

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
23 February 2017**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Barry Thomas, Leader

**SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Gwynfor Thomas
Submitted at the Council meeting on 19 October 2016**

In June 2014 a report was commissioned by the education department into secondary school financial viability.

This report was compiled by PWC.

Appendix 1 – Individual school commentary – contains tables outlining specific financial information on each school from 2011/12 through to 2017/18.

There is a clear line showing transport costs and the use of school budget by each school in providing transport for pupils attending the school.

It is very clear what each school was currently and predicted to spend their budgets on.

As Leader you read and understood this report I am sure.

With the appendix outlining how school budgets were being used by each school on transport why did you not raise concerns about Llanfyllin High schools use of their budget on school transport post 2011/2012 - post full implementation of Regulation 5.2?

Answer from the Leader for Council 19 October 2016

In light of issues raised at the LEA Governor Appeal Hearings in connection with the PWC report, I have arranged for Mr Jonathan Walters, the Independent Investigator, to consider the relevance to his investigation, if any, of the PWC report. In the circumstances, I do not consider that it is appropriate to provide you with a response to your question until such time as the item of further investigations by Mr Walters are to hand.

I shall arrange for your question to be incorporated to the Agenda for the first Full Council meeting after the further report from Mr Walters is available.

Answer from the Leader for Council 23 February 2017

I received the report, as did all County Councillors, via e-mail in October 2014. This was for information.

I attach a copy of page 23 of the PWC report which states:-

“Home to school transport for all pupils is funded directly by the Council, with schools only funding in-school transport for educational and extra-curricular trips. However, there is an inconsistent cost recovery of school trips amongst the schools. Some schools do not charge pupils, whilst others ask for donations”.

At that time I did not appreciate the implications of the line in the PWC showing increased transport costs in Llanfyllin High School. The report from Jonathan Walters concludes that no-one picked the matter up at the time, not even yourself or the other LEA Governors at the school. Neither did you or the other LEA Governors become aware of the potential significance of the PWC report until after the date of his first report, even though you and your fellow LEA Governors were fully aware of the breach of regulation 5.2.

To answer your questions directly, I did not raise concerns about Llanfyllin High School's use of their budget on school transport because I, like everyone else did not appreciate the potential significance of the PWC report until it was brought to my attention at the LEA Governor appeal hearing.

In any event, the PWC report was looking at the financial viability of Secondary Schools in Powys and not on school transport and I would say that there is a very big difference between missing something and actually knowing it has happened.

I find it interesting that you have tabled this question to me whilst you were a Governor of the school and would have known by approving the budget that the school was not complying with 5.2 of the schools policy. Also, two other Governors, one being Chair at one stage of the Audit Committee which you serve on as well. I am extremely surprised that you did not raise it as an item to be discussed at Audit Committee. There was a Cabinet member who also had the opportunity to raise this issue and at no time did he inform us as I am aware in our discussion concerning budget issues.

One must get into perspective that the PWC report came in October 2014 and I was made aware of the breach in 5.2 policy just before Christmas 2015. So if someone had picked up as you suggest this knowledge would have come to the rest of us Councillors who were not Governors at Llanfyllin High School information some 14 months earlier as the school had not been compliant with policy since its introduction in 2010.

The PWC report was not focussing on school transport.

I am sure you also read and understood this report.