

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

20th December 2020

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Phyl Davies
Portfolio Holder for Education and Property

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

REPORT FOR: Discussion by Full Council

1. Summary

- 1.1 On the 13th July 2016, the County Council debated a motion proposing that Full Council should meet to discuss recommendations relating to Primary and Secondary School proposals prior to a decision being taken by the Cabinet, and resolved the following:

‘That Full Council meets to discuss recommendations relating to Primary and Secondary School proposals that are affected by the Council’s Transformation Policy and Schools Reorganisation Policy 2015, to inform the Cabinet of Council’s views prior to any decision being taken by Cabinet.’

- 1.2 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 17th September 2019, the Council has recently carried out consultation on the following proposals:

- To close Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School
- To establish a new English-medium primary school for pupils aged 4-11 on the current sites of Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School

- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the responses received to the consultation carried out in respect of Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School, and to enable members to discuss the recommendations relating to amalgamating these two schools, to inform the Cabinet prior to a decision being taken by Cabinet, in accordance with the motion outlined in 1.1 above.

- 1.4 The report is supported by the following appendices:

- **Appendix A** – Consultation Document
- **Appendix B** – Consultation Report
- **Appendix C** – Minutes of meetings with School Councils, Governors and Staff

- **Appendix D – Updated Impact Assessments**

2. Proposal

Background

The Consultation Period

- 2.1 On the 17th September 2019, Cabinet considered a report relating to Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior. At this meeting, Cabinet determined the following:

‘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.

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.’

- 2.2 Consultation on the proposal to amalgamate the two schools and establish a new all-through school commenced on the 26th October 2019 and ended on the 7th November 2019.
- 2.3 The consultation document was available on the Council’s website throughout the consultation period. The document was also distributed to stakeholders as required by the School Organisation Code (2018). The consultation document that was issued is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.4 Consultees were asked to respond to the consultation by either completing the online consultation form, filling in a paper copy of the form and returning it to the School Transformation Team, or by writing to the School Transformation Team.
- 2.5 During the consultation period, meetings were also held with the following:
- Staff of Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School
 - Governors of Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School
 - School council of Ladywell Green Infants School
 - School council of Hafren C.P. Junior School

The minutes of these meetings are attached as Appendix C, and the issues raised in the meetings are included in the Consultation Report (Appendix B).

- 2.6 In addition, two drop in sessions were held during the consultation period, to give people the opportunity to discuss the proposals with officers. One session was held in Ladywell Green Infants School and the second was held in Hafren C.P. Junior School.

Consultation Responses

- 2.7 16 respondents completed the consultation response form which was included in the consultation document, including paper copies and responses submitted using the online response form. In addition, a written response was received from Estyn.
- 2.8 The consultation response form asked respondents to answer a number of questions. The findings are provided in full on pages 5 and 6 of the Consultation Report (Appendix B).
- 2.9 The written responses received included a response by Estyn, which is provided on page 17 of the Consultation Report (Appendix B).

Consultation Findings

- 2.10 As part of the consultation, a consultation response form was issued, which was completed by 16 respondents. 38% of respondents indicated that they were associated with Ladywell Green Infants School, 44% indicated that they were associated with Hafren C.P. Junior School, and 19% of respondents indicated that they were not associated with either school.
- 2.11 The consultation response form asked respondents whether or not they agreed with the proposal to amalgamate the two schools. The findings are outlined in full on pages 5-6 of the Consultation Report (Appendix B), and are also provided below:

3. *Do you agree with the current proposal to amalgamate Ladywell Green and Hafren?*

Yes	10	63%
No	4	25%
Don't know	2	13%
Total Responses	16	

4. *Do you think that the Council should be considering any other options for Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School instead of the proposal to amalgamate the schools to establish a new primary school?*

Yes	4	27%
No	9	60%
Don't know	2	13%
Total responses	15	

2.12 Written comments were also provided in the consultation response form. These comments, as well as issues raised in written responses and those raised in the consultation meetings, are listed in the Consultation Report (Appendix B) from page 18 onwards, along with the Council's response to these issues. The issues raised relate to the following headings:

1. Impact on pupils
2. Impact on staff
3. Queries regarding categorisation / inspection arrangements
4. Financial queries
5. Reference to a potential new building
6. Comments relating to the North Powys Well-being Programme
7. Comments relating to documentation
8. Comments relating to the process
9. Other options

2.13 The findings of the consultation, as summarised in 2.11 above, suggest that the respondents' preferred option is to proceed with the proposal to amalgamate Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School to establish a new primary school in Newtown.

The Proposal

2.14 Based on the findings of the consultation, the current proposal to Cabinet is as follows:

- i) To receive the Consultation Report in respect of the proposals relating to Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School.
- ii) To approve the publication of a Statutory Notice proposing the following:
 - To close Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School
 - To establish a new English-medium primary school for pupils aged 4-11 on the current sites of Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School

2.15 As indicated in the Consultation Document published in respect of this proposal, based on estimated pupil numbers for both schools in September 2020, it is estimated that implementation of the proposal would result in annual revenue savings to the Council of £131,885. This is calculated as follows:

Estimated funding for both schools 21/21	£1,025,302
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Estimated funding for one school 20/21	£893,466
Estimated saving / (Cost)	£131,885

The estimated savings figure will be reviewed going forward as estimated pupil numbers change.

2.16 In line with the Council's Scheme for Financing Schools, should either school be in a deficit budget position on closure of the school, the deficit would be written off.

2.17 In addition, in order to ensure effective stewardship of the resources available to schools, particularly those that are subject to closure, Powys' Scheme for Financing Schools makes provision for this under Section 3.7.2, where it states that:

'The Authority may impose additional restrictions, including but not limited to:

- restriction of expenditure to agreed plans
- removal of powers of virement'

2.18 It is therefore proposed that should a final decision be made to proceed with implementation of the proposal, the following actions would be taken:-

- spend at the schools would be restricted to that included in their approved budget plan and no virement of funds between budget headings to be permitted unless approved by the Authority;
- any staffing changes to be subject to approval by the Authority;
- any contracts awarded for the supply of goods or services to be subject to approval by the Authority.

This would ensure that expenditure was limited to that which was absolutely necessary to protect council resources.

2.19 It is anticipated that Statutory Notices will be published before the end of January 2019, and that a further report, summarising any objections received, will be considered by the Council's Cabinet before the end of March 2019.

2.20 The target would be for the new school to open in September 2021.

3. Options Considered / Available

3.1 A number of options were considered in respect of Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School. These are outlined in the consultation document in respect of this proposal (Appendix A).

3.2 A number of other options were suggested during the consultation. These are outlined in the Consultation Report (Appendix B).

4. Preferred Choice and Reasons

- 4.1 As outlined in section 2 above, the outcome of the consultation exercise carried out suggests that the preferred option is to amalgamate Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School and to establish a new primary school on the current sites of the two schools.
- 4.2 Therefore, the preferred choice is to proceed with amalgamating Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School, and to establish a new primary school on the current sites of the two schools.
- 4.3 The reasons for this are as follows:
- 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
 - The option is in line with the Council's School Organisation Policy
 - In the longer term, to provide access to 21st Century Schools funding in order to improve building condition and running costs
 - The outcome of the consultation carried out suggested that this is the preferred option.
- 4.4 It must be noted that the establishment of a new school does not preclude that school from being a part of future reorganisation proposals.

5. Impact Assessment

5.1 Is an impact assessment required? Yes

5.2 If yes is it attached? Yes

A range of draft impact assessments were produced as part of the consultation documentation. These included a Single Integrated Impact Assessment, an Equalities Impact Assessment, a Community Impact Assessment and a Welsh Language Impact Assessment.

These draft impact assessments have been updated to reflect issues raised during the consultation period, and are attached in Appendix D.

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)

- 7.1 Local members will have the opportunity to comment as part of the discussion.

8. Other Front Line Services

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

9. Communications

Have Communications seen a copy of this report? Yes

Comment: The report is of public interest and requires use of news release and social media to publicise the recommendation/decision.

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

- 10.1 Legal: Comment to be provided.
- 10.2 The Schools Finance Manager confirms the estimated savings in the report. Finance will continue to work closely with the two current schools and the proposed new school to ensure the financial position is managed within the requirements of the Scheme for Financing Schools. If a decision is made to proceed with closure then ensuring effective stewardship of resources will need to be a consideration as set out in paragraph 2.18 and 2.19.
- 10.3 HR: The Schools HR Team will continue to work with the Headteachers, Employees, Governors and trade union representatives to ensure that Powys County Council's policies and procedures are followed in consulting upon and implementing any proposed changes.

11. Scrutiny

Has this report been scrutinised? No

12. Statutory Officers

The Head of Finance acknowledges the response from the Schools Finance Manager, and endorses the comments made – it is essential

that any school closures have a minimal effect on school deficits and support a longer term savings delivery plan.

The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) will provide a comment during the meeting.

13. 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:
To discuss the proposed recommendation to Cabinet in respect of Ladywell Green Infants School and Hafren C.P. Junior School as set out in paragraph 1.4 of this report, to enable Cabinet to take the views expressed by Council into account when making a decision.	To inform the Cabinet of Council's views prior to a decision being taken by Cabinet.

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

Relevant Local Member(s):	Cllr David Selby (Newtown Central) Cllr Joy Jones (Newtown East) Cllr Daniel Rowlands (Newtown Llanllwchaiarn North) Cllr Mark Barnes (Newtown Llanllwchaiarn West) Cllr Les Skilton (Newtown South)
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	School Organisation Team
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	End of January 2020

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Background Papers used to prepare Report: