

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

18 May 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 16th February 2021, the Council published a Statutory Notice proposing to close Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School from the 31st August 2022, and to establish a new dual stream all-age school in Llanfair Caereinion from the 1st September 2022.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet members of the outcome of the statutory objection period.
- 1.3 The report includes a recommendation to proceed with the establishment of a dual stream all-age school in Llanfair Caereinion from the 1st September 2022.
- 1.4 The report is supported by the following appendices:
- **Appendix A** – Statutory Notice
 - **Appendix B** – Objection Report
 - **Appendix C** – Updated Impact Assessments

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 Consultation in relation to establishing an all-age school in Llanfair Caereinion was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code (2018) from the 13th October 2020 to the 24th November 2020.
- 2.8 A Consultation Report listing the issues raised during the consultation and the authority's response to them was published. This was considered by Cabinet on the 12th January 2021 and the 16th February 2021.
- 2.9 At the meeting on the 16th February 2021, Cabinet agreed to proceed with the process to establish an all-through school in Llanfair Caereinion through the publication of a Statutory Notice.

Statutory Notice

- 2.10 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 16th February 2021, the Council published a Statutory Notice proposing the following:

'From 31 August 2022:

- i. *The Council proposes to discontinue the following two schools which are maintained by Powys County Council:*
- *Llanfair Caereinion Community Primary School/Ysgol Gynradd Llanfair Caereinion, Llanfair Caereinion, Welshpool Powys, SY21 0SF ("Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School");*
 - *Caereinion High School, Llanfair Caereinion, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 0HW*

From 1 September 2022:

- i. *The Council proposes to establish a new bilingual community school for boys and girls aged 4-18 years old, that will operate on the current sites of Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School.'*

- 2.11 The Statutory Notice was published on the 23rd February 2021 for a period of 28 days, in accordance with the guidance within the School Organisation Code (2018). A copy of the Statutory Notice is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.12 The objection period ended on the 23rd March 2021.

Objections

- 2.13 Thirty-one objections were received during the statutory objection period. The issues raised in these objections and the Council's response to these issues are listed in the Objection Report, which is attached as Appendix B.

3 Advice

- 3.1 Having considered the objections received, it is recommended that the Council proceeds with implementation of the proposal to close Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School from the 31st August 2022, and to establish a new dual stream all-age school in Llanfair Caereinion from the 1st September 2022, as outlined in the Statutory Notice (Appendix A).

- 3.2 The reasons for this are as follows:

- To improve educational outcomes
- To improve educational provision
- To improve leadership and management
- To improve efficiency in the delivery of education
- To provide more seamless transition between key stages

- 3.3 Whilst this proposal is specifically about establishing an all-age school in Llanfair Caereinion, the main issues raised in the objections received are about the need for a designated Welsh-medium secondary school. This issue was also a strong theme within the Consultation Report as well. Within the Consultation Document, it was stated the following in terms of the authority's ambitions to develop Welsh-medium secondary provision in the area:

- *'The Council recognises the strength of Welsh-medium provision in the Caereinion area, and that the Welsh-medium provision at Caereinion High School is central to the Council's aspiration to provide access to enhanced Welsh-medium secondary provision. The Council's intention is to take this forward using a phased approach. Whilst the discussions with Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School have included consideration of the school's language category going forward, the current proposal does not propose any changes to the language provision in Llanfair Caereinion.'*
- *The current proposal to amalgamate Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School to establish an all-age school in Llanfair Caereinion is the first phase of transforming education in Llanfair Caereinion. Alongside this process, the Council will continue to engage in dialogue with representatives of the two schools, in order to continue to explore ways to develop and enhance the Welsh-medium provision in Llanfair Caereinion. This would contribute to implementation of the*

Council's Strategic Aim to 'improve access to Welsh-medium provision across all key stages', the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and the Welsh Government's Strategy to achieve a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

- If the outcome of this is a need to change the school's language category, a further statutory process would be required to implement this. If required, this would be separate to the current process to merge the two schools, and a separate consultation exercise would be required.'*

3.4 A recommendation was included within the Cabinet report of the 16th February 2021 which stated the following:

- 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.*

3.5 Initial discussions have taken place with Caereinion High School and its feeder schools. Should the Cabinet approve the proposal to establish the all-age school in Llanfair Caereinion, this dialogue will continue at pace with the temporary governing body and leadership of the new school, in order to move the school along the language continuum, Feeder schools and other partners will be essential to help develop this vision.

3.6 If the outcome of this is the need to change the school's language category, a further statutory process would be required to implement this – this will be reviewed following the establishment of the all-age school in September 2022.

3.7 If it becomes apparent that developing designated Welsh-medium provision in Llanfair Caereinion will not be desirable or possible, the Council will reconsider its previous plans to develop Welsh-medium provision within the Severn Valley, to ensure that designated Welsh-medium provision can be offered to pupils in the area. If this were to go ahead, there could potentially be an impact on the all-age school in Llanfair Caereinion.

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
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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 recommendation.

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 No comments received.

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 C.

8. Recommendation

- To receive the Objection Report in respect of establishing an all-age school in Llanfair Caereinion
- To approve the proposal to amalgamate Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School in order to establish a new all-age school on the current sites of the two schools, by:
 - Closing Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School from the 31st August 2022
 - Establishing a new dual stream all-age school on the current sites of Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School on the 1st September 2022

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