

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

17th September 2019

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Myfanwy Alexander
Portfolio Holder for Learning and Welsh Language

SUBJECT: Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report recommends the commencement of formal consultation on the amalgamation of Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School to create a new primary school on the current sites of the two schools.
- 1.2 The proposal is linked to longer term plans for a replacement building on the current site of the two schools to replace the current buildings, as part of the multi-agency well-being campus planned as part of the North Powys Well-being Programme. However, the current proposal to carry out consultation on amalgamating the two schools is not dependent on the provision of a new building – the proposal is to establish a new school in the current buildings.
- 1.3 The proposal to amalgamate the two schools aligns with the Council's priorities for developing the Powys schools network as outlined in the School Organisation Policy – one of the priorities outlined in the policy is to 'Remove infant / junior split by creating 'all-through' primary schools'.
- 1.4 The report is supported by the following appendices:

Appendix A – Options Appraisal

Appendix B – Impact Assessment

2. Proposal

Background

- 2.1 Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School are located on the same campus in Newtown. Current pupil numbers at the two schools are as follows¹:

¹ Teacher Centre, 4th September 2019

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Ladywell Green Infants School	26	39	29	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	94
Hafren C.P. Junior School	N/A	N/A	N/A	28	34	37	46	145
Total	26	39	29	28	34	37	46	239

- 2.2 In the summer of 2017, the Council submitted its Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) for Band B of the 21st Century Schools programme to Welsh Government. The SOP includes a number of elements located in Newtown, including investment in primary provision in the town. The SOP was approved by Welsh Government and by the Cabinet in the autumn of 2017.
- 2.3 Since January 2018, the Council has been working with Headteachers and Governing Bodies in Newtown to develop plans for the future schools infrastructure in Newtown. This work identified the need for one new building to replace the buildings currently occupied by Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School, to be located on the site currently occupied by the two schools.
- 2.4 In parallel with this, the North Powys Well-being Programme, which is being led by the Powys Regional Partnership Board, is developing ambitious plans to improve health and social care facilities in North Powys, and is designing a new model of care for North Powys. Alongside this, there is a vision to establish a Multi-agency Well-being Campus, bringing together a range of services to include education, health and social care services, to create an intergenerational wellbeing campus.
- 2.5 Following consideration of a number of potential sites in Newtown, the preferred site for the proposed Multi-agency Well-being campus is a site adjacent to Park Street, Newtown, which is currently occupied by the Park Day Centre, Newtown Integrated Family Centre (formerly Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd), health services and Hafren and Ladywell Green Schools. The intention is that the new building planned to replace the buildings currently occupied by Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School would be part of the Multi-agency Well-being Campus.
- 2.6 Irrespective of whether a new building is provided at some time in the future, the Council intends to proceed with the statutory process to amalgamate the two schools in their current accommodation, with the intention that the new school would move to a new building if one is built in the future.

2.7 Engagement has taken place with a range of stakeholders in developing this proposal. This has included the following:

- Individual discussions with Headteachers
- Establishment of stakeholder group including representatives from all Newtown schools
- Meetings with the governing bodies of Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School
- Letter and FAQ document shared with parents of pupils at both schools
- Initial engagement with staff at Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School

2.8 Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School are both good schools. However, similarly to other schools across Powys, there are challenges facing the two schools. These include building condition, financial pressures, decreasing pupil numbers, and other challenges caused by being separate infant and junior schools. These are explored further in 'Appendix A – Options Appraisal'.

2.9 The proposal to amalgamate the two schools aligns with the Council's priorities for developing the Powys schools network as outlined in the School Organisation Policy – one of the priorities outlined in the policy is to 'Remove infant / junior split by creating 'all-through' primary schools'

Information about the two schools

2.10 Data about the two schools is provided below:

i) General Information

	School Type	Language Category	Admission Number
Ladywell Green Infants School	Community Primary (Infant) School building owned by PCC.	English	48
Hafren C.P. Junior School	Community Primary (Junior) School building owned by PCC.	English	52

ii) Pupil Numbers

Current pupil numbers²

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Ladywell Green Infants School	26	39	29	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	94
Hafren C.P. Junior School	N/A	N/A	N/A	28	34	37	46	145
Total	26	39	29	28	34	37	46	239

Projected pupil numbers

	January 2020	January 2021	January 2022	January 2023	January 2024
Ladywell Green Infants School (R-Yr 2)	106	106	107	106	108
Hafren C.P. Junior School (Yr 3-Yr 6)	147	131	129	130	128
Total	253	237	236	236	236

iii) Building Capacity and Condition

	Capacity	Condition	Suitability
Ladywell Green Infants School (excl. Nursey)	150	C/D	B
Hafren C.P. Junior School	210	C	B

² Teacher Centre, 4th September 2019

iv) Quality and standards of education

Estyn

	Ladywell Green Infants School	Hafren C.P. Junior School
Date of Inspection	June 2019	December 2015
School's Current Performance	Good	Adequate
Prospects for Improvement	Good	Adequate
Follow Up Activity	None	Estyn Monitoring Estyn Monitoring visit March 2017 – the school was judged to have made good progress, and was removed from the list of schools requiring Estyn monitoring

School Categorisation (2018)

	Standards Group	Improvement Capacity	Support Capacity
Ladywell Green Infants School	N/A	A	Green
Hafren C.P. Junior School	N/A	A	Green

v) Budgetary position (as of 1st May 2019 submittal by full governing body)

	2018/19 Actual Cumulative Outturn	2019/20 Budget	2020/21 Budget	2021/22 Budget

Ladywell Green Infants School	£63,925	£16,669	(£18,648)	(£73,828)
Hafren C.P. Junior School	£48,896	£73,718	£23,045	(£39,087)

3. Options Considered / Available

- 3.1 The Council has considered the following options as possible ways of moving forward in respect of Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School:

Option	Description
1	Status quo – infant and junior school continue to operate independently
2	Federation – infant and junior school federate to create a federated all-through primary school
3	New primary school – infant and junior school amalgamate to create a new primary school

- 3.2 The advantages and disadvantages of these three options are considered in 'Appendix A – Options Appraisal'.

4. Preferred Choice and Reasons

- 4.1 The preferred option is Option 3, to amalgamate the two schools, and the preferred choice is to carry out formal consultation in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code on the following:

'To amalgamate Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P Junior School to create a new 'all-through' primary school in Newtown. This will be achieved by closing Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P Junior School and opening a new primary school providing education for pupils aged 4-11 operating from the current school buildings with effect from 1st September 2021.'

- 4.2 The reasons for this are:

- To improve transition arrangements for pupils between Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2
- To provide improved opportunities for staff as a result of being part of a larger team with opportunities to work with pupils across the primary age range
- To provide a more efficient operating model – one staffing and governance structure rather than two

- In the longer term, to provide access to 21st Century Schools funding in order to improve building condition and running costs
- 4.3 Further consideration of this option against the factors outlined in the School Organisation Code as factors to be considered when developing school organisation proposals is provided in 'Appendix A – Options Appraisal'.
- 4.4 Should the Council proceed with amalgamating the two schools in order to establish one new school operating from the current buildings, the new school would be funded in accordance with the Council's funding formula, and would be expected to operate within the budget provided to it.
- 4.5 An estimate of the financial impact of amalgamating the two schools has been carried out. This estimates that the proposal to amalgamate the two schools would result in annual savings of at least **£22,739**. The actual savings would depend on the staff appointed to positions in the new school and could be more than this. This figure does not take account of any redundancy costs which may initially be required.
- 4.6 Ladywell Green Infants School is projected to be in a deficit budget position by the 31st August 2021 when it is anticipated that the school would close should the recommendation be implemented. The deficit is forecast to be £18,648. In line with the Council's Scheme for Financing Schools, should a school be in a deficit budget position when closed the deficit is written off. However, the Council will continue to work with the school(s) to ensure that the school budget complies with the scheme for financing schools and is within the funding envelope available.
- 4.7 The Scheme for Financing Schools also states the following in section 3.7.2:
- 'In order to ensure effective stewardship of the resources available to schools, the Authority may impose additional restrictions on a school scheduled to close, including but not limited to:
- Restriction of expenditure to agreed plans
 - Removal of powers of virement'
- The Council will consider the use of these powers of intervention where appropriate.

Risks

- 4.8 As with all school reorganisation proposals, there are risks associated with the recommendation. The following risks have been identified in respect of the proposal to amalgamate Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School:

- i) Lack of support from stakeholders, in particular due to concerns about the possible impact on the site in the future
- ii) Parents choose for their children to attend alternative schools
- iii) Negative impact on standards at the two schools whilst the statutory process is being carried out and during any implementation period
- iv) Difficulty planning for the new curriculum whilst the statutory process is ongoing.
- v) Uncertainty for staff whilst the statutory process is being carried out and during any implementation period.

Risks will be monitored throughout the process and appropriate mitigation actions will be implemented.

Timescales

- 4.9 Should the recommendation to commence formal consultation be approved, it is anticipated that consultation would commence in September 2019.
- 4.10 The target date for closure of the two schools would be the 31st August 2021, with the new school to open on the 1st September 2021.

The Decision-Making Process

- 4.11 Should Cabinet approve the recommendation to commence the statutory process, the Council would need to follow the process set out in the School Organisation Code (2018). This process is as follows:

- i) Consultation

Consultation would be carried out with stakeholders as required by the Code. This includes consultation with the pupils at both schools, to ensure that their views are taken into account, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Feedback from the consultation would be collated and summarised, and a report would be presented to the Cabinet. Cabinet will consider the report and the feedback received during the consultation period, and will decide whether to proceed with the proposal, to make changes to the proposal or to not proceed with the proposal.

If Cabinet decides not to proceed, that will be the end of this proposal.

ii) Statutory Notice

If Cabinet decides to proceed, a Statutory Notice would be published, which would give a period of 28 days for people to submit written objections.

If there were objections, the authority would publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and the authority's response to them. A further report would be presented to the Cabinet, which they would consider alongside the objection report, in order to decide whether or not to approve the proposal.

iii) Implementation

If Cabinet approves the proposal, it would be implemented in accordance with the date given in the Statutory Notice or any subsequently modified date.

5. Impact Assessment

5.1 Is an impact assessment required? Yes

5.2 If yes is it attached? Yes (Appendix A)

An initial impact assessment in respect of the recommendation is attached. The impact assessment considers the proposals impact on the Welsh Government's well-being goals, as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Should Cabinet approve the commencement of the statutory process in respect of the recommendation, the impact assessment would be updated throughout the process, to take account of feedback received.

6. Corporate Improvement Plan

6.1 Learning and Skills is one of the four priorities outlined in Vision 2025: Our Corporate Improvement Plan 2018-23.

Within this priority, the Plan includes a commitment to 'Improve our schools' infrastructure'. In order to achieve this, 'we will implement our new School Organisation Policy and Delivery Plan to develop a more efficient schools network, with a greater focus on working in partnership with schools and the communities they serve.'

7. Local Member(s)

The following comments were received from Local Members representing Newtown wards:

Cllr D Rowlands (Newtown Llanllwchaiarn North):

"I am a local member in Newtown and my children go to both Ladywell Green Infant School and Hafren Junior School. I am also a governor at Ladywell Green Infant School.

I have also met (as a governor) with the school transformation team back in May and the Powys Health Board to discuss our concerns. My concern I have is that the education of our children is at risk of becoming superseded by the health and well-being programme.

The green space both Ladywell Green and Hafren Juniors has at this present time is so beneficial for our children and I am very concerned that this space will be taken away. When the health hub is built this will take up green space as it will also need a car park which again will take up green space. Before any decision is made by cabinet or council plans need to be put on paper of the potential 'what it will look like in the future' this includes buildings, car parks, pathways etc... so that the governing bodies of both schools can scrutinise them. Please can I be assured that this will happen?

It will be extremely beneficial to work closely with both schools on this project."

8. Other Front Line Services

Does the recommendation impact on other services run by the Council or on behalf of the Council? Yes

If so, please provide their comments

9. Communications

Have Communications seen a copy of this report? Yes

Have they made a comment? 'The report is of public interest and requires use of proactive news release and social media to publicise the recommendation.'

10. Support Services (Legal, Finance, Corporate Property, HR, ICT, Business Services)

10.1 Legal: The recommendations can be supported from a legal point of view

10.2 Finance: Finance confirm the estimated savings within the report. The finance team will continue to work with both schools to ensure that the budget set is within the funding envelope available to ensure compliance with the scheme for financing schools.

10.3 Corporate Property: N/A

10.4 HR: The Schools HR Team will continue to work with headteachers, employees, governors and trade union representatives to ensure that Powys County Council's policies and procedures are followed in consulting upon and implementing the proposed changes.

10.5 ICT: N/A

11. Scrutiny

Has this report been scrutinised? No

12. Data Protection

If the proposal involves the processing of personal data, then the Data Protection Officer must be consulted, and their comments set out below. N/A

13. Statutory Officers

13.1 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) commented as follows: "I note the legal comments and have nothing to add to the report."

13.2 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the comments of Finance and supports the consideration of the use of powers of intervention if appropriate as per section 4.7 of the report.

14. 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.

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
<p>To carry out consultation in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code on the amalgamation of Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School, by closing Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School and opening a new primary school for pupils aged 4-11 operating from the current school buildings.</p> <p>The target date is to close the two schools on the 31st August 2021 and to open the new all-through school on the 1st September 2021.</p>	<p>To provide a more efficient model of delivering education.</p>

Relevant Policy (ies):	School Organisation Policy		
Within Policy:	Y	Within Budget:	Y

Relevant Local Member(s):	Cllr D Rowlands – Newtown Llanllwchaiarn North Cllr M Barnes – Newtown Llanllwchaiarn West Cllr J Jones – Newtown East Cllr D Selby – Newtown Central
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	School Transformation Team
Date by When Decision To Be Implemented:	End of October 2019

Contact Officer:	Richard Williams
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Background Papers used to prepare Report: