



Schools Scrutiny Panel

Scrutiny Observations to Cabinet on: 7 April, 2020

The Schools Scrutiny Panel met on the 20.03.2020 and considered the following documents:

- Strategic Review of the Schools Business Case / Vision

The Schools Scrutiny Panel thank the Portfolio Holders for Education and Property and Finance, Countryside and Transport, together with the Head of Transformation and Communications for attending scrutiny.

Scrutiny make the following observations:

<u>Context / Background</u>	<u>Observation</u>	
None.	1. The Panel noted that the Chair had been asked to review the model utilised to develop the vision which he had agreed was a robust approach, and was based on the data which had been presented to Members and included "what if" scenarios.	The discussion with the Chair was greatly appreciated. Officers are working to bring best practice to a very challenging area of work, and are open to ideas as we proceed. It was helpful that the Chair could bring his professional experience to affirm the work that has been done.
Is the Council trying to plug the current flow of pupils out	2. Is the Council going to support those learners	The Council has a responsibility to ensure that all learners have access to effective provision, with choice. The goal is to ensure

of county by ensuring learner needs met in county? What about pupils who might get a better choice out of county, are we going to support them as the document is silent in this respect?	who chose to select a better learning offer outside the county?	<p>that every learner in Powys can access the vast majority of learning opportunities without the county. There will always be some specialisms that should be provided in an agreed partnership with other providers, or outside the boundaries of the authority. It is a clear ambition of the current planning process to reduce significantly the number of learners who go outside Powys, and to improve the offer for those who would plan on travelling, but would make do with a limited range.</p> <p>In the longer term, support for learners to go outside the authority should be determined in relation to the access and availability of provision within the authority.</p>
In the previous version of WESP there was no secondary level Welsh Language provision for pupils from Ystradgynlais other than out of county. Will this provision be repeated in the new WESP?	3. The WESP will need to ensure that it covers Welsh language provision where this is to be provided outside of the county as was suggested previously for pupils from Ystradgynlais attending Bro Tawe School.	Pupils in the Ystradgynlais area currently access their Welsh medium secondary provision in Ysgol Ystalyfera Bro Dur in Neath Port Talbot Borough Council area. This arrangement works well for those learners. Officers will need to engage actively with partner authorities, in particular NPT, to ensure that such mutual support is sustainable.
The document is silent as to what happens to the debts of existing schools. It was explained that there is guidance to deal with this. Should this be referred to in the document?	4. With the 13 sites, if these are new schools, what will happen to the debts of the former schools?	Major re-organisations of schools' require a planned approach to budgets – for schools that are running down and for new schools opening. A protocol will need to be established with all of our school to ensure that the change does not incur debts that reduce the local authority's ability to fund the new start-ups. Transition from one configuration to another will need a plan for all costs, and leaving legacy deficits should be minimized as far as possible.
The meaning of the phrase was not clear to the Panel.	5. Language continuum – can this term be clarified in the document as to	Across Wales, there are a range of language settings in which education is delivered. At one end there is Welsh medium provision (where all subjects are taught through the medium of

	<p>what this means, for ease of reference for the reader.</p>	<p>Welsh, and pupils study both Welsh and English as first languages). The other end of the continuum is English medium education, where all pupils study all of their subjects through the medium of English, and study Welsh as a second language.</p> <p>Powys has several schools that are in neither of these categories – but where the use of Welsh varies enormously. Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, on the one hand, has a significant number accessing their curriculum mainly in Welsh, with a small number accessing in English. On the other hand, Brecon High School has a relatively small number accessing a small number of subjects in Welsh – with the rest of the school population studying in English only.</p> <p>Where some of our schools are delivering a significant proportion of their teaching and learning through the medium of Welsh, it is proposed that we plan for that to increase, thus enabling a fuller access to those learning in Welsh. Currently, there is no equity or equality across Powys in terms of opportunities to study through the medium of Welsh.</p>
<p>In the Wave slide it refers to 11 new schools when earlier it refers to 13 locations. It was explained to the Panel that 2 all through schools were already in development, but this is not made clear in the document.</p>	<p>6. In the Waves slide, it appears that there are only 11 schools proposed in total rather than 13. Can it be clarified that 2 all through schools are already in development which then make the 13 schools proposed.</p>	<p>This slide will be adapted for future clarity.</p>

<p>The Panel were unclear as to where 6th form centres would be located, was it co-location or separate sites? What is the proposed relationship between all through schools and 6th forms?</p>	<p>7. Could 6th form centres be located in existing schools? There is a need to clarify the relationship between all through schools and 6th form provision.</p>	<p>Sixth form centres provide a way of reducing the current number of sites that are offering post-16 education, and they offer an ability to invest in a transformed environment and offer for post-16 learners. Their relationship with the schools needs to be developed. Currently, some of our schools make outstanding progress with their post-16 learners, in terms of outcomes. We need to build on that, and it would be hoped that those strengths would become essential components in any new arrangements. Any move towards sixth form centres needs to be worked through with school leaders. Given the level of investment that would be required, this part of the plan may not happen quickly, and in the interim we need to be sure that both choice and quality are improved across Powys, using our strongest providers to support the wider improvement.</p>
<p>Is there a role for scrutiny in reviewing strategic proposals moving forward?</p>	<p>8. As Council is no longer considering individual school reorganisation proposals, will there be an opportunity for scrutiny to look at strategic proposals (and how they link to the vision) rather than individual proposals?</p>	<p>Every proposal brought forward should form part of a coherent whole. Scrutiny should play an active role in ensuring that the coherent whole is best suited to the needs of learners in Powys, but also has a key role in ensuring that each single proposal helps achieve the objectives underlying the guiding principles that will be agreed by cabinet.</p>
<p>The Panel was concerned that there could be a disconnection between policies if the first stage of the Vision was being implemented and then the WESP developed some months later.</p>	<p>9. The WESP needs to be in place by June / July 2020 to compliment the decisions being taken on progressing the vision.</p>	<p>A draft WESP should be ready before the summer break, and it is crucial that there is a clear synergy between that document and the wider emerging plan.</p>

<p>The Panel was unclear regarding the age range of all through schools and suggested that currently it could be interpreted in different ways. Clarification was provided to the Panel. Therefore, the document required review to clarify the intention.</p>	<p>10. The Panel was unclear in reading the document that the proposal was for all schools to be for learners up to age 16. It was suggested that as currently written it could imply that schools were for 3 to 14 year olds, with 14-19 hubs. It was clarified that schools would be up to 16 although the offer to learners may change from 14 to 19. Could the document be reviewed to make this clearer?</p>	<p>As long as there is effective collaboration at all phases of education, Powys can sustain schools in each of its 13 centres for learners up to the age of 16. However, from the age of 14 there should be an agreed offer for all learners in Powys that will make it essential for schools to be involved in heavy collaboration post 14. The sixth form centres could in due course provide excellent facilities for some aspects of the post 14 curriculum, and support minority subjects. A seamless relationship between schools of all ages and the post-16 centres could provide an excellent offer for all learners in Powys, and during consultations, the issues around leadership and governance of all of our provision will need to be clearly articulated and discussed.</p>
<p>None</p>	<p>11. The Panel was pleased to note that its suggestion about having easier to read document so that pupils could engage in the process had been taken up as part of the process.</p>	<p>Pupil responses need to be factored into all decision-making – whilst ensuring that there is equity given to views across the county.</p>
<p>The Panel questioned the 13 locations as it was too similar to the current provision, and asked whether the model could be assessed based on centres of population, or 6 areas</p>	<p>12. The Panel was concerned that having 13 schools could be seen as basing the schools on the current historical basis, even though it was explained that the basis</p>	<p>The current configuration of 13 is distributed fairly well across Powys, allowing fairly straightforward access to most learners. The road network and conurbations also support such a configuration.</p> <p>By committing to 13, the discussion needs to move from previous time expended on Save Our Schools campaigns, and be far more firmly rooted in a principled discussion around how a rural</p>

within the county with 2 schools in each area.	would be 13 localities, not necessarily using the same school sites as currently. The Panel asked if a different model could be assessed e.g. split the county into 6 areas with 2 schools in each, so that catchment areas would be the same for English and Welsh schools. There was, however, some concern about extended travelling times for pupils.	<p>authority can best provide a world-class education for all of its learners, and ensure that living in rural authority is not seen as an impediment to choice or excellence.</p> <p>Having a 6 x 2 model is not currently feasible. Powys currently has no Welsh medium schools. Moving to 6 would be premature at this stage. Travelling times would increase for many learners, and the need to balance equality, equity, effectiveness and efficiency would be significantly compromised.</p> <p>However, Powys must move ahead at pace to ensure that the offer of a full education in Welsh is available and encouraged – so that our young people have access to a provision that is unique to Wales, but is part of a global movement towards bi and multi-lingualism.</p>
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Scrutiny's Recommendation	Accept (plus Action and timescale)	Partially Accept (plus Rationale and Action and timescale)	Reject (plus Rationale)
1 That the Cabinet consider and produce a response to the 12 scrutiny observations as set out above			

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 Cabinet meeting i.e. by 07.06.2020

Membership of the Schools Scrutiny Panel on 20.03.2020:

County Councillors:

P. Roberts, B. Davies, S. Davies, L. Roberts, G. Thomas, J. Berriman.

S. Davies and G. Robson (Co-Opted Members)