

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.**

**CABINET EXECUTIVE  
September 13<sup>th</sup> 2016**

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Arwel Jones  
Portfolio Holder for Education

**SUBJECT:** Nantmel C. in W. School

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**REPORT FOR:** Decision

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**Summary**

Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016, the authority published a Statutory Notice to discontinue Nantmel C. in W. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016. The Statutory Notice was published on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

This report provides information about the outcome of the statutory objection period, and includes a recommendation to discontinue Nantmel C. in W. School from the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016.

The report is supported by the following appendix:

Appendix A – Objection Report

**Background**

Formal Consultation

Formal consultation in relation to closure of Nantmel C. in W. School was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code (2013) from the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2016 to the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2016. A Consultation Report listing the issues raised during the consultation and the authority's response to them was considered by Cabinet on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016.

Statutory Notice

Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016, the authority published a Statutory Notice proposing to discontinue Nantmel C. in W. School on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016 for a period of 28 days, in accordance with the guidance within the School Organisation Code.

## Objections

17 objections were received during the statutory objection period. 2 further objections were received outside the statutory objection period. The issues raised in the objections received during the statutory objection period and the authority's response to these issues are listed in the Objection Report in respect of this proposal, which is attached as Appendix A.

## Proposal

Having considered all the objections received, it is recommended to confirm the Cabinet's decision dated 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016 to discontinue Nantmel C. in W. School with effect from the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016. The named receiving school for pupils currently attending Nantmel C. in W. School is Rhayader C. in W. School, however pupils would be entitled to apply for a place at any other school. Transport would be provided to pupils in accordance with the authority's Home to School Transport Policy.

It is estimated that closure of Nantmel C. in W. School would lead to annual savings of £54,000.

## One Powys Plan

'Transforming Learning and Skills' is a key priority within the One Powys Plan, and the Authority's aim is to ensure that 'all children and young people are supported to achieve their potential'. The plan states that the Authority needs to 'reorganise schools (primary, secondary and post 16) to ensure affordability, sustainability and appropriate leadership capacity'.

## Options Considered/Available

N/A

## Preferred Choice and Reasons

N/A

## Sustainability and Environmental Issues/Equalities/Crime and Disorder,/Welsh Language/Other Policies etc

Detailed Impact Assessments in relation to the Proposal were considered by Cabinet on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016.

## Children and Young People's Impact Statement - Safeguarding and Wellbeing

The Authority's Schools Transformation Programme is intended to improve educational outcomes for children and young people. This aligns with the aspiration to improve safeguarding and well-being for children and young people.

### Local Member(s)

Cllr David Evans commented as follows:

The proposal to close Nantmel School is as fundamentally flawed as the consultation process which followed it. Along with every other respondent to the process, I remain totally opposed to it.

The Nantmel C in W school review was triggered by it meeting *some* criteria in the Schools Transformation Policy, NONE of which related to any concern with educational issues. Powys concedes that ***'The quality of education provided at Nantmel C in W. School is not one of the reasons why closure of the school is being proposed'***. So why close?

The school also met some objective criteria around pupil numbers and cost per pupil, which many other Powys primary schools also met but which are not under review. So why close?

Using Powys County Council's own figures, Nantmel School delivered a surplus budget of over £24,000 in 2015/16. So why close?

Using Powys County Council's own figures primary school numbers are increasing across the County. So why close?

Not one response to the consultation document was in favour of closure, with many suggesting other viable, creative and sensible options for a win-win solution. So why close?

The decision to close the school is a choice and not a requirement.

It is a huge disappointment that Powys County Council has failed to adopt a proactive approach through the consultation process. Its responses to the Appeal Report are repetitive verbatim paragraphs often unrelated to the point being made. Reference is continually made to SORP's views of nearly two years ago. The purpose of an appeal is to consider new information and situations yet not one dedicated meeting on the subject has taken place. It is incomprehensible that the SORP panel has not re-convened to consider the responses and new information revealed through the consultation that its initial proposals triggered.

The Report is clear and admits that a decision to close Nantmel School will not lead to any improvements for pupils: **“the authority is satisfied that education of an equivalent standard would be provided to pupils at the named receiving school. (1.6)’**

It is also clear that closure will have a massive negative impact on the local community which far outweighs any scant savings that *may* be made. It is the current and future generations who will bear the true cost of the school closure if closure were to go ahead. I remain disillusioned when the authority states that **‘Ultimately, economic and social factors are non-educational issues’** and will not be considered. For an authority to take such a fundamental decision without considering the wider implications is a dereliction of duty.

Cabinet Members need to remind themselves of Powys County Council’s ‘One Powys Plan’ which states that it wants a county where: **‘Our towns and villages are more community focussed, self-reliant and resilient’** where **‘People of all ages volunteer and take an active part in supporting their community’**, where **‘People feel that they matter, that they have a voice and can influence local decisions’**.

There is nothing transformational about this proposal. The implications for all rural communities of a local authority content to dismantle well performing, viable rural schools which also play a vital part as a much needed rural facility is massive. To cause such upheaval to children and communities for an **‘equivalent standard of education’** is an insult to all those who live in our rural communities. I state again, **there is nothing transformational about this proposal.**

Children learn by example so, I urge you, set a good one - keep Nantmel School open and the community alive.

### **Other Front Line Services**

N/A

### **Support Services (Legal, Finance, Corporate Property, HR, ICT, Business Services)**

**Legal:** The recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view.

**Finance:** The figures have been rerun for the 16/17 financial year inclusive of transport costs. This has led to a reduction in the estimated savings from £68k to £54k due to the funded pupil numbers reducing from 33 (15/16) to 30

(16/17), this drop to 30 has led to the reduction of the small schools allowance of £18k which was included in the previous estimated savings based on 2015/16 formula. The small schools allowance ensures sufficient funding is delegated to the school to enable them to employ a minimum number of teachers. The funding generated by pupil numbers alone does not provide sufficient funding.

The estimated savings do not include any one-off redundancy costs

The School ended the 2015/16 financial year with a surplus of £24,338 and has a projected budgeted surplus of £8,034 for the 2016/17 financial year. In accordance with the Scheme for Financing Schools, finance continue to work with schools to ensure that resources are used appropriately.

### **Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc**

N/A

### **Corporate Communications**

**Communications Comment:** The report is of public interest and require proactive news release and use of social media to publicise the decision.

### **Statutory Officers**

The Strategic Director Resources (S151 Officer) notes the comments made by Finance.

The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report save that Cabinet Members must have read the Objection Report in Appendix A before making a decision."

### **Members' Interests**

The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If Members have an interest they should declare it at the start of the meeting and complete the relevant notification form.

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>Reason for Recommendation:</b>
<b>To confirm the decision of Cabinet made on 23<sup>rd</sup> June to discontinue Nantmel C. in W. School with effect from the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016, with Rhayader C. in W. School to be named as the receiving school.</b>	<b>To ensure future sustainability of primary education</b>

<b>Relevant Policy (ies):</b>	School Transformation Policy		
<b>Within Policy:</b>	Y	<b>Within Budget:</b>	Y

<b>Relevant Local Member(s):</b>	Cllr D O Evans
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<b>Person(s) To Implement Decision:</b>	School Transformation Team
<b>Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> December 2016

Contact Officer Name:	Tel:	Fax:	Email:
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**Background Papers used to prepare Report:**