

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

16th February 2021

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

**REPORT TITLE: Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High
School – All-age School Proposal**

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 29th September 2020, the Council has carried out consultation on the following proposal:
- To close Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School
 - To establish a new bilingual all-age school for pupils aged 4-18 on the current sites of Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet members of the responses received to the consultation and to determine whether or not to proceed with the statutory process to amalgamate the two schools and to establish a new all-age school on the current sites of Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School through the publication of a Statutory Notice.
- 1.3 The report is supported by the following appendices:
- Appendix A – Consultation Document
 - Appendix B – Consultation Report
 - Appendix C – Minutes of meetings with School Councils, Governors and Staff
 - Appendix D – Updated Impact Assessments
 - Appendix E – Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee Meeting 1st February 2021

2. Background

Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys

- 2.1 On the 14th April 2020, a new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys was approved by the Leader via a delegated decision.

2.2 The Strategy was developed following extensive engagement with a range of stakeholders during two separate periods between October 2019 and March 2020. The Strategy sets out a new vision education in Powys, as follows:

'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.'

2.3 The new strategy also sets out a number of guiding principles which will underpin the transformation of education in Powys. These are as follows:

- *A world class rural education system that has learner entitlement at its core*
- *Schools that are fully inclusive, with a culture of deep collaboration in order to improve learner outcomes and experience*
- *A broad choice and high quality of provision for 14 – 19 year old learners, that includes both academic and vocational provision, meeting the needs of all learners, communities and the Powys economy*
- *Welsh-medium provision that is accessible and provides a full curriculum in Welsh from Meithrin to age 19 and beyond Provision for learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN)/Additional Learning Needs (ALN) that is accessible as near to home as is practicably possible, with the appropriate specialist teaching, support and facilities that enables every learner to meet their potential*
- *A digitally-rich schools sector that enables all learners and staff to enhance their teaching and learning experience*
- *Community-focused schools that are the central point for multi-agency services to support children, young people, families and the community*
- *Early years provision that is designed to meet the needs of all children, mindful of their particular circumstances, language requirements or any special or additional learning needs*
- *Financially and environmentally sustainable schools*
- *The highest priority is given to staff wellbeing and professional development*

2.4 The new strategy sets out a number of Strategic Aims and Objectives, to shape the Council's work to transform the Powys education system over the coming years. One of the Strategic Aims of the Strategy is to *'improve learner entitlement and experience'*. Within this aim, the Strategy sets out a Strategic Objectives to *'Develop a network of all-age schools based around the 13 current secondary school locations'*.

- 2.5 The strategy also includes a Strategic Aim to *'improve access to Welsh-medium provision across all key stages'*. Within this aim, the Strategy sets out Strategic Objectives to *'Move schools along the language continuum'* and to *'Develop new primary and secondary provision'*.
- 2.6 On the 29th September 2020, the Council's Cabinet considered an options appraisal paper in respect of Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School, and agreed to carry out consultation on the following

The Consultation Period

- 2.7 On the 29th September 2020, Cabinet considered a report relating to Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School. At this meeting, Cabinet agreed to carry out consultation in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code on the following:
- 'To amalgamate Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School to create a new all-age school in Llanfair Caereinion. This will be achieved by closing Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School and opening a new all-age school providing education for pupils aged 4-18 on the current site of the two schools.'
- The target date is to close the two schools on the 31st August 2022 and to open the new school on the 1st September 2022.
- 2.8 Consultation on the proposal to amalgamate the two schools and establish a new all-age school commenced on the 13th October 2020 and ended on the 24th November 2020.
- 2.9 The consultation document was available on the Council's website throughout the consultation period. The document was also distributed to stakeholders as required by the School Organisation Code (2018). The consultation document that was issued is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.10 Consultees were asked to respond to the consultation by either completing the online consultation form, filling in a paper copy of the form and returning it to the School Transformation Team, or by writing to the School Transformation Team.
- 2.11 During the consultation period, meetings were also held with the following:
- Staff of Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School
 - Governors of Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School
 - School council of Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School
 - School council of Caereinion High School

The minutes of these meetings are attached as Appendix C, and the issues raised in the meetings are included in the Consultation Report (Appendix B).

Consultation Responses

- 2.12 111 respondents completed the consultation response form which was included in the consultation document, including paper copies and responses submitted using the online response form. In addition, 8 written responses were received, including from Estyn.
- 2.13 The consultation response form asked respondents to answer a number of questions. The findings are provided in full on pages 5 to 8 of the Consultation Report (Appendix B).
- 2.14 The written responses received included a response by Estyn, which is provided on page 17 of the Consultation Report (Appendix B).

Consultation Findings

- 2.24 As part of the consultation, a consultation response form was issued, which was completed by 111 respondents. 19.8% of respondents indicated that they were associated with Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School, 48.6% indicated that they were associated with Caereinion High School, 19.8% indicated that they were associated with a different feeder primary of Caereinion High School, and 11.7% of respondents indicated that they were not associated with either school.
- 2.11 The consultation response form asked respondents whether or not they agreed with the proposal to amalgamate the two schools to establish a new all-age school. The findings are outlined in full on pages 5-8 of the Consultation Report (Appendix B), and are also provided below:

1. *Do you agree with the current proposal to establish a new all-age school in Llanfair Caereinion?*

Yes	58	52.3%
No	37	33.3%
Don't know	16	14.4%
Total	111	100.0%

2. *Do you think that the Council should be considering any other options for Llanfair Caereinion instead of the proposal to establish a new all-age school?*

Yes	45	40.5%
No	59	44.1%
Don't know	17	15.3%
Total responses	111	100.0%

2.12 Written comments were also provided in the consultation response form. These comments, as well as issues raised in written responses and those raised in the consultation meetings, are listed in the Consultation Report (Appendix B) from page 22 onwards, along with the Council's response to these issues. The issues raised relate to the following headings:

1. Impact on pupils
2. Impact on staff
3. Comments relating to Leadership and Governance
4. Reference to the community
5. Comments relating to buildings
6. Reference to Council strategies
7. Reference to Estyn
8. Financial queries
9. Comments relating to the all-age school model
10. Comments about the current provision
11. Criticism of the proposal / the Council
12. Comments about the Welsh Language
13. Reference to Welsh-medium education delivery models
14. Reference to equality of opportunity / Welsh language being treated less favourably than English
15. Concern about the impact on English-medium pupils / provision
16. Comments relating to the consultation documentation
17. Comments relating to the process
18. Impact on protected characteristic groups
19. Other options

3 Advice

- 3.1 Based on the findings of the consultation, the advice of officers is that the Council should proceed with the proposal to amalgamate Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School to establish a new all-age school by publishing a Statutory Notice.
- 3.2 It is anticipated that Statutory Notices will be published before the end of January 2021, and that a further report, summarising any objections received, will be considered by the Council's Cabinet before the end of March 2021.
- 3.3 It is also acknowledged that a significant number of comments were received to the consultation in respect of the language category of the proposed new all-age school. These included comments which expressed a view that the current proposal was not ambitious enough in respect of the language category of the proposed new school, as well as comments which supported the proposal to retain the current dual stream provision in Llanfair Caereinion.

- 3.4 Whilst not a formal part of the proposal, a number of respondents took the opportunity to comment on the Council's approach to developing Welsh-medium provision at Caereinion and it must be noted that there was a strong response in favour of establishing designated Welsh-medium provision to serve the Llanfair Caereinion/Severn Valley area as well as criticism of the Council for lack of progress over the years.
- 3.5 In order to address this issue, the Council will accelerate the dialogue with representatives of the two schools and the community to explore ways to develop and enhance the Welsh-medium provision in Llanfair Caereinion and will also include all feeder schools in this dialogue.
- 3.5 The target would be for the new school to open in September 2022.
- 3.6 It must be noted that the establishment of a new school does not preclude that school from being a part of future reorganisation proposals.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 As indicated in the Consultation Document published in respect of this proposal, based on estimated pupil numbers for both schools in September 2022, it is estimated that implementation of the proposal would result in annual revenue savings to the Council of £11,994. This is calculated as follows:

Estimated funding for the two separate schools 21/22	£3,286,364
Estimated funding for one all-age school 21/22	£3,274,370
Estimated saving / (Cost)	£11,994

The estimated savings figure will be reviewed going forward as estimated pupil numbers change.

- 4.2 In line with the Council's Scheme for Financing Schools, should either school be in a deficit budget position on closure of the school, the deficit is written off.
- 4.3 In addition, in order to ensure effective stewardship of the resources available to schools, particularly those that are subject to closure, Powys' Scheme for Financing Schools makes provision for this under Section 3.7.2, where it states that:

'The Authority may impose additional restrictions, including but not limited to:

- restriction of expenditure to agreed plans

- removal of powers of virement'

4.4 It is therefore proposed that should a final decision be made to proceed with implementation of the proposal, the following actions would be taken:-

- spend at the schools would be restricted to that included in their approved budget plan and no virement of funds between budget headings to be permitted unless approved by the Authority;
- any staffing changes to be subject to approval by the Authority;
- any contracts awarded for the supply of goods or services to be subject to approval by the Authority.

This would ensure that expenditure was limited to that which was absolutely necessary to protect council resources.

4.4 Implementation of the proposal would require involvement from a number of service areas, including staff from the Schools Service, HR and Finance.

4.5 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the content of the report and can support the recommendations.

5. Legal implications

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

5.2 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".

6. Comment from local member(s)

6.1

6.2

7. Integrated Impact Assessment

7.1 An initial impact assessment was considered by Cabinet on the 29th September 2020.

A range of draft impact assessments were produced as part of the consultation documentation. These included an Integrated Impact Assessment, an Equalities Impact Assessment, a Community Impact Assessment and a Welsh Language Impact Assessment.

These draft impact assessments have been updated to reflect issues raised during the consultation period, and are attached in Appendix D.

8. Recommendation

- To receive the Consultation Report in respect of establishing an all-age school in Llanfair Caereinion.
- To approve the publication of a statutory notice to close both Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School from the 31st August 2022, and open a new dual stream all-age school for pupils aged 4-18 on the sites currently occupied by Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School from the 1st September 2022.
- To accelerate the dialogue with representatives of the two schools and the community to explore ways to develop and enhance the Welsh-medium provision in Llanfair Caereinion, and to include all feeder schools in this dialogue.

Contact Officer:	Marianne Evans
Tel:	01597 826155
Email:	Marianne.evans@powys.gov.uk
Head of Service:	Emma Palmer – Head of Transformation & Communications Lynette Lovell – Interim Chief Education Officer
Corporate Director:	Dr Caroline Turner