

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

**CABINET EXECUTIVE
18th March 2021**

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

**REPORT TITLE: Llangedwyn C. in W. School, Llanfechain C. in W.
School and Llansantffraid C. in W. School – Proposal
Paper**

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

1.1 This report requests Cabinet approval to commence the statutory process on the following proposals:

- **To close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2023 with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools**
- **To close Llanfechain C. in W. School from the 31st August 2023 with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools**
- **To make a regulated alteration to increase the capacity of Llansantffraid C. in W. School by 90 places from 1st September 2023, following completion of the construction project at Llansantffraid C. in W. School.**

1.2 The report also requests approval for the following:

- **To develop a Business Justification Case (BJC) for submission to Welsh Government to develop an extension to Llansantffraid C. in W. School**
- **To release £50,000 from the 21st Century Schools ‘Other Projects’ line in the capital programme, to support the initial feasibility and design stages of the new extension at Llansantffraid C. in W. school.**

1.3 The report is supported by the following appendices:

- Appendix A – Pre-consultation response from the Diocese of St Asaph
- Appendix B – Options Appraisal
- Appendix C – Community Impact Assessment
- Appendix D – Impact Assessment

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.
- 2.3 The Strategy sets out a new vision for education in Powys, which is 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.’
- 2.4 The Strategy also sets out a number of guiding principles which will underpin the transformation of education in Powys.
- 2.5 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 these Aims is to *‘improve learner entitlement and experience’* and includes an objective to *‘rationalise primary provision’*.

Llanfyllin / North Welshpool Programme Business Case

- 2.6 Following approval of the new Strategy, a Programme Business Case (PBC) was developed for the Llanfyllin / North Welshpool catchment. The PBC was considered by Cabinet on the 29th September 2020.
- 2.7 Without requiring Cabinet to make a decision on the future configuration of schools in the catchment, the PBC identified a preferred way forward for the Llanfyllin / North Welshpool area as follows:
 - A new community campus for approximately 900 pupils aged 4 – 18 in Llanfyllin, replacing the current poor condition buildings of Ysgol Llanfyllin – to be built on the current Ysgol Llanfyllin site.
 - To establish and build a new 360 place area school, to replace Carreghofa School and Llandysilio C. in W. School – this could also potentially include neighbouring schools in the Welshpool catchment as well. Site to be confirmed.
 - To establish a new Welsh-medium school on the current Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant site, replacing both Ysgol Pennant and Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant Primary School. This may require capital funding to extend the school.
 - To provide an extension to Llansantffraid C. in W. Primary School.

- Possible closure of Llangedwyn C. in W. School, Llanfechain C. in W. School and Ysgol Bro Cynllaith.

2.8 The intention is to take forward the Transformation Programme in the Llanfyllin/North Welshpool catchment area on a phased basis as follows:

- Phase 1 – the development and consideration of options for Llangedwyn CIW Primary School and Llanfechain CIW Primary School, along with plans for capital investment in Llansantffraid CIW Primary School.
- Phase 2 – the development and consideration of options for Ysgol Bro Cynllaith, Ysgol Gynradd Pennant and Ysgol Gynradd Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant – it is expected that this exercise will be concluded shortly after Easter 2021.
- Phase 3 – the development and consideration of options for Llandysilio CiW Primary School, Carreghofa CP School, Arddleen CP School and Brynhafren CP School, which is expected to be undertaken in the autumn term 2021.

2.9 This paper relates to Phase 1 above and does not refer to Phases 2 or 3 which will be subject to separate papers presented to Cabinet.

3. The Case for Change

Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School

3.1 Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School currently operate as a formal federation – Ffederasiwn Dwy Afon. The following is a summary of the main challenges facing the two schools:

3.2 Llangedwyn C. in W. School

i) Low pupil numbers

Current pupil numbers¹ at Llangedwyn C. in W. School are as follows:

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	3	1	7	3	0	3	5	22

The Welsh Government defines a ‘small school’ as a school with fewer than 91 pupils. Pupil numbers are significantly lower than this and are expected to decrease further to 16 by January 2021. Whilst pupil numbers are projected to increase over the following couple of years, they are expected to remain low.

¹ Finance NOR – 2020 Pupil Count Day (6th November 2020)

The school's low pupil numbers have also resulted in a high number of surplus places at the school. Based on current pupil numbers, there is currently 56% surplus capacity at the school.

ii) High budget per pupil

Based on the Council's Section 52 Budget Statement for 2020-21, the school's budget share per pupil during 2020-21 was £11,912. This is significantly higher than the Powys average of £4,264. Llangedwyn is ranked the highest school in Powys by budget share per pupil.

iii) Issues with the building

Despite the findings of the Welsh Government's condition survey carried out in 2009, which found that the condition of the building was 'B – Good' and its suitability was 'B – Good', there are still concerns about the school's condition and suitability, in particular its suitability to deliver the new curriculum.

The school was built at the end of the 19th Century and the design and configuration reflects the nature of school buildings at that time. There is limited access for seamless outdoor learning, which is a particular issue in respect of the foundation phase curriculum, as well as no access to a hall on site. In addition, there is poor office and staffroom provision. The backlog maintenance cost is estimated to be approximately £84k.

The current accommodation at Llangedwyn constrains the school's ability to fully meet the requirements of the new curriculum, and does not meet the Council's vision statement for education, as outlined in the Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys

iv) Leadership arrangements

Current leadership arrangements at the school are temporary, with an acting headteacher working across both schools in the Federation Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School.

Whilst the school's recent Estyn inspection notes that 'The acting headteacher has managed a period of significant change competently...', the report also identified concerns regarding leadership arrangements, and includes a recommendation to 'Put in place clear arrangements to cover leadership in the absence of the headteacher.'

The inspection report also includes a recommendation in respect of the governing body, which is to 'Ensure that the governing body hold the school to account for standards and progress of pupils.'

v) Need to improve quality of provision

Whilst Estyn’s inspection of Llangedwyn C. in W. School in January 2020 identified a number of positives in respect of the school’s provision, a number of areas were identified which require improvement. In particular, Estyn’s overall judgement on Standards was ‘Adequate and needs improvement’, and the inspection report includes recommendations to ‘improve standards of reading in the foundation phase’ and to ‘improve provision to develop pupils’ information and communication technology (ICT) skills’.

vi) High proportion of pupils are from other catchment areas

Of the 18 pupils attending the school in January 2020, Llangedwyn C. in W. School is only the closest school for 7 of them. This means that 61% of pupils attending the school do not live in the school’s natural catchment area.

3.3 Llanfechain C. in W. School

i) Low pupil numbers

Current pupil numbers² at Llanfechain C. in W. School are as follows:

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Llanfechain C. in W. School	6	3	10	7	5	7	5	43

The Welsh Government defines a ‘small school’ as a school with less than 91 pupils. Pupil numbers are significantly lower than this, and are projected to remain fairly stable over the coming years.

ii) High budget per pupil

Based on the Council’s Section 52 Budget Statement for 2020-21, the school’s budget share per pupil during 2020-21 was £5,427. This is higher than the Powys average of £4,264. Llanfechain is ranked the 15th highest school in Powys by budget share per pupil.

iii) Building condition and suitability

The Welsh Government’s survey of school buildings carried out in 2009 identified issues with the building condition of the Llanfechain building, with the building being assessed to be condition C – Poor. The school is a mid-20th century school and estimated backlog maintenance costs are approximately £431k.

² Finance NOR – 2020 Pupil Count Day (6th November 2020)

iv) Leadership

Current leadership arrangements at the school are temporary, with an acting headteacher working across Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School.

3.4 Llansantffraid C. in W. School

The main challenges facing the school relate to the capacity of the school building, particularly in light of the Council's preferred way forward for the Llanfyllin catchment, as outlined in the PBC considered by Cabinet on the 29th September 2020.

The challenges facing the school are as follows:

i) Capacity

As indicated in the PBC relating to the Llanfyllin / North Welshpool area which was considered by Cabinet on the 29th September, Llansantffraid C. in W. School 'is currently unique amongst the schools in the Llanfyllin catchment, being the only one that is operating above capacity, and has been doing so consistently for the past six years.' The current capacity of the school is 105 and there are currently 103 pupils on roll. As a voluntary aided school, the school is responsible for its own admissions, and demand for places is increasing. The school also operates a pre-school setting within the main school building.

ii) Backlog Maintenance

Whilst Llansantffraid C. in W. School is a fairly new building compared with other school buildings in the area, the school does have some outstanding backlog maintenance costs, currently estimated at £312,951.

4. Information about Llangedwyn C. in W. School, Llanfechain C. in W. School and Llansantffraid C. in W. School

The following primary schools are located within approximately 10 miles of Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School:

School	Distance from Llangedwyn C. in W. School by road (miles)	Distance from Llanfechain C. in W. School by road (miles)
Ysgol Llanfyllin	4.8 miles	3.5 miles
Llansantffraid C. in W. School	4.5 miles	2.3 miles

Ysgol Meifod	9.5 miles	6.2 miles
Ysgol Pontrobert	10.4 miles	8.4 miles
Ysgol Pennant	6.5 miles	8.1 miles
Ysgol Bro Cynllaith	3.6 miles	7.0 miles
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	N/A	4.4 miles
Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant C.P. School	3.7 miles	6.7 miles
Trefonen CofE Primary School (Shropshire)	6.0 miles	7.5 miles
Bryn Offa CofE Primary School (Shropshire)	8.0 miles	6.6 miles
Ardleen C.P. School	9.1 miles	6.9 miles
Carreghofa C.P. School	7.8 miles	5.6 miles
Guilsfield C.P. School	12.0 miles	8.7 miles
Llandysilio C. in W. School	8.2 miles	6.0 miles
Llanfechain C. in W. School	4.4 miles	N/A
Ysgol Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog (Wrexham)	8.4 miles	12.7 miles
Woodside Primary School (Shropshire)	8.7 miles	12.0 miles
Selattyn CofE Primary School	8.9 miles	12.1 miles

(Shropshire)		
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The following is a summary of key data relating to the Llangedwyn C. in W. School, Llanfechain C. in W. School and Llansantffraid C. in W. School:

	School Type	Language Category	Admission Number	Rural School?³
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	Voluntary Controlled Primary Church in Wales School building owned by the Diocese of St Asaph	English-medium	6	Yes
Llanfechain C. in W. School	Voluntary Controlled Primary Church in Wales School building owned by the Diocese of St Asaph	English-medium	7	Yes
Llansantffraid C. in W. School	Voluntary Aided Primary Church in Wales School building owned by the Diocese of St Asaph	English medium	15	No

Pupil Numbers

³ Annex F of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2018) (<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/school-organisation-code-second-edition.pdf>) includes a list of 'rural schools', to which the 'Presumption against the closure of rural schools' applies.

i) **Current pupil numbers⁴**

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	3	1	7	3	0	3	5	22
Llanfechain C. in W. School	6	3	10	7	5	7	5	43
Llansantffraid C. in W. School	12	16	15	12	25	10	13	103

ii) **Historical pupil numbers⁵**

	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2015	Jan. 2016	Jan. 2017	Jan. 2018	Jan. 2019	Jan. 2020
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	32	30	31	26	28	31	18
Llanfechain C. in W. School	30	35	40	44	39	39	44
Llansantffraid C. in W. School	120	114	119	108	100	118	120

iii) **Projected pupil numbers (Birth rate)⁶**

	Jan. 2021	Jan. 2022	Jan. 2023	Jan. 2024	Jan. 2025
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	20	17	18	21	21
Llanfechain C. in W. School	43	48	53	50	45

⁴ Finance NOR – 2020 Pupil Count Day (6th November 2020)

⁵ PLASC 2020

⁶ Powys Schools Service Projections (R – Yr6) based on PLASC 2020 & Birth Rates

Llansantffraid C. in W. School	105	100	96	87	87

iv) **Projected pupil numbers (Finance projections)⁷**

	Jan. 2022	Jan. 2023	Jan. 2024	Jan. 2025
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	22	20	N/A	N/A
Llanfechain C. in W. School	43	44	N/A	N/A
Llansantffraid C. in W. School	105	110	N/A	N/A

Building Capacity and Condition

i) **Capacity**

The following table provides information about the current capacities of school and the capacity:

	Current Capacity⁸	Currently Filled	Surplus Capacity
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	47	22 (47%)	19 (53%)
Llanfechain C. in W. School	47	43 (91%)	4 (9%)
Llansantffraid C. in W. School	105	103 (98.1%)	2 (1.9%)

ii) **Building condition**

⁷ Powys Finance Projections based on actual pupil numbers – November 2020

⁸ Welsh Government School Places Return – August 2020

In 2009, Welsh Government carried out condition and suitability assessments of the school.

	Condition	Suitability	Access to hall on site	Estimated backlog maintenance
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	B Good	B Good	No	£84,291
Llanfechain C. in W. School	C Poor	B Good	Yes	£431,250
Llansantffraid C. in W. School	B Good	C Poor	Yes	£312,951

Standards of Education

i) **Estyn**

	Llangedwyn C. in W. School
Date of Inspection	January 2020
Standards	Adequate and needs improvement
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Adequate and needs improvement
Follow up activity	School will draw up an action plan and Estyn will review the school's progress.

	Llanfechain C. in W. School
Date of Inspection	April 2015
Standards	Good
Wellbeing	Adequate
Learning experiences	Good
Teaching	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Learning environment	Good
Leadership	Adequate
Improving quality	Adequate
Partnership working	Good
Resource management	Adequate
Follow Up	School to draw up action plan. Estyn to monitor progress.

	Llansantffraid C. in W. School
Date of Inspection	March 2014
Standards	Good
Wellbeing	Good
Learning Experiences	Good
Teaching	Good

Care, support and guidance	Good
Learning Environment	Good
Leadership	Good
Improving Quality	Good
Partnership Working	Good
Resource Management	Good
Follow up activity	The school will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations

ii) **School Categorisation⁹**

	Standards Group	Improvement Capacity	Support Capacity
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	N/A	B	Yellow
Llanfechain C. in W. School	N/A	B	Yellow
Llansantffraid C. in W. School	N/A	B	Yellow

Financial information

i) **Cost per pupil¹⁰ (Section 52 Budget Statement, 2020/2021)**

	Budget share per school	Budget share per pupil	Notional SEN budget	Non ISB funds devolved

⁹ 2019

¹⁰ Section 52 Budget Statement 2020/2021

				to the school
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	£191,000	£11,912	£21,000	£7,000
Llanfechain C. in W. School	£239,000	£5,427	£15,000	£3,000
Llansantffraid C. in W. School	£425,000	£3,758	£26,000	£7,000
Powys average (Primary)	N/A	£4,264	N/A	N/A

5. Options Appraisal exercise

5.1 An options appraisal exercise has been carried out, which has included the following steps:

- Consideration of key data relating to Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School
- Identification of options
- SWOT analysis of each option
- Assessment of each option against a number of critical success factors
- Identification of an initial emerging preferred option
- Consultation with the Diocese of St Asaph on the emerging preferred option
- Review of the options appraisal to take account of the consultation response received from the Diocese of St Asaph
- Consideration of key data relating to Llansantffraid C. in W. School
- Consideration of implementation options
- Identification of an emerging preferred option
- Further consideration of the emerging preferred option against factors listed in the School Organisation Code (2018) as factors to be taken into account when developing school organisation proposals.

5.2 The initial options appraisal carried out in respect of Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School considered a range of options for the two schools. This exercise identified an emerging preferred option to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools.

5.3 As Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School have a religious character, the School Organisation Code includes the following requirements:

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

5.4 To meet the requirements of the School Organisation Code, consultation was carried out with the Diocese of St Asaph during November / December 2020 on the emerging preferred option, to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School. The Consultation Response received from the Diocese raised concerns about the emerging preferred option for the two schools, and in particular on access to Church in Wales places in the area currently served by Llangedwyn C in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School.

5.5 The options appraisal was reviewed and updated to address the concerns expressed by the Diocese in respect of access to Church in Wales places, by linking the plans for Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School more closely with the planned extension to Llansantffraid C. in W. School, which was outlined in the PBC for the Llanfyllin / North Welshpool area. In addition, the updated options appraisal considered a range of implementation options which would ensure access to additional Church in Wales places until the completion of the extension to Llansantffraid C. in W. School

5.6 The updated options appraisal identified the following preferred option:

- Close Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools
- Retain the Llanfechain site on a temporary basis as part of Llansantffraid C. in W. School until the planned extension to Llansantffraid is complete.

5.7 A second period of consultation was subsequently carried out with the Diocese of St Asaph on the amended preferred option as outlined in 5.6 above. The response received from the Diocese in respect of this option is attached as Appendix A.

5.8 Whilst supportive of the Council's intention to provide an extension to Llansantffraid, the response raised concern that some pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School may need to move schools twice in order to continue to access Church

in Wales provision, and suggested that both schools should remain open until the extension to Llansantffraid C. in W. School is complete.

5.9 Having considered the response received from the Diocese of St Asaph, the Council has acknowledged the need to minimise disruption for those pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School, and the need to minimise disruption for Llansantffraid C. in W. School. As suggested by the Diocese, the Council has further revised the proposal to be taken forward in respect of these three schools. The amended preferred option is as follows:

- To close Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School from the 31st August 2023
- To make a regulated alteration to increase the capacity of Llansantffraid C. in W. School by 90 places from September 2023, following completion of the construction project at Llansantffraid C. in W. School.

5.10 The options appraisal document in respect of Llangedwyn C. in W. School, Llanfechain C. in W. School and Llansantffraid C. in W. School has been further amended to reflect the amended preferred option. The options appraisal also includes consideration of the impact of the preferred option on the factors to be taken into account when developing school organisation proposals. The full options appraisal is attached to this paper as Appendix B.

5.9 Based on the options appraisal carried out, the consultation response received from the Diocese of St Asaph, and further consideration against the factors outlined in the School Organisation Code, the preferred option is as follows:

- **To close Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School from the 31st August 2023**
- **To make a regulated alteration to increase the capacity of Llansantffraid C. in W. School by 90 places from September 2023, following completion of the construction project at Llansantffraid C. in W. School.**

5.10 The reasons for this are:

- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers at Llangedwyn and Llanfechain
- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- The Council would no longer need to maintain the Llangedwyn and Llanfechain buildings
- Revenue saving to the Council
- Pupils would attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum

- Pupils would attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities
- Pupils would attend schools with more suitable accommodation
- Minimal impact on any other schools
- Potential reduction in travel for pupils currently attending Llangedwyn School if they transfer to their closest school
- Church in Wales provision would continue to be available at Llansantffraid C. in W. School
- Delaying implementation of the proposal would not impact on Llansantffraid C. in W. School
- Would provide continued access to Church in Wales places in the area throughout the implementation period
- Would ensure that no pupils would have to move schools twice
- Supported by the Diocese of St Asaph

6. Presumption against closure of Rural Schools

6.1 The School Organisation Code (2018) includes special arrangements in regard to schools identified in Appendix F of the Code as rural schools, which require proposers to follow a more detailed set of procedures and requirements in formulating a rural school closure proposal and in consulting on and reaching a decision as to whether to implement a rural school closure proposal.

6.2 As indicated in the Code:

'This does not mean that a rural school will never close but the case for closure must be strong and all viable alternatives to closure must have been conscientiously considered by the proposer, including federation.'

6.3 The School Organisation Code includes a number of steps required to be taken when formulating a rural school proposal which relate to the following headings:

- Formulating the proposal
- Identifying reasonable alternatives
- Preparing a proposal paper for the decision maker

6.4 As the School Organisation Code identifies Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School as rural schools, the additional requirements for rural schools have been addressed when developing the proposal paper.

6.5 A draft Community Impact Assessment has been carried out on the preferred option, which considers the impact of closure of Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School on the community. This has been developed with input from the schools. This is attached as Appendix C.

- 6.6 The draft Community Impact Assessment includes the following conclusion:

'A range of extra curricular activities are available to pupils at both Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School, and there are links between both schools and their respective communities.

Should there be no schools in Llangedwyn and Llanfechain, it is acknowledged that this would impact on both communities. However, there is a Memorial Hall in Llangedwyn, and a Village Hall in Llanfechain, both of which would continue to be available should there be no schools in the two villages, and where community activities and events could be held.

Should there be no schools in Llangedwyn and Llanfechain, additional travel would be required for those pupils for whom these are currently the closest schools. Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the home to school transport policy, it is acknowledged that there could be an impact on some pupils' ability to access after school activities, and could impact on the ability of parents to take part in school events, meetings etc. However, the majority of pupils at both Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School live closer to other schools. For these pupils, transferring to their closest schools would lead to a reduction in travel distance / time.'

7. Extension to Llansantffraid C. in W. School

- 7.1 The Programme Business Case (PBC) included an extension to Llansantffraid C. in W. School based on the school's limited available capacity.
- 7.2 Whilst developing the preferred option for Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School as outlined above, it became apparent that the extension in Llansantffraid was a key requirement to provide an appropriate number of Church in Wales places in the area due to the proposed closure of two other Church in Wales schools.
- 7.3 Initial feasibility work has taken place to establish whether a 90-place extension can be provided. This has indicated that this is possible, however there may potentially be a need to decant pupils from the current Llansantffraid building during the construction stage in order to secure the safety of pupils. Further work is being carried out to identify possible site options. It is not expected that the extension to Llansantffraid C. in W. School would be in place until September 2023 at the earliest.
- 7.4 The Consultation Response received from the Diocese of St Asaph (Appendix A) raises a number of queries in respect of the planned

extension to Llansantffraid C. in W. School, and also requests that the building programme commences at the earliest opportunity. To enable this work to move forward as quickly as possible, officers will develop a Business Justification Case (BJC) for submission to Welsh Government to develop an extension to Llansantffraid C. in W. School

8. Advice

8.1 It is advised that Cabinet approves a recommendation to commence the statutory process on the following proposals:

- To close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2023
- To close Llanfechain C. in W. School from the 31st August 2023
- To make a regulated alteration to increase the capacity of Llansantffraid C. in W. School by 90 places from September 2023, following completion of the construction project at Llansantffraid C. in W. School.

8.2 The reasons for this are:

- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers at Llangedwyn and Llanfechain
- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- The Council would no longer need to maintain the Llangedwyn and Llanfechain buildings
- Revenue saving to the Council
- Pupils would attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum
- Pupils would attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities
- Pupils would attend schools with more suitable accommodation
- Minimal impact on any other schools
- Potential reduction in travel for pupils currently attending Llangedwyn School if they transfer to their closest school
- Church in Wales provision would continue to be available at Llansantffraid C. in W. School
- Delaying implementation of the proposal would not impact on Llansantffraid C. in W. School
- Would provide continued access to Church in Wales places in the area throughout the implementation period
- Would ensure that no pupils would have to move schools twice
- Supported by the Diocese of St Asaph

8.3 Should the recommendation to commence the statutory process be approved, it is anticipated that consultation would commence in the summer of 2021 at the earliest.

- 8.4 It must also be noted that implementation of this proposal does not preclude schools from being a part of future reorganisation proposals.
- 8.5 It is also advised that officers proceed with the developments of a Business Justification Case (BJC) for submission to Welsh Government to develop an extension to Llansantffraid C. in W. School.
- 8.6 It is also advised that Cabinet approves the release of £50,000 from the 21st Century Schools 'Other Projects' line in the capital programme, to support the initial feasibility and design stages for a new extension to Llansantffraid C. in W. School.

9. **Resource Implications**

Revenue

- 9.1 The amount of funding provided to schools is driven by the funding formula. Any change to the formula funding provided will impact on the Council's revenue budget. Based on the current formula, it is estimated that this proposal would result in annual revenue savings to the Council of around £66,000 per annum. This overall figure comprises a potential saving on schools' delegated funding of £117,000, estimated additional transport costs of £46,000, potential loss of funding for pupils that may move to out of county schools of £11,000 and savings on catering costs of around £6,000.
- 9.2 In line with the Council's Scheme for Financing Schools, should a school be in a deficit budget position when closed the deficit is written off.
- 9.3 The Scheme for Financing Schools also states the following in section 3.7.2:

'In order to ensure effective stewardship of the resources available to schools, the Authority may impose additional restrictions on a school scheduled to close, including but not limited to:

- *Restriction of expenditure to agreed plans*
- *Removal of powers of virement'*

The Council will consider the use of these powers of intervention where appropriate.

- 9.4 Implementation of the proposal would require involvement from a number of service areas, including staff from the Schools Service, Finance, HR and ICT. These service areas will be kept informed of the development of the proposal throughout the statutory process.

Capital

- 9.5 It is estimated that the amount of capital funding required for this project is £3 million, which includes both costs of the extension at Llansantffraid C. in W. school and potential decanting costs. The project will be funded through the 21st Century Schools Programme, and as a voluntary aided school, the Welsh Government's contribution is 85%, with the Diocese / school governing body responsible for the remaining 15%. A Business Justification Case would need to be submitted to the Welsh Government to draw down this funding.
- 9.6 Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School are both Church in Wales schools. Neither school site is owned by the local authority, therefore the proceeds of any sale of either site would not be available to the local authority.
- 9.7 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the content of the report and the resource implications above. Funding is available and £50,000 can be released to support the initial design stage of the new extension at Llansantffraid C. in W. School. This expenditure will be incurred at risk, if the project does not proceed these costs could not be recovered through the 21st Century schools programme and would fall on the Council's Revenue budget.

10. Legal implications

- 10.1 Legal: The recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view (Locum Education Lawyer).
- 10.2 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".

11. Comment from local member(s)

- 11.1 To follow.

12. Integrated Impact Assessment

- 12.1 An initial impact assessment in respect of the recommendation is attached. The impact assessment considers the proposal's impact on the Welsh Government's well-being goals, as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

- 12.2 The summary of the impact assessment is as follows:

'The aim of the proposal is to improve the educational provision for learners. However, whilst this impact assessment has identified some positive aspects, in particular relating to learning and skills and ensuring the best strategic management of the Powys schools estate, and the provision of sufficient Church in Wales school places in the area, the assessment has also identified some negative aspects.'

These primarily relate to the impact on the communities of Llangedwyn and Llanfechain due to loss of educational provision from the villages, and the associated additional travel requirements for pupils, however most pupils that currently attend Llangedwyn C. in W. School and Llanfechain C. in W. School live closer to other schools.'

12.3 Should Cabinet approve the commencement of the statutory process in respect of the recommendation, the impact assessment would be updated throughout the process, to take account of feedback received.

13. Recommendation

13.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves commencing the statutory process on the following proposals:

- To close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2023 with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative school;
- To close Llanfechain C. in W. School from the 31st August 2023 with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative school;
- To make a regulated alteration to increase the capacity of Llansantffraid C. in W. School by 90 places from 1st September 2023, following completion of the construction project at Llansantffraid C. in W. School.

13.2 It is recommended that officers proceed with the development of a Business Justification Case (BJC) for submission to Welsh Government to develop an extension to Llansantffraid C. in W. School

13.3 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the release of £50,000 from the 21st Century Schools 'Other Projects' line in the capital programme, to support the initial feasibility and design stages of the new extension at Llansantffraid C. in W. School.

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