

Appendix C – Minutes of meetings with Staff, Governors and School Council

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1. Consultation meeting with Staff of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon

23rd March 2021

Present

Staff:

Caroline Harries
Claire Rowlands
Awel
Jemma
Sian Canning
Nesta Jones
Nicola Macken
Tracy Jones
Gwenfair Owen
Sara Aeron

Officers:

Geraint Rees, Strategic Lead for Education
Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer
Emma Palmer, Head of Transformation and Communications
Marianne Evans, Senior Manager Schools Transformation
Mari Thomas, Interim Schools Finance Manager
Sarah Christoforou, HR Business Manager (Schools)
Sarah Astley, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education

Geraint Rees welcomed all to the consultation meeting and introduced the officers attending the meeting. The Staff of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon introduced themselves. It was explained that there would be a brief presentation with an opportunity for discussion, comments, and questions for the officers. Geraint explained that the meeting would be recorded, for minuting purposes but they will be deleted once completed.

Geraint Rees and Marianne Evans gave a short PowerPoint presentation to give an overview of the proposals and the consultation process. It was explained that the Council is consulting on the following proposals:

- To make a regulated alternation to the medium of instruction at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon, from dual-stream to Welsh-medium. This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception in September 2022.

Geraint Rees then gave staff the opportunity to proceed with any questions or comments they had in relation to the matter.

Staff: Can I just ask a question which has come in from parents who have responded to the consultation? Some are asking will there be a meeting for parents as part of the consultation.

Geraint Rees: The truth is that during this pandemic period, we are currently relying on electronic medium to consult and holding meetings with groups of pupils, staff, governors, but it is difficult to be able to hold one with parents. However, we do know that parents use a lot of social media, and electronic means, so we are having quite a large number of responses through social media and that is the means that the information is coming in. The consultation period has been extended so that there is additional opportunity for people to respond. Parents can ask questions throughout the consultation period via email, and can request that we can send documents to them. However, there is no formal meeting.

Staff: I have also been asked, in terms of responses to the consultation, how are those responses recorded? Are they recorded as to individuals or are names deleted?

Marianne Evans: Everything is confidential, and no names are disclosed. Once the consultation period ends, the next step is to analyse the responses, the concerns, and matters that are raised are put into the report which goes back to Cabinet, but it will not mention any names or show where the response has come from.

Geraint Rees: Every response will be noted in the report to Cabinet, positive or negative, and the officers will need to respond to these, but no names will be named.

Staff: I have a question please. Will the finance we have now as a dual-stream school stay the same if we change to a Welsh only stream?

Geraint Rees: Mari will explain further, but I would just like to say that finance is allocated according to the needs of the school. Therefore, if there is a need to have two classes in one year there will be funding for that. A school with only one stream will be different, but the entitlement of the children is still the same.

Mari Thomas: At the moment, the two streams are treated as two separate schools more or less, except for some shared costs in terms of Headteacher and support costs. Therefore, although the numbers in the English stream are very small, we still give them money, and this will obviously change, were there be a change to a single stream.

Geraint Rees: Any change would be over a period of time. If the proposal goes ahead, then every child in Dyffryn Trannon has a right to education in the language they have chosen, therefore the County would have to work things out over time.

Staff: Can I just follow on from that question please. If for example we have in year 2 one pupil, if that one pupil remains at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon is there a commitment

from the authority that the pupil will be funded? At the moment we have huge concerns from parents as to whether this will be the case. At the moment I am saying to them, yes, the local authority have said yes they will, but when it comes down to the English stream actually having only one pupil will that promise be honoured?

Geraint Rees: I think it is really an important question, and in any local authority when they carry out a transformation process, they must look after everybody who is in the system at the moment. However, it would be quite usual for the parents of a single child in a school to have a conversation with parents as to whether they will support the transition to the Welsh stream through language immersion and whether or not that may be something that will appeal to them. There are social challenges for a child who may be the only child in a whole key stage, further down the line, and there are challenges around wellbeing. Quite often when people grasp the issue that Welsh-medium actually means bilingual, and it isn't exclusive that you either speak Welsh or English, they might change to the Welsh stream. However, it would be the well-being of the child which would be at the heart of this too. It is something we need to look at very carefully.

Staff: I just want to ask, with the discussion about Bro-Hyddgen, would our children from the Welsh stream be feeding Bro Hyddgen or Llanidloes?

Marianne Evans: That is a good question. At the moment Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon feeds to Llanidloes. If the proposal for Ysgol Bro Hyddgen goes through, then this would be part of a discussion for any family in the wider community and they could choose for their child to go to go Ysgol Bro Hyddgen.

Staff: If that were to happen, would they have transport offered or would they need to arrange that themselves?

Marianne Evans: They would have to arrange the transport themselves, as they need to go to their nearest secondary school, with their nearest being Llanidloes, but it all depends on where they live.

Geraint Rees: However, you are aware that we are trying to work with schools and communities of children, both Primary and Secondary, to help with the progression of education for children, and we need to review this as proposals change and things change around us to ensure each child is treated fairly. There is a commitment in the transport policy for it to be reviewed annually, as things change, in order to ensure fairness to every pupil. This hasn't been discussed in detail yet, but this proposal could influence the dynamics and how we see things in the future.

Staff: Just one more thing, can I check that the secondary school in Llanidloes is going to carry on being a secondary dual-stream school?

Geraint Rees: Yes, that is the only plan at the moment. We want those who opt to have secondary education through the medium of Welsh, to have a very high percentage of subjects taught through Welsh and this is a challenge at the moment for schools including Llanidloes because they are trying to provide more than they do now.

Staff: We feel it is important that the parents of pre-school children know when they start at pre-school that they have Welsh language provision in their Primary and Secondary school. If I understand correctly, Welsh provision will still be available at Llanidloes High School. Most of our children travel to Llanidloes as it is the nearest school to Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon.

It is a pity because of the wider changes that are happening in relation to Powys admissions policy, with Carno for example, that Carno pupils will no longer naturally feed Llanidloes, and that in relation to Rhayader the Welsh stream is expected to transfer to Ysgol Calon Cymru.

So, I feel that if we are going to have a Welsh primary school in Trefeglwys, and pupils transferring to their nearest secondary provision in Llanidloes, only Dyffryn Trannon pupils will be transferring to the Welsh stream at Llanidloes, and they will not have the opportunity to mix with other children and make new friends with other children in the community. Dyffryn Trannon pupils will be together from pre-school to year 6.

Geraint Rees: It is a clear aim for the Council that there is an increase in Welsh-medium provision in both primary and secondary, and that the provision needs more depth to it. Therefore, we will need to consider how we would do that. You say that if it will only be Dyffryn Trannon pupils at Llanidloes. If so, the number of pupils will be relatively low, making it difficult to have a wide curriculum. But there is no solution to this at this moment in time, except to say that by the end of the summer, we should have submitted a plan to Welsh Government, and we need a long term vision to endure that children have much wider provision than they have at the moment.

The Heads of the dual-stream schools know this, as we also lose children who have their primary education either fully or partly through the medium of Welsh, who lose out significantly in the secondary. We need them to have a clear language progression and if the progression was clearer, it is likely that this would lead to an increase in demand for Welsh primary education as parents could see a clear pattern until 18 years of age.

Marianne Evans: Can I come back on that question please. There are over 100 children now in the Secondary school in Llanidloes in the Welsh stream. We know there are some from Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd and we know a consultation has been completed on the admissions policy for 2022-2023, and I think it is going back to the admissions forum tomorrow, and we will then be able to see the results of the

consultation. I know there are a lot of discussions in Llanidloes with regards to these new proposals, and we will see what will come out. It is a different sort of catchment area to everywhere else.

Geraint Rees: It is complicated because of distances and population numbers. I know that we need a significant improvement to ensure that children have access to language fluency in the primary and secondary.

Because there is a significant investment being made in the primary in relation to Welsh language education, we just need to make sure that that is respected right up to sixth form.

We have discussed a model where secondary schools network together far more than they have done in the past so that there is far more choice in the Welsh language.

Staff: I was just wondering, if parents choose that English is their preferred stream for their children, during lockdown a lot of parents struggled and are going to be thinking twice. Where will be their feeder school from Trefeglwys?

Marianne Evans: Their local school would be Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon, and should they not choose the Welsh-medium provision then they would have the option of any other school in the catchment or outside the catchment. It would be Caersws, Llandinam, or the English stream at Llanidloes in the catchment.

Staff: But they wouldn't have transport provided?

Marianne Evans: Quite right, they wouldn't have it provided. Transport is provided to your closest or catchment school, so they would only have it provided to their closest provision.

Geraint Rees: It is interesting the dialogue around language and bilingualism, and the situation in Powys is quite different to much of Wales. We are trying to create a bespoke system, where the appreciation that everybody becomes bilingual through their education is important and it is challenging at the moment as there is a perception that education through the medium of Welsh is education for children who speak Welsh at home, which isn't the case. We need to keep working and supporting staff who may not feel comfortable working in Welsh, but with proper support and the opportunity for sabbaticals with support from the Welsh Government to produce bilingual children but also more bilingual adults too. There is a lot of talent that needs to be harnessed in the system that will help move Wales onto the next stage. We as a local authority will be looking to say that if a member of staff is looking to acquire those bilingual skills, we would be keen to work out what support is needed.

Marianne Evans: There is also an opportunity for young families to understand the benefits of bilingual education from a very early age, and the authority will be

launching a promotional campaign about Welsh-medium education and bilingualism. We would be happy to support Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon if the proposal goes ahead to provide the information to the families out there, and we hope that those in the local area will choose Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon and not choose it on the basis of it is an English or a Welsh-medium school, but because it is their local school and it is about naturalising and normalising the Welsh language and the choices that we have. The success that you have had in your Welsh-medium provision over the last few years really proves that there is a demand there for the provision, and if Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon can see this as your own unique journey in order to normalise Welsh-medium provision, then we are on to a winner here.

Staff: I am teaching children at present in the English stream. It is difficult for me to say, because I am slightly biased, but I love working and it has helped me develop my Welsh language. The opportunity to speak both languages is lovely and rare, in a school that is a dual-stream school. The children in my class at the moment, have the uncertainty of not knowing how long they are going to be together. It is more from the children's side, but this is an uncertainty to us knowing how long we are going to be all together?

Geraint Rees: The challenge for a local authority when a proposal comes forward is that initially the impact it has is destabilising, but the worst thing we can do is sit on a fence for 5 years unsure what to do. What we owe to you is that the officers bring forward a report as quickly as possible, tackle the issues that are raised like the one you asked and get to Cabinet for a decision. If they say walk away, so be it. If they say let's go ahead with it, again that needs to be enacted so it doesn't become a nobody knows for a long time. It is interesting the issue you raise with regards to the bilingual nature of the school and your ability to engage in both English and Welsh.

Staff: I can't engage in Welsh as much as I would like to, but I have had help from the lovely staff who have given me the opportunities to learn a little bit more. For the children in my class their Welsh has come along, usually they get the chance to mix and develop the skills. Whereas, if they were in an English stream school, they wouldn't have had the opportunity to practice their Welsh.

Geraint Rees: It does make it more challenging with the relatively small numbers you have at the moment in the English stream, because if you had 40 learners in the English stream and the decision was taken to move along the language continuum there would still be a sizeable group around for a long period of time for it to evolve. Because the numbers are small it is challenging for you as a teacher should that be destabilised as well, which is why I feel we owe it to everyone to consult openly, report accurately and expect the Cabinet to decide in a timely way. Thank you for raising those points.

Staff: Could I just say something else please, in my opinion a lot of the changes coming in now with the new Welsh curriculum, and as people move into the area, they will have the opportunity to see that Welsh isn't just in the classroom, but it is in

the corridor, a living language, and they will be able to melt and blend into the community and it is a positive change happening in Wales.

Geraint Rees: Yes, this has been happening in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Gwynedd, where if people move into the area where Welsh is the language, and the children go to their local school and become bilingual, wherever they may have come from, and whatever the language at home. What has happened in Powys is that it has been possible to move to an area where the Welsh is still vibrant, but you can have education in English, and therefore the children do not obtain full language skills. A lot of things need to be done to normalise Welsh-medium as Marianne said. However, it is a challenge, and it creates uncertainty and worry for people that don't have bilingual skills at the moment. However, as a County we are committed to support those who want to develop their Welsh language skills.

Staff: My question is, after lockdown and all the home learning it presented, that you have Welsh learners in homes where there are non-Welsh speaking parents. How sure will you be that if you do go forward with the transformation, that these families will want to stay in a Welsh stream school because it might have raised the question for some that some families will have decided at the end of foundation phase that it would be better for them to go into the English stream? My question is will you be looking at definite numbers to know how many children in the next stage of the foundation phase will be wanting to go into the Welsh stream, otherwise they will be falling out into other schools in the catchment area, when we know a school like Llanidloes have large class sizes already.

Geraint Rees: The issue around children from non-Welsh speaking homes continuing to make progress throughout lockdown became an issue right at the beginning of the pandemic situation and there has been a strong response from Welsh government, S4C and teachers to help those children who wouldn't otherwise hear Welsh. There is a growing feeling around Wales that the issue that was a huge concern at the beginning, may be far more temporary than people thought it would be because other questions are being asked about lost learning for GCSE and A level students, in whichever language, but most of the world have got lost learning and people can only pick up from where they left off. There isn't much evidence at the moment about drop-outs happening from Welsh-medium. There are cases and it is a challenge for the teachers and support staff to keep them going, but let's hope this doesn't become a routine part of life.

Lynette Lovell: I just wanted to say we have conducted a survey in Powys for the provision that has been given to children during the blended learning approach. For many parents, they are from English speaking homes, but the children receiving Welsh-medium education. However, we have been quality assuring some of the work and the Welsh-medium primary provision through this period has been excellent. I know parents have found the provision from Welsh-medium schools has really helped English speaking parents to enable their children keep their Welsh language skills.

Geraint Rees: We did a survey of parents in the new year and had 3,500 responses, mixed language, as we really needed to get a handle on where we were on this. The overwhelming response we had from parents was that their children had been well served by their teachers and schools during this period, and it seemed to replicate itself in Welsh, but we can't take our eye off the ball. Also, during lockdown there has been a remarkable growth in parents who have wished to develop their Welsh language skills. There seems to be a cultural shift which has happened, and thankfully S4C and the Welsh Government have responded positively to this, we just need those resources to keep coming.

Staff: I have noticed there is a chatter between the parents from those whose children are due to start with us in Reception this year. They are nervous because they were choosing Trefeglwys because of the safety net of the English stream should the Welsh stream not work out for them, I am nervous that we could lose those children all together if they do not feel their children will have that safety net. I don't know what the answer is, but I know they are anxious and a few of them are re-thinking their options.

Geraint Rees: What I would say is, Powys is one of the rare places where you have within the same school the option of an education which is bilingual or just in English, and the safety net hardly exists in other areas in Wales where you just have to make that one decision from the start for every child. It will be interesting to see how it plays out but we do need to be mindful of it. I would hope that as a body of staff, your commitment to seeing children become bilingual and what you put into that might just help carry them over that line.

Staff: Can I just come in on what is being said there. There are still a few children in the English stream class who have diverted out of the Welsh stream classes as they cannot keep up with it. I am wondering what the back-up plan for those children will be, as there could be many more and what will the provision be for those?

Geraint Rees: It will be pretty much the same as it is anywhere else in Wales or bilingual countries. You make your choice and if you don't want it then you make your other choice, but it will usually be in a different place. If the proposal were to go ahead, it strengthens the overall climate of the school and social use of Welsh becomes stronger and it will offer stronger bilingual skills for the children, but it would be a matter for the school as to how that plays out.

Emma Palmer: Could I ask what do you do now when that happens?

Staff: I am a teaching assistant within the English stream class, and I have only just started just before Christmas, so as far as I know those children have just been put into that class. Is that correct?

Staff: Yes, as it is at the moment, if a parent decides they want to transfer their child from Welsh medium provision into English provision, and they are within the local area they will go into the English medium stream. Will this still be offered to pupils from 2022?

Geraint Rees: How many children do you have in the English stream currently?

Staff: 15

Geraint Rees: How many of them moved over to English medium from the Welsh stream?

Staff: 4

Geraint Rees: In terms of numbers we are talking that it occasionally happens, but you also have some strong well regarded English-medium schools in the local area should someone really feel that they want to go into the English stream.

Staff: I know there is already a pupil which has left because of the consultation, and they are driving their child to the new school out of the catchment area which I think is really sad. They were afraid of the outcome, and they are now out of the village. I feel as a village it is going to split it. You have so many coming in by bus to the school and you will find the children being bussed out of the village as well.

Geraint Rees: I think that the challenge there is for the school to work with the local community to normalise bilingualism. Across the world 70% of children speak two languages by the end of primary school and the challenge is that we haven't lived with the normalisation of having bilingualism.

I was interested in the question around how many, because then if it is 4, it is not many. If you had say 3 children per year shifting over to the English stream, you would have 20 odd of them, but because it is a small number it is something we need to consider and respond to in the consultation report.

Marianne Evans: The opportunity is there in front of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon to really change the approach to how it sells and what it can offer in terms of bilingualism. We will be launching a Welsh promotion campaign which will be providing support and information for families. This is a real opportunity for Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon.

Geraint Rees: We are consulting in order to gather the views both positive and negative and report them to Cabinet so that Cabinet can make a decision.

Staff: I just wanted to say, in relation to children moving from the Welsh-medium to the English stream, if we were a Welsh-medium school where both languages were used, then we could encourage people to speak Welsh on the playground and in the corridors, and their Welsh language ability would be much better. At the moment,

being a dual-stream, it is difficult to encourage children to speak Welsh when they are playing with children who are non-Welsh speaking. If it was all in Welsh, they would be immersed in Welsh and would pick it up a lot easier.

Geraint Rees: Yes, that is fair enough, I agree, and we will make note of this.

Staff: If we were to change to a Welsh-medium school, staffing in a Welsh-medium school is difficult. Do Powys have a scheme where we can recruit Welsh speaking staff to come to the school? We find it difficult to find Welsh language staff as there are very few in the area, so what can the Council do in relation to this?

Geraint Rees: As part of our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan we need to report to Welsh Government our intentions regarding the recruitment and development of staff. We have found that there are a number of teachers who would like to teach through the medium of Welsh, but don't choose to come to Powys because the opportunity to teach in the Welsh language is restricted. We do need to address this problem.

Sarah Christoforou offered all staff the opportunity to speak with her or the HR business partners privately if they would like to do so and ask any queries which they may have with regards to staffing structures.

Geraint Rees brought the meeting to an end and thanked everyone very much for their thoughtfulness and comments. There was also a slide shown explaining that the Council will prepare a consultation document report outlining the feedback received, which Cabinet will later consider and agree how to proceed.

If Cabinet agree to proceed with the proposal, a statutory notice will be published with 28 days given to object. The council will then prepare an objection report, for Cabinet to further consider and make a final decision.

2. Consultation meeting with Governors of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon

23rd March 2021

Present

Governors:

Caroline Harries (Head)
Paul Cartwright
Susan Hill
Julia Toy
Sue Wilcox
Iwan Owen
Jordan Davies
Gerwyn Hughes
Cllr Phyl Davies

Officers:

Geraint Rees, Strategic Lead for Education
Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer
Emma Palmer, Head of Transformation and Communications
Marianne Evans, Service Manager Schools Transformation
Sarah Christoforou, HR Business Manager (Schools)
Mari Thomas, Transformation Finance Business Partner
Sarah Astley, Programme Manager, Transforming Education

Geraint Rees welcomed all to the consultation meeting and introduced the officers attending the meeting. The Staff of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon introduced themselves. It was explained that there would be a brief presentation with an opportunity for discussion, comments, and questions for the officers. Geraint explained that the meeting would be recorded, for minuting purposes but they will be deleted once completed.

Geraint Rees and Marianne Evans gave a short PowerPoint presentation to give an overview of the proposals and the consultation process. It was explained that the Council is consulting on the following proposals:

- To make a regulated alternation to the medium of instruction at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon, from dual-stream to Welsh-medium. This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception in September 2022.

Geraint Rees then allowed for the Governors to proceed with any questions or comments they had on the matter.

Governor: There is a question regarding the finance of the school going forward and also around the continuity of education and what the long-term plan is when children reach 11 in terms of the local provision.

Geraint Rees: Currently Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon is being funded as a dual-stream school which is essentially almost giving you the budget for two schools. One of the challenges with dual-streams is that in some schools the Welsh stream is small and expensive to maintain and in others the English stream is small and expensive to maintain.

Mari Thomas: The way the formula works at the moment is that there are shared costs across the school, for example headteacher, premises and administration costs, but otherwise the school is funded almost like two schools.

If the school becomes Welsh-medium, there would be no need for the extra funding for the English stream and that would be phased out.

Geraint Rees: A lot of local authorities have moved away from dual-stream schools because of the imbalance it causes and the costs are high. But that's not the rationale here; the difference in numbers between the two streams is quite marked and causes financial and educational challenges.

As to the second question asked regarding progression and secondary education, this proposal is a stand alone proposal not dependent on any secondary proposal, but we have to move to a point where learners who wish to study in Welsh have access to a broad curriculum in Welsh and other features to develop their bilingualism.

Governor: There is a fear for the school that if there is nowhere for the pupils to move on to when 11, the concern would then be that parents would vote with their feet, with the school diminishing in size and suffering as a consequence. People need to see a strategy in place.

Marianne Evans: Your secondary provision is the Welsh stream at Llanidloes High School and there are over 100 pupils in that stream. The school also has ambition to improve the provision.

We have also finished consulting on changing the language category of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, and are in the process of analysing consultation responses in relation to changing the language category of Bro Hyddgen from dual-stream to Welsh-medium.

Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon is a dual-stream school in a catchment where you are the only provider of Welsh-medium primary provision. Llanidloes High School doesn't have many Welsh language pupils feeding in, although an increasing number of Dafydd Llwyd pupils are choosing it for secondary provision.

There has also been a consultation for changes to the admissions process with proposals which might affect the feeder schools of Llanidloes High School which might also have an impact on things.

Governor: The provision in Machynlleth is too far, and I don't think parents will choose to send their children there.

Governor: What are the numbers required to make the English stream viable?

Geraint Rees: It's not just a matter of the cost of educating a child. It's a matter of what kind of curriculum can be provided and what the social experience of the child would be. For example, there is one child in year two who wants an education in English, and it's not a matter of cost, but how do you make sure that child has a rounded social experience.

Because Powys has historically built its educational provision around dual-stream schools, there is not at the moment Welsh-medium secondary provision in Powys. This is out of synch with what is happening elsewhere in Wales and beyond in terms of how you ensure multilingualism and access to a full curriculum.

You couldn't reasonably expect to sustain a primary school in Wales over a long period of time, with less than 25 pupils in its classes.

There are so few children in the foundation phase at Dyffryn Trannon at the moment, it raises questions as to its stability, however much money is thrown at it.

Governor: My concern is that I like the concept of a dual-stream school, although I appreciate that there are challenges because the numbers never add up and they will never add up.

It strikes me that this is the beginning of the end for the dual-stream schools concept if this proposal goes forward. Are you saying that dual-stream schools have no future full stop?

Geraint Rees: Not necessarily. There may be corners of Powys where they may be the only reasonable provision going forward. In other parts of Powys, for example Dyffryn Trannon where there are English-medium schools not far away, this might be so. Because of the nature of dual-stream, one of the key things that hasn't happened is normalising the question of education in the minority language. In other parts of Wales, people move in from Somalia or Latvia or Birmingham and they assume that if the education is in Welsh it guarantees bilingualism and that's it.

Because the dual-stream option exists a choice has to be made and in a situation where you are with an enormous disparity in numbers you have to go over all kinds of hurdles to make sure nobody is disadvantaged. Nobody has any ambitions but for Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon to be a vibrant school which serves its community. It will be interesting to see if this proposal goes through, will families who move to the surrounding area say that's the village school and my children will be bilingual when they leave that school. That's the normalisation which we probably haven't achieved so far, but other areas of Wales have.

Governor: There is a more transient nature to population these days, and Trefglwys village is growing, and it is possible that the outlook of some parents will be short term. They might see themselves moving elsewhere in a few years and therefore Welsh language provision might not be attractive to them. I am therefore

concerned that we will see many parents sending their children out of Trefeglwys to their nearest English-medium school.

Marianne Evans: I see this as an opportunity for Dyffryn Trannon to provide a unique provision for the local area. We need to educate young families about the advantages of bilingualism. People don't understand what Welsh-medium education is and what it can offer. If the proposal goes ahead, then the school could support young families and tell them what the advantages of Welsh-medium education are.

Governor: What language category will YDT be if the proposal goes forward under the proposed Welsh Government new language categories?

Geraint Rees: There has been a consultation regarding changing the definitions of school language categories. It will take some time for any new categories to be agreed, and a number of issues have been raised during the consultation. In terms of categorising this proposal, then it would take this to whatever the furthest point is in terms of all learners being entitled to bilingualism, but I don't know how they are going to define this at the moment.

Governor: What are the numbers in Caersws and Llandinam?

Geraint Rees: A phrase that has been used earlier on is "if Dyffryn Trannon goes under". What we're planning here is that Dyffryn Trannon becomes a permanent part of the Powys school estate. There's no notion of Dyffryn Trannon "going under".

Governor: The concern is unless the secondary option is strong, the concern is that the school would not necessarily go under, but that could weaken the school from the point of view of parents.

Geraint Rees: That risk has to be tackled by ensuring that when pupils go on to secondary provision that the secondary provision enables pupils to carry on with their bilingualism. Our engagement last year manifested frustration that whilst the primary school did a great job, in the secondary, Welsh language provision was unreliable and patchy. We have to tackle the secondary provision or our solution will only be partial.

By the end of this summer we should have a new Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, (WESP), in place, which will show where we will be by 2032, and that will go some way to ensure better continuation between primary and secondary.

Governor: If the Welsh-medium provision increases in Llanidloes and the children who travel in by bus from Llanidloes end up going to Llanidloes instead, what effect will that have on the school.

Also, I think the school has a unique selling point in being dual-stream, it just needs to be promoted better. Many people don't understand what dual-stream means.

Marianne Evans: There is no Welsh-medium provision in the primary at Llanidloes. The secondary school is dual-stream.

Governor: I'm talking about the future. A Welsh stream might be introduced at Llanidloes in the future.

Marianne Evans: We have no plans to introduce any Welsh-medium at Llanidloes primary, but I appreciate that things can change.

Geraint Rees: Did you mean promoting the English stream at Dyffryn Trannon, in order to increase the numbers?

Governor: Yes. I think we could expand the promotion of the English stream, and COVID hasn't helped. Maybe we could pause the consultation process for the promotion to have time to work.

Geraint Rees: Is it some 15 pupils that you have across the 2 key stages in the English stream? The numbers are significantly higher in the Welsh stream. That imbalance of numbers is a problem. The question of how the budget is deployed is hugely challenging. There are only 90 learners between the two schools in Caersws and Llandinam. Therefore, there isn't a large population in the area to be able to attract to the English stream at Dyffryn Trannon. If we're wrong say it, but it doesn't look like it at the moment.

Governor: I just think it needs time for the promotion of the English stream to work. The past 12 months have made it difficult.

Geraint Rees: Did the school evolve to be a dual-stream, or was there a conscious policy to start it?

Governor: Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon was Ysgol Gynradd Trefeglwys, but it's historically dual-stream.

Geraint Rees: Dual-stream has been there as an option for a long period of time, but the take up of the Welsh stream is such that it is greater. The majority of learners in the Welsh stream are not from Welsh speaking families, so you have managed to reach families who have moved in and those who have lived in the area both of which have lost their Welsh. The challenge is to normalise the use of Welsh, so that moving to the area and having Welsh-medium education is not a problem.

Governor: Both my daughters attend the English stream and both can speak Welsh. I don't see the system broken, it just needs enhancing. Geraint has said that this proposal is not about saving money, but I think it is because you're funding two schools and can see a way to save money because of the decline of the English. We need to keep what we've got and just do it better.

Geraint Rees: As far as the authority is concerned, if change happens, it's not a saving to Powys but it's actually a commitment to education and to improve equality across the board wherever people are in Powys. It is a time of investment not a time of saving.

Marianne Evans: It might look as if this has come out of the blue. However, we have had conversations over many years with Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon about the sustainability of the English stream. We have 12 pupils in the English stream and this will go down to 8 in September. This is not educationally or financially sustainable.

Governor: I feel that the decline of the promotion of the dual-stream has happened over a number of years. Had the dual-stream been actively promoted we wouldn't be having this conversation now. Let's maintain what we have, which is unique to any other school in the area.

Cllr Phyl Davies: Valid points have been made, especially regarding the secondary provision going forward. However, when I was in YDT the language was 50/50 split, and Dyffryn Trannon has seen a sustained level of uptake in the Welsh language, despite the fact that we don't have the secondary provision we should have.

Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon needs to be a future part of the estate in Powys and we are not looking at a stream in Llanidloes which could take half of the pupils we have in Trefeglwys.

Emma Palmer: I just wanted to give a commitment from the transformation perspective that we are looking to strengthen the secondary provision across the County. We have had discussions with Welsh Government about securing funding for Welsh-medium provision. There is also the Estyn recommendation to strengthen Welsh language provision across all ages across the county.

This is about a commitment from the local authority that we absolutely want to strengthen the Welsh-medium provision across Powys, and in terms of Welsh-medium here, this gives you a sustainable future here.

Governor: There is a comment in the chat from Iwan and a few other comments which need to be noted.

Governor: I was pleased and relieved to see the commitment from Powys that all current English stream pupils will continue to be able to be taught in the English stream.

What level of assurance can Powys can give about the continuity of English provision should the proposal be implemented, as the numbers may taper off in the English stream.

Geraint Rees: How do you balance the commitment made by the local authority and the well-being of a child? The authority can make a commitment, but the well-being of the child has to be central.

It would be interesting to know if this goes ahead, how many parents would be interested for their children to have an immersion experience for some 11 or 12 weeks, and transfer from the English stream to the Welsh stream, but the well-being of pupils is key to this.

Governor: What were the drivers for Dyffryn Trannon being selected for this process at this time, when there are other dual-stream schools or small schools? Also, what consideration was given for the consultation to be undertaken on a cluster basis so that we could see better how the pieces of the jigsaw for the cluster fitted together because many of the queries we have had tonight relate to unknown quantities because the picture for the cluster as a whole was unclear.

Geraint Rees: So where else in this cluster is there Welsh-medium provision which we could be looking at as part of this equation?

Governor: My query relates specifically to the two small schools in the cluster, in Llandinam and Caersws, and in the strategy both dual-stream and small schools were not favoured, and I want to understand why Dyffryn Trannon, and why not other schools in the cluster at this time?

Geraint Rees: Dyffryn Trannon is the only school with Welsh provision in the primary and it is very successful. I don't know if the suggestion is that we should have gone to Caersws to tell them to switch to Welsh so that Dyffryn Trannon could then become single stream English or what. You're successful with your Welsh stream and it seems sensible to build on that.

Governor: Apologies if I'm not explaining myself very well. What I want to understand is why is Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon being consulted for change when Transforming Education talked about the future of small schools as well as dual-stream schools. Why are we not looking at other schools in the cluster? All the other schools in the cluster are small schools which would potentially realise similar if not greater financial savings than Dyffryn Trannon, then why are you not moving those schools along the language continuum, as all the other schools in the cluster are English-medium.

Marianne Evans: There are a number of different strands to the strategy and a number of different waves. We have taken a cluster approach in a number of areas in the county, but we have also taken the approach of looking at the data in individual small schools across the County. There is also a strategic aim of moving schools along the language continuum. When we were invited to your governors' meeting in November last year, and saw the numbers in the English stream were so low, it made sense to move Dyffryn Trannon along the language continuum. So there's different approaches across the whole County. We will be looking at every catchment as we go forward, so there will be opportunities to look at the catchment to be included in the next wave of activity.

Governor: You say that you were invited to the governing body in November. By whom?

Marianne Evans: By the governors, if my recollection is correct.

Governor: It's news to me that you were invited by the governors to the meeting, but we can pick that up another time.

What method is the local authority using for those with low or no literacy ability to ensure that they are able to contribute to the consultation?

Geraint Rees: We are consulting in accordance with Welsh Government guidelines, including guidelines recently issued regarding consulting during the pandemic. Powys. We've also discussed whether or not we should do this at all during the pandemic. However, Powys needs to move on to improve its education provision

However, what we have found during this Covid period, is that the number of responses we have for consultations is better than what they have been in the past. For example, there were some 3,500 responses to a survey regarding blended learning. Therefore, the response seems to be higher than what we have had in the past. However, we will be evaluating this in order to be sure that we are engaging properly. If you are aware of any individuals with protected characteristics who you feel are excluded who otherwise would have taken part, let us know and we will act on it.

Governor: The Integrated Impact Assessment refers to activities should the school move along the language continuum, such as enhanced Urdd participation and Menter Maldwyn, all of which are already in place. I just wonder if the Integrated Impact Assessment will be revised further in the process, to reflect the reality of the situation as I don't feel it currently reflects the extent of the extra-curricular and Welsh cultural language activities taking place at the school.

Marianne Evans: Absolutely, it is a draft at the moment and it will be updated and revised to include anything that comes through during the consultation.

Geraint Rees: Things like the Impact Assessment are put forward before the consultation and will be changed following comments received during the consultation process.

Governor: I completely appreciate that the Impact Assessment was draft

Marianne Evans: The information about the Welsh language activities were provided by the school itself. If there is additional information we can then add that to the final Impact Assessment.

Governor: Will it be possible for Welsh stream pupils to transfer to the English stream after September 2022 should they wish to do so?

Geraint Rees: The local authority is sustaining the two streams to see them through, and there is an expectation that we have to work through that with people. However, the traffic might be the other way with people asking for immersion experience to transfer from English to Welsh.

Governor: I've spoken to some parents, and a number have voiced concern that removing the dual-stream will discourage some from choosing the Welsh stream. Many parents who have children in the Welsh stream now have said that one attraction to that was the safety net of the English stream, so that they could move from the Welsh stream to English if the Welsh did not work out. In the last couple of years there have been at least 4 children who have transferred from the Welsh to the English stream.

What consideration has Powys given to the potential detrimental impact on recruiting pupils to the Welsh stream by not having a dual-stream site which gives parents the flexibility of moving to the English stream if things don't work out?

Geraint Rees: The record across Wales is that it doesn't make the difference that people believe that it will. It's an insurance policy that is not often cashed in. I

understand that 4 have made the switch from Welsh-medium to English, so it doesn't happen often. The bottom line is when we are actively promoting the school to provide for every learner to be bilingual, very rarely do people want to move.

Maintaining dual-stream as an insurance policy is a very expensive plan. Whether the provision is English-medium or bilingual we need to support what the schools aim to do and support the schools in doing that.

Governor: I was not suggesting that we should retain the dual-stream as an insurance policy, but some parents may view it in this way.

My next point is that the School Organisation Code on page 9 stipulates that projected transport costs needs to be included and I'm interested in CO2 emissions. None has been included in the Integrated Impact Assessment. Will it be included?

Marianne Evans: In the Impact Assessments we have mentioned that there are no transport costs linked to this proposal and therefore no CO2 considerations.

Governor: That is incorrect as there are some pupils in this village which if the proposal goes ahead will need to be bused to alternative provision. There will be data available to make a reasonable assumption as to projected transport costs to make the Impact Assessment a more balanced document.

Marianne Evans: We will respond.

Governor: Can I invite any governors who have not had the opportunity to ask questions to do so? I was not aware that the meeting was scheduled to end at 19:30

Governor: This is disappointing. If I had known of the fixed timescale I would have asked some questions in beforehand.

Emma Palmer: The calendar invite has the meeting noted as one and a half hours, but sorry about that.

Governor: I think we need to embrace this as a positive going forward. The parents have chosen to send their pupils to the Welsh stream. It's a very difficult and delicate situation but that's my opinion.

Governor: We're still looking at a skeleton plan. We need more detail to make an informed decision. I have numerous concerns, for example if Newtown have a full Welsh-medium secondary we could be in trouble, particularly if Welsh-medium secondary was pushed out of Llanidloes. I'm struggling to come to a decision without knowing the wider implications.

In terms of ideology of what we're trying to do, we moved to Trefeglwys and placed our children in the Welsh-stream, but talking about the children's experience I have no doubt that a dual-stream is very beneficial to the pupils' experience. I also have long term concerns that the numbers of pupils coming to Welsh-medium would plummet.

Governor: I'm all for changing the language category, because the school has shown that's what it's good at. For myself, I was taught in Glantwymyn and Bro

Ddyfi, and when I moved to the Llanidloes area, people were saying that I spoke Welsh fluently, and mentioned their disappointment that they were not fluent in Welsh. My answer was that I can do that because I was taught through the medium of Welsh from start to finish. You naturally pick up English. If it's a bilingual school the Welsh language will suffer.

Headteacher: I have my own personal views but I wouldn't want to share those personal views in the forum. I was appointed as Headteacher of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon when it was a dual-stream school and so long as it is dual-stream I will do the best for all pupils in the school. If the language category changes then I will do the best for those pupils as well.

Geraint thanked everybody for attending the meeting.

Comments made in the meeting Chat

Part A - no evidence of any proactive justification for YDT's proposed change of status - no strategic context ie the case made for change appears to be YDT in isolation with no real strategy evident

Part B - all the reasons cited in support of the proposal could be questioned - the disadvantages listed are fewer in number but potentially have a bigger impact - the risks are understated

Part C - reference is made to impact on other schools but what about the impact on YDT of decisions taken by other schools? - evidence of current / future need or demand appears to ignore the current building work going on and expansion of the village - it is claimed that the impact of the proposal on the community would be minimal but it could well be extremely divisive if we see the children from the village being transported to Llanidloes for their education

Approx 2005, the language balance was almost a mirror image of where we have been in the last 5 years or so - admittedly not quite as extreme as the current position but indicative, nevertheless, of an often highly unpredictable issue

What is the PCC methodology for reviewing and presenting responses to cabinet?

What lessons learned have been considered from elsewhere in Powys or further afield on ALN impact, what is the evidence base to show outcomes ALN pupils taught through a language that may not be spoken at home are comparable to the outcomes of pupils taught in their first language?

3. Consultation meeting with the School Council of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon

24th March 2021 – Held virtually on Microsoft Teams

Present: Marianne Evans, Sarah Astley, Huw Rowlands – Powys County Council
Caroline Harries – Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon

Officers from Powys County Council met virtually via Microsoft Teams with representatives from the School Council of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon to discuss the consultation to change the language category of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon from dual-stream to Welsh-medium.

The session was held with two different groups of pupils from the school council, one group representing the English stream and the other representing the Welsh stream.

Pupils were reminded that if they or their friends thought of any further questions or comments following the meeting, they were welcome to ask for their teachers' assistance to send those to Powys County Council by the 15th of April the date the consultation ends.

It was explained that after the 15th of April all comments received would be considered and then a report made summarising comments received during the consultation. Powys councillors would then consider the report before deciding what to do.

English stream group

The group consisted of one pupil in year 6 and one in pupil in year 4.

Officers explained the proposals for changing the language category of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon, and that they would like to have the views of the pupils on the proposal. The pupils understood that if the change was implemented, it would mean that there would be no English stream in Dyffryn Trannon, and all classes would be taught through the medium of Welsh. This would be phased over time and the proposal would therefore have no effect on existing pupils.

The pupils were asked several questions and their responses are summarised below:

What do you like about the two streams in Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon?

- Having two streams is very unique as there are not many bilingual schools
- I like being in a school with Welsh-medium pupils. I like things how they are.

What do you not like about the two streams in Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon?

- Not really. I like things as they are.

If things were to change, and the English medium provision was phased out of the school, what do you think about that? Do you have any concerns or questions about that?

- Over the last couple of years, numbers in the English stream have increased, as we have gained five pupils from the Welsh stream, and one from another school in Powys. There are now fifteen pupils in my class, but in September, when pupils go to high school, there will only be ten.

How many years do you have in your class and do you think that works well?

- Year 6, 5, 4, 3 and year 2. It can be a bit of a struggle, but it's working really well as we're all great friends and we're independent as well.

Do you mix with children of the Welsh stream, for example at playtime?

- Because of the pandemic, we now have our own bubbles. But before, we had lots of friends in the Welsh stream, even though they were in different classes.

If the proposal goes ahead, what do you think the effect of any change would be?

- I think that we have the best of both worlds at the moment, as we can speak English but also learn Welsh as well. I think we've got the best of both at the moment.

Any other comments?

- I don't think that enough people know of the English stream at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon. We are going to make posters and leaflets to let people know about the English stream at Dyffryn Trannon. I would like more children in my class.

Welsh stream pupils

The group consisted of six pupils, years 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

Officers explained the proposals for changing the language category of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon, and that they would like to have the views of the pupils on the proposal. The pupils understood that if the change was implemented, it would mean that there would be no English stream in Dyffryn Trannon, and all classes would be taught through the medium of Welsh. This would be phased over time and the proposal would therefore have no effect on existing pupils.

The pupils were asked several questions and their responses are summarised below:

Questions asked to pupils

What do you think of the dual-stream system? Is it good or bad?

- There are not many pupils in the English stream – there are far more in the Welsh stream. Children in the Welsh stream can speak both languages

Before you had to form bubbles, were the children of the Welsh and English stream mixing?

- Not really, no, only a little. Welsh stream pupils tend to play with Welsh stream pupils and English stream pupils tend to play with English stream pupils

Do you think that it would be better if Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon only had a Welsh stream?

- I'm not sure. There are not many pupils in the English stream, but they might go to other schools where they are only taught in English
- It would be good just to have one stream, as then everybody would be able to speak Welsh, and more Welsh would be spoken at home

Do you think that there will be a problem if a new family which doesn't speak Welsh moves to the area, and Welsh is the only language of the school?

- Yes, it could be a problem, maybe children would go to other schools, further away than where they live.

Questions pupils asked

I would like to know if children will have to speak Welsh all the time if the school's language category was changed.

- If the school's language category was changed, Welsh will be the school's language and you would speak Welsh as you do now.

Why are you considering this change?

- Because Powys County Council are concerned that there aren't enough children in the English stream at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon, and no children whatsoever in the lower classes of the school, and the Council thinks that the school could be run better with only one language.

Will the English stream teacher have the opportunity to learn Welsh?

- Yes, every opportunity and support will be given for the English stream teacher to learn Welsh, if she so wishes

What will happen to the English stream teacher?

- She will stay, because the English stream will still be here for some years, and she will have the opportunity to learn Welsh.

But when the English stream has ended, will she still have a job?

- That is something which will have to be considered at a later time, if this proposal goes forward.

Why do pupils not go to schools in England if they want to be taught in English?

- In Wales, there are two languages, Welsh and English, and both are the official languages of Wales. There are English schools in the area, such as in Caersws, Llandinam and Llanidloes primary. Dyffryn Trannon is the only school in the area which teaches in Welsh.

Why can't the children themselves choose whether they want to attend the English stream or the Welsh stream?

- It was explained that Powys County Council were worried that pupil numbers in the English stream were very small, and because most pupils were in the Welsh stream, it might be better for the school to be just a Welsh-medium school, as the school could be better run with only one language. However, we are here to listen to what everyone has to say, as we haven't yet made a final decision.

Pupils and the school were thanked for their time in attending the meeting and providing their views.