other schools. It's how we fill the gap in the interim and having sustainable succession planning around that as well. We'll explore those connections to other schools and see what we can do around that.

Governor: I was just wondering if you could look on your Welsh speaking staff as being a resource countywide. If we've got schools which have got 20% of Welsh pupils and they have a full complement of Welsh speaking staff, that means 80% of the time that resource is being wasted if they are teaching in English because they could be replaced by non-Welsh speaking staff. If you looked at your staff

strategically as a group of Welsh speaking units across the provision that you're providing, then you could make sure that maximum use is made of people's skills.

Governor: Say you've got a Maths teacher in Llanfyllin in the Welsh medium and their timetable is 60% would you have the authority to move that person down here for 40% of their timetable?

Georgie Bevan: What we need to do is ensure that schools can work cohesively together. We could use external timetablers to help with timetabling, we could fund something like that. One of the challenges is the teachers moving rather than the children, but at the same token the class size isn't just about money, it's about a really immersive learning environment, and when you've got classes of five in one subject, it isn't. How do we make sure we haven't got three fives in different schools when we could bring all of those learners together and have fifteen that could have a really good learning experience in a specific subject? We can explore that. As a local authority we are leading and working around the E-Ysgol model as well, which is ideal for some subjects but not for others. It's about how we transition using that model, but that would require collaboration and agreement across schools in the interim whilst we grow those numbers in the Welsh medium.

Governor: Could that be brought down to Key Stage 4?

Georgie Bevan: Yes, it could be. We've got a stream in Llanfyllin and a stream in Llanidloes, so if you put all of those streams together around the key stage four offer for example, we could explore that. We do that with vocational and it does happen in other LAs not just in Welsh, but English as well, two days a week are vocational. The children go off site to have that offer, so it can be done, but we need help around the timetable.

Governor: There needs to be a much more strategic approach across the County to education provision. You can't look at the transformation of this school to a Welsh medium school in isolation to what is happening at an adjoining school. I'm not saying for one minute go and close them all, but I don't think you can really have success unless you look at this strategically, especially in those areas like Llanfyllin, Llanidloes where the feeder schools have their voice. I want to make that point that this needs to be escalated as well to be looking countywide at what else impact and make this a success.

Marianne Evans: We're in this transition at the moment and we're going from a position where traditionally we had English Medium Secondary Schools and Dual Stream Secondary Schools and we're moving and changing a big piece of this now. We're working on this daily. Welsh Medium Secondary Provision is different to Dual Stream Secondary Provision I would argue. Then there's the dilemma of needing to make sure that as many children around Powys have access to Welsh medium provision, and in some areas it may only be possible because of the numbers that it is Dual Stream, so there's always that dilemma given the size of the County.

However, until we get to a position where there are potentially further changes around all of that, the transport policy is key. Transport has come out quite a bit throughout the day. What we need to do as an authority is work with you, work with the cluster to make sure we remove as many barriers to children being able to access this school if it becomes a Welsh medium school because that's how it will succeed. One of the barriers is the transport policy, so we will need to be pushing on that, and that's a conversation we will need to take forward around making sure that the transport policy recognises the difference between Welsh medium, Secondary and Dual Stream provision.

Georgie Bevan: Another point around that is cluster working. The teachers talked about certain clusters not coming to Bro Caereinion. So as part of the transition around curriculum for Wales, that clustering networking has begun, cluster plans have been written. It is about the face of Bro Caereinion as well, working with those schools. I was in a school with a very similar financial situation and we really proactively went into those schools to try and engage those learners, and I think that's a big part of the work, we can support with that but it is going to be a big part of the work.

Marianne Evans: Not speaking on behalf of the cluster primaries, we do know there's support for this within the cluster primaries, maybe not all of them but in general there's support. This isn't just the development of a new version of Bro Caereinion it's the development of a new secondary Welsh medium provision for North East Powys and everybody has a part to play. It's not all on your shoulders to make sure it's a success, there's cluster working going on maybe wider than just your cluster as well, it is that kind of strategic development.

Governor: If Caereinion after the consultation didn't become a Welsh school, would the county be looking at another secondary school in the area to becoming a Welsh School?

Marianne Evans: We would still have to look at that.

Sarah Astley: If it doesn't happen here following this consultation, the pressure to establish a Welsh-medium secondary isn't going to go away.

Governor: We haven't got a choice really because if Llanfyllin or Llanidloes became Welsh-medium, then the Welsh would go from here.

Marianne Evans: The numbers work here because your primary sector is growing and you need all of the pupils to come here, that's why we need the transport links. It will take a while and it won't happen overnight, but the end result we would hope for is for everybody who wants Welsh Medium provision within this area, maybe wider, to choose Bro Caereinion.

Governor: My point is about branding, there's such an opportunity here to make this your flagship, a really fantastic tool for future generations. It's not going to impact my own children because they're in it now, and somebody made the point eloquently that those who are in the education system are actually taking the burden for the future. Your messaging has to be now and around this being a once in a lifetime opportunity, we are going to invest in this, and really bringing in what bilingualism means. There was a lack of understanding around for example, studying history in Welsh, does that mean you can only do your exams in Welsh? If you're struggling there's an option you do it bilingually. There's a marketing branding campaign, but the other one that came up also was special needs, there is concern that if your child is in English-medium and has special needs, and it was forgotten last night about the children in Welsh-medium who have special needs, this needs to serve both of these and it does because it's bilingual and I think you need to hear that message because it came out last night.

Governor: Obviously we're got the Ysgol Gymraeg for us, which is the consultation at the minute, but the reality is the whole education system in Powys is going to be have to be reviewed, economically it's not sustainable. Dual stream schools you would question, are they sustainable? I think potentially in the next 10 years Llanfyllin and Llanidloes potentially may go through a similar process, Llanfyllin Primary School is already going through a process. We're almost at the start of the process and I think if parents heard that actually this is the first step of many in North Powys, they might think differently. I'm thinking ahead but it's important because Llanfyllin of today may be very different in 10 years time. Then this school will be 10 years ahead of the game, because we'll have hopefully an established stable school, that is a good place to go to because we've already done the work, we've got ahead of the game. I don't think parents understand that actually this is the beginning of a big, long journey for Powys. I think that needs to be told to the community, don't be fooled into thinking Llanfyllin and Llanidloes are actually a safe place to go to.

Marianne Evans: The transformation strategy is based on having secondary provision in all 13 localities or the 13 current secondary locations. What we're saying in the strategy is we'll need them to change to become all age which you have already done, Llanfyllin have done, Bro Hyddgen have done, so that's the current strategy that was written three years ago. There may be a requirement to review whether that is still a sustainable strategy going forward, given that we are now facing really difficult times, as many other Councils are. There will probably be a review on that. One of the things we've always said when looking at secondary schools is that until you understand where the Welsh Medium provision is going to be and what it's going to look like, you can't move the other bits of the jigsaw. What we've said in the WESP is that we need three schools. Bro Hyddgen is on the journey, we're consulting on this one, we're taking papers through to Cabinet very soon on somewhere else in Powys.

Governor: The other one is in the south?

Marianne Evans: Yes.

Governor: What you're saying is, once these have been established, everything else will then be looked at, but I don't think parents understand that. If I was a parent hearing that I would think although it's a rocky road at the moment long term, especially if you've got a child who's four years old, the long journey would be different to those in there middle bit of education now. Hopefully for those that are four years old now, by the time they get to Year 7, this place should be in a good place. That's the message parents actually need to hear. Although we don't know the future, it probably will not look like anything today, I think that's all you can say.

Marianne Evans: That is all we can say, and I think there will be further communications and engagements coming out generally of the Council going forward.

Governor: You need to get people thinking because at the minute, they think Llanidloes and Llanfyllin are there in their current forms forever, which I don't think they will be.

Georgie Bevan: We are meeting with Heads and Chairs of Governors next week with the 151 officer to discuss the current financial year and the pressure it will be putting on all schools.

Governor: Maybe put it in the County Times, that's what people read. I think people need to know the reality of the situation.

Governor: Are you able to share any answers that you're giving us tonight more widely with parents and students before the end of the consultation?

Marianne Evans: We can't share anything apart from what's gone out. This meeting will be recorded and the minutes will be available. I think this is the difficulty with the situation. To make sure that the consultation is robust, everybody needs the same level of information at the same time. We've talked about FAQ's but the difficulty with that is we're so close to the end of the consultation now and it would be difficult to ensure that everyone gets the same information at the same time. However, once things progress, if the decision is to go forward there will need to be more communications activity to raise awareness.

Governor: People will then be able to see the responses to the questions and comments that have been raised during the consultation, won't they? These will be provided after the end of the consultation period?

Sarah Astley: There are a lot of points, questions and observations that have come in. They will be pulled together in a detailed report, which will include the Council's response to the points, however we appreciate that this isn't particularly user friendly

and it may be difficult for people to get the information they want, so we can look at maybe creating a simpler version which pulls out the main points.

Governor: Going forward, there should be case studies. I think people really relate to examples.

Lynette Lovell: That's a really good point. We've got examples already of Trochi within Powys. You all know of Dan Lydiate the rugby player where, his brother's children came through Trochi and are quite happy to share their story. They went from English-medium in Year Six and Year Four and a younger pupil. The Trochi that we provided was really successful, they went into the Welsh Stream in Trefonnen and now are in the Welsh Stream in Builth and are top of the set. They were saying how much it's changed the children's options and life opportunities, the parents are going to come and speak to Cabinet for us. It's those case studies that we need to share, as late as year six it can happen. That's really important for parents to hear, particularly as there are concerns and worries about that. In terms of Trochi at the moment we have groups of about twelve, it's about making sure we've got that provision. If the proposal goes through, we need to look at the current year five and get something in there as soon as possible.

Governor: Since we're talking about a long term plan, one of the issues that's going to crop up again and again is the future of A Levels. That's going to become an increasingly big deal, which is going to confuse all parents. From this school's point of view, it could be strategically advantageous if we were able to offer the International Bacc in Welsh.

Governor: We have the Welsh Bacc now.

Governor: Yes, I'm talking about the International Bacc, which is recognised by all of the UK Universities. What I am saying is we need to include that discussion as well, but we need to be very clear about it early on because that will give people reassurance about the sixth form provision.

Governor: I think if we are being ambitious, Newtown College or NPTC hardly offers anything through the medium of Welsh so isn't there an ambition. Rather than transferring students to NPTC, to Newtown for whatever subject they choose, couldn't we aspire for the school trying to offer Welsh medium provision here on this site?

Governor: The drop out rates are 2.5 times higher for children who go from Welsh Medium to non Welsh Medium vocational courses, I've raised it with the Welsh Language Commissioner. It's a scandal, but nobody cares because they are more interested in A level provision. If a child can't get an engineering qualification, and these are the young people that actually remain in our communities – they're not living in Canton, they're in Llanfair Caereinion. If we can't get them to get the vocational qualifications they need, and Newtown have been approached by this so

many times to ask whether they could at least provide the key skills through Welsh, those learners can't continue, and they leave. That is a scandal and we should do something about it.

Georgie Bevan: We are already working with NPTC on this, the centre for alternative technology as well. We work with them to get an offer together and to be delivered through the medium of Welsh as well. The 14 plus lead did get together resources for assemblies and we have captured pupil voice. Currently we are also doing a curriculum mapping exercise for key stage four, as we know it's not equitable, we know it isn't where it needs to be. I think the challenge then is how we transition to the Welsh provision that has enough learners in it for us to be able to offer such a comprehensive offer. The challenge of vocational is the equipment needed and that is why the colleges provide it. NPTC know themselves that they need to consider the Welsh medium and provision and we're working with them on that. They are having the same challenges we are having around Welsh medium recruitment, I know there isn't an alternative option though so it is more about a strategic approach. The issue is when we keep doing this in each school, we need to look more cohesively around that.

Governor: Slightly different aspect, I'm going back to before about Dan Lydiate's family. You said that pupils moved into the Welsh stream at Year Six, that is potentially going to be our students by 2025, and you were saying that they've done so well but maybe some students won't be doing so well. What is the County's vision for them coming to the end of Year 11? If they are struggling students will they be expected to do their GCSE's in Welsh? What is your vision on that?

Georgie Bevan: We have that in other subjects, with Maths and English. It would be a specific element of intervention that's required, and for some learners that is an alternative model. In terms of how that looks, that's currently the situation in any secondary school. I think that's a valid point, but it is about how we intervene along the way before it gets to that point. You identify your learners much earlier on if they're struggling with specific elements of the curriculum and you might seek alternative provision or a learning coach at an earlier age. We hope that no one gets to that point.

Governor: The reality is they're going to as it's not easy to do GCSE's if it's not in a language you've spent your whole life speaking, so if they're changing the language they're learning in at that age, there's going to have to be an awful lot more intervention than there is currently. It is tough learning anyway so it's going to need an awful lot more intervention, a lot more teachers to teach and a lot more support staff. They're not going to make the progress in those five years and they aren't going to change their language at that point are they?

Governor: As part of our vision, we've said technically we want specific staff in each year as well as non-teaching staff. I'm really interested in the Trochi in terms of how long it actually lasts and could we have staff members from the school shadowing

your experts? Then they can continue supporting those children. Also is there a mechanism for somebody who is struggling to pick up Cymraeg in that window that you've designated, could we then extend the Trochi for this individuals? It's those sort of questions that parents are asking, in our vision it's blue sky thinking. It's having those key personnel in those phases, helping parents, having volunteers coming in just to support the children, to have groups for parents who are worried about that leap of faith they make, there's a lot we can do within the school. I know there's a cost element involved in it, like I said before we have an opportunity to do something different here and we should really grab and go for it, despite everything that's coming our way. In my view, there will be some staffing obligations. You're not going to have the same compliment of staff in school after 2025. You can shift staff to different roles to support this, but they need to be involved in the Trochi methodology and what support those children have going through.

Governor: Last night it was interesting, one of the questions was about how do the different streams do in exams. There's a 20% difference in most subjects between the English Medium and the Welsh Medium. If those stats were published today you'd have them coming in droves but I'm not sure if we can do that. It's known, the children from Welsh Medium do better in English as a subject, therefore it just shows what bilingualism does wire the brain. Whatever language you're using you're going to struggle with some subjects and of course that's where you need the intervention because there are children that can't do maths but are top of the class in English.

Governor: On the flip side of what was said last night, things you see on Facebook is what people interpret and what I've seen is people have interpreted less investment in the English. That's what they're saying is that we're not investing enough into the English, and you can see their argument. I think that again comes from the need for education and the benefits that could come into communicating with the community and educating them even more because they don't understand.

The second point that nobody has mentioned tonight is sport and funding towards that. Sport will bring bums on seats, it's a fact and even those who are opposing, I think if we had the facilities such as a new pitch, leisure centre that doesn't have a hole in the roof I think we will get more people. I just want to make a point also that I think funding for sport has to go hand in hand with this.

Chair of Governors: That will be fed into the Leisure review.

Governor: Can I just make two points please? Retention of staff is an issue for me as we transition because we have a duty as a school to provide a dual stream provision during that transition. If I was an English speaking teacher I would be looking at the first opportunity to get out of here because although we'll provide support for learning, not everybody can learn Welsh to that standard. Retention of staff needs to be something that captures all of that. My second point is I'd like to know what happens if this community doesn't choose to go down this route, what becomes of this school beyond that?

Marianne Evans: If your numbers drop significantly? If we take the proposal forward and the numbers don't come forward, it's a long term plan and we need to establish the Welsh-medium secondary provision in particular. We know it may be smaller than what it is currently, and it's difficult at the moment as it's only consultation. But if it goes forward, we don't want anybody to leave Bro Caereinion, we want pupils to come here and those pupils in the primary to have the Trochi and stay here, and we want to sell it in a positive way. We have to recognise that it may be a small school and it may be small for quite a number of years.

Lynette Lovell: I think in terms of that as well, we've got work to do around Dafydd Llwyd, Ysgol Gymraeg Y Trallwng. Children from those schools are not seeing a clear pathway through, so they're looking at other options. If Bro Caereinion was to become Welsh Medium this would be the school that the transport would come to, so that would change all of that.

Chair of Governors: That needs to start now, not two years down the line.

Marianne Evans: We have a very vibrant early years provision in Dafydd Llwyd so the numbers are strong. We have also got Ysgol Gymraeg Y Trallwng that are hitting the 100 mark, the momentum with that school and the leadership, that school is going to be full before we know it.

Governor: It's the transition, I think that's where we need to target our message.

Marianne Evans: We'll collate everything now after the consultation, we have a couple more meetings next week and then finish on the 7th December and we'll respond back then in the new year.

Governor: I think we do need to mention, the children who choose to continue in English. This question came up a lot last night actually and at the moment they would have to pay to go to an alternative school. This is a concern.

Marianne Evans: That will be noted and explained.

Chair of Governors: I think we will wrap this up now, just a couple more points. We've talked about the transport which is good. The speed of transformation, a lot of people have said to me yes we've got to be brave. Year 7 in particular is a concern, but maybe some would buy into it. In the vision it was 2027, so that needs looking at. I'm really glad that you're going to Rhiw Bechan to speak to them because it's so important.

Governor: Most of the points I've got listed here have been discussed, thank you for coming tonight. I can't get away from the fact that the community needs to be brought with us on this, this isn't just us governors. If this is to succeed, the wider community has to buy into this. The engagement has to happen.

Chair of Governors: Thank you for agreeing to come into school today. One of the big things that came out of last night was the pupil engagement and we all mentioned it and spoke to the team and you have agreed to come back in next week.

Marianne Evans: We met with over 100 pupils today and it was really valuable. We had four sessions, two with secondary pupils and two with primary pupils. All of them were very vocal but we've got similar themes coming through from everyone. We had a chat with Huw and have agreed that the school will facilitate further feedback from the pupils, and will ensure that this comes through to us.

Governor: I've done that before with a consultation. Getting pupils in PSE to write down their views individually and send it to the team, and then you have every single child's response, I think that would be a good way of managing it.

Marianne Evans: One of the things we picked up today in the pupils as well, was the themes were the same. Even if it was from the Welsh group or the English group. However it was difficult for some pupils to voice their opinions, you could see that there was peer pressure.

Sarah Astley: It was clear too that some pupils had some positive points but didn't feel comfortable that they could share those.

Marianne Evans: If they write something down individually then everybody gets to have their say.

Headteacher: Marianne you also mentioned that the 120 pupils you met today is more than you've met in any other consultation?

Marianne Evans: Yes that is correct, this is significantly more pupils than we've spoken to in any recent consultation. The level of preparation that they'd all done was great as well.

Sarah Astley: Also almost everybody that was in the sessions said something, whereas often one or two say a lot and everyone else is quiet, but today almost everybody contributed.

Marianne Evans: We were very impressed with the quality of questions and their behaviours. The primary ones in particular were excellent.

Chair of Governors: Thank you to all of the Governors and the Powys Officers for coming tonight. Please take into consideration what we've said tonight, you've got a governing body here that wants this to work.

Meetings with pupils at Ysgol Bro Caereinion

22 November 2023

Officers present: Bethan Price, Marianne Evans, Sarah Astley

As part of the council's proposal to change Ysgol Bro Caereinion's language category, meetings were held with 4 groups of pupils, to give them the opportunity to give the Council their views on the proposal.

Each meeting began by explaining the council's proposal, and explaining the purpose of the consultation period, which was to gather views on the proposal.

Meeting 1 – Welsh medium secondary pupils – 12.00 – 12.50

25 pupils attended from years 7 to 13

After explaining the proposal and the process, pupils were asked to comment on the proposal:

Do some of you think the proposal is a good thing? If so, why do you think so?

- Parents in the area are already opting for Welsh language rather than English language education
- There are a lot of Welsh people in the area but not many English people
- There is an increased demand for Welsh language education
- Welsh language education is increasing in a lot in schools such as Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd
- There is a need for a Welsh language school in the county. If the school isn't in Llanfair, it will happen somewhere else, and and that will close Ysgol Llanfair.

What about the not-so-good elements of the proposal? Why do you think it's not a good thing?

- The school is small anyway – where are the children going to come from?
- Where are the Welsh teachers going to come from? No one is currently available to teach maths in Welsh – already the school is struggling to recruit teachers who can teach in Welsh
- There is already a Welsh and English stream in the school, why is it necessary to remove the English stream? It would create a rift / conflict in the community
- What if people can't cope in Welsh language education? What would happen to them?

- The choice of Welsh language education is already here – I don't think it's necessary to remove the English stream
- Taking children out would be taking money out of school – who is going to come there to replace the children who leave?
- Parents are worried that they won't be able to help with homework etc.
- Concern about the impact on children with special needs. Due to the two-stream model, pupils with some needs can move into the English stream if necessary, but if the change were to happen, they would need to move to another school.

What other questions do you have about the proposal?

- Would all staff have to be able to speak Welsh, or was it just teaching staff? What about kitchen staff etc?
- Would this happen if money was not in short supply?
- What additional opportunities would pupils have in a Welsh language school to compare it to a two-stream school?
- Would children be expected to speak Welsh during break time etc?
- If this change doesn't happen, what is the future of the school?
- Where would the English children go because most of the other schools in the area are full.
- How much would it cost to pay for buses to other schools for English medium children? Who would pay for this?
- Is this more to secure the future of the school or to tick a box with the Government?
- If this happens and extra money comes, what will you spend it on?

Other comments

- I've learned a lot from this conversation today, I don't think people in the community understand
- At the moment a lot of kids think they're going to be thrown out of school – maybe there are wrong messages going around the place.
- Some of the people who have put their children into Welsh language education have done so because they think the medium of language will change.
- We should put more emphasis on pupils in the English stream speaking better Welsh– many friends say they can speak Spanish better than Welsh!
- In recent years, there hasn't been enough support for children with special needs – there's been no money to support them. If there was enough funding, some of those children wouldn't have to move into the English medium.

Pupils were reminded that the consultation runs until 7th December and that they can forward any other comments they have to the team so they can be considered in the consultation.

Meeting 2 – English-medium Primary Pupils – 1.25 – 1.55

35 pupils were present who currently attend English-medium classes in the school's primary phase.

After explaining the proposal and the process, pupils were asked to give their views:

Why do you think the proposal isn't a good idea?

- It's not fair, it feels like Welsh is taking over
- English learners have already learnt English, don't know that much Welsh - might be difficult for them to learn enough Welsh
- The school might have to close if not many people come here
- Some children might move schools, which might mean that they would lose friends
- People have been here a long time and would miss the teachers
- Why change it now? It's been like this for a long time
- It would affect a lot of people
- It would affect other learners from other schools that come to the school's secondary phase
- It will affect people's education it will interfere with pupils education if they have started in English
- It will make learning harder for non Welsh speakers
- English people will be sad because they have to learn Welsh
- It will make every learning session harder, and new starters will find it harder to learn
- Concern that it would be hard to do exams in year 11 because they would be in Welsh
- Some of the English teachers might lose their jobs
- Pupils might be scared if they have to move schools
- Concern about homework – pupils might not Welsh speaking people at home to help with homework
- Not a good idea because there aren't Welsh speaking maths teachers

Is there anyone who thinks there would be anything good about this idea?

- English people could learn more languages
- It would encourage more people to use Welsh

Officers explained that if the proposal moved forward, 'Trochi' provision would be available to enable pupils taught in English at the moment to learn Welsh and move into the Welsh stream. The following questions / comments were made about this provision:

- If we did the Trochi provision, would we learn enough Welsh to go to high school here?
- Is there 'trochi' for pupils to move to the English stream?
- Can the Trochi be done online?
- Would the Trochi be in school hours
- How long does it take to learn Welsh on Trochi?
- Where will the Trochi be?

Other questions about the proposal

- Would the current year 6 be the last year that could have English-medium secondary provision?
- Why not go full English?
- Would pupils in year 8 in the secondary be able to still have English education?
- Why does it have to be in Llanfair?
- Would there be a new uniform?
- Will we have to have Welsh speaking dinner ladies?
- Is it a vote?
- How are you going to keep the pupils in the English so that they don't move schools?
- When would we know whether it will happen?

Other comments

- Pupils are worried about this possible change
- Some pupils might have to move to go to English-medium schools
- Some teachers might leave because they don't speak Welsh
- It's good to have options to do Welsh or English

Explained that the consultation will continue until the 7th December, pupils were encouraged to write down any comments they have if they think of anything else and hand these to their teachers who will ensure that they are sent on.

Meeting 3 – Welsh-medium primary pupils – 2.05 – 2.35

There were 34 pupils in attendance who attend Welsh medium classes in the primary stage of the school.

After explaining the proposal and process, pupils were asked to give their views:

Why do you think the proposal would be a good idea?

- Everyone would have a Welsh language education and be able to speak Welsh

- People who only speak English will be able to learn Welsh
- If we don't do this, the Welsh language will die
- There would be an opportunity to get more Welsh children to come here
- If you have friends in the English stream, you can't speak Welsh with them at the moment, but everyone would be able to speak Welsh so it's a good thing

Why do you think the proposal isn't a good idea?

- It wouldn't be fair to the children in English class because they would have to go to another school
- We'd lose friends if they moved school
- The school might lose a lot of pupils and the school would have to close
- It wouldn't be fair to mums and dads if siblings were educated in different languages / different schools
- Children would have to travel further to get an education in English
- There may not be enough children to do a sports team if the English children leave
- The English children would be forced to do something they don't want to do
- Many English teachers may leave the school

Other questions / comments

- What will happen to English stream classes?
- Where will the English teachers go?
- Is it only Ysgol Bro Caereinion which is becoming a Welsh school?
- Will it affect children who are already in high school?
- What if all the children leave school and there aren't enough children left?
- Why do you put money before the children's education?
- Will this affect children who are already in high school?
- Will people who live here have to go to Welshpool?

It has been explained that the consultation will continue until 7th December. Pupils have been encouraged to write down any other comments they may think of, and to give these to their teachers, who will ensure they are forwarded.

Meeting 4 – English-medium Secondary Pupils – 2.35 – 3.25

Around 22 pupils were present from all year groups.

After explaining the proposal and the process, pupils were asked for their views:

Why don't you think this is a good idea?

- This is a bilingual area, this would split the area
- The proposal would take away choice

- Children are already finding it hard to cope in English
- It's unfair to the English-medium pupils and staff
- Concern that teachers that don't speak Welsh would be out of a job
- It will affect younger learners who have older siblings – they may have to go to different schools
- Siblings and friends would be separated
- A lot of pupils don't have anyone that speaks Welsh at home so it would be more difficult for them to do homework etc
- It would result in a big divide in the community
- It might be hard for pupils to make friends if they have to move to a different school
- Where would the staff come from? Already struggling to get a Welsh speaking maths teacher
- A lot of parents choose the Welsh stream because the safety net is there to move to the English stream if needed, however this safety net would no longer be there
- Some pupils move to the English stream later on in high school to do GCSEs ready for university etc – they wouldn't be able to do this.
- Some parents in the area have put their children in Welsh-medium in the primary knowing that they could move to English-medium in the secondary
- Pupils would have to get up earlier to get to school
- The current model means that Welsh and English medium pupils help each other to develop skills in both languages
- Concern that all the teachers will leave, then no pupils could come here, then there would eventually be no school
- It would be more difficult for pupils to transfer to university if they have been through Welsh-medium education
- It would be more difficult for pupils with additional needs e.g. pupils with dyslexia who already struggle learning in English
- Concern that pupils with additional learning needs would have to go to other schools like Welshpool and Newtown
- Concern that pupils with additional learning needs would have to go to different schools than their siblings / friends

Is there anything you think would be good about the plans?

No comments were made.

Other questions

- Pupils have their lessons in Welsh already, so what's the problem?
- Why our school not other schools like Llanfyllin?
- Would the primary turn Welsh too?
- Why not make a new Welsh school somewhere else?
- Is the only reason this has come about because of funding?

- Will the Council change the catchment areas? Parents can't afford to drive their children to school twice a day.
- Where would the pupils go?
- Has the Trochi provision that's being proposed proven effective?

Other comments

- A lot of parents have only put their children in the Welsh stream because they thought the language would change in the future
- Some Welsh-medium children might have to be moved from the school if their siblings move
- Pupils want to do GCSEs in English
- Pupils are being pushed / forced into the Welsh-medium
- Teachers are already leaving the school because of this, which is causing disruption to current pupils in exam years
- Llanfair is strong for Welsh second language
- The Welsh-medium pupils at Llanfair get treated better – more trips, get to go on the bus for free, they had a new block built for them.

Explained that the consultation will continue until the 7th December, pupils were encouraged to write down any comments they have if they think of anything else and hand these to their teachers who will ensure that they are sent on.

Consultation meeting with Staff of Ysgol Rhiw Bechan

28 November 2023

Present:

Staff:

Allyson Whitticase, Headteacher
Christine Watkin, Teaching Assistant
Emma Jerman, Teacher
Margaritta Lovell, Deputy Headteacher
Owain James, Teaching Assistant
Gwen Davies, Teacher
Elin Watkin, Teaching Assistant
Stephanie Lea, Teaching Assistant
Emma Langford, Teaching Assistant
Becca Edwards, Year 5/6 Teacher
Angela Jones, LSA
Terri Owen, Teaching Assistant

Officers:

Marianne Evans, Service Manager Schools Transformation
Sarah Astley, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education
Ffion Evans, Transforming Education Co-ordinator
Eurig Towns, Service Manager for School Improvement
Bethan Price, Cymraeg Lead

Marianne Evans welcomed all to the meeting. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves.

It was explained that there would be a brief presentation with an opportunity for discussion, comments, and questions to the officers afterwards. It was explained that the meeting would be recorded for minuting purposes but the recording would be deleted once the minutes had been completed and agreed.

Sarah Astley gave a Powerpoint presentation which outlined the background to the current proposal and the process.

The proposal is:

- To make a regulated change to the language category of Ysgol Bro Caereinion to be a Welsh medium school, to be implemented gradually commencing with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025.

It was explained that the consultation was due to close on 30 November but has been extended to 7 December, 2023.

Following the presentation, staff were given the opportunity to ask any questions or to make any comments in relation to the matter.

Member of Staff: Why was September 2025 chosen as you've mentioned Bro Hyddgen which is also on a transition and they seem to have been given a much longer period. Why was that date chosen?

Marianne Evans: We've had this question quite a lot. This is the difference between the two proposals, so in Machynlleth the proposal was to phase it in gradually from Reception, which will take 12 years to see right through. With this one, that was one of the options we looked at, whether we could do the same in Bro Caereinion. But actually the pressure in this area has been around the secondary. As a Council we've been lobbied for years about the fact that we don't have secondary Welsh medium provision in this area. So we had to consider whether to take another 12 years to see the establishment of full Welsh medium provision, or to consult on maybe phasing it in from Reception and Year 7 at the same time. We decided that was the right thing to go out and consult on because there's concern about the Year 7 transition, that's what we're hearing. It could be that we need to look again at this if the proposal goes forward, but I think if we hadn't proposed something around moving the secondary more quickly than Bro Hyddgen, we would have had even more concerns coming in from other stakeholders. It's a difficult one, but this Year 7 seems to be the thing that is causing concern and I can understand that, for your pupils and parents as well. The Year 7 does come with the Trochi provision, so if it does go through, we would also be introducing the Trochi provision. Do you want me to jump into the Trochi first?

Member of Staff: Can I just ask, you said there's been pressure, and I'm just talking myself as an individual, but I've got the impression that there does not seem to be that much pressure in general from people to move this quickly. Perhaps it would have been better to give people the opportunity to have that discussion first and discuss a timeline, because for us as a school this has been really difficult. Obviously parents worrying about things.

Also with the Trochi I'd like to know how much funding is being used, who's going to be delivering it, because we work really closely with a lot of the teachers that currently provide Trochi in the county, and they talk about how it's a class of sixteen children, at the moment they've got eight and it's fantastic. You're talking about a much larger number of children, so who's going to deliver it and where is that funding coming from. So if you could explain that please.

Marianne Evans: I do hear your concerns about the Year 7, that is coming through. We could have consulted on a range of options but we thought, hang on, we do need to tackle the secondary issue so that's why we're consulting on the Year 7.

Bethan Price: In terms of Trochi funding at the moment, the Trochi programme is funded separately by Welsh Government. Then its run / delivered by members of the Council, “Swyddogion y Gymraeg” team. We are hoping to make changes to the way we run Trochi as a Council in that we would hope to set up a “canolfan” Trochi, a centre for Trochi. At the moment it only happens on an ad-hoc basis when there’s enough demand, whereas actually here if the proposal goes ahead we would have an intense need for Trochi in the area. So we’d be looking at running a Trochi centre in the area to accommodate the larger number of pupils who might wish to take part in that Trochi.

We don’t perceive that they’ll all need to go at once, because of course it’ll be phased. We can work with different year groups at different times or it might be the case of there are some people who want it and some people who don’t. Obviously whilst the consultation process is taking place, and until we know if the proposal will go forward or what the proposal will be going forward, it’s difficult to measure the need for the Trochi provision. The hope is we can locate a centre in the area and ensure that there’s an ongoing centre to be able to get through the number of pupils that would need that provision.

Marianne Evans: It’s not only the Trochi but the follow on to Year 7 as well.

Bethan Price: Yes absolutely. As you know there’s an intensive Trochi course which tends to last around twelve weeks, but at the moment there’s also a policy of a year of ongoing support, again provided by the Council’s team.

Marianne Evans: You mentioned funding. At the moment Trochi is funded by a Welsh Government grant of £100,000 a year. We’re in discussions with Welsh Government, as obviously we need Trochi throughout the county. We’re in discussions with Welsh Government all the time about pressure and the need to make sure that the funding is there to support Trochi provision in Powys. It’s a different type of Trochi as well, isn’t it Bethan, so it will be Trochi Pontio (Bridging Immersion), it works in other authorities and it’s a model widely used elsewhere.

Bethan Price: What we’ve done so far in Powys is Trochi Cynradd (Primary Immersion). So obviously those of you who teach in the Welsh stream do Trochi education anyway, that’s how you do it. But usually that’s Trochi Cynnar (Early Immersion), starting from the start of the school journey, whereas we’re looking at those who have come later – Trochi Hwyr (Late Immersion). At the moment in Powys we’ve worked with pupils between years three and five mostly but we have had pupils in year six as well transition to high school through the medium of Welsh. There are pilots and Trochi centres across Wales which do year six transition as well, which is known as Trochi Pontio, where year six have completed their primary journey through the medium of English, then have the Trochi provision to go into a Welsh medium high school.

Member of Staff: I think for us though as a school the timing of Trochi is obviously going to cut right into our own curriculum and I think that's going to be pretty destructive. If it was going to happen in the summer term before they go to high school, there's all sorts of things already going on and other projects we do. And the second thing, with us being dual stream our parents have already made that decision. They had the opportunity to go through the medium of Welsh back in Reception. It's a heck of a job to persuade them to take that big step, and it is a huge step, because academically those children are going to take a huge step back as they're not going to be on a par with their counterparts who have come through the medium of Welsh since Reception. I think that's the reassurance you will have to give to parents and there's a huge job to persuade them to do that. I'm trying to take both sides. We've got to weigh up the fact that there are children here that can never access Trochi because they have additional needs, they've moved, they've tried Welsh, they've had to move across because they've got literacy difficulties. They will not have that opportunity. I have to say the strength in Caereinion is that it's a rural high school, children are sheltered there which is why parents send their children there. And I mean no disrespect to Newtown or anywhere else, but as parents if you can shelter your children from the big bad world for as long as you can, you do. And that's what's drawn people to live in Tregynon, that's what's drawn people to come to Rhiw Bechan and so on. That's massive, that's cultural. It's going to be pretty rocky now but we are going to have to weather the storm.

This has come from Welsh Government ultimately I think it's fair to say. But the thing is with Welsh Government, I don't think they quite understand the infrastructure of this area as well when talking about things like staffing as well. I think there's an awful lot that needs to be put into place first of all, and as things stand at the moment, I don't think this is the time. It seems that the infrastructure needs a lot of planning. Who are the Welsh speakers, who are those people that we can draw in? Who are the people that we can grow within by giving them that opportunity. There will be people coming through, I'm quite sure, but by September 2025? I feel like it's going to be set up to fail, and that's my biggest fear, because we want to be your advocates for this.

Sarah Astley: Just on the September 2025 date, the proposal is a phased introduction, so it would be starting the transition in September 2025. It wouldn't be that from September 2025 everything changes, this would just be the start of the transition.

Member of Staff: But you would still have to have those people in place. The parents, then once you start the process, then you're going to offer the Trochi all the way down through our year groups. And what if we end up with 50 or 60 needing Trochi and you don't have the staff to do that. I think that's the biggest fear with parents.

Marianne Evans: What I'm picking up here then are concerns mainly about the year 7, concerns about the timeline of implementation and you think that if we're going to go down this route, we need longer to plan it.

Member of Staff: I think as well one size doesn't fit all. There have been opportunities that have been missed previously. You know Dafydd Llwyd, that could have been all through right up to nineteen, or there have been opportunities missed. Now it just seems like we're in a bit of a panic and thinking where are we going to put a Welsh medium secondary school, and I think it needs more thoughtful consideration and more thought about locality and again the infrastructure. I don't think we're quite there yet, and I don't know how long that's going to take, but it might take a bit longer again.

Member of Staff: I think parents are coming over to wanting their children to be bilingual. We can see it in the numbers in Bro Caereinion, we can see it in our numbers here. And sometimes with parents, if you push them into a corner, they'll fight back. You take that choice away, then they'll fight back. Whereas they were already making the choice.

Marianne Evans: It's interesting, if you look at the numbers in the catchment, there's been a change, there's been a shift already, and the numbers in Welsh medium have grown. This is happening, it wasn't happening a few years ago, it's happening now, the growth is there. Excellent, but we've had to think about what we can do to address it. The team have been working with Bro Caereinion for a number of years and we made it clear back when the schools were merging that Bro Caereinion would be on this language continuum, and so the governors did finally come to a conclusion that this was their vision as well. So in terms of working with them and getting the commitment of the governors of Bro Caereinion, that's taken quite a long time because they've had discussions previously and there's been public meetings previously around this one and people feel very strongly, it causes division, doesn't it? But by the time we got to the position where the governors were in favour, it's then we thought like we have now got the mandate to move forward with it.

Member of Staff: Are Bro Caereinion in favour, because that's not the impression we got at the meeting with parents the other night. It was very much 'Its Powys' decision. Powys is doing this to us'. We were a bit unsure about who is making the decision.

Marianne Evans: They do have a vision. What we're doing is taking that vision forward. Their vision is slightly different. Originally they had a Year 7 transition of 2027 I think. But it was our decision to bring that forward for consultation, to see what people thought about it.

Member of Staff: So is there a possibility of sliding back to 2027 or is it financial pressures that are driving this?

Marianne Evans: We'll have to look at everything and weigh it all up. Yes, there is a way that when Cabinet decides what it needs to do next, it can modify, but we'll just have to weigh it all up, and that's why we'll have to go through the responses very carefully on this one.

Member of Staff: What about the bigger infrastructure as well with Cymraeg? It's always been a fear and it's something that we really struggle with here, educational psychologists, speech and language, NHS coming in, school nurse, health visitors, that's not there yet.

Marianne Evans: That's a bigger agenda, isn't it. But you're right and we just have to be realistic and practical in what the offer is and what the external support can be. We know how difficult it is to recruit Welsh speakers within the Council anyway, and within the health board. Yes, we have to be mindful and realistic about what we can do.

Member of Staff: We also we hear that particularly when we're talking about Welsh speaking staff, secondary staff, some Welsh speaking staff would prefer to be in a Welsh medium school than a dual stream school. They're looking for that type of provision for their families. So the same then follows through, doesn't it, for other professionals in other areas. It's been a provision that we haven't had in Powys. Obviously, the security of Bro Caereinion hasn't been great has it. And that's why it hasn't drawn staff in, that it's always been under that threat of closure, really. That's the elephant in the room, isn't it? And I just hope this isn't driven to try and keep Caereinion open. I sometimes feel that it is.

Marianne Evans: The reasons are the lack of secondary Welsh medium in the area, the change in pupil numbers in the catchment, the financial pressure of being a dual stream school as well. Going back to Newtown and Dafydd Llwyd and Newtown, we did have plans a few years ago to look at an all age in Newtown. Space, land, availability of capital funding was the issue. Staffing would be an issue – the staff are in Caereinion, we'd have to find staff. Adding another secondary into the mix would also be problematic.

Member of Staff: If that was to happen then the implications then for Bro Caereinion are significant aren't they, because potentially it's the same pupils we'd be talking about. You talk about the catchment and obviously it would be us, Ysgol Gymraeg y Trallwng, Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd. I think in both of those areas there's parents needing to be persuaded to come to Caereinion. Are you stretching the catchment further out to say Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon?

Marianne Evans: At the moment the catchment is the current catchment, so you, Dafydd Llwyd, Ysgol Gymraeg y Trallwng, Pontrobert, Cwm Banwy, Caereinion. Meifod have already moved into the Llanfyllin catchment.

Sarah Astley: The question about Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon has come up in some other meetings. It's not something that's being looked at, but you know changes happening in one place can lead to other changes elsewhere in the future.

Marianne Evans: It could be a position where should this happen and should Bro Caereinion become that school, that flagship provider for Welsh medium education then pupils from outside the catchment may choose to come in, and then we get into the transport policy and all that, so we'll have to look at that. We could also have pupils coming in from the Llanfyllin catchment and further afield. So that's the vision, that's what we're aiming to get to, that Bro Caereinion becomes the provider for Welsh medium. But we hear your concerns, and hear all the stuff we'd need to work through.

Member of Staff: This has already been mentioned, but this is about choice. The parents have already made that choice. And also if you're thinking post 16 as well, you know you've got young adults wanting to perhaps have that choice again of whether they want to go through the medium of Welsh and whether they want to go solely through the medium of English or if they want to do a bit of both. How can you say that you can still offer that to those parents and those pupils, those young adults that we're hoping are going to be our infrastructure in this county. We want to keep our young people here, don't we? But at the same time, we want to keep them here for the right reasons. So what are we thinking for perhaps post 16 as well? What choices are there.

Marianne Evans: Currently in terms of Welsh medium post 16, post 16 is provided in sixth forms. We do have very small sixth forms, so we have sixth forms in all but one of our secondary schools, so that's twelve. What's happened with our sixth form provision over the years is the numbers are falling. And so the numbers staying on in our sixth forms has been decreasing. This has been a concern of ours for a number of years, however what's happening is they're being attracted out to Shrewsbury, Hereford, Merthyr, Neath, etc. So we are losing pupils out of county because we're not able to offer the range of provision through the medium of English and through the medium of Welsh. In terms of our main providers of Welsh medium, you're talking Bro Caereinion and you're talking Bro Hyddgen and then there isn't much if any Welsh-medium post-16 provision at the other schools. For our sixth forms, we've set up a collaborative model. So all of the schools are working together. It's called Chweched Powys Sixth. A choice was made. We could either have looked at rationalising the number of sixth forms we had or we could have worked really hard on making the schools all work together. That seems to be working, and we're working with a college and other providers as well. But the attraction of Shrewsbury in this area is still a big thing. We've also got the E-Ysgol, this is where courses are provided online.

Eurig Towns: The other point to make on this is if it was a single stream school, they wouldn't have to double up on courses. So I'm thinking of Pre 16 now, GCSEs where they currently provide hanes and history, daearyddiaeth and geography.

That's actually taking four members of staff. If it was single stream they could probably increase their choices as well. That then would probably have an impact into A level courses as well because they'd be able to offer them purely through the medium of Welsh, which should avoid the pull to Shrewsbury, as Shrewsbury cannot offer those courses in Welsh. So you know there is potential and potential that they could actually attract people to the school purely to do subjects through the medium of Welsh and into A level as well.

Member of Staff: But what if some of those people decide that they don't necessarily want to do it through the medium of Welsh. We're going back to offering choice. Perhaps some youngsters have gone through the medium of Welsh and then they're thinking, right, I want to go somewhere like Cambridge or Oxford. I think I'm going to be better off doing my maths, my higher maths and so on through the medium of English, ready to make that transfer because ultimately it'd be great to see that we could see an increase in our youngsters going after those sorts of universities. So how can we then ensure that as well?

Eurig Towns: That is still an option within our schools because we have the Chweched Powys approach. It means that pupils can do different courses in different schools, so you know, they can do different courses and they have that choice now. That would still be open to them. It wouldn't just be the case that they could just do Welsh there. They would be able to access English medium courses as well in other schools, which is what we already have in place.

Member of Staff: Transport would be an issue with that then.

Eurig Towns: Transport is provided now for those because it's where the courses are held, so each school will provide a set number of courses, some in English, some in Welsh. What Caereinion would be able to offer would be courses through the medium of Welsh only, rather than at the moment they're offering Welsh and English courses.

Member of Staff: So the other thing I was thinking about as well is I presume Welsh Government would provide significant investment in the actual building because you know there's a lot of parents choosing to go to certain schools because of the facilities they've got. And poor Caereinion, you do go there and it's the poor relation of high schools, you know. A lot of parents from Dafydd Llwyd are going to Llanidloes because of what can be offered for them there.

Marianne Evans: I think there are a number of reasons why Dafydd Llwyd parents are choosing to go to Llanidloes. But coming back to it in terms of the capital investment needed, yes, Bro Caereinion is tired, we know that.

Member of Staff: What is the difference in numbers between the English and the Welsh stream up in Bro Caereinion at the moment.

Marianne Evans: Off the top of my head it's 280 odd in the Welsh stream and 240 odd in the English.

Member of Staff: It's more than I thought then.

Sarah Astley: Currently there's 292 in the Welsh medium, 257 in the English medium, but the primary is where things have changed. In the primary they are currently 74 in the Welsh medium and 50 in the English medium, but sixteen of those 50 English medium are year six.

Eurig Towns: No pupils came into the English stream this September, so that means there's zero English-medium in reception, so they're going to have a year group going through there with zero. The potential is, again from conversations they're having now, there will be very few, if any, going into English medium again next September. So again, the sway towards Welsh is significant.

Member of Staff: Well, they will apply. They have to select.

Marianne Evans: Yes, they select the Welsh class or the English class when they apply.

Member of Staff: Starting from the bottom and I've only got like 3 plus. That's all Welsh medium, because I think if it starts from the bottom it will grow really.

Marianne Evans: There is a Cylch in Llanfair.

Eurig Towns: They did used to have an English and a Welsh early years there, but they didn't have the numbers to sustain them. So it just went to Cylch Meithrin, which is well established now in in the town.

Marianne Evans: So that could have had a knock on effect on parents choosing the Welsh medium class.

Eurig Towns: It's had a knock on effect this year, certainly. There were twelve children that came into reception, 11 chose initially to go into the Welsh stream, only one into the English, and as soon as they found out that all the others were going into the Welsh stream they chose to transfer them over. And that was before they actually got there, you know, that's when the offer was given out. So it's definitely having an impact into the school.

Member of Staff: If this change happened and they want to go through the medium of English, where would their nearest catchment school be? Would it be us.

Marianne Evans: In terms of English medium primary?

Member of Staff: Depends where they live, wouldn't it? So it could be here, it could be Berriew, Welshpool Church in Wales. So I just wondered whether to expect any additional pupils?

Marianne Evans: I was going to ask you in terms of the makeup of this school, in terms of the pupils in the Welsh classes, are they from Welsh speaking backgrounds at home, or are most of them English speaking?

Member of Staff: It's grown slightly because we're now teaching the children's children, so they have come back and they're Welsh speakers because they went through Rhiw Bechan. And they went through a dual stream school and they still did really well and they went to Bro Caereinion, and that was dual stream.

I can get my head around maybe the cost, but standards wise I cannot get my head around that, because I do feel they do just as well, and I know because my own children have been and they've come out with A's in their Welsh GCSEs, so there's something's going right and the bilingualism going from Welsh to English and then we underestimate our children they can go from language to language but I get the point on Immersion, you've got to do that because you can't hear Welsh around all the time.

Sarah Astley: As you say, the familiar model here is the dual stream, isn't it? In this area we're not familiar with the alternative at a secondary level. We are to some extent at primary level, but we're not familiar with the alternative at a secondary level whereas across Wales the alternative is the norm.

Member of Staff: Yes, and there's fear there to be honest. That's what caused people to fall out, and a lot of parents want support for parents because that's what they worry about, that when they get high school, it's that "I'm not going to be able to help them with their homework", so I'm going to put them into the English. And then they have that option now. Some of our parents have said do we swap to English now while we're in Rhiw Bechan, so that they can make friends and go to an English medium, so to actually physically take them out of Welsh, so we're not going to have as many children going up to Caereinion any more. And that really worries me because we've worked so hard to get children into Welsh medium.

Marianne Evans: I think the message is, we need to get the messages out about Welsh medium education anyway, don't we as a Council and there's lots of stuff there. We've got our own Destination Bilingual web page. We've got stuff on the website there, but I think there's more to do if this goes forward. Regardless of if this goes forward, we still need to raise awareness of the benefits of bilingualism, the benefits of Welsh medium education, what Welsh medium education is, because there's a lot of parents who don't really understand or who think that you come out with just the Welsh language, rather than being able to speak both languages. And so there's a piece of work to be done anyway regardless of whether this goes forward or not, but if this does go forward, then we have to ramp that up because

you know, this is a big strategic change for the authority, and with that goes massive raising awareness etc, a communications campaign.

Member of Staff: I think with the rumour of that becoming Welsh, it's changing our structure. It's going to change our structure as a school, isn't it. That's everyone's concern here. What's going to happen with us when that happens. What happens to our jobs.

Marianne Evans: What do you think is going to happen to you then in terms of changing the structure?

Member of Staff: The fear is that everyone's going to panic because they want their children to go to Caereinion, which is great, but they're going to go possibly into Cymraeg. We've seen a change in the numbers. We're possibly down to next year two English classes. We've got four Welsh at the moment.

Member of Staff: That's probably from the rumour, isn't it? I mean, you would do that as a mother anyway, wouldn't you, as a parent, anything.

Member of Staff: I want people to choose Welsh medium for the right reason. If you don't speak Welsh, it's a huge commitment.

Marianne Evans: So at the moment you're four Welsh medium classes.

Member of Staff: Four Welsh medium classes at the moment, and well, because the way the budget's changing, we'll probably have to drop an English class because we've got quite a lot of English moving on next year, more than Welsh, haven't we. We're bottom heavy Welsh.

Marianne Evans: So I think the question came up in the meeting with pupils about what are the plans for Rhiw Bechan. And I explained there that we've got a target as a Council to increase the numbers of Welsh medium pupils by 2032. And it's quite a significant target that they've given us. We do have a duty to look at how we meet this. We are working with schools to explore whether, for example, we can start a Welsh stream. We've done that at a school in the South. We're talking to other schools and we're talking to Cylch Meithrin, Mudiad Meithrin about looking at early years provision and developing Cylch Ti a Fi – in some areas, there's nothing at all at the moment. We're starting from a very low base in Powys. We're also looking at schools and the make up of schools such as Rhiw Bechan. If we were thinking that the school was ready to move along the language continuum then we would start discussions. It wouldn't mean that we would be forcing anything because we have to have the support of schools to do this. Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon in Trefeglwys is another school where this has happened. But by the time we were in those discussions with Dyffryn Trannon their numbers had significantly changed and it was like 90% in the Welsh stream, 10% in the English stream so you're not there yet.

Sarah Astley: The aspiration is to support all schools to move along the language continuum. But obviously that means something different in every school, depending on their situation and even the changes that you've mentioned in terms of pupil numbers here is the school moving along the language continuum, isn't it to some extent. So as we said to the pupils, the aspiration is to support all schools to move along the language continuum. If there came a point where there was an appetite to change the language category of Ysgol Rhiw Bechan, then again it isn't something that would be able to happen overnight. It would be again, most likely, a phased process. And again, even if we wanted to consider that we'd have to go through this same process again. So there would need to be consultation again, there would be the full process again. And at the moment we haven't got any plans to even think about starting that process.

Marianne Evans: But we do have schools elsewhere that are that are coming to us, that are talking to Bethan and talking to the school improvement team about can we move the foundation phase to Welsh medium or other plans. Schools are aware that we have this target and are working with us, but it is a joint thing, we do this jointly. It's difficult enough as it is. Getting the support of the schools and the governing bodies is vital, especially with the language element, because it can be divisive, as you know.

Member of Staff: Actually, it works brilliantly when you're roughly balanced, but when one stream starts to outweigh the other, it's really hard to subsidise the other financially and that's when it gets really tricky.

Marianne Evans: And it's difficult as well isn't it because for the governors, for yourselves as leaders and as teachers in school, when you have dual streams, whilst you're supportive of the Welsh language, you can't go all out to promote Welsh medium in the same way as some of the Welsh medium schools can because that's their only audience, isn't it. You have to balance the sensitivities of having two communities of parents.

Member of Staff: I do think we're missing a trick with our English medium classes. Their level of Cymraeg is excellent. They don't want the language instruction to be through medium of Welsh, the parents have decided that. However their level of conversational Welsh, they do extremely well when they go up to Caereinion and the Welsh ethos / cynefin everything is probably a lot higher here I would say, compared to some of the English medium schools, it's not such a priority. Whereas our children are hearing Welsh all day, every day, we're always speaking Welsh to them. Welsh all the time.

We're just worried about the English medium cohort in general, just feeling like we don't need you anymore. And it's sad. That's the feeling of parents, I think probably more so in Bro Caereinion than here because they're that middle band that potentially are being forgotten. It's the town they live in and they potentially can't go to their local school if they don't want to go to the medium of Welsh. A tricky one.

Marianne Evans: All change is tricky.

Member of Staff: And we've already had a massive one here where four schools were closed to create Ysgol Rhiw Bechan.

Sarah Astley: If you have any other questions or comments after the meeting, we would encourage you to respond to the consultation before it closes.

Consultation meeting with Governors of Ysgol Rhiw Bechan

28 November 2023

Present:

Governors:

Allyson Whitticase, Headteacher
Margaritta Lovell, Deputy Headteacher
Kaye Davies, Community Governor
Helen Law, Parent Governor
Richard Rees, Parent Governor
Darryl Owen, Chair of Governors
Jonathon McVicar, Parent Governor
Heulwen Hulme, L.A Governor

Officers:

Lynette Lovell, Director of Education (via Teams)
Marianne Evans, Service Manager Schools Transformation
Sarah Astley, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education
Mari Thomas, Deputy Head of Finance (via Teams)
Bethan Price, Cymraeg Lead
Ffion Evans, Transforming Education Co-ordinator

Marianne Evans welcomed all to the meeting. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves.

It was explained that there would be a brief presentation with an opportunity for discussion, comments, and questions to the officers afterwards. It was explained that the meeting would be recorded for minuting purposes but the recording would be deleted once the minutes had been completed and agreed.

Sarah Astley gave a Powerpoint presentation which outlined the background to the current proposal and the process.

The proposal is:

- To make a regulated change to the language category of Ysgol Bro Caereinion to be a Welsh medium school, to be implemented gradually commencing with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025.

It was explained that the consultation was due to close on 30 November but has been extended to 7 December, 2023.

Following the presentation, governors were given the opportunity to ask any questions or to make any comments in relation to the matter.

Governor: To open, we would just like to share our disappointment as a governing body with the timelines you have gone through that this has been on the cards for quite a while, this has been a long process. When it comes to the consultation period, it's the 28th November today and we requested a meeting as soon as this announcement came out and it's disappointing for us as we have parents coming to us on a daily basis who want updates and questions, so it's left us with a very short window to have this meeting and go back to the parents, I'm not sure if we're going to get any outcomes today but with some of the concerns that I'm sure we'll be raising today, it would have been extremely useful to have been able to meet before.

I suppose my first question is why is it taken to the 28th of November for this meeting to take place?

Marianne Evans: I appreciate your concerns. We had meetings with Bro Caereinion last week. There was also a parent meeting in Bro Caereinion last week, and you know with trying to get diary dates etcetera. We had to move the meeting with you to today because we were struggling with staff availability. We have extended the consultation period, but I do appreciate your comments. You asked us for an earlier meeting and I'm sorry we couldn't accommodate that.

Governor: Obviously there are lots of views and I know you're capturing it in loads of different ways, so will all of that be considered with everything that's been submitted? Will we have assurance of that?

Marianne Evans: Absolutely. We have already got a significant amount of responses in, we're expecting more. We usually have a flurry at the beginning of consultation periods, then there's a bit of a lull and then a flurry at the end. But I think we're expecting quite a lot in now from Bro Caereinion pupils, because we met with Bro Caereinion pupils last week. We met with yours today, and I'm hoping we get feedback from yours too, so our job then as officers is that the team have to then go through each response and then we pull out all the issues. It's quite an onerous task because there's no quick way of doing it, there's no artificial intelligence or anything that can help us. We just have to read and assess and then pull out the issues, and then we create a document and then we have to provide the Council's response to those issues as well. These consultation reports can be hundreds of pages, they are very, very detailed. Our job is to make sure that all the issues are there and put in front of the Cabinet, then Cabinet have a duty to read everything and go through all the issues themselves. The consultation report is probably the most significant document within the whole consultation process, because that is where Cabinet can actually read and understand the views and issues, the Council's response to the issues, and this is an important part of the decision making then. So it's really important we get consultation, analysis and the consultation report correct.

Governor: What was the rationale behind or decision between not meeting directly with parents because I appreciate you've done students, the staff, the governing bodies. Why not the parents?

Marianne Evans: We haven't met with parents for a long time as part of school consultations. This hasn't hindered the process, we still get the same views coming

through in a variety of written forms. We went through COVID as well when we were having to do some of the consultations, we had to do them all online, we weren't even allowed to come and meet you in person, so it did work. We have had hundreds and hundreds of responses to consultations around small schools, so the information coming in, coming through and the views coming through, we can still get that through that process, so that's the reason why.

Governor: I think a lot of parents would have appreciated it because there's a lot of parents really, really worried about future. Some of us were at the parents meeting in Bro Caereinion last week, there were a lot of people there and you know, people just want to put their views across. I know they can put everything down on a piece of paper, but for many people it is quite a daunting prospect. If you're going to take anything forward from this is please meet with parents.

Headteacher: Consultations are really difficult to answer, the way it's worded. To understand how to answer.

Marianne Evans: They're not the most exciting things to read, but we do have to follow the legalities and the School Organisation Code, and they require you to consider all these issues and provide a response to those issues.

Sarah Astley: Also in terms of the response form. We have to meet the requirements of the School Organisation Code, but there are other legal requirements, so Welsh language standards, equalities, a lot of what's in that consultation response form reflects legal requirements.

Marianne Evans: We've met with pupils last week in Bro Caereinion, we met with Staff and Governors and yourselves. We do understand the emotions behind it all.

Governor: Trust me, parents emotions are next level.

Marianne Evans: We are seeing it coming through in the written feedback too. We've already got up to about 300, we can see within it how difficult it is.

Governor: I think from a consultation perspective with so long in the planning it's also quite surprising that a lot of the documentation, that there's nothing in relation to transport, and I think it just it fuels the fire, almost like you don't want to talk about it so that then people will draw their own conclusion and I think when you have something as emotive as this which impacts the community like it does, it seems like Powys is just going to railroad it through whatever, that's probably driven the parents emotions even more. Is there any reason why you can't put something else out? You know the consultation doesn't have to stop here. If you're getting lots of queries about transport and how that affects English stream pupils going to another school why can't we answer these questions now? What stage are they going to be answered? Do they have to wait until March next year?

Marianne Evans: With the consultation we have to make sure that all the information is out there at the same time for all the stakeholders to read. All the information is within the consultation document and supporting document. If we went down the route of providing frequently asked questions for example, we would need

to make sure that the frequently asked questions are the same as what's in the consultation document. We wouldn't necessarily be adding any value, because the information is in the consultation document. But if things do come out during the consultation, we are able then to respond to them to in the in the consultation report. In one of the consultation meetings last week, I think we did mention maybe some kind of easy read summary of the consultation report with some of the main headings because they are hundreds of pages. We'll be looking at that and that will be a new addition for us.

Headteacher: Then people will have a choice of looking through the full one or the summary, that's a good idea.

Governor: Another thing for us as a governing body was how this was released. The governing body should have been informed, because the parents obviously came to us straight away, I think that was very badly planned. It hasn't helped the situation with parents. That's something that really needs to be noted.

Governor: In terms of the decision, as a governing body we have had quite mixed messages. Parents have as well in terms of Bro Caereinion governing body was very much for this but the messaging we were getting back from Bro Caereinion's governing body is that's not the case. I don't know whether you can help us because some of us have been here longer than others in terms of that decision making and actually, from a Bro Caereinion governor perspective, when was it discussed and who moved that forward would help us.

Marianne Evans: We have been working with Bro Caereinion for a number of years and then there's a there's a number of things that have happened recently in terms of Welsh medium education. We've been looking at pupil numbers in the catchment and looking at the pattern, and they're increasing. Welsh Government have also introduced new Welsh language categories for schools, Bethan has been out in schools working with schools on these new language categories. Discussions have been taking place with Bro Caereinion on these language categories for quite a while. When we consulted back on establishing Ysgol Bro Caereinion as an all-age school back in 2020, we made it clear in the documents that we would be supporting them to move along the language category and that as part of that, we would have to consult to the formal process. We received some communication from Bro Caereinion before the summer around the fact that their governing body had signed up to a vision on wanting to move the school along the language continuum. Once that happened, it's the Councils process to take forward. There was a difference in opinion between Bro Caereinion and us. Bro Caereinion's vision was to potentially bring Year 7 in or change Year 7 at a later point, rather than the 2025 point which is the Council's proposal at the moment. Bro Caereinion governing body have had the parents meeting and they have had quite a bit of correspondence etcetera, and as a governing body they're aware of the issues, they're aware of the tension within the community and how the parents are feeling, they're also aware of how they're staff are feeling. They have voiced those concerns to us in in their consultation meeting and we will be responding to those concerns. I would say Bro Caereinion's Governing Body whilst having the vision may have some concerns maybe around the speed of it, maybe around the year 7 transition. So there are things that we will need to be consider very carefully when we when we go forward with looking at this.

Governor: Can I just pick on something you said then Marianne? You said this has been going on for some time, going back possibly to 2020, so why weren't feeder Schools notified? Because this school is one of the larger feeder schools into Bro Caereinion so why weren't the feeder schools involved at that time as well.

Marianne Evans: In terms of when they were notified about the consultation, they were all notified at the same time. We've had some discussion as a cluster about the development of Welsh medium...

Governor: It was just a discussion, nothing was really set.

Sarah Astley: The Transforming Education Strategy and Work Programme are public documents, the WESP is a public document. There was consultation on the WESP at the time when that was being developed, there was consultation and engagement as part of developing the Strategy too.

Governor: Parents who have put their children into this school or Bro Caereinion haven't been reading the WESP. There is the future outlook and what it looks like, but there's also this immediate cohort of parents who are very trapped at the moment. They could quite easily have some children at high school, some children in primary, and they're in a real difficult situation now as to what they do, and they don't have until March or waiting for the outcome of the consultation, so I think they are the hardest hit.

Lynette Lovell: You're absolutely right. That's something that came up in Bro Caereinion last week when we had the consultation there with the governors and staff, the impact on the current cohort. That's something that we will need to consider. We talked about trochi support, but you're right, the parents currently in your English stream in Rhiw Bechan have made that choice to go for English stream education. We get that. Trochi is something that we know can be successful later on, but your parents have made that choice. It's something we need to consider in the consultation, we need to look at how we overcome that and deal with it, because they've made those choices and you know, some of them are in year five now so that this is a few years ago that they made that choice. That's something that needs to come through in the consultation and something that we will need to consider.

Trochi support will be available, but we need to look at all of that and the other alternative is looking at some other options to bring those children possibly into Welsh medium education, but that is a really important part of the consultation where we need to hear from you and from the parents around those concerns and it will be something that we will need to consider as part of this proposal. So really important point, thank you for raising that.

Governor: I think for many parents as well, the parents don't speak Welsh. They've chosen to put their children through the Welsh Stream, but they can't support their children. There are parents out there who choose to have their children educated through the medium of Welsh here. But when they go to Bro Caereinion they're looking to put them through the English stream because they know their children will cope better and they can support their children in high school education.

Headteacher: Also, with dual stream it's having the choice. Dual Streams are very successful because they can give it a go and try, but worst case scenario they can move across, so they start with Cymraeg and see how they go. Generally, it's very rare that they do have to move across. If they don't have that choice though, I think they're going to start thinking 'am I doing the right thing'.

Governor: You talked about looking at numbers and so on but that is like you've said, there's always that choice. Some parents put their children in the Welsh stream, but moved one child to the English stream because they were having difficulty, but the children could still attend the same school. Also the standard of Welsh second language here and up in Bro Caereinion is very high and pupils do well through Welsh second language as well. That's as a parent who could support at home. There's a lot of parents who don't have that and like I mentioned earlier on it's about having that choice. At the moment a lot of the parents just feel like that's being taken away from them.

Lynette Lovell: I just want to come in on that on my own personal experience. I'm an English speaking Welsh person and my two daughters have been through Welsh medium education. One of the key things for me was right at the start of their Welsh education and this is going back to the start of the slides around the 2019 Estyn report. Strategically, as a Council, we have to have the pathway there for really true Welsh medium education, right the way from the three year old settings right up into our secondary education and at the moment in Powys, we still don't have a designated Welsh medium secondary school, so we haven't got that breadth of choice. So going back to that choice element, we still don't have the equality of choice in Welsh medium education, particularly at secondary level, in primary it's there. So part of this is around having that pathway right the way through, and although we've got dual streams at the moment, what we've got currently around the local authority is children going from, I'll use Newtown as an example as that's where I'm from. So currently some are going to Caereinion, some are going to Llanidloes because the choice at the moment isn't as strong as the choice could be for different places. So we've got to do something strategically at the local authority around that Welsh medium provision, particularly in secondary, and this proposal could seek to develop that. So that's where we're coming from on the proposal really in line with our WESP. As you said, your parents won't be reading the WESP, it's about what it means to them and their children at this time. But from a strategic perspective, we're looking at that continuum and ensuring our Welsh secondary provision is improved. We don't have it in place at the moment. Pupils that went to Caereinion High School had to do some of their subjects through the medium of English because there was no teachers. So we've got a lack of teachers, so there's a huge issue there.

So just coming from that perspective it's about strategically looking at ensuring we've got that Welsh medium provision all the way through and we've got that breadth of choice as we move forward. I guess it doesn't take away from the parents choosing right now, and the timing is one of the key issues, but certainly that's our vision for the future. If it's not Caereinion, where would it be in the north of Powys? We've got to have that vision for secondary.

Governor: From a Finance perspective, I think that's the main problem. Powys is so rural. It's so spread out that you're just having to move schools around and it just feels that it just doesn't work in this part of Powys and I suppose that's going to be the decision – do the negatives outweigh the benefits of sticking to the strategy. I think my main challenge on all of this is that that strategy going back to 2018 or it just doesn't work in Powys. The noise that I'm certainly hearing is that in order to do what the strategy is and to have that school at Bro Caereinion is at the expense of so much else.

Marianne Evans: I hear what you're saying. There is a lot of discussion about choice being taken away. I think if you if you look at it from another perspective and strategically you could argue that parents wanting designated Welsh Medium Secondary school in Powys have been deprived for years as we haven't got one, we're the only county in Wales that haven't got a designated Welsh medium school.

Governor: We haven't got a big population and we're on the English border.

Marianne Evans: That doesn't mean that we shouldn't have a designated Welsh Medium school.

Governor: You can't possibly say we need a Welsh Medium school, look at the size of Powys compared to others counties, it's not practical.

Marianne Evans: We have had lots of parents asking for this for years. This is a Council that hasn't moved on Welsh medium education for years, that's what Estyn said back in 2019. If it wasn't Bro Caereinion, what would you do? The pressure would still be on, we would still have to look at where we would place the designated Welsh Medium secondary school and if that was somewhere else or somewhere in this vicinity, then what would impact Bro Caereinion. Bro Caereinion have the staff, they've got the vision that and that's one of the reasons why we've gone for Bro Caereinion on for now for consultation.

One of the big issues is finance. It is a fact that Bro Caereinion is a fairly small secondary school and it's got two streams within it, and that has a financial impact. Mari do you want to come in?

Mari Thomas: I think there's been a lot in the news lately about the difficult situation for public finances going forward and in some ways it's worse than it has been. You're quite right in saying that it's quite an issue for Powys because of the sparsity of the population and the area that we're trying to cover and deliver public services in. From my perspective, I'm very passionate about local services and the difference that local government can make to a community, but it's about making sure that we use all the resources that we've got in the most effective way that we can. So at the moment, with Bro Caereinion and with the two streams, we're more or less funding them almost as two separate schools within that one school. Then when you start looking at the pupil numbers and that split between the between the two streams as well and that makes cost effective delivery really, really difficult within that school, and it causes a lot of stress for the head teacher and the governing body trying to manage that as well.

The proposals would release some funding for the authority, which would then be available and it would be available for the Council then to decide how to spend it. One of the areas would be back into school budgets, and be available for other schools as well. It would also give the school that opportunity to not just streamline their provision, but potentially offer a broader offer as well, because it's really difficult with small class sizes to offer the breadth of subjects that learners want. If by implementing this proposal, if it were to be approved and go ahead, because it's as a Welsh medium secondary school, if that grows the school would then be able to have that broader curriculum as well. You can't talk about the finances without the service delivery, that's what it's there for. For me, it's about making sure that we're using all the funding that we've got and the resources that we've got in the most cost effective way really, rather than it being about taking things away. It's about making sure that our delivery is as cost effective as it can be and that it provides a good quality education as well and large enough class sizes. From my perspective, that's what we're trying to do with any of the of the proposals that we bring forward, the driver is about the education provision and the learner entitlement but if it means that we can be more cost effective with our funding as well then then that's all the better really as far as we're concerned.

Governor: I still don't quite get why Ysgol Bro Caereinion was chosen, because we are so close to the English border but also a lot of those pupils go to English universities and they don't return to Wales and they don't use their Welsh language. The only source of employment I can see for Welsh speakers would be the Welsh Government and Local Authority. Welsh Government isn't for everybody, so I'm really struggling as to why Ysgol Bro Caereinion was chosen as we are so close to the English border.

Marianne Evans: Ysgol Bro Caereinion was chosen because they are already one of our strongest Welsh Medium providers. The staff are there, the governors have their vision, there is a lack of provision in this northeast Powys area. Yes, we're close to the border, but that doesn't mean that there aren't people in this area who want Welsh medium secondary education, and that can be seen by the numbers growing in the primary and also in the in the secondary in Bro Caereinion. Welsh medium education is flourishing in your school, it's a fact that you have given pupils the opportunity to become fully bilingual. So in a Welsh medium class or a Welsh medium setting the children come out fluent in both languages, and I know you're doing excellent here in terms of your Welsh second language pupils, but the Welsh Government's aspiration is to have a million Welsh speakers by 2050. As a Council, Welsh Government have given us a target as part of our WESP that we need to meet, and it's quite an ambitious target in terms of increasing the percentage of pupils in Welsh medium.

Governor: At the moment children in the English stream have the opportunity to learn Welsh and become bilingual. This proposal will take that away, for parents wanting their children to remain in the English stream, that then takes that away. I understand targets are targets, we all work in business, we all have targets, objectives, but I'm struggling to see how it's going to really make a dent in that target when you're automatically going to exclude a percentage.

Marianne Evans: We're not going to automatically exclude, I think this is the myth. What we'd like is for all pupils to join Bro Caereinion, because we could then provide them with the immersion, the real deep immersion Trochi support that we will be able to provide, and for them all to be given the opportunity to have a Welsh medium education and become fully bilingual. It is a phased transition, it would be phased in.

Going back to the point around children going to universities. Yes they go to England, but having Welsh medium education isn't a hindrance to go into any English medium university.

Governor: I have to disagree with you there. I know of people who went to an English university having been through Welsh Medium education and they had to record all their lectures so that they could translate them from English into Welsh. How can you say that's not a disadvantage? Being immersed into the Welsh language has actually been a detriment to them.

Marianne Evans: I don't know what that the individual circumstance, but Bethan went to a French university from a Welsh Medium background. I went to university in England as well, it's not a hindrance and it shouldn't be seen to be a hindrance. It should be seen as a positive that you can have a Welsh Medium Education and go anywhere across the globe.

Governor: If she got into a Welsh university I would have completely agreed with you because the chances are had she done her degree in Wales she'd probably have been now been working in Wales, but she couldn't get into a Welsh university she had to go to England, she had no choice on the situation.

Marianne Evans: Ok, that is a specific example.

Governor: You've also got no Welsh teachers, you need to get the amount of teachers there before you start moving these pupils.

Marianne Evans: I just want to finish off on the employment and opportunities because I think this is there are opportunities and it is becoming bigger and bigger in terms of the requirements to work within Wales, to have two languages. You mentioned the Welsh Government, you mentioned the public sector. Powys, the Council, is desperate for more Welsh speakers within the Council in order to provide services to the citizens of Powys who are Welsh speakers. There is that drive, you've got early years provision and you've got childcare. There is a growing need and demand for Welsh speakers for all sorts of other roles, such as educational psychologists. There is a whole world out there of employment opportunities that we aren't fulfilling yet in terms of having bilingual speakers, the Welsh Government know this and the drive is there and we're expected to deliver that. In terms of staff we've heard this throughout the whole consultation – 'Where are you going to get the staff from?', 'Where are you going to get the teachers from?' There's an issue around the maths teacher currently in Bro Caereinion not being a Welsh Speaker. We know, we know that this isn't just a problem for the Council or for Powys. This is a national problem in terms of the number of Welsh medium teachers and staff in our schools. The Welsh Government currently have the ambition and aspiration to get the million speakers. However, they need to make sure that the workforce is there to help

support the schools, because that's where we're going to get the million Welsh speakers from. So there's work going on nationally, and we need to look at how we how we support this development locally as well.

Lynette Lovell: It is an issue as Marianne said, it is an issue nationally as well as being an issue locally. When staff are sick or something, it's really difficult to get a Welsh medium supply teacher.

Headteacher: Getting any teacher now is difficult, there is a shortage. Nobody's going into education.

Lynette Lovell: There is an issue. What we're going to do locally as well is we're setting up a working group to look at how we can grow our own. In terms of Welsh speakers who may be graduates, for example in let's say in maths or whatever science, to see whether or not we can look at bursaries. Outcome seven of our WESP is around the workforce, so we're looking at that. We also want to target looking at our sixth form students to see whether or not any of them would be interested in coming back and teaching in Powys, in Welsh medium if we could help and support. We need to be working with HR to see how we can grow our own in Powys and you know whether we can do graduate teacher programs with people in schools to grow our own Welsh medium staff. So we've got all that local plans as well in terms of, you know, recruiting into Powys generally. In terms of social workers, for example, in Powys, it's been hugely difficult to get social workers to come to Powys to work. We've currently got a grow our own initiative, which is resulting in training up our own workforce and paying for them to get their degrees in social work, that's a strategy that's worked and we're looking at all of that to try and address all of this. I do think as well that in terms of attracting Welsh medium teachers into the area, having the right Welsh medium education for their own children, we have anecdotal stories of Welsh medium teachers who moved out of Powys into other local authorities to work so that the Welsh medium education, particularly at secondary for their own children, is improved. We have some of that evidence as well, so we need to look at how we attract teachers into Powys in line with teachers pay and conditions but are there some incentives etcetera that we can offer? All of that is happening behind all of this strategy as well. Workforce development plan is happening at the local authority. It's challenging, but we've got to address it and look at how we can improve and attract people into Powys to work in Welsh medium education.

Governor: I think the issue for me is that won't be in place for this cohort. I think it's great that you have these initiatives. It's great to work with the 6th formers and have a plan, but that is not going to have any impact on this cohort and as far as I'm aware, we don't have any Welsh speech therapists. We're seeing more children with additional learning needs, whether that's because there's better diagnosis, I'm not sure, but we're definitely seeing that. But the infrastructure is not there to support those children. So, if you have a child that needs speech therapy, where do they go? What is the plan for those children? This is what I mean about the consultation. There is no plan that's being made available. Those parents, what do we tell them as a governing body? How do we manage their expectations? The families who want the Welsh medium fully accept that and if there's a demand, that demand should be

met, but it can't be the expense of vulnerable children, who aren't going to necessarily get the education they need or may have to go a lot further afield.

That brings you on to the transport policy that Powys has, as it clearly doesn't cater for those people. So if you have a child that for whatever reason can't cope, what are you going to do for those children? Are those parents going to be expected to cover the costs? These are things that I was hoping would come out during the consultation, but with seven days to go, I don't think it is going to come out of the consultation.

Marianne Evans: I think you raised some pertinent issues there. Issues such as the educational psychologists, speech service and support, we recognise that we're at a low base in terms of number of Welsh speakers able to support. That's not to say that we shouldn't be endeavoring to make sure that provision is there. We know it's a weak point and it's not only Powys, is it? It's probably across Wales in terms of the support from those health specialists or the ALN specialists, etcetera. I think we just have to accept that that is the reality, but that we don't need to work on that. If it's our aspiration to have Welsh medium secondary provision of the highest standards in this area to provide that education in north Powys and become the flagship, we just have to accept that we'll have to live in the real world as well in terms of what we have around us and work on that through other strategies and initiatives.

Going on to the transport policy, I am going to come to Sarah on this one.

Sarah Astley: The consultation document outlines the current transport policy, which is to provide transport to the nearest school, but it doesn't currently provide transport to the nearest English medium school. This again is something we've heard a lot through the consultation. Obviously the transport policy was developed at a point in time, and it was a point when there were no Welsh medium Secondary Schools in Powys.

Governor: It was reviewed when the strategy was, so you knew it was coming. I write policies for a living, I know that I'm future proofing my policies, that hasn't been done.

Sarah Astley: At the time, we didn't know for definite. Currently we've got Ysgol Bro Hyddgen which is on the journey, but it's still some years away from changes in the secondary. As things currently stand, the transport policy is appropriate for the current provision, obviously if this proposal goes forward, the position changes and we may need to look at that.

Governor: We already have parents that are having to make that decision now, they can't wait until next year. They feel like they have to make the decision now.

Sarah Astley: We're still in the process at the moment, no decisions have been made.

Governor: They've already made the decision. Some pupils will go to Llanfair, not out of choice, but out of need and accessibility. They will go there without their friends because the others have already jumped ship because you've frightened

them. They're scared, they're going to Welshpool. People are moving house so that their child can actually go to an English high school because they are fed up of Welsh politics. That's how bad it's got in this area. You're driving a wedge completely straight down the middle of the community. Children have got brilliant friends at this school, but they will lose them as they will go to different high schools, and you think that's an appropriate strategy?

Marianne Evans: The point is, and with all due respect, the only decision that the Cabinet has made at this point is to consult on this proposal.

Governor: The timescale is far too short, you are frightening parents into making decisions that they shouldn't have to be making now.

Marianne Evans: They need to feed into the consultation.

Governor: They're that petrified that it's going to go ahead anyway, because knowing the Council, they'll just put whatever they want through. The timescales are too short I think, and they've got younger siblings, so if you send your child to Llanfair in year six now to go through the English medium, you've got a younger sibling that's not going to be able to go to Llanfair. That is not an option. They'll have to take their children out of Llanfair and change their high schools, they're not going to do it. They have had to make a decision on the cuff. Bearing in mind we have just had to put our secondary school choices in as well.

Marianne Evans: I understand. The issue is that as Lynette said earlier, as the Council, we have a duty to consider the future organisation of schools. We were told by Estyn back in 2019 that we were lacking and we were behind other authorities.

Governor: That doesn't take into account your timing. Your timescale doesn't take that into consideration, it is way out. We need to be talking 10 years down the line, not 1. It should have been an option in the first place.

Marianne Evans: We hear that, this will be reflected in the consultation report. We do have a pressure from a number of other parents to make sure that we do address this issue of lack of secondary provision, and we've had that for a long time. So at some point, the authority needed to take a grasp of this and actually make some progress. I do hear what you're saying, and I understand fully how emotional and difficult and challenging it is because we have heard it and we will feed it back. Timing has been one of the issues that has come up.

Governor: Why is the timing so short initially then? Why 2025? Why did anybody think that was a respectable timing situation?

Marianne Evans: There are options in the consultation document that were considered, but we felt that in order to address this demand for designated Welsh Medium secondary that bring in 2025 into the equation for the transfer year seven was doable but only if we had the full trochi support and the support for staff etcetera.

Governor: If you think that throwing your child through Trochi is going to get them up to the standard of somebody that's been in a Welsh Medium primary school and an excellent primary school that's just incomprehensible.

Marianne Evans: It has worked in other authorities, Bethan would you like to come in about Trochi?

Governor: Perhaps you should have put proof of that in the document for parents to actually be able to back up your timing situation because they're not feeling it.

Bethan Price: In terms of Trochi and we have run trochi schemes in primary level before and obviously it depends on the child, on the individual child but we do find that 12 weeks of intensive trochi support does get pupils up to a standard whereby they can assimilate into the classroom, and obviously that's not to say that they will be exactly the same level they would have been had they been in Welsh medium, but it means that they are able to access the curriculum and therefore able to catch up at a faster speed than they would have otherwise. It's not just the 12 weeks support that they're given, and there's also a year of support from the Cymraeg Team following the Trochi Immersion centre time. It has worked in other counties, it does work in ours. We've also had pupils go through the trochi experience at year six and then join a Welsh medium class in year 7. I have actually taught pupils with Trochi from year six into year seven and who've gone on to do superbly well and perhaps by the end of year 9 you wouldn't know the difference between someone who's been in Welsh-medium the whole time and someone who hasn't. Children's brains are incredibly elastic, especially before the age of 12.

Governor: What happens if they're dyslexic and have got ALN issues? How many of those do you think you're going to throw into Trochi, and they're going to be successful and then they'll have to leave to go to an English high school because they can't cope.

Bethan Price: There will always be pupils for whom perhaps it's not an option. I accept that.

Governor: Do you have any data, exam results? I don't know how long that system's been going, but is there a cohort so far that has gone from year five to GCSE stage, and what do those results look like compared to other schools or are we too soon to be able to provide that?

Bethan Price: We as an authority don't have that many pupils. I would certainly say that maybe Ceredigion would be able to provide us with that sort of information, they've been doing this for many years and Gwynedd, for example. If you move to Gwynedd there isn't an option of an English medium school, so all pupils have to go through Trochi to be able to join Welsh medium education. So certainly there would be data on that, but it is something that's been proven internationally as an option.

Headteacher: I suppose those with trochi as well, if you've chosen to move to that country and you've chosen to go through that situation, put your child in trochi, it's a little bit different because obviously the parents are committed to that. I think in this situation it's kind of been thrown on people slightly. We've had children here who've

not gone through Trochi but they've had one to one, however they were very bright children. But I think with my well-being head and mental health for children, the thought of my child being on catch up, that throws alarm bells a little bit. I'd be a little bit concerned as a parent that my child's going to have to catch up.

Sarah Astley: Again, that is one option. Obviously the hope would be that as many people as possible would continue to Bro Caereinion, but there is still always the option to continue in English-medium provision in a different school, there are different options.

Headteacher: There's a brand new school opened up down in Cardiff, this glowing, fantastic dual stream School. Half of it is Welsh medium and then for the second language pupils there's a much higher level of Welsh. That to me sounded really interesting because it sounded almost very similar to how Caereinion used to be when you had Pontio, where pupils were selected who had the capability of doing certain subjects through the medium of Welsh because we're trying to do that here. There's lots of things going on in class where they're being taught geography, but there's lots of Welsh language going in there at the same time, the child not even noticing, they're just like sponges. It's not affecting them academically. It's broadening their understanding of language. I think the word immersion frightens people. It's just your child is going to have to be taught Welsh.

Bethan Price: I've been in contact with the head of the School in Cardiff, they actually opened in September. I'm hoping to be able to go and visit them sometime during the academic year to see how their model is actually working because it's a new pilot and a new model for Cardiff Council and certainly it's something I would like to look at as an option going forward.

Governor: Just another concern I've got around timings and everything is obviously it doesn't feel that long ago we came out of the pandemic and everybody's world's turned upside down. I think it's well documented the sort of catching up children are having to do and from a mental health perspective as well I still feel that we're very much in a world where we're very quick to go back to remote learning. It isn't beyond the realms of possibility that we could have maybe other lockdowns, remote working just feels like the default position. Going back to the immersion in Welsh, I would be really nervous about how those children who already are on the back foot would cope if we had to go into that state again. How far behind they would fall. When the strategy was done, the pandemic wasn't featured. So has that strategy been adapted on the back of COVID lockdowns?

Bethan Price: Actually interestingly quite a lot of our Trochi has been delivered online. Because of the nature of Powys as a county, quite a lot of our provision has happened online anyway, and a lot of the after support happens online too. We sort of already run a bit of a hybrid model compared to some councils at the moment.

Governor: Is that being done one to one?

Bethan Price: Small groups usually.

Governor: The amount of pupils potentially in this thing would be a lot bigger. So would Powys be able to provide more?

Bethan Price: Obviously the suggestion is to introduce the change on a phased basis. So we're not sort of looking at everybody going for immersion straight away possibly, and we appreciate that not everybody will want it either. We have looked at the number of pupils who may want to access it, and then we'd have to sort out how we go forward, depending on who's ready for it, who's keen, and what age groups the pupils are in with that.

Governor: Can I just ask, where do you see Ysgol Bro Caereinion in 10 years time?

Marianne Evans: If this goes forward, I see Ysgol Bro Caereinion as the flagship Welsh medium secondary, all age provider for this part of the county.

Governor: What data have you got on pupil numbers going forward?

Marianne Evans: Pupil numbers are in the document. If you look at the primary pupil numbers, they are higher in the lower years, so we would expect this to lead to an increase in Welsh medium numbers.

Sarah Astley: The document includes current numbers at each school in the catchment broken down by stream as of September. Then we've got the projections for schools affected by the proposal which aren't broken down by stream, these are the PLASC projections, unfortunately we didn't have the PLASC 23 projections by the time the consultation started, so they're based on 22.

Governor: You're saying overall numbers are going to increase, but my knowledge is that pupil numbers are going to decrease.

Marianne Evans: It's the numbers in the Welsh Primary Schools. If you think of Dafydd Llwyd that's on the increase, Ysgol Gymraeg Y Trallwng is on the increase, Welsh-medium pupil numbers here are on the increase.

Governor: Do you base your projections on all of those children going to Llanfair High School?

Marianne Evans: That's the other issue really and that's what we're trying to address. At the moment some Ysgol Gymraeg Y Trallwng pupils have come to Caereinion, others have gone to Welshpool and have left Welsh Medium Education. Dafydd Llwyd is another one, in the past almost all pupils from Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd went to Caereinion, however for the past 4 or 5 years the trend has shifted, the pupils have been going to Llanidloes or Newtown High School.

Governor: Do you think making it a Welsh Medium School will pull them back? Or will you make it that if you go to Dafydd Llwyd you have to go to Bro Caereinion?

Marianne Evans: We hope that by becoming this unique Welsh medium provider for the north of the county, that it would attract those going to other schools. It will take time though. What would have to happen is Bro Caereinion would have to be a

provider of quality Welsh medium education and that should be the focus and that's what attracts parents.

Governor: Going back a little bit, we spoke about attracting teachers. I don't know any teacher who would want to go to a building that is run down because it is run down. A Governor last night mentioned that the school isn't very different to when he was in school. As a new Welsh teacher, I'd be looking at a nice new Welsh school to be quite honest with you.

The one thing I want you to take from here tonight is there's a lot of pain, there's a lot of upset in the community. Let's have the pain once and once only. I don't want to see another consultation for this community in five years' time with the potential of closure. There are going to be school closures, we know that, but let's have the pain once and once only, because this is not good for any community.

Governor: What's the road map for this school? Because it's going to change the dynamic hugely if Bro Caereinion goes Welsh stream so there must be a plan of what's happening to this school, the feeder schools.

Marianne Evans: If this goes ahead and Bro Caereinion becomes Welsh Medium, then you're the only dual stream provider left in the catchment because all the others are Welsh medium. I'll go back to the targets that we have, we need to work with all our schools to move them along the language continuum. That's part of the Welsh Government's aspiration. So the work around redefining the Welsh medium categories for schools, Welsh Government are going to be legislating on a new Welsh medium education bill, if that's the right terminology, and we'll be putting those categories into law, so the authority will have to be working with schools within that framework then and going forward. We discussed this earlier, we would be keeping an eye on pupil numbers, but we would also be working with all schools around how they see themselves moving forward in terms of the language continuum. We've recently consulted on and moved Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon in Trefeglwys from being dual stream to Welsh medium on a phased basis. But the difference there is that at that time they were probably 90% in the Welsh stream and 10% in the in the in the English stream with no reception or year ones, or at that time. So they had moved naturally. What we'd like to do is to work with schools who are sort of moving naturally, but then every situation is different and we need to look up what else is in your catchment, what else is happening in the community, what type of community. In another area in the South we introduce a pilot Welsh medium class in an English medium school and then we consulted and that's schools now becoming dual stream. So there's no plan for Rhiw Bechan apart from continuing the dialogue if your pupil numbers change.

Sarah Astley: Our aspiration is to support all schools to move along the language continuum, but obviously that means something different in every school depending on the context of the school, doesn't it? There's no plan at the moment to change the language category of Ysgol Rhiw Bechan, that's not to say things might not change in the future, but if there was a point where that was something that was being considered, it wouldn't be something that would happen overnight. There would need to be the same process, consultation and so on again.

Marianne Evans: It was mentioned earlier that dual streams work best when it's sort of equal. When one stream is larger than the other, it brings operational difficulties and financial difficulties, doesn't it.

Sarah Astley: An interesting comment was made earlier about should this change happen, what could it mean for Rhiw Bechan. It could mean a shift to Welsh medium in order to get to Bro Caereinion, but also it could mean that more pupils come here to access English medium provision.

Headteacher: Can I just ask? You've spoke about that you want to give pupils in perhaps Dafydd Llwyd and Gymraeg Y Trallwng the opportunity to go through Welsh Medium, you feel at the moment they're not taking that opportunity. What if they still don't take that opportunity? I'm aware that for Dafydd Llwyd a lot of pupils just walk to school and it's the same in Gymraeg Y Trallwng, it's just easy to walk to your local School. So what happens then with Bro Caereinion?

Marianne Evans: If this goes forward, as I said earlier, we would need to really be raising awareness about Welsh medium education. I think there's a lack of understanding amongst parents. We would need to do that, but also, if Bro Caereinion did move, there would be an onus on them to work with the cluster schools to explain what they can bring to the table. I think it could take time as people have already made their decisions, some in Dafydd Llwyd are going to Llanidloes.

Headteacher: Will Bro Caereinion be supported financially around that?

Marianne Evans: We've had very strong requests from Bro Caereinion that if this goes forward there needs to be that additional financial support. What they are afraid of is that they will dip initially in terms of pupil numbers, but then it will grow. Whilst it appears immediate and I understand that it is a concern for parents having to make choices, but it is a longer term plan which will take some time to see through.

Governor: Every Council is extremely stretched financially, they're going to have to find the money to support Bro Caereinion. Going back to the transport policy, particularly the more vulnerable children, I'm struggling to see how you couldn't change your transport policy because I think you'd be open to a whole world of potential claims there from a discrimination perspective. Then we go back to all the other strategies around the increasing the 6th formers, persuading them to go to Welsh university, bursaries. That's all going to take money, so where is that money coming from? That's a Powys problem, but is that going to come from other aspects of education? Would we see cuts to this school to fund that? Will there be a plan that will be, you know, shared with us as part of the consultation or as part of the future process? I appreciate they're all 'what if' questions, but I'm sure you can appreciate that these are important to help parents decide whether to keep their children at Bro Caereinion or move them now.

Marianne Evans: In terms of funding and the development of Welsh medium education in Powys. One of the key things we keep saying to our councillors is that the development of Welsh medium education is going to cost the authority, because we're coming from a low base. But in terms of that strategic plan of changing the

whole network of schools in Powys, that's just something that we have to accept and realise. I think the Councillors have started to understand that and we need to have conversations with Welsh Government because this is part of delivering their vision as well and you know, capital costs, the school needs a spruce up, if not more. One of the main priorities for the schools capital programme is the development of Welsh medium education.

Mari Thomas: What we have done in terms of the Transforming Education Strategy is to try and cost that up over a 60 year lifetime, which is kind of a standard lifetime really in terms of capital investment. We've compared the cost of the strategy including the Welsh medium and the Welsh language developments compared to continuing with the status quo and doing the bare minimum. In terms of repairs and maintenance and investment in the schools and the transformation programme is cheaper in the long run. I'm not going to say it's cheap because there's no way it's going to be with the level of capital investment that's needed really, but overall even with that additional cost of growing the Welsh language provision, that is still the better option financially over the whole period, that's looking at the whole strategy rather than individual projects. I just thought it would be useful for you to understand that really, that we have done that comparison.

Governor: If this doesn't go through do you have another location lined up?

Marianne Evans: No. But there's no getting away that the pressure will still be there.

Governor: What assurances can you give to parents of children who are currently in Bro Caereinion and go into the medium of English? That these children can finish their career at Bro Caereinion going through the medium of English, particularly if a lot of teachers leave? Because I think that there's some parents who perhaps have already got children in the high school and they might be concerned about whether they're going to continue to have a good standard of education really.

Marianne Evans: The number of teachers in Bro Caereinion, the majority can speak Welsh so that isn't a problem because we're phasing it in. There are teachers there who aren't fluent and they're concerned, but because we're phasing it in there's time for us to provide them with additional support and additional training opportunities to get them up to a standard if that's what they want – some may not want that and may choose another option. Those going into year six now in Bro Caereinion, they'll be in year seven next September, the change won't affect them, but what you're saying is they may be affected if staff leave. If this goes forward then there will be that risk of staff maybe moving, that is something we just need to acknowledge. However, because we're doing it on a phased basis, then we've got time to work with staff there and provide the additional support if they wanted to come in with us.

Lynette Lovell: I was just going to come in on teaching. We met with the staff at Caereinion last Wednesday, and there are only a few who are not bilingual there, I know that some of them are obviously able to teach through English and Welsh, and there's only a few that can't, many of whom teach modern foreign languages and English. The majority there, the vast majority are bilingual. However we would work with all staff there as we move forward.

Marianne Evans: There's over a week to go until the consultation closes, so please, if you haven't responded and then do so individually, we would really encourage others to do as well.

Governor: One more thing. Why couldn't it be phased in more like at Ysgol Bro Hyddgen? Is that a financial decision? Why can't that be done here?

Marianne Evans: The year 7 transition at the same time as the reception transition is in order to meet that need for getting the secondary Welsh medium sorted quicker. It may be that we go back and look at this, and decide that the Year 7 option isn't the right option for now and we could then be in a position where it's reception right through. We will take everything we've heard and we will put it in the report.

Sarah Astley: It's a slightly different context here as well compared with Bro Hyddgen. Every area is very different and here it's very much the secondary provision is the gap.

Governor: I do feel it's unfair that there are now pupils that have started in Llanfair thinking that their children are going to go all the way through the school, but now they might have to go to a different High School. I think the timing of that isn't fair.

Marianne Evans: We do really genuinely and understand the concerns.

Governor: There is a lot of passion out there. We appreciate you're just doing your job, it's your job to represent Powys we do all respect that. I just think it from my perspective to have the parents involved in the consultation so you can see the level of you know upset and passionate out there it is a part of this consultation that is flawed.

Sarah Astley: We have seen the parents views from the consultation responses.

Everyone was thanked for their time.

A meeting with pupils at Ysgol Rhiw Bechan

28th November 2023

Present:

Marianne Evans, Sarah Astley – Powys County Council;
Allyson Whitticase, Becca Edwards, Jacci Foulkes – Ysgol Rhiw Bechan
16 pupils from years 4, 5 and 6 were in attendance from both streams.

Officers met with pupils to discuss the consultation to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Caereinion from dual stream to Welsh-medium on a phased basis, starting with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025.

Officers explained that this is only an idea at the moment, and the Council is asking people to let them know what they think about this idea.

Pupils were asked to indicate whether they thought this was a good idea, a bad idea or whether they weren't sure. Almost all pupils indicated that they thought it was a bad idea.

Pupils were then asked to give their views / comments on why it was a bad idea or a good idea. The following is a summary of the comments made:

Why do you think it's a bad idea?

- It would split families up – some children would have to go to a different school to their brothers and sisters
- It would split friendships – friends would have to go to different schools
- Some English stream pupils might not go to Bro Caereinion, they might choose other schools
- More buses would be needed, which would cost more, and would impact on global warming and climate change. Who would pay for more busses if more busses were needed?
- The children in Ysgol Bro Caereinion at the moment would leave.
- Some of the teachers would lose their jobs if they don't speak Welsh
- Would be harder to get Welsh teachers
- If people are struggling in the Welsh stream, they wouldn't be able to move to the English stream.

Does anyone have any suggestions about why it's a good idea?

There were no suggestions.

Where do pupils from Ysgol Rhiw Bechan go to high school now?

- Most pupils go to Ysgol Bro Caereinion to high school, almost all pupils in fact. Only the odd pupil goes to other schools, such as Newtown High School, this is mainly if the pupils live outside Ysgol Rhiw Bechan's catchment.

Pupils were asked whether they had any other comments or questions:

- Can't you extend the date so that those that are in reception now could carry on in the English-medium?
- Isn't high school meant to support different languages?
- Would it be hard to move to the Welsh stream?
- Will there be enough people to teach us?
- What are the chances of Ysgol Bro Caereinion being closed down in the future?
- Don't you think it's mean for the English stream?
- More busses would impact on the climate
- If we have to have more buses, who would pay for them?
- What will happen to other dual stream schools?

Pupils were reminded that the consultation will continue until the 7th December, and were encouraged to write down any comments they have if they think of anything else and hand these to their teachers who will ensure that they are sent on.