

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

Report for Decision

**by the Leader,
County Councillor Rosemarie Harris
Date: 14th April 2020**

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Phyl Davies
Portfolio Holder for Education**

**REPORT TITLE: Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020 -
2030**

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020 – 2030 (see Appendix B). The Strategy includes;

- a new vision for education in Powys
- outlines the challenges faced by the education sector in Powys
- a final set of guiding principles
- strategic aims and objectives
- programme of activity
- legislative process
- monitoring arrangements.

The strategy replaces the School Organisation Policy 2018.

1.2 The report is supported by the following appendices:

- **Appendix A** Engagement Report
- **Appendix B** Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020 - 2030
- **Appendix C** Capital Funding Strategic Outline Programme
- **Appendix D** Integrated Impact Assessment
- **Appendix E** Scrutiny observations to Cabinet

2. Background

2.1 In the summer of 2019, Powys Education Services were inspected by Estyn. Estyn's findings report outlined significant concerns regarding the Council's progress on school reorganisation, and included a recommendation to '*Ensure that the organisation of provision for non-maintained, post-16, Welsh-medium education and secondary education meets the needs of the children and young people of Powys.*'

2.2 Subsequently, the Council recognised the need to review education provision in the county, commencing a Strategic Review in October 2019. The Review included two phases:

- Phase 1 - Developing the Case for Change (October 2019 – January 2020)
- Phase 2 - Developing a Vision for Transforming Education in Powys (January – March 2020)

2.3 During the first phase, officers carried out an engagement exercise with a range of key stakeholders to commence the shaping of a new vision for education in Powys. On 21st January 2020 Cabinet considered a case for change, an engagement report and approved for a Stage 2 engagement to take place on a "Transforming Education in Powys" document which set out the emerging vision and guiding principles for transforming education in Powys. Following the engagement exercise officers were tasked to bring forward to Cabinet in April 2020 (a) A revised vision and guiding principles that will underpin future transformation for schools in Powys; and (b) - an implementation plan to begin the journey to realise that vision. The new Strategy for Transforming Education encompasses the revised vision and guiding principles, and includes an implementation plan.

2.4 The case for change report considered by Cabinet on 21st January 2020 outlined the main areas of concern as follows:

- Lack of equity for learner entitlement
- High proportion of small schools
- Decreasing pupil numbers
- High number of surplus places
- Building condition
- Financial pressures
- Inequality in access to Welsh-medium education
- Limited post-14 and post-16 offer
- Historical lack of political decision making.

2.5 The Council has previously completed reviews of the education sector, all of which have highlighted the need for significant change. These include:

- 2007 – Tribal Report on Powys' Post-16 Infrastructure
- 2010 – Secondary School Modernisation – informal consultation
- 2013 – Post-16 Strategic Review
- 2014 – Viability of Secondary Schools in Powys – PwC
- 2015/16 – Secondary School Reorganisation Programme, including a report on the development of Welsh-medium secondary education in North Powys.

2.6 These reviews have clearly articulated the challenges of providing education in Powys, a large rural county with a sparse and declining population, with the very clear risk articulated in PwC's 2014 report that *'schools were increasingly at risk of becoming financially-led rather than curriculum-led'*.

2.7 Whilst progress has been made over the last ten years, with a number of new schools built and around 45 schools reorganised or closed, it has not been at a sufficient scale or pace to address the issues outlined above. Estyn identified this as an area of concern, not only in the 2019 Inspection Report but also in earlier Inspection Reports.

3. Phase 2 - Developing a Vision for Transforming Education in Powys

3.1 As part of Phase 2, all stakeholders have had the opportunity to provide their views on the draft 'Transforming Education in Powys' document, findings at Appendix A.

3.2 The engagement period took place from the 27th January to the 24th February 2020. An online questionnaire asking for views on the draft 'Transforming Education in Powys' document was available online on the Council's website throughout the engagement period. In addition, paper copies were available at libraries. Respondents could also submit written responses, either by e-mail or by post.

3.3 A young people's version of the Transforming Education in Powys' document was also prepared and circulated to all schools.

3.4 Two engagement events were held during the period: a Schools Conference on the 6th February 2020, and an online Learner Engagement event using distance learning technology on the 12th February 2020.

3.5 478 individuals completed the engagement questionnaire, this included 206 pupils. In addition, 124 written responses were received to the engagement exercise which included 110 responses from school pupils. Completed pupil questionnaires were also received from the School Councils of 13 schools.

4. New Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys (Appendix B)

4.1 The feedback from the engagement exercise has helped inform the development of a new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys, see Appendix B. The Strategy includes:

- a new vision for education in Powys
- outlines the challenges faced by the education sector in Powys
- a final set of guiding principles
- strategic aims and objectives
- programme of activity
- legislative process
- monitoring arrangements.

4.2 The final vision '**All children and young people in Powys will experience a high-quality, inspiring education to help develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that will enable them to become healthy, personally fulfilled, economically productive, socially responsible and globally engaged citizens of 21st century Wales**'.

4.3 The guiding principles have been refined to take account of feedback received and are found in Appendix B. These will now become the foundation of a new transformed education system.

4.4 The Strategy also includes the following four **Strategic Aims**:

Strategic Aim 1	We will improve learner entitlement and experience for pre-16 learners
Strategic Aim 2	We will improve learner entitlement and experience for post-16 learners
Strategic Aim 3	We will improve access to Welsh-medium provision across all key stages
Strategic Aim 4	We will improve the provision for learners with SEN/ALN

4.5 Each Strategic Aim is underpinned by strategic objectives, which can be found on pages 10 – 13 of Appendix B. Each Aim will have its own programme plan, and progress will be monitored bi-monthly by the Schools Transformation Programme Board. Outcomes and progress will be reported to the Transformation Delivery Board.

4.6 The Strategy will be delivered over a ten-year period in three 'waves':

- Wave 1 2020 – 2022
- Wave 2 2023 – 2025
- Wave 3 2025 – 2030

4.7 The Strategy also sets out the **legislative process** of developing proposals:

- Proposals for school reorganisation, as defined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018, will be developed in accordance with the requirements of the Code
- Proposals for school federations will be developed in accordance with the Federation of Maintained Schools Regulations 2014

4.8 Alongside the development of the Strategy, officers have developed a **modelling methodology** which is able to provide detailed analysis of learner numbers and travel patterns. The modelling methodology will be used to support the implementation of the Strategy in order to ensure the optimum configuration of future education provision.

4.9 As the Strategy is implemented, it is important to ensure that there is full alignment with another two key policy areas:

- **Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2020 – 2030**

All local authorities have a statutory duty to develop and implement Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. The Welsh Government is due to launch new guidance for the development of new ten-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. Officers will bring a draft WESP to Cabinet for consideration.

- **Home to School Transport Policy**

It is essential that the Home to School Policy is revised to ensure that it can support the implementation of the Transformation Strategy. A revised Policy will be brought to Cabinet for consideration.

5. Advice

5.1 The advice of officers is that Cabinet approves the new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020 – 2030. This will enable vision and guiding principles that are included within the Strategy to be realised and will address the challenges outlined in the Case for Change Report that was considered by Cabinet on 21st January 2020. The Strategy has been informed by an extensive engagement and it is clear that there is significant support for change, as evidenced within the Engagement Report.

5.2 The new Strategy will be fully resourced to ensure pace and progress – Welsh Government has agreed that staff costs can be capitalised against the 21st C Schools Programme.

6. Resource Implications

6.1 The estimated capital funding required to enable the Strategy to be delivered is approximately £350m. It is expected that this will be funded through the Welsh Government's 21st C Schools Programme and discussions are already underway about securing this commitment from the Welsh Government – the funding required

is in addition to the already approved Band A and Band B funding. A new Strategic Outline Programme for capital funding is attached at Appendix C.

6.2 Currently, the Welsh Government provides 65% of capital funding for school building projects, with the Council responsible for the remaining 35%. The Council's contribution will be funded from a combination of borrowing and capital receipts from sale of assets. Any surplus schools will be dealt with as part of the Council's Capital Asset Policy.

6.3 Any projects that require capital funding will be developed in accordance with the requirements of the 21st C Schools Programme (or any other grant) and Cabinet will be required to approve the initial business case for each capital project.

6.4 Revenue implications from individual proposals for reorganisation or capital investment will be considered on a case for case basis as part of the proposal or business case.

6.5 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) can support the recommendation. The financial implications for the individual proposals will be modelled and costed as they are developed to ensure affordability both of the capital investment and the ongoing impact on the revenue budget.

7. Legal implications

7.1 Legal : The recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view.

7.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: " I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report".

8. Comment from local member(s)

8.1 Not applicable.

9. Integrated Impact Assessment

9.1 This impact assessment indicates that the impact of the strategy is generally good.

The Strategy includes a commitment to 'a major capital investment programme that will ensure that schools in Powys have inspiring, environmentally sustainable buildings that can provide opportunities for wider community activity, including where possible childcare services, early years, ALN, multi-agency support and community and leisure facilities.' This will ensure the continued provision of community facilities.

However, whilst the aim of the Strategy is to improve educational provision across Powys, it is acknowledged that some proposals which could be brought forward following approval of the Strategy could be unpopular with some residents and some communities, and could make it more difficult for residents in some communities to access provision, without having to travel further than they do currently.

Following approval of the strategy, individual impact assessments will be carried out for any proposals taken forward, which will ensure detailed consideration of each proposals.

10. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leader:

- accepts the findings of the Engagement Report (Appendix A)
- approves the new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020 – 2030 (Appendix B) for implementation
- in order to demonstrate full commitment to the ambition outlined in the Strategy, approves the development of a ten-year outline (notional) capital investment sum of £350m to transform the schools' estate as outlined in the revised 21st C Schools Strategic Outline Case (Appendix C)
- requests officers to return to Cabinet, no later than September 2020, or as soon as is reasonably practicable, with the first set of proposals and a revised home-to-school transport policy, for consideration
- requests officers to return to Cabinet, no later than September 2020, or as soon as is reasonably practicable, with a draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, for consideration
- accepts that surplus schools will be dealt with in line with the Council's Capital Asset Policy.

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