

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

18th July 2018

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Aled Davies
Portfolio Holder for Finance, Countryside and Transport

SUBJECT: Banw C.P. School and Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation)
School

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Summary

1.1 This report recommends the commencement of formal consultation on the closure of Banw C.P. School and Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School and the opening of a new Voluntary Aided Church in Wales Primary School on the current site of Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School.

1.2 The report is supported by the following appendices:

Appendix A – Options Appraisal

Appendix B – Report of survey of Banw and Llanerfyl parents

Appendix C – Response from the St Asaph Diocese

Appendix D – Impact Assessment

2. Background

2.1 Banw C.P. School and Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School are two small Welsh-medium primary schools situated in the Banwy Valley in North Powys. The schools are situated approximately 2.5 miles apart, and serve the villages of Llanerfyl, Llangadfan and Y Foel, along with the surrounding rural area. Current pupil numbers¹ at the two schools are as follows:

	N2	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Banw C.P. School	0	2	2	1	7	4	4	6	26
Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School	2	3	4	6	1	5	5	5	32

¹ Teacher Centre, 6th July 2018

Total	2	5	6	7	8	9	9	11	57

- 2.2 Pupil numbers in the area have reduced over recent years, and in the summer of 2017, Banw C.P. School contacted the Schools Service, to express concern about the current and projected numbers at their school, and to request that a solution is identified in order to safeguard the provision of education in the Banwy Valley.
- 2.3 The Council has subsequently undertaken a review of the two primary schools in the Banwy Valley. The review process has included the following steps:
- Discussions with the governing bodies – this has included individual meetings as well as joint meetings with both governing bodies
 - Initial engagement with parents – a questionnaire was distributed to parents of pupils currently attending the two schools and the local Cylch Meithrin. A report outlining the findings is attached as Appendix B
 - Options appraisal
 - Information presented to the Learning and Skills Programme Board
 - Recommendation ratified by members of the Learning and Skills Programme Board
 - Recommendation presented to Cabinet

Information about the two schools

2.4 Data about the two schools is provided below:

i) General Information

	School Type	Language Category	Admission Number
Banw C.P. School	Community Primary	Welsh-medium	8
Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School	Foundation Church in Wales	Welsh-medium	7

ii) Pupil Numbers

Current pupil numbers

	N2	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Banw C.P. School	0	2	2	1	7	4	4	6	26
Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School	2	3	4	7	1	5	5	5	32
Total	2	5	6	8	8	9	9	11	58

Projected pupil numbers

	January 2019	January 2020	January 2021	January 2022	January 2023
Banw C.P. School	22	18	17	13	15
Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School (R-Yr6)	28	30	29	31	28
Total	50	48	36	44	43

iii) Building Capacity and Condition

Capacity

	Current Capacity	Maximum Capacity
Banw C.P. School	72 + 10 nursery / reception	99 + 10 nursery / reception
Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School	44 + 5 nursery / reception	59 + 5 nursery / reception

Building Condition

	Condition	Suitability
Banw C.P. School	C Generally poor	B Generally satisfactory
Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School	B Generally satisfactory	C/D Poor to bad This assessment is based on the perceived limitation of having no hall, and the significant limitations due to conversion and extension of the original property

iv) Quality and standards of education

Estyn

	Banw C.P. School	Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School
Date of Inspection	September 2016	November 2014
School's Current Performance	Good	Adequate
Prospects for Improvement	Good	Adequate
Follow Up Activity	No follow up activity	Estyn Monitoring Estyn Monitoring visit January 2016 – the school was judged to have made good progress, and was removed from the list of schools requiring Estyn monitoring

School Categorisation (2017)

	Standards Group	Improvement Capacity	Support Capacity
Banw C.P. School	N/A	A	Green
Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School	N/A	C	Yellow

v) Financial information

Cost per pupil (2018/19)

	Budget share per school	Budget share per pupil	Notional SEN budget	Non ISB funds devolved to the school
Banw C.P. School	£156,330	£6,013	£5,493	£6,025
Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School	£152,093	£5,432	£7,105	£6,020
Powys average (Primary)	N/A	£3,752	N/A	N/A

Current budgetary position (as of 1st May submittal by full governing body)

	2017/18 Actual Cumulative Outturn	2018/19 Budget	2019/20 Budget	2020/21 Budget
Banw C.P. School	£28,525	£15,582	(£1,576)	(£23,536)
Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School	£19,422	(£969)	(£25,852)	(£50,624)

vi) Home to school travel

Closest school

An analysis of pupil travel patterns has been carried out, based on the 58 pupils that were attending Ysgol Dyffryn Banw and Ysgol Llanerfyl in November 2017. The closest Welsh-medium provider for all of these pupils is as follows:

	Pupils attending Banw C.P. School	Pupils attending Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School	Total
Banw CP School	25	1	26
Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School	0	29	29
Ysgol Llanbrynmair	0	2	2
Ysgol Gymraeg Y Trallwng	1	0	1

Average Travel Distance

The current average travel distance for all pupils currently attending Ysgol Dyffryn Banw is 4.01 miles.

The current average travel distance for all pupils currently attending Ysgol Llanerfyl is 1.79 miles.

If there was no school in Banw, the average travel distance for all current pupils attending the two schools to attend provision in Llanerfyl would be 3.31 miles.

If there was no school in Llanerfyl, the average travel distance for all current pupils attending the two schools to attend provision in Banw would be 3.57 miles.

(Note: in this section, 'all pupils' includes pupils for whom Ysgol Dyffryn Banw or Ysgol Llanerfyl is not their closest provider of Welsh-medium education)

Furthest Travel Distance

Of the pupils that currently attend Ysgol Dyffryn Banw, the furthest travel distance to the school for those pupils for whom Ysgol Dyffryn Banw is the closest Welsh-medium provider is 8.48 miles. If there was no school in Banw, the furthest distance to the nearest alternative provision at Llanerfyl would be 10.01 miles.

Of the pupils that currently attend Ysgol Llanerfyl, the furthest travel distance to the school for those pupils for whom Ysgol Llanerfyl is the closest Welsh-medium provider is 4.71 miles. Should there be no school in Llanerfyl, the furthest distance to the nearest alternative provision at Banw would be 5.85 miles.

3. Options Considered / Available

- 3.1 See Appendix A – Option Appraisal for information about the options considered.

4. Preferred Choice and Reasons

- 4.1 The options appraisal concluded the following:

‘From the assessment that was carried out, there is very little to differentiate the two school sites as a base to establish a new school. However, the main differences are in the following areas:

- a) Strategic location – Llanerfyl scores higher
- b) Learning environments – Ysgol Dyffryn Banw scores higher
- c) Potential achievability – Llanerfyl scores higher
- d) Value for money – Llanerfyl scores higher

On this basis, the **preferred option** is to establish a new school on the Llanerfyl site.

- 4.2 Based on the outcome of the options appraisal, the preferred choice is to commence formal consultation on the following proposal:

‘To close Llanerfyl Church in Wales Foundation School and Banw C.P. School, and to establish a new Welsh-medium Church in Wales Voluntary Aided School on the Llanerfyl site.’

- 4.3 The reasons for this are as follows:

- The recommendation would result in one larger school in the Dyffryn Banw area which would continue to provide access to Welsh-medium education
- Llanerfyl is the best strategic location for the whole Dyffryn Banw area – pupil numbers are currently slightly higher in Llanerfyl and

are projected to remain higher. Parents already travel in to Llanerfyl to access Early Years provision.

- Current projected pupil numbers are higher in Llanerfyl than Dyffryn Banw
- The current Llanerfyl building is large enough to accommodate all current pupils and projected pupil numbers
- The Llanerfyl building has been assessed to be in a better condition than the Banw building
- Potential capital receipt from sale of the Banw C.P. School building – the authority is in ownership of this school, whilst Ysgol Llanerfyl is owned by a Trust, therefore a capital benefit wouldn't be available to the authority if this site was to close.
- The proposal to close both schools would ensure all staff currently employed at the two schools would have an equal opportunity to secure a position in the new school
- The recommendation would continue to provide access to Welsh-medium Church in Wales denominational provision in the Dyffryn Banw (the nearest alternative Welsh-medium Church in Wales provision is in either Rhayader C. in W. School or Trefonnen C. in W. School, Llandrindod. Both of these are dual stream schools, located approximately 40 miles from Llanerfyl)
- This recommendation has been supported by the Diocese and therefore has a higher level of achievability.

4.4 Whilst it is recognised that the facilities at Llanerfyl are not as extensive as the facilities at Banw C.P. School, the condition of the building has been categorised as being better than the condition of the Banw building, and the building is able to accommodate current and projected pupil numbers in the area.

4.5 Should the authority proceed with a proposal to establish a new Voluntary Aided School on the current Llanerfyl site, there may be an opportunity to apply for capital funding as part of the 21st Century Schools Programme. The Welsh Government provides 85% of funding towards Voluntary Aided schools, with the remaining 15% coming from the Local Authority and/or the Diocese.

4.6 Whilst there is a potential to achieve a capital receipt from the sale of the Banw C.P. School building, there is a community centre attached to the school, which may cause difficulties regarding sale of the site.

4.7 It is estimated that implementation of the recommendation would lead to revenue savings of £63,426 per year. However, this figure does not take account of any redundancy costs which may initially be required.

Risks

4.8 As with all school reorganisation proposals, there is an element of risk associated with the recommendation. The following risks have been identified:

- i) Based on the current pupil projections, there would still be less than 50 pupils in the new school in a few years time
- ii) Pupils may transfer to other schools instead of the proposed new school, which would impact on pupil numbers
- iii) As the new school would be a small Welsh-medium school in a rural area, it may not attract a headteacher
- iv) Welsh Government may not provide capital funding for investment in a school of this size
- v) The current configuration of the school at Llanerfyl may cause challenges for the new school in relation to curriculum delivery following the introduction of the new curriculum

Consultation with the Diocese and the Trust

- 4.9 Local authorities are required to follow the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code when implementing school organisation proposals. The Code states the following on page 31:

'In the case of proposals to reorganise schools for which land and/or buildings are held on trust, or which have a designated religious character, the proposer **must** conduct consultation with the trustees and/or appropriate religious body before the consultation document is published. The proposer **must** allow 28 days for the receipt of comments and **must** have due regard to those comments before any decision is made to proceed to general consultation.'

- 4.10 As Llanerfyl C. in W. (Foundation) School is owned by a trust, and has the school has a designated religious character, there is a requirement to carry out consultation with the St Asaph Diocese and the Priscilla Foster Trust. The Council wrote to the Trust and the Diocese on the 20th June 2018, requesting their comments on the recommendation set out above. The response received from the St Asaph Diocese is attached as Appendix C.
- 4.11 No response has yet been received from the Priscilla Foster Trust. Should a response be received, this will be tabled at the meeting.

The decision making process and timescales

- 4.12 Should Cabinet approve the commencement of the statutory process in respect of this recommendation, the Council would need to follow the process set out in the School Organisation Code. 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 will be published, which will give a period of 28 days for people to submit written objections.

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

iii) Implementation

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

4.13 Should the recommendation to commence formal consultation be approved, it is anticipated that consultation would commence in September 2018.

4.14 The target date for closure of the two schools would be the 31st August 2020, with the new school to open on the 1st September 2020.

5. Impact Assessment

5.1 Is an impact assessment required? Yes

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

An initial impact assessment in respect of the recommendation is attached. This 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)

- 7.1 Cllr Myfanwy Alexander, Local Member for the Banwy ward, has commented as follows:

'Fel cynghorydd lleol, mae'n anodd cyfaddau bod pwysau demograffig wedi ein gorfodi ni i wynebu'r fath benderfyniad. Mae'r ardal arbennig yma yn gadarnle i'r iaith Gymraeg a chrud i'w diwylliant. Os bydd i'r iaith ffynnu i'r dyfodol, rhaid gwarchod yr ardaloedd prin hynny lle mae'r Gymraeg yn parhau yn iaith naturiol y gymuned. Rwyf felly yn croesawu unrhyw ymdrechion i gryfhau'r economi leol. Heb swyddi, ni fydd plant i lenwi ein hysgolion.'

Mae sawl un wedi beirniadu'r oedi o fewn y broses yma, yn enwedig yn syth ar ol y Nadolig. Os oes rhaid i ni, fel cymunedau, wynebu newidiadau heriol fel hyn, byddai'n llesol i'r penderfyniad gael ei weithredu cyn gyntedd a phosibl. Ni yw cyfnodau o ansicrwydd byth yn help i neb, yn enwedig y plant a'r staff. Mae gennym ni ddyletswydd tuag at y dyfodol i warantu addysg Gymraeg i blant y Dyffryn, i gyflawni polisiau'r Sir a Llywyodraeth Cymru.'

'As a local councillor, it is difficult to admit that demographic pressures have forced us to face a decision such as this. This special area is a stronghold for the Welsh language and a haven for its culture. For the language to thrive in the future, we must protect those rare areas where Welsh continues to be the natural language of the community. Therefore, I welcome any efforts to strengthen the local economy. Without jobs, there will be no children to fill our schools.'

A number of people have criticised the delay in this process, particularly immediately after Christmas. If we, as communities, must face challenging changes such as this, it would be beneficial if the decision was implemented as soon as possible. Periods of uncertainty are never helpful for anyone, particularly children and staff. We have a

duty to the future to ensure Welsh-medium education for the children of the Valley, to fulfil the County and the Welsh Government's polices.'

8. Other Front Line Services

Does the recommendation impact on other services run by the Council or on behalf of the Council? Yes/No

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 considerable public interest and requires use of news release and appropriate social media to publicise the decision'.

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

10.1 Legal –

10.2 Finance – 'The financial aspects of the report have been worked on and verified by finance'.

10.3 HR – 'The Schools HR Team will continue to work with and support Headteachers, Governors and staff to ensure that Powys County Council's policies are adhered to, and to minimise any risk of redundancy resulting from decisions that are made in relation to these schools.'

11. Scrutiny

Has this report been scrutinised? No

12. Statutory Officers

The Section 151 Officer notes the comments made by Finance.

The Monitoring Officer

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 carry out consultation as required by the School Organisation Code on a proposal to close Banw C.P. School and Llanerfyl C. in W. Foundation School and to open a new Welsh-medium Church in Wales Voluntary Aided School on the Llanerfyl site, with a target date of closing the two schools on the 31 st August 2020 and opening the new school on the 1 st September 2020.	To ensure the continued provision of Welsh-medium education in the Banwy Valley through the establishment of one larger school.

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

Relevant Local Member(s):	Cllr Myfanwy Alexander
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Marianne Evans
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	End of September 2018

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Background Papers used to prepare Report: