

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

**CABINET EXECUTIVE
22nd November 2016**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Arwel Jones
Portfolio Holder for Education

SUBJECT: Welshpool Town Primary Education

REPORT FOR: Decision

Summary

1. Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 24th January 2016, the authority has carried out formal consultation on the following proposal:

“To establish a new English-medium Church-in-Wales (Voluntary Controlled) (CiW) Primary School and a new Welsh-medium Community Primary (CP) School in Welshpool.”
 - It is proposed that the new English-medium School will be located on land at Welshpool High School. The school will, however, operate from the current sites of Ysgol Maesydre, Gungrog and Oldford Schools on a temporary basis before subsequently transferring to the new building at the earliest opportunity;
 - The new build Welsh-medium School will be located on the Ysgol Maesydre site, but will operate from the current site of Ardwyn School on a temporary basis before subsequently transferring to the new building;
 - The anticipated timescale is for the new schools to be established from September 2017 before transferring into the two new school buildings upon their opening in 2018/19;
 - The current four schools in Welshpool – Ardwyn Nursery & Infant School; Gungrog CiW Nursery & Infant School; Oldford Nursery & Infant School and Ysgol Maesydre would close from the end of August 2017.

2. The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet members of the responses received to the consultation and to determine whether or not to proceed with the statutory process to establish the two new schools and to close the current four schools in Welshpool, through the publication of a Statutory Notice.

3. The report is supported by the following appendices:
 - **Appendix A** – Consultation Document

- **Appendix B** – Consultation Report
- **Appendix C** – Minutes of meetings with School Council, staff, governors and parents / community
- **Appendix D** – Impact Assessments

Background

The Consultation Period

4. On the 24th January 2016, Cabinet approved the commencement of consultation on the establishment of a new English-medium Church in wales (Voluntary Controlled) primary school and a new Welsh-medium Community Primary School in Welshpool from the 1st September 2017. The proposal includes the closure of Ardwyn Nursery & Infant School, Gungrog C. in W. Nursey & Infant School, Oldford Nursery & Infant School and Ysgol Maesydre.
5. The consultation period commenced on the 5th September 2016 and ended on the 18th October 2016.
6. 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 (2013). The consultation document that was issued is attached as Appendix A.
7. Consultees were invited 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 Modernisation Team, or by writing to the School Transformation Team.
8. During the consultation period, meetings were also held with the following:
 - Staff of Ardwyn, Gungrog, Oldford and Maesydre schools
 - Governors of Ardwyn, Gungrog, Oldford and Maesydre schools
 - Parents of pupils at all four schools and the community of Welshpool
 - Ardwyn School Council
 - Gungrog School Council
 - Oldford School Council
 - Maesydre School Council
9. The minutes of these meetings are attached as Appendix C, and the issues raised in the meetings are included in the consultation report.

Consultation Responses

10. A total of 297 written responses were received to the consultation. This includes responses received via the online response form, the paper response form and other written responses.

11. The issues raised during the consultation period, including those raised in written responses and those raised in the consultation meetings, are listed in the Consultation Report (attached as Appendix B), along with the authority's response to these issues.
12. During the consultation period it became apparent that the Wales Humanists Association, an association that 'works on behalf of non-religious people who seek to live ethical lives on the basis of reason and humanity',¹ had started a campaign against the proposal. The association was encouraging their supporters to respond to the consultation in order to oppose the proposal for the English-medium primary school to be a Church in Wales school. Screenshots of the Wales Humanists Facebook page are provided in Appendix A of the Consultation Report (Appendix B).
13. A large number of the responses received oppose the Church in Wales element of the proposal, however it is not clear how many of these responses were due to the Facebook campaign as most responses were anonymous. However, many of the respondents that opposed the proposal, and who did provide a name and address, were from outside Welshpool and outside Powys.
14. A large number of responses were also received from members of the local community which supported the proposal outlined in the consultation documentation, including the establishment of an English-medium Church in Wales School. The responses received are analysed further in the consultation report based on whether the comments in each response indicated support for the proposal or otherwise. More than half of the responses received were in support of the proposal.

Proposal

- i) To receive the Consultation Report in respect of the proposal outlined in 1 above.
 - ii) To approve the publication of a Statutory Notice in respect of this proposal.
15. A financial analysis of the draft recommendation was carried out, and details were included in the Consultation Paper (Appendix A). Based on this analysis, it is estimated that implementation of the proposal will lead to a total net saving of £78,047 upon the establishment of the two new schools (across the current sites) from September 2017. When the schools move into their new buildings in 2018/19, it is estimated that implementation of the proposal will lead to a total net saving of £173,693.

¹ British Humanists Association webpage

One Powys Plan

16. 'Transforming Learning and Skills' is one of the priorities within the One Powys Plan. Within this priority, the Plan states that *'We need to re-organise schools (primary, secondary and post 16) to ensure affordability, sustainability and appropriate leadership capacity.'*

Options Considered/Available

17. In order to find a potential solution to the issues relating to the current provision in Welshpool, a number of possible options were evaluated as part of the development of the Strategic Outline Case, in accordance with Stage 2(v) of the School Review Process outlined within the School Transformation Policy 2014. The options considered and the reasons why they were discounted are outlined on pages 27-28 of the Consultation Document (Appendix A).
18. A number of alternative options were also suggested during the consultation period. These are listed on pages 51-52 in the Consultation Report (Appendix B), along with the authority's response.

Preferred Choice and Reasons

19. Having considered the responses received to the consultation on this proposal, the preferred choice is to proceed with the proposal as outlined in the consultation document.
20. The reason for this is that the proposal will deliver the following benefits:
 - Greater economy and efficiency through appropriate sized schools and better use of resources to improve the cost effectiveness of the education system
 - Ensures that Powys has Welsh-medium primary schools of the right type and right size in the right place to meet current and future demand for Welsh-medium education
 - Develops a sustainable education system progressing towards a position where schools meet national building standards and by reducing the recurrent costs and carbon footprint
 - Creates safe learning environments for schools and communities that will enable the successful implementation of strategies for school improvement and better educational outcomes and life chances for children and young people that are aligned to the council's key strategies
 - Inspirational settings appropriate for new educational developments, new technologies, adaptable to cater for the changing needs of the future
 - Inclusive settings, providing for the individual learning needs for all pupils, providing pleasant and appropriate spaces for all

school users, and spaces in which pupils including those with additional learning needs and disabilities feel that their needs are respected.

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

A Single Integrated Impact Assessment has been produced in respect of this proposal. This is attached in Appendix D.

The Equality Impact Assessment and Community Impact Assessment in respect of this proposal have been updated following the consultation period, and are also included in Appendix D.

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)

Other Front Line Services

N/A

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

Legal:.

The Finance Business Partner comments:

HR:

Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc

N/A

Corporate Communications

Communications Comment: The report is of considerable public interest and requires the use of a news release and appropriate social media to publicise the decision.

Statutory Officers

The **Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer)** has commented as follows:

The **Strategic Director Resources (Section 151 Officer)**

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:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To receive the Consultation Report in respect of the proposal to establish a new English-medium Church in Wales (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School and a new Welsh-medium Community Primary School in Welshpool, resulting in the closure of Ardwyn, Gungrog, Oldford and Maesydre Schools. • To approve the publication of a statutory notice in respect of this proposal. 	<p>To provide a sustainable model of English-medium and Welsh-medium primary education in Welshpool town.</p>

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

Relevant Local Member(s):	Cllr Francesca H Jump / Cllr Phil Pritchard
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Marianne Evans
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	End of December 2016

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Background Papers used to prepare Report:

CABINET REPORT TEMPLATE VERSION 3