

Scrutiny Observations to Cabinet on the Post 16 Review

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LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee met on 8th July 2019 and considered the following documents:

- Draft Cabinet Report – Review of Sixth Form provision 2019
- Future Powys – Review of Sixth Form Provision in Powys Stage 1 report
- Report on the Post 16 destinations survey

The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee thank the Portfolio Holders for Education and Finance, the Head of Schools Services and the Senior Manager Schools Transformation for attending scrutiny.

Scrutiny make the following observations:

1. Introduction

Scrutiny of the Post 16 Review has been more complex than the recent pre-Cabinet scrutiny undertaken by the Learning and Skills Committee. This report reflects this complexity and includes more detail than has been previously the case. A brief background to Post 16 education is outlined followed by consideration of a number of issues pertinent to the review including:

- Pupil numbers, projections, retention;
- Funding (Post 16 funding and central services funding);
- Digital learning;
- Standards;
- Transport;
- Capacity;
- Students views and
- Political cycle.

These are not standalone issues and the relationships between them are identified within the conclusions.

Whilst it is usual for scrutiny observations to be broadly limited to the report before them, scrutiny have found in this case it has been necessary to draw on their wider experience and make additional, more far reaching recommendations. This is an approach which we expect to continue to use when scrutinising significant service change proposals. These recommendations are made in the context of a scrutiny committee which is committed to ensuring Cabinet reports are comprehensive and that decisions which are taken are robust and fully in keeping with the vision outlined to the people of Powys.

2. Background

Going back at least as far as 2005¹ there have been concerns regarding school organisation, and in particular Post 16 education. These concerns have been expressed by regulators (the Audit Commission now Wales Audit Office, and Estyn) as well as Members. There have been a series of reviews undertaken each expressing a common theme around the aims of the service and the reasons why a review is required (outlined below). However, despite this, in 2019, Post 16 provision remains on 12 out of the 13 sites of secondary education and the dire predictions made in a series of reports to Cabinet over the years (set out below) are now being realised.

These scrutiny observations and recommendations, whilst based on the report before Cabinet, also draw on a shared scrutiny experience going back many years. It is hoped that this shared corporate memory will help existing Members of the authority understand how the current position has arisen and what actions need to be agreed now in order for Post 16 education within the schools setting to be safeguarded for future generations of young people in Powys.

A brief summary of activity regarding Post 16 education, including Cabinet recommendations, is attached at Appendix 1. Detail contained within these reports shows that the issues facing the authority now have been known about for some considerable time. These issues include:

Powys is unique in that it is a very large geographical area but a sparse population. This presents real challenges for the delivery of Post 16 education and training in a coherent and equitable manner. This combined with demographic declines in school age learners and the inevitable pressures on funding presents Powys with a set of challenges that need to be addressed.

Appendix A Shaping the Powys Post 16 Learning Infrastructure
Board 31 July 2007²

- The impact of curriculum change – the need to provide more for less;
- Demographic changes and decreasing learner numbers;
- Financial sustainability – budgetary reductions across all sectors;
- The need to maintain ageing buildings and invest in technology to support learning;
- The need to improve equality of provision for Welsh medium learners across the county;
- The need to provide an inclusive approach to learners with additional learning needs;

Secondary and Post-16 Modernisation – Strategic Outline Case
Board 7 December 2010³

- need to provide a broader menu of options which includes both academic and vocational provision, in both English and Welsh languages;
- generally, a competitive approach amongst providers to attracting and retaining learners;
- some very small sixth forms, operating at a level at which it is difficult to be economically efficient or to provide the full range of entitlement to learners;
- As a result, some very small class sizes are in existence;
- A decrease in pupil numbers will only exacerbate this situation;
- The geography and rural nature of Powys has implications for travel and transport between providers;

Secondary Modernisation Proposal for Post 16
Cabinet 22 November 2011⁴

In order to establish a more sustainable secondary school infrastructure, it is recommended that a Secondary Reorganisation Programme is commenced immediately to achieve the following outcomes:

- The need to find cost-effective solutions to providing high-quality education, given the budgetary and demographic forecasts;
- The need to ensure learners are able to access a wider range of post-16 provision without having to make unreasonable journeys;
- Ensuring sustainability of Welsh medium provision that meets the needs of all learners;

Secondary School Review
Cabinet 27th January 2015⁵

The report to Cabinet as scrutinised on 8th July 2019 ‘the Cabinet report’⁶ presents an urgent need for action described in terms of the following key challenges:

- Decreasing pupil numbers;
- Financial challenges;
- Sustainability of the curriculum offer;
- Sustainability of the Welsh medium curriculum offer and
- Impact on standards and outcomes.

None of these challenges or fears are new. It is Scrutiny Members’ view that Officers and decision makers have been aware of them for some long time and their failure to take bold decisions to address these challenges has meant that students across the county have been disadvantaged over the past decade.

The clear consequences of the inability to take the necessary decisions has hastened the spiral of decline such that students, faced with a shrinking curriculum offer which in some cases may involve intra-school travel, choose to vote with their feet and desert their county of residence and head to England for their Further Education.

It is noted that the Cabinet report is titled ‘Review of Sixth Form Provision 2019’. Throughout the period referred to above the review of education for Key Stage 5

students has been referred to as the Post 16 Review. During the scrutiny session on 8th July 2019 it was confirmed that the review had been limited to sixth forms to keep it manageable and that whilst it would be necessary to improve strategic planning with partners it did not appear that the same crisis that was being experienced in sixth forms was replicated in the colleges. It is imperative that the opportunities for all students to undertake the course most appropriate to their needs is available and the restriction of this report to 'sixth form provision' does not limit the bold alternatives that Cabinet will necessarily have to consider.

3. Issues:

3.1. Pupil numbers – pupil projections

The Cabinet report includes school by school sixth form numbers since 2010⁶. It can be seen from these figures that there has been an overall decrease of 467 between 2010 and 2019. Numbers fluctuated between 1,445 and 1,381 students between 2010 and 2015. There was then a drop of 197 pupils between 2015 and 2016 and numbers have continued to decline steadily since then. (page 25 of reference 6)

Pupil projections at secondary level are understood to be more accurate than at primary level and the November 2011 Cabinet report⁷ predicted a steadily declining Post 16 population, a decrease of 274 between 2011/12 and 2018/19 some 193 less than the actual decrease. The dramatic drop between 2015 and 2016 was not foreseen. School by school analysis of these drops shows that schools in the north of the county lost almost twice as many pupils (130) as schools in the south of the county (67).

North Schools	2015	2016	Change	Total
Caereinion High School	83	66	-17	
Llanfyllin High School	200	147	-53	
Llanidloes High School	97	75	-22	
Newtown High School	108	100	-8	
Welshpool High School	192	163	-29	
Ysgol Bro Hyddgen	65	64	-1	-130
South Schools				
Maesydderwen School	57	60	+3	
Brecon High School	89	83	-6	
Gwernyfed High School	82	79	-3	
Crickhowell High School	185	169	-16	
Ysgol Calon Cymru	223	178	-45	-67

Table 1 Powys Sixth Form numbers 2015-2016

It is likely that this reduction resulted from a combination of factors which could include the following:

- The Welsh Baccalaureate becoming a compulsory subject for Welsh students. This was identified by the Portfolio Holder during the scrutiny committee as a potential reason why students were deserting Powys schools. The new Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate was introduced in September 2015 with an expectation that this would be universally adopted by schools and colleges and that all Level 3 learners would be following this qualification by September 2019. It is worth noting that the results of the Learner Survey (appended to the Cabinet Report) contain no mention of the Welsh Baccalaureate as a reason for either staying or leaving Post 16 education within Powys.
- The introduction of an hourly train on the Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury line. This commenced in May 2015. This could have influenced students making

post 16 choices from September 2015 and would show in the figures from 2016 (PLASC figures for student numbers in school are recorded in January)

- The changes to Post 16 funding which resulted in a reduction in the number of courses offered from September 2014 (the effects of the first year of this would be recorded in the 2015 figures, the full effects would show in the 2016 figures) NB the following outcomes were predicted in a report to Cabinet on 'Future sustainability of Post-16 provision in Powys sixth forms' March 2014⁹:
A reduced menu of provision in Powys schools will not be attractive to learners, and may lead to further reduction in funding as learners opt to travel out of county / country for their post-16 education. In a county such as Powys, this is a very real risk due to the fact that we share a border with numerous other Welsh counties, and also a lengthy border with England
- Uncertainty around subsidised transport at Llanfyllin which had been non-compliant with Scheme for Financing Schools since 2011. In June 2016 Cabinet agreed a two year transition to compliance and full cost recovery by September 2018 commencing in September 2016 with charging at least in line with the Councils' vacant place scheme⁹.
- The opening of post 16 provision at The Marches, Oswestry (an Academy) announced in 2012 and opened in September 2013 may have had an impact on the number of pupils coming over the border from Shropshire whose only alternative previously would have been tertiary education in Shrewsbury, or at the North Shropshire College. A few pupils also chose to travel from Powys to The Marches which was very effectively marketed in the border area. The impact on this change would not begin to be felt until 2018.

3.2. Retention rates

The retention rates in Powys sixth forms, outlined within the Cabinet report, vary widely from 19.8% in Newtown High School to 83.8% in Crickhowell High School. The Cabinet report notes 'the average retention rate into sixth forms in Powys from Year 11 to 12 is 43% over the last four years, a drop of 7% since 2010'. This drop in overall retention rate would support the contention that increasingly Powys students are choosing to look for alternative provision for their Post 16 education.

Scrutiny have previously had sight of some retention figures covering the period 2013-2016 (Appendix 2).

This shows Crickhowell firmly anchored in the top spot for retaining pupils with other schools having far lower levels of retention. This appendix covers the period prior to the dramatic reduction of the sixth form population between 2015 and 2016. Comparison between the retention rate information contained within the Cabinet report and Appendix 2 shows the following reduction in percentage point retention between 2013 and 2018:

School	2013	2018	% point reduction in retention 2013-2018
Caereinion	48%	37%	11%
Llanfyllin	60%	55%	5%
Llanidloes	62%	39%	23%
Newtown**	31%	20%	11%
Welshpool	46%	49%	-3%
Ysgol Calon Cymru	45%*	46%	-1%
Maesydderwen	42%	39%	3%
Brecon	52%	33%	19%
Gwernyfed	54%	45%	9%
Crickhowell	83%	84%	-1%
Bro Hyddgen	69%	78%	-9%
Average**	51%	43%	8%

Table 2: Powys Sixth Form retention rates 2013-2018

* In 2013 this was Builth High School (retention rate of 54.9% (62 of 113 pupils) and Llandrindod High School (retention rate of 32.6% (29 of 89 pupils) giving a combined figure of 45% (91 of 202 pupils))

**average based on total number of pupils

It can be seen that some schools have shown a far higher reduction in retention rates than others, in particular Llanidloes and Brecon, whilst some have seen an increase in retention rates including Bro Hyddgen and Welshpool.

Whilst it may not be possible in the future to encourage pupils to choose Powys for post 16 study at the levels enjoyed in 2013, a pragmatic position should be taken in the knowledge that sixth form study is neither the desired nor appropriate place for all pupils to continue their education. High quality alternative options including apprenticeships and college courses should be available to students within the county.

Retention rates across the county present a varied picture and scrutiny heard that there were often positive and negative factors impacting upon them. A large school able to offer a range of subjects or a small school without easily accessible alternatives show higher retention rates. The accessibility of alternatives (such as the sixth form colleges in Shrewsbury and Hereford) or the lack of specific courses (such as Agriculture through the medium of Welsh) result in lower retention rates. At least one third of students are actively choosing not to pursue their sixth form studies within Powys. This links to the learner survey considered later.

3.3. Financial Challenges

The Cabinet report states that funding for Post 16 education by Welsh Government Grant has been reduced from £6.5million in 2013/14 to £4.5million in 2018/19. This period covers the change in funding between 2015/16 referenced above in the section on pupil numbers. Over this period there has been a reduction of approximately one third of pupils.

The information provided within the Cabinet report regarding the number of courses funded by the Welsh Government grant compared to the total number of courses schools are providing demonstrates that some additional 67 courses are being provided over and above those funded. The Cabinet report notes that 'schools are able to offer more courses themselves by utilising their delegated budget, which has an impact on the funding available for pre-16 provision'. However, this information also varies from the published courses advertised under collaborative arrangements (Appendix 3). It will be necessary to undertake further analysis to get a clear picture of the current position. If schools are running unfunded courses or receiving funding for courses that are not running this should be identified. It would not be fair for schools to advertise courses which attract students, to receive funding for such courses but, due to lack of numbers fail to run the course with the student having to study a second choice course.

The Cabinet report also notes that 11-16 funding is being utilised to subsidise Post 16 study ('cross-phase subsidisation'). The extent of any such subsidisation should be identified. It will then be necessary to compare any cross-phase subsidisation against the school budget information to ascertain if there is any correlation between the offer of unfunded 6th form courses and deficit budgets. The majority of Powys secondary schools are facing increasing deficit budgets. This analysis will identify if deficits are arising from schools maintaining unaffordable sixth forms.

In any event, Scrutiny Members are firmly of the opinion that schools delegated budgets should be used to support Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 learning. This funding is to support pupils to achieve their best potential at GCSE level. It is not fair that the opportunities of 11-16 pupils may be being curtailed by the use of funding meant for their courses to prop up struggling sixth forms. If this results in a poor learning experience for more able pupils it may lead to them being more open to moving elsewhere for post 16 education, thereby exacerbating the problem of pupils moving out of county.

The revision of the Post 16 funding formula as part of the Formula Review Group is welcomed and Members look forward to the opportunity to scrutinise this jointly with Members of the Finance Panel.

In relation to the capacity of the Schools Transformation team the attention of scrutiny was drawn to the £2million savings that had been taken out of the schools central services rather than schools delegated budgets in order to protect frontline services. Scrutiny accept that the policy has been to protect frontline services, but this risks an inability to support those very services in delivering quality provision and a limited ability to drive transformation. It will be necessary to closely consider the balance in funding between central and frontline services to ensure there is no decline in the overall service offered.

3.4. Digital Learning

One of the short-term solutions suggested within the Cabinet report is to increase the use of digital learning. It is understood that this year there are a small number of students accessing digital learning through Tute teach but it will not be possible to assess the outcomes until results are published provisionally in August 2019. Plans are in place to introduce digital learning under partnership arrangements with

Ceredigion County Council whereby each school teaches a subject digitally which all students are able to access across Powys.

There was some confusion as to whether all schools are digitally enabled to successfully provide these digital courses or if Welsh Government grant money recently accepted to enhance digital education will be required before the courses can run. The position regarding the accessibility and reliability of the digital offer needs to be clearly articulated within the report.

The report does not address the degree to which students would choose to study a digital course. This is a new way of learning for students of this age and it is not clear how confident students (and parents) would be in choosing a digital option, or if they would prefer face to face learning together with the social experience that class based learning brings at this important stage in their education.

3.5. Standards

The acknowledgement within the report to Cabinet that standards are 'adequate' at A level, with A and A* grades significantly below the Welsh average and a declining position regarding the average points score is difficult to match with the Vision 2025 aim of 'improving educational attainment for all pupils'.

It is accepted that it is difficult to ascertain what performance should be expected from those pupils that continue to access sixth form education within Powys, but without a considerable amount of additional data it cannot be ascertained if it is the higher performing pupils that are choosing alternative provision or, as was suggested by the Head of Schools, the full range of pupils choosing alternative provision. It has been suggested that Sixth Form Admissions Tutors in Powys Secondary Schools may be accepting students with lower GCSE results than other counties in an effort to maintain their numbers. It is possible that although results from Powys schools are lower than expected elsewhere, they reflect the wider capability range of students entering the sixth forms. Alternatively, it may be that small sixth forms are unable to offer quality teaching across the whole range of subjects offered, and students are failing to reach their potential.

The section on retention rates notes that pupils are choosing to study in a variety of settings out of county.

The aspiration should be that Powys pupils are able to access quality education without having to choose to attend provision elsewhere. This applies equally to students accessing apprenticeships, vocational qualifications and academic qualifications.

3.6. Transport

At present the authority pays for pupils to be transported to their local school and then, if a pupil takes up a course offered in another Powys sixth form under collaborative arrangements, the cost of transport is paid centrally. It is understood that this intra-school transport is costing in the region of £240k.

According to Question 13 of the Learner Survey ‘Do you travel to any other schools / colleges to study any subjects?’ and Question 14 ‘If yes, what are your views on this?’:

The majority of the responses were on the following themes (in decreasing order of incidence/mention):

- The intra-day travel wastes time;
- Intra-day travel is fine;
- Students would prefer the subjects to be available on 1 site;
- Concern about the cost of buses;
- General dislike for intra-day travel;
- Intra-day travel means students can miss lessons;
- Intra-day travel is tiring.

The general perception appears to be that intra-day travel is unpopular. Regrettably this section of the survey report does not quantify the levels of students voicing each opinion only ranks them. It is therefore impossible to say how strongly pupils feel that time is wasted relative to those who think it is fine.

The figures for students accessing education in England demonstrate students are clearly willing to travel long distance either by train, bus or car as they pass their driving test, to access education on one site. This can often mean catching a bus or train at 6.30am and travelling for up to two hours in each direction to reach College. The commitment this demonstrates to access their preferred education should not be underestimated and the view that students are not prepared to travel, in some instances quite a considerable distance, is not borne out.

3.7. Capacity of schools’ service

Scrutiny have followed with interest the progress of this Post 16 Review. It had been understood that this would come to Cabinet with options in Spring 2019 but that it had been postponed to allow the findings of a Learner Survey to inform the recommendations. Scrutiny have long recommended that matters regarding school organisation are progressed at pace. In June 2014 the Education Interim Scrutiny Report¹⁰ was presented to Cabinet and included the following recommendations:

R4	<i>That the Portfolio Holder, brings forward plans for a review of Secondary Schools provision, in order to develop a sustainable model for Powys, with a view to ensure work is in progress to implement any infrastructure changes by September 2015</i>
R5	<i>That the Portfolio Holder, as a matter of priority brings forward plans for the re-organisation of the Post-16 provision to ensure that the proposals are implemented by September 2015</i>
R6	<i>That resources should be prioritised to addressing the problems facing the secondary sector, rather than the primary sector. However, work should take place to review the Primary Schools Modernisation Policy (2006), so that the Council then has an appropriate policy to hand</i>

Relevant extracts from this paper are attached at Appendix 4.

It is therefore disappointing to read the proposed recommendations are limited to a number of short term solutions in the first instance, with further work required before a business case and recommendations can be brought to Cabinet in Spring 2020. This is where scrutiny understood the authority to be in Spring 2019.

Questioning the ability of the service to undertake large scale transformation has highlighted that whilst a successful bid for Management of Change funding had been made for the ALN Transformation Programme, the Schools Transformation Team is limited to one Member of staff, supported by some input from the Senior Manager Schools Transformation and some input from the Corporate Transformation Team. Whilst the work produced to date should be commended, it is clear that significant additional capacity is needed within this team to enable this programme to be progressed at the speed required.

3.8. Students views

What had been particularly disappointing to scrutiny was the delay to this programme in order for the Learner Survey to be undertaken only to find that to quote the Cabinet report ‘...a number of interesting viewpoints can be found in the learner survey...however, there are no clear conclusions that can be drawn at this stage’. The Learner Survey appears to have been compromised with skewed results which are of limited value. This is exemplified by the disproportionate number of responses from individual schools, and the unusually high number of history and geography students that participated. The delay has provoked additional difficulties which could have been eased had the Post 16 Review been brought forward on its original timeframe.

The Learner survey does give an indication of why students choose to study in local authority sixth forms, in NPTC colleges or outside Powys. The survey omits to include students who move to independent provision. Excluding Christ College Brecon there are at least six Independent Schools surrounding Powys all with bus routes running from Powys enabling students to attend on a daily basis. The reasons for choosing to study in certain different institutions will need further investigation given ‘there are no clear conclusions that can be drawn at this stage’ from the Learner survey. The impact of the requirement of students to study the Welsh Baccalaureate in Powys schools or the choice for students to study the EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) in English sixth forms is a potential further factor in student choice and should be included in any planned student engagement.

It is essential that the views of students are properly sought and that any engagement is undertaken in a way that ensures that the results can be trusted to be a reliable representation of user views. The student voice should be given proper prominence amongst other voices including schools, parents and the community. In order to increase the number of student responses and their value it would be helpful to include past pupils if possible. If students are not listened to and are not provided with an offer that they wish to take up they will continue to seek alternative provision.

3.9. Political cycle

The ability to complete the review within this political cycle (with the next round of County Council elections taking place in May 2022) was queried. Scrutiny were

assured that the timeframe allowed for a decision to be made but that the implementation would require adherence to the Schools Organisational Code.

Based on previous experience scrutiny have grave reservations about the ability of the Council to complete the Review during this political cycle. Scrutiny have warned the service that this needs to proceed at pace to allow for difficult decisions to be made and implemented at an appropriate time in a Council term, taking into account the requirements of the School Organisational Code.

Looking back through past attempts to reorganise schools it is clear that on two occasions Members failed to take the necessary bold decisions as indicated earlier (Appendix 1). A considerable amount of work was undertaken in respect of Secondary School and Post 16 modernisation proposals culminating in a report to Cabinet in November 2011. This was six months before County Council elections in 2012. No structural decisions to alter the schools' estate were taken at this time.

School modernisation continued to be discussed during the next political term and in January 2015 a further report was presented to Cabinet which included a series of bold recommendations noted below together with the resolutions actually passed. Attention is drawn to the differences between the recommendations and resolutions.

<i>Recommendation:</i>	<i>RESOLVED</i>
<p>1. It is recommended that a Secondary Reorganisation Programme is commenced immediately</p> <p>2. It is recommended that the Programme will take forward the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconfiguration of secondary and post-16 education by closing up to three secondary schools along with their 6th forms. • Reconfiguration of Welsh-medium education with the aim of establishing at least one Welsh-medium secondary school in the county and consolidation of other Welsh-medium streams into larger units. • The closure of any 6th form should financial and demographic pressures continue to deteriorate to a point where the Authority is unable to sustain an appropriate range of post-16 subjects across the county. <p>3. It is recommended that a business case for each specific</p>	<p>1. That a Secondary Reorganisation Programme is commenced immediately.</p> <p>2. That the Programme will take forward the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reconfiguration of secondary and post-16 education by closing sufficient secondary schools along with their 6th forms to create a viable infrastructure.</i> • Reconfiguration of Welsh-medium education with the aim of establishing at least one Welsh-medium secondary school in the county and consolidation of other Welsh-medium streams into larger units. • The closure of any 6th form should financial and demographic pressures continue to deteriorate to a point where the Authority is unable to sustain an appropriate

<p>proposal is considered by Cabinet, before any decisions are made to proceed with any statutory processes, including consultation. Each business case will include the rationale for the proposal; benefits; risks; costs; and implementation plan. Equality, community and Welsh language impact assessments will also be undertaken.</p>	<p>range of post-16 subjects across the county.</p> <p>3. That a business case for each specific proposal is considered by Cabinet, before any decisions are made to proceed with any statutory processes, including consultation. Each business case will include the rationale for the proposal; benefits; risks; costs; and implementation plan. Equality, community and Welsh language impact assessments will also be undertaken.</p>
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This removed the decision to close up to 3 secondary schools and sixth forms replacing it with a recommendation to close 'sufficient secondary schools along with their sixth forms to create a viable infrastructure'. The decision was taken in January 2015 some 16 months before the next round of County Council elections which took place in May 2017.

Since then the Powys High Schools estate remains on 13 sites with sixth forms on 12 sites. Two schools have closed and reopened as one school on two campuses. The position of this school remains precarious, it is forecasting high deficits and is unable to attract and retain a permanent head teacher.

At the beginning of a Council term, especially when there has been a turnover of Members, it becomes apparent to Members that the status quo cannot be maintained. Considerable effort is expended in reviewing the schools' estate only to fail at the final hurdle.

Again, scrutiny are being asked to look at proposals to modernise schools. Scrutiny have repeatedly recommended that school modernisation is progressed at pace. For example at a briefing on the Post 16 review Members of the Committee and Chair outlined to officers a realistic timetable which would enable reorganisation to proceed in harmony with political cycles rather than in conflict with them. This timetable has already slipped by six months and the proposals before scrutiny suggest a further six months slippage is planned for. This results in a distinct sense of frustration from scrutiny that the time has reached when this Council accepts that modernisation is not only needed but needs to be taken urgently. However, there is also a sense of déjà vu. There is an urgent need to progress this at considerable pace if there is to be any potential of getting necessary decisions at an appropriate time in the Council term. This urgency has been exacerbated by the delay in undertaking the Learner Survey.

3.10. Pre and Post 16 education

Throughout consideration of the report, Scrutiny Members were adamant that it was not possible to consider post 16 education in isolation. Choosing to retain sixth forms in some schools rather than others may result in certain secondary schools becoming unviable and for this reason alone it essential that pre-16 education is considered at the same time as post-16. Achieving a sustainable pre-16 model may mean a different

outcome than if the post 16 review was undertaken first. This appears to be obvious however, Officers are understandably hesitant in bringing forward such large scale proposals given the failed previous efforts. Scrutiny is of the opinion that all Members need to show clear leadership and commitment to the review so that Officers can feel confident and supported through the process.

4. Conclusion

Scrutiny welcome this report in so far as it goes. However, it is not the report that was expected and falls far short of the radical proposals which will be essential to protect education in Powys. The short-term objectives include:

- Developing a new brand for Post 16 in Powys – this appears to be a marketing exercise for collaborative working. The collaborative approach championed since 2011 hasn't stemmed the decline and scrutiny would suggest that a marketing campaign will produce a limited response;
- Developing digital opportunities – considered to be reliant on courses when standards are unknown, technology whilst assured to have been tested is yet to be tested in real-time, and on take-up by pupils who may consider themselves to be guinea-pigs in this style of learning;
- Relaunching the Powys 14-19 network, this may improve matters but is not a bold move and
- Revising post-16 funding – this should be done regardless of the transformation programme and is welcomed but will not in itself produce the necessary changes.

If Cabinet wish to successfully proceed with a review of Post 16 education, it will be necessary to inject a considerable amount of capacity into the process. It is also recommended that the review is extended to include Pre-16 education as this may result in changes to proposals regarding Post-16. Scrutiny draw to the attention of Cabinet the need to proceed at, by this stage in the political cycle, considerable pace given the failure of the last two modernisation programmes to make any bold decisions.

It is imperative that the current cycle of decline is arrested. Powys students should not be compelled to travel distance to access quality provision. An attractive offer for all post-16 students needs to be provided and exactly what this comprises of and where this is sited needs to be fully informed by the young people themselves, and whilst parents, teachers, members and local communities need to have their views heard most consideration should be given to voice of the young people who are using this service. The alternatives are already apparent, and whilst some students are choosing to access provision elsewhere, with access to transport (including the money to pay for the bus or train) and a willingness to commit to a considerable time commitment this option is not available to all students and offer that remains is becoming a very poor substitute for the quality offer that Powys should be proud of.

5. Recommendations

Conclusion	Recommendation
<p>1. Post 16 pupil numbers are declining, the extent to which this is demographic rather than desertion has been hypothesised within the scrutiny report. A full understanding of the extent to which pupils are deserting Powys post 16 and the reasons behind the individual decisions to pursue out of county further education is necessary to enable changes to be brought forward to stem this flow.</p>	<p>1a. That a student engagement exercise based on formal market research interview techniques is undertaken to ascertain students' views regarding post 16 education within and outside of Powys to understand the push and pull factors existing when post 16 choices are made.</p> <p>1b. That a comprehensive demographic review on the catchments of the existing schools is undertaken to determine the maximum potential intake for the existing schools, the number of potential Welsh speaking students and potential cohorts under a number of sixth form reduction scenarios.</p> <p>1c. That the hypothesis put forward by the Portfolio Holder and others as to the reasons for the decline in student numbers are independently verified or rejected to ensure the ongoing public discussion is based upon accurate information.</p>
<p>2. Whilst it may not be appropriate for all students to undertake a course leading to an A Level qualification and hence it would be expected that some pupils would enter vocational training there are variations in retention rates which need to be understood in the modelling of ongoing service provision. Additionally, since 2013 eight of the twelve sixth forms have experienced a drop in retention rates of up to 23 percentage points. Four sixth forms have experienced an increase in retention rates of up to 9 percentage points.</p>	<p>2. That a review is undertaken to determine appropriate expectations for post 16 retention rates across the county and to understand the significant discrepancy in retention rates currently present. This should also consider the reasons underpinning the high retention rates at Crickhowell and Ysgol Bro Hyddgen with a view to identifying and sharing any examples of best practice.</p>
<p>3 The Cabinet Report identifies that there are more courses being offered/run than there are courses being financed by the post 16 grant from Welsh Government. There is also a mismatch between the number of courses offered/funded and the number of courses outlined on the North and South Powys option blocks. During discussions within scrutiny</p>	<p>3. That school by school clarity is provided showing the funding source (post 16 grant or other) of each:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course offered; • Course run, or • Course withdrawn. <p>To ascertain the extent (if any) to which schools are receiving grant funding for courses which are subsequently withdrawn.</p>

<p>anecdotal evidence was also offered that there are often discrepancies between the courses offered to pupils before the summer vacation and those actually delivered to students in the academic year.</p>	
<p>4. Cross-phase subsidisation of funding with pre-16 supporting post 16 is acknowledged to be taking place. This will impact on the provision of education for 11-16 pupils and may be contributing to the deficit budgets that High Schools are recording.</p>	<p>4. That the level of cross-phase subsidisation is calculated so that the extent of funding meant for 11-16 pupils which is being used for sixth form students is clear and the extent of any link to school deficit budgets can be ascertained.</p>
<p>5. The revision of Post 16 funding formula by the Formula Funding Review Group is appropriate and a clear understanding of how funding is allocated is welcomed.</p>	<p>5. That this review is undertaken as a matter of extreme urgency and that scrutiny have an opportunity to undertake pre-Cabinet scrutiny of the proposals put forward by the Funding Formula Review Group in respect of post 16 funding.</p>
<p>6. £2million have been taken from central education services in order to protect delegated funding to schools. The capacity of the central education services team has been compromised by this move during a period when their workload is increasing.</p>	<p>6. That an immediate review is undertaken regarding the balance in funding between the central education services team and frontline services to ensure that the authority is able to directly support schools and undertake major transformational projects at an appropriate level.</p>
<p>7. A short term solution of using Tute teach was expanded upon by the Portfolio Holder. A pilot of this technology is ongoing with first results becoming available mid August 2019 after this report has been prepared for Cabinet.</p>	<p>7. That the provisional results published in August 2019 are incorporated as a supplementary report to enable Cabinet to make an informed decision about the likely success of a wider roll out of this approach.</p>
<p>8. During the scrutiny session Portfolio Holder and Officers were unable to confirm that all High Schools had the physical capability to deliver the Tute teach or similar module. It was noted that funding was available to improve the digital infrastructure of schools but it was unclear as to the stage at which the implementation of changes to the physical infrastructure as a result of this funding have reached.</p>	<p>8. That a confirmatory report is provided to Cabinet and Scrutiny outlining the exact digital capacity of all of the high school settings along with a timetable by which any enhancement to additional capacity to bring it up to standard is included</p>
<p>9. The report acknowledges that current grade achievements are below the levels sought in Vision 2025. It is unclear at this point whether this reflects underperformance by the most able pupils or whether this is a less able cohort who are performing</p>	<p>9. That a review is undertaken to determine if there are significant variations in academic achievement at GCSE level between pupils remaining within the Post 16 sector in Powys and those undertaking comparable courses outside of the Powys education system.</p>

<p>above expectation. Anecdotal evidence was offered to scrutiny that pupils were entering sixth form with lower GCSE grades than would normally be expected but this could not be confirmed. In determining the configuration of post 16 education in Powys it is essential to understand if the pupils that are being lost from the Powys system are the most able seeking to stretch themselves because the Powys offer is not perceived to be good enough or whether students from across the academic spectrum are leaving with a uniform distribution.</p>	<p>To aid in understanding whether the standard of education offered to those students in Powys is of the level expected.</p>
<p>10. Both anecdotal evidence from the Portfolio Holder and from the Learner Survey indicate that a significant number of students wishing to attend agriculture related courses are choosing to do so outside the county boundary</p>	<p>10. That as part of the ongoing review of sixth form provision a study is undertaken to understand why agriculture students are making this choice and to examine if there are other vocational courses across all employment sectors which are offered within the county where a similar pattern of rejection of the ‘in Powys’ offer is being made by students thereby removing from the authority the potential for collaborative working with vocational providers to deliver the academic components of the vocational qualification.</p>
<p>11. The Learner Survey identified conflicting views with regard to intra-day travel. This contrasts with the willingness of individuals to travel up to 2 hours in each direction to attend sixth form colleges in Hereford and Shrewsbury. It is therefore clear that distance of travel to a place of learning is not a barrier to choosing to undertake a course on a remote campus.</p>	<p>11. That a section on attitudes to travel which is quantifiable is included within the market research identified in Recommendations 1 and 13.</p>
<p>12. During scrutiny it was disclosed that the initial report was the product of work undertaken by a single Officer. Given the scope and pace needed to complete this review scrutiny are of the opinion that this is unsustainable. It was acknowledged that additional support is being supplied by other teams.</p>	<p>12. That a formal project team be drawn up with reference to existing or new positions within the Powys workforce to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to enable the project to proceed to agreed deadlines.</p>
<p>13. That whilst the Learner Survey provides an interesting insight into</p>	<p>13. That formal surveys are designed and delivered in the style used by market</p>

<p>views of current and previous students it does not offer a rigorous source of research on which the authority can have confidence that the views of potential students are being accurately understood. The approach taken whilst innovative lacks academic rigour and as such the quantitative responses should be treated with caution. In contrast qualitative responses offer significant insight into the overarching concerns of Powys students.</p>	<p>research organisations. In particular, the guided interview technique where an individual researcher undertakes a semi-formal interview or leads a focus group across a number of localities is undertaken to firstly test the validity of the diverse hypothesis as to why student numbers have declined and to determine the nature and type of education system students would like to see available to them. Later in the process, as initial delivery models are being formulated, a further study to test conclusions is also undertaken.</p>
<p>14. Scrutiny have consistently encouraged officers to move with greater urgency. This report is no exception however, the lack of pace provides scrutiny with grave concern. Officers were warned of a very short window of opportunity within the political cycles at Welsh and local level during which such a review could be undertaken with a reduced risk of it becoming mired in political controversy. The current timelines miss that window.</p>	<p>14. That the timelines proposed in this report are reviewed to ensure all stages are completed within the minimum timescales that the School Organisation Code allows.</p>
<p>15. The separation of the pre and post 16 reviews provides scrutiny with significant concern that the outcome of one may prejudice the taking of the best decision with respect to the other. Scrutiny also notes the proposals for a new Welsh Medium school within Band B of the 21st Century Schools programme. Given the complex interactions already highlighted within the body of this scrutiny report it is a concern that the successful implementation of all three transformations is only possible if they are considered together</p>	<p>15. That the Portfolio Holder accelerates the review of pre-16 education including Welsh Medium provision across Powys so that a fully integrated proposal for the provision of Key Stage 3, 4 and 5 education can be brought before Members/Cabinet at the earliest possible opportunity.</p>

In accordance with Rule 7.27.2 the Cabinet is asked to provide a written response to the scrutiny report, including an action plan where appropriate, as soon as possible or at the latest within 2 months of the date of the meeting i.e. by 17th November 2019.

Post 16 Education – additional information

Background.

In 2005 Estyn and the Audit Commission (since replaced by Wales Audit Office) reported on an inspection undertaken in 2004 relating to Access to Education in Powys¹. This found:

Good features of the LEA's performance are:

- the authority has clear and challenging aims for the activity that are well understood and have the commitment of officers and members with key responsibilities;
- Inspection of Powys Local Education Authority November and December 2004
- corporate plans and business plans, including the Supplementary Education Strategic Plan and the School Organisation Plan, link together well;
- a committed and purposeful approach to planning school places is starting to develop and the authority has now decided to close two primary schools;
- the School Organisation Plan has a thorough analysis of the situation facing the authority, and sets out an appropriate range of factors for consideration and principles that provide a clear direction for the authority's work;
- there is effective asset management planning that identifies clearly the quality of building stock, the prioritisation of work needed to improve it and the funds available over the next three years; and
- buildings maintenance is highly rated by schools.

The areas that require attention are:

- there is a high proportion of surplus primary school places;
- there is no overall coherent programme of school re-organisation at present and some elected members do not show the necessary commitment to tackle surplus places;
- although there is an efficient and effective system for forecasting secondary pupil numbers, the system for forecasting primary places is underdeveloped;
- although schools generally rate home-to-school transport as being of good quality, the cost of home-to-school transport is high and there is a large overspend on the budget; and
- a high proportion of the authority's school buildings have shortcomings.

Factors that are likely to support improvement are:

- the review process for access to education was comprehensive, robust and critical;
- there is a good-quality action plan to implement the review's findings;
- senior CFLL Directorate officers provide good leadership and direction;
- the chief executive and senior elected members have a clear commitment to addressing the issue of surplus school places;

- there are challenging and realistic targets for improving school buildings and reducing surplus places;
- there is a good-quality strategic approach to asset management planning; and
- the authority is prepared to take difficult decisions and has a good track record in improving school buildings.

Factors that are likely to impede improvement are:

- In some instances, the authority has not been able to proceed with its proposals because some elected members have not always shown the necessary commitment to agreed policy.

In July 2007 the then Board considered the following reports:

- Shaping the Powys Post 16 Learning Infrastructure (referencing research undertaken by Tribal)
- Secondary School Modernisation Policy (developed by the Learning Opportunities Scrutiny Committee and agreed for consultation)

A series of reports were considered at Board on Secondary School Organisation culminating in recommendations in December 2010¹¹ to go to consultation the results of which were considered under the new Cabinet arrangements on 22nd November 2011¹². In respect of Post 16 the following recommendation was approved:

- 1. That the Local Authority moves to a central planning and funding system of commissioning post-16 courses;**
- 2. That in collaboration with other education providers in Powys, the Authority takes forward plans to formalise the central commissioning system by establishing a new legal entity for all academic and vocational provision within three years.**

In October 2012¹³ Cabinet received an update for progress with Post 16 where the following recommendation was approved:

That the Cabinet notes the progress of the informal collaborative arrangements for post-16 education in the county, and confirms its support for the direction of travel and the intention to commence the Post-16 Commissioning Project.

In March 2014¹⁴ Cabinet received a report regarding changes to funding of Post 16 education which would have an impact on the sustainability of provision. The following recommendation was approved:

To approve the commencement of a new strategic review of post-16 education in Powys sixth forms, for completion by end of April 2014:

In May 2014¹⁵ it was recommended that this work was added to the commissioned PwC work on school modernisation.

In January 2015 Cabinet considered a report¹⁶ on the Secondary School Review. In relation to Post 16 the recommendation was to

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
<p>1. It is recommended that a Secondary Reorganisation Programme is commenced immediately</p> <p>2. It is recommended that the Programme will take forward the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconfiguration of secondary and post-16 education by closing up to three secondary schools along with their 6th forms. • Reconfiguration of Welsh-medium education with the aim of establishing at least one Welsh-medium secondary school in the county and consolidation of other Welsh-medium streams into larger units. • The closure of any 6th form should financial and demographic pressures continue to deteriorate to a point where the Authority is unable to sustain an appropriate range of post-16 subjects across the county. <p>3. It is recommended that a business case for each specific proposal is considered by Cabinet, before any decisions are made to proceed with any statutory processes, including consultation. Each business case will include the rationale for the proposal; benefits; risks; costs; and implementation plan. Equality, community and Welsh language impact assessments will also be undertaken.</p>	<p>To develop a future secondary, post-16 and that is as sustainable as possible.</p> <p>To create an infrastructure of nine secondary schools across Powys, all with 6th forms. It is intended that this reconfiguration will allow at least six schools to have larger 6th forms, enabling a broader range of subjects to be provided from each school, whilst minimising the need for inter-school travel and transport.</p> <p>To ensure that Welsh-medium provision is sustainable and provides wider curriculum and progression opportunities for all learners who choose to be educated through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>To ensure that 6th forms can provide an appropriate range of provision.</p> <p>Producing business cases for each individual proposal will provide Cabinet with the necessary information required to make subsequent decisions to proceed with statutory proposals for the reorganisation of schools</p>

The actual agreed resolution however is different¹⁷:

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
<p>1. That a Secondary Reorganisation Programme is commenced immediately.</p> <p>2. That the Programme will take forward the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconfiguration of secondary and post-16 education by closing sufficient secondary schools along with their 6th forms to create a viable infrastructure. • Reconfiguration of Welsh-medium education with the aim of establishing at least one Welsh-medium secondary school in the county and consolidation of other Welsh-medium streams into larger units. • The closure of any 6th form should financial and demographic pressures continue to deteriorate to a point where the Authority is unable to sustain an appropriate range of post-16 subjects across the county. <p>3. That a business case for each specific proposal is considered by Cabinet, before any decisions are made to proceed with any statutory processes, including consultation. Each business case will include the rationale for the proposal; benefits; risks; costs; and implementation plan. Equality, community and Welsh language impact assessments will also be undertaken.</p>	<p>To develop a future secondary, post-16 and that is as sustainable as possible.</p> <p>To create an infrastructure of viable secondary schools across Powys. It is intended that this reconfiguration will allow at least six schools to have larger 6th forms, enabling a broader range of subjects to be provided from each school, whilst minimising the need for inter-school travel and transport.</p> <p>To ensure that Welsh-medium provision is sustainable and provides wider curriculum and progression opportunities for all learners who choose to be educated through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>To ensure that 6th forms can provide an appropriate range of provision.</p> <p>Producing business cases for each individual proposal will provide Cabinet with the necessary information required to make subsequent decisions to proceed with statutory proposals for the reorganisation of schools</p>

From this point the School Reorganisation programme morphs into a series of individual proposals around:

- The outcome on the consultation to remove the Welsh stream from Brecon High School
- Sixth form provision at Ysgol Maesydderwen
- Secondary education in North Powys including Welsh medium provision.
- Mid Powys Secondary School

Which have been progressed to a greater or lesser extent.

Sch. No.	School Name	Powys Region	Yr.11 at Jan. 2011-12			Yr.11 at Jan. 2012-13			Yr.11 at Jan. 2013-14			Yr.11 at Jan. 2014-15		
			PLASC	in Yr.12	% Ret.	PLASC	in Yr.12	% Ret.	PLASC	in Yr.12	% Ret.	PLASC	in Yr.12	% Ret.
4000	Caereinion	Montgomeryshire	92	44	47.8%	105	45	42.9%	106	38	35.8%	90	36	40.0%
4001	Llanfyllin	Montgomeryshire	154	92	59.7%	161	108	67.1%	139	79	56.8%	130	72	55.4%
4002	Llanidloes	Montgomeryshire	106	66	62.3%	118	56	47.5%	81	42	51.9%	114	50	43.9%
4011	Newtown**	Montgomeryshire	218	68	31.2%	189	41	21.7%	221	56	25.3%	227	63	27.8%
4013	Welshpool	Montgomeryshire	197	91	46.2%	192	97	50.5%	187	95	50.8%	178	91	51.1%
4019	Llandrindod	Radnorshire	89	29	32.6%	109	41	37.6%	95	47	49.5%	108	49	45.4%
4020	Builth Wells	Brecknockshire	113	62	54.9%	102	63	61.8%	103	55	53.4%	79	50	63.3%
4021	Maesydderwen	Brecknockshire	85	36	42.4%	89	41	46.1%	81	28	34.6%	97	38	39.2%
4022	Brecon	Brecknockshire	113	59	52.2%	130	51	39.2%	140	51	36.4%	121	44	36.4%
4023	Gwernyfed	Brecknockshire	109	59	54.1%	85	33	38.8%	101	53	52.5%	85	36	42.4%
4024	Crickhowell	Brecknockshire	118	98	83.1%	121	103	85.1%	113	76	67.3%	111	91	82.0%
5500	Bro Hyddgen	Montgomeryshire	54	37	68.5%	59	45	76.3%	52	30	57.7%	72	39	54.2%
		Powys Totals:	1,448	741	51.2%	1,460	724	49.6%	1,419	650	45.8%	1,412	659	46.7%

Note: * January 2017 figures not yet available for Yr.12 so interim September figures from Teacher Centre used.

** Data not available separately for the Newtown and John Beddoes campuses of Newtown High School hence cannot reflect regional split.

Montgomeryshire	821	398	48.5%	824	392	47.6%	786	340	43.3%	811	351	43.3%
Radnorshire	89	29	32.6%	109	41	37.6%	95	47	49.5%	108	49	45.4%
Brecknockshire	538	314	58.4%	527	291	55.2%	538	263	48.9%	493	259	52.5%

APPENDIX 2

Sixth form retention rates 2012/13 to 2015/16

NORTH

OPTION BLOCKS SEPTEMBER 2018-19

APPENDIX 3

POWYS

16 – 19

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
A	D	C	E	B
B	E	A	D	C

	A	B	C	D	E
Welshpool High School	Maths Welsh Bac Drama	Biology DT Art ICT (Btec)	Chemistry Media Studies (Btec) Politics Psychology	Music Business (Btec) Geography	PE History ICT(Btec)
Llanfyllin High School	A	B	C	D	E
Physics Psychology Cymraeg History Art	Chemistry DT Theatre Studies Geography French	Biology ICT Psychology Photography	English Literature Maths Agriculture Textiles Business Studies	Biology Sports (BTEC) Media Studies Further Maths	
Caereinion High School	A	B	C	D	E
Welsh Bacc	Maths Mamiath Ali laith	Art Daearyddiaeth Geography Chemistry Spanish	Bioleg Biology English	PE Hanes History	
Llanidloes High School	A	B	C	D	E
Art & Design PE Physics	Biology D&T – Product Design ICT	Business Studies Chemistry History	Health & Social Care Maths Psychology *	English Geography Travel and Tourism	
Newtown High School	A	B	C	D	E
English Physics	Maths	Chemistry Law Fashion and Clothing (Btec)	Biology Music Art	Psychology Geography Music Tech (Btec)	
NPTC GROUP (Newtown College)	A	B	C	D	E
Photography (AS) Btec Business Studies Btec Law	Dance (AS)	Media Btec Film (AS)			

* **Psychology** will be offered at Llanidloes High School mainly through distance learning and there may be flexibility to move from this option block

****AS Further Maths** will be offered at Llanidloes High School outside the option block with reduced contact

SOUTH

OPTION BLOCKS SEPTEMBER 2018

POWYS

16 – 19

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
A	D	C	E	B
B	E	A	D	C

	A	B	C	D	E
Crickhowell High School	Chemistry History Drama Computer Science	French Law Psychology Music Maths Welsh	Biology ICT Art Health and Social Care German DT Photography	Geography RS Further Maths English Lit Maths	English Lit Physics Business Studies PE Media Studies
Gwernyfed High School	A English Lit / Lang Chemistry	B Media Studies Biology	C Art Geography Photography	D Physics Sociology	E Business History Maths
Ysgol Calon Cymru	A History (B) Art (L) Maths (B) PE (L) Drama (B)	B History (L) Physics (B) Biology (B) Music (B) Daearyddiaeth (B)	C English Language and Literature (L) Welsh Second Language (B) Health & Social Care (B) Agriculture (B) Computer Science (L)	D Art (B) English Literature (B) Chemistry (L) French (L) Geography (L) Hospitality BTEC (B) Cymraeg (B)	E Biology (L) RE (L) DT/Dylunio (B) Hanes (B)
Brecon High School	A Biology History RE	B Music Tech Geography	C Chemistry D & T Drama	D Maths	E English Literature Physics
Maesydderwen High School	A Maths Media Health & Social Care L3 Btec– Double Award	B Chemistry IT L3 BTEC Art	C History Health & Social Care L3 Btec– Double Award	D English Lit/Lang Product Design Physics	E Biology Public Services BTEC
NPTC GROUP (Brecon Campus)	A	B	C Health & Social BTEC Hospitality	D	E Applied Law & Business Btec IT Btec BTEC Sport

Extract from Education Interim Scrutiny Report 2014

This report was taken to Cabinet on 17th June 2014. The full Scrutiny Report and Cabinet minutes from that meeting can be accessed at:

<https://powys.moderngov.co.uk/CeListDocuments.aspx?CommitteeId=137&MeetingId=927&DF=17%2f06%2f2014&Ver=2>

Scrutiny Report on Powys Education Service Recovery Plan

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the Portfolio Holder for Learning:

R4	That the Portfolio Holder, brings forward plans for a review of Secondary Schools provision, in order to develop a sustainable model for Powys, with a view to ensure work is in progress to implement any infrastructure changes by September 2015.
R5	That the Portfolio Holder, as a matter of priority brings forward plans for the re-organisation of the Post-16 provision to ensure that the proposals are implemented by September 2015.
R6	That resources should be prioritised to addressing the problems facing the secondary sector, rather than the primary sector. However, work should take place to review the Primary Schools Modernisation Policy (2006), so that the Council then has an appropriate policy to hand.

6. Post 16 Funding

As part of the work around school budgets the ESWG also looked at the situation facing Post 16 provision in the light of news of substantial cuts in funding from Welsh Government. Funding for Post 16 Education does not come from the Council's Budget and is grant funded separately. A new 'Post 16 planning and funding framework' has been introduced by Welsh Government and this will result in a reduction in funding across Wales of around 5%, although in Powys the reduction is more severe. Initial information from Welsh Government in the autumn showed that Powys would receive a reduction in funding of 10% for 2014/15,

amounting to a cut of £653,555, which leaves the Authority worse off by £252,761. This cut would have been even more severe had other authorities not contributed to the provision of a floor which meant no authority would face cuts of more than 10%. The authority needs to note the actions of the other authorities in providing the support of a 'floor' when considering what action needs to be taken within the county. Indicative funding for the further two years (which could be further affected by Welsh Government budget difficulties), is likely to show a shortfall over previous estimates of a further £647,976 in 2015/16 and £760,729 in 2016/17.

The reduction in funding and falling student numbers has shown that there are very difficult and challenging times ahead for Post-16 Education provision in Powys, for the period 2014/15, urgent consultation took place with Secondary Heads in December/January to find a short-term solution that would suffice for 2014/15. The outcome has been a reduction in the number of courses offered at Post 16 in Powys of 41, (222 to 181 - a reduction of 18.5%). This means less choice in opportunities for Powys students and also far more travelling to access their course of choice. In most areas the geography of Powys means that attending courses at different school sites is an impractical and unattractive proposition. Fewer courses available in Powys will almost certainly lead to a further reduction in students as students will access courses outside the county. This again perpetuates itself by further funding reductions. In addition the removal of the ability to use 14-19 grant funding to pay for collaborative provision and for funding transport will impact on the offer

It is clear that the above was a short term 'fix' and the ESWG are of the opinion that the problem cannot be solved by continuing to reduce courses and therefore opportunities for young people in Powys.

7. Schools Modernisation/School Organisation

As mentioned in the 1st Interim Scrutiny Report, the ESWG was originally informed that there would be a review of the Primary School Modernisation Policy (originally developed in 2006) by end of July 2013. This did not come to fruition and the Group subsequently understood that the new policy would be available in December 2013 and would encompass both Primary and Secondary School provision. This also did not come to fruition within that timescale but since then work has belatedly been undertaken. In addition it also became clear that the Cabinet decision of November 2011 to establish a 16-19 Commissioning Model with a formal Commissioning Board, is also not now being taken forward although informal commissioning does take place. It would appear therefore that there has been somewhat of a policy 'void' for several months which has resulted in no clear direction for the development of a sustainable school organisation model.

Pupil numbers in the primary sector have fallen in recent years, however there is an indication that numbers are levelling out and indeed may rise slightly over the next 4 years, although it is understood that the increase will take place in some areas and not in others.

The numbers are as follows:-

2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Actual	Est	Est	Est	Est
9,268	9,213	9,282	9,388	9,518

In consideration of the problems facing the service, the ESWG came to a view that problems facing the entire secondary sector were now becoming acute, and that although there is still some work to do on the modernisation agenda in the primary sector, with pupil numbers in that sector no longer falling, it was felt that priority of our resources should be focussed on the secondary sector. However, some opportunities for further modernisation may occur naturally in the primary sector and it was therefore important that the existing Primary School Modernisation Policy (2006) should be reviewed.

The projected number for the Secondary sector continues to give rise to concerns with a overall 7.8% reduction estimated from the actual figure of 8,245 in 2013/14 to a projected 7605 by year 2016/17.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Change
11/16	6,913	6,687	6,484	6,363	-550 (8%)
Year 12	724	706	705	648	-76 (10.5%)
Year 13	608	612	597	594	-14 (2.3%)
Overall	8,245	8,005	7,786	7,605	-640 (7.8%)

In addition to the projected student numbers (above), the Group formed a strategic view by also taking into account the following:-

- The current secondary school budget situation and forward predictions (as outlined in Section 4 above)
- The situation regarding Post-16 funding and projections for the next 3 years (as outlined at section 5 above).
- Growing concerns about the current educational performance in our schools particularly at Level 2 (see glossary), and the further impact on standards that is likely due to the impending reduction in teachers (see section 8 below)

The ESWG reached a unanimous view that urgent action was needed and a review of the Secondary School model was urgent, both for 11 to 16 provision and Post-16 provision. This prompted the Group to make an immediate release of the detailed minutes of their 19th February 2014 meeting, together with the recommendations (shown below). The information

was released to the Council Leader, Portfolio Holder for Education, all Members and all relevant Officers.

A copy of the relevant section of the minutes of 19th February ESWG meeting is attached **(Appendix C)**

Recommendation 4 (2014): That the Portfolio Holder, brings forward plans for a review of Secondary Schools provision, in order to develop a sustainable model for Powys, with a view to ensure work is in progress to implement any infrastructure changes by September 2015..

Recommendation 5 (2014): That the Portfolio Holder, as a matter of priority brings forward plans for the re-organisation of the Post-16 provision to ensure that the proposals are implemented by September 2015.

Note: The ESWG are aware of the Cabinet decision in March 2014 to begin an urgent review of the Post 16 provision in Powys, to be completed by the end of April 2014. To date the ESWG has no further information regarding the findings of this review.

Recommendation 6 (2014): That resources should be prioritised to addressing the problems facing the secondary sector, rather than the primary sector. However, work should take place to review the Primary Schools Modernisation Policy (2006), so that the Council then has an appropriate policy to hand.

References

Within the Scrutiny Report

1. 2005, Estyn and Audit Commission 'Inspection of Powys LAESCYP Access to Education November and December 2004'

[Inspection of Powys LAESCYP Access to Education November and December 2004](#)

2. 31.07.2007 Powys Board, 'xBoard 31st July 2007 - Shaping the Powys Post 16 Learning Infrastructure - Tribal Recommendation Vers 2' (page 5 paragraph 5)

[xBoard 31st July 2007 - Shaping the Powys Post 16 Learning Infrastructure - Tribal Recommendation Vers 2](#)

3. 07.12.2010 Powys Board, 'xB375 Secondary and Post 16 Modernisation SOC Appendix' (paragraph 2.10)

[xB375 Secondary and Post 16 Modernisation SOC Appendix](#)

4. 22.11.2011, Powys Cabinet, 'xC142c Cabinet Report Sec Mod Post-16 Proposals ABSOLUTE FINAL _2' (page 3 paragraph 1)

[xC142c Cabinet Report Sec Mod Post-16 Proposals ABSOLUTE FINAL _2](#)

5. 27.01.2015 Powys Cabinet, 'xC14 Secondary School Cabinet Report 27 Jan FINAL' (paragraph 21)

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6. 08.07.2019 'Cabinet Report' contained within the agenda of the Powys Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee (Report pp13 – 16, Appendix 1 Review of Sixth Form Provision pp17-42 and Appendix 2 Learner Survey pp43-84)

[Cabinet Report](#)

7. 22.11.2011 Powys Cabinet, 'xC142a Cabinet Report Sec Mod Overview ABSOLUTE FINAL1' (page 11)

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8. 11.03.2014 Powys Cabinet, 'xC50 Post-16 Cabinet Report 11 March v3 HR' (page 25 paragraph 26)

[xC50 Post-16 Cabinet Report 11 March v3 HR](#)

9. 14th June 2016 Powys Cabinet 'Printed minutes' (Item 5)

[Printed minutes](#)

10. 17.06.2014 Powys Cabinet –'xC112 FINAL Education Scrutiny 2nd Interim Report'

[xC112 FINAL Education Scrutiny 2nd Interim Report](#)

Within Appendix A

11. 07.12.2010 Powys Board 'Minutes' (item 13)

[Minutes 07-12-2010](#)

12. 22.11.2011 Powys Cabinet 'Minutes' (item 3 Proposals for Post 16 education)

[Minutes 22-11-2011](#)

13. 02.10.2012 Powys Cabinet 'Minutes' (Item 7 Post 16 collaboration – progress report)

[Minutes 02-10-2012](#)

14. 11.03.2014 Cabinet 'Minutes' (item 7 Future Sustainability of post 16 provision in Powys sixth forms)

[Minutes 11-03-2014](#)

15. 20.05.2014 Cabinet 'Minutes' (Item 9 Post 16 Strategic Review Interim Report)

[Minutes 20-05-2014](#)

16. 27.01.2015 Powys Cabinet report 'xC14 Secondary School Cabinet Report 27 Jan FINAL'

[Report 27-01-2015](#)

17. 27.01.2015 Powys Cabinet 'Minutes' (Item 5)

[Minutes 27-01-2015](#)