

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

Contents

1. Consultation meeting with Staff of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School	2
2. Consultation meeting with Governors of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School....	5
3. Consultation meeting with the School Council of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.....	13

1. Consultation meeting with Staff of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School

27th April 2021

Present

Staff:

Sarah Brian, Headteacher
Molly Evans, Teacher
Olga Pugh, School Administrator
Julie Taylor, Cleaner
Eirlys Jones, Breakfast Club and Midday Supervisor
Christine Williams, Breakfast Club Supervisor
Helen Elaine Savage, Teaching Assistant

Officers:

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

Others:

Sheridan Goodey, Schools Business Support Officer, St Asaph Diocese

Emma Palmer welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Powys County Council officers attending the meeting. The Staff of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School were also in the meeting, and Headteacher Sarah Brian introduced them.

It was explained that there would be a brief presentation with an opportunity for discussion, comments, and questions to the officers afterwards. Emma Palmer explained that the meeting would be recorded, for minuting purposes but the recording would be deleted once the minutes had been completed.

Marianne Evans gave a Powerpoint presentation and explained that in February 2021, Powys Cabinet gave approval to proceed with a proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. The consultation commenced on 14th April 2021 and will finish on 2 June 2021.

The importance of the consultation process as a way for people to make their views known was emphasised.

The specific proposal is:

- To close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School from 31st August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools.

Emma Palmer explained that responses received during the consultation period would be summarised and a response given to them, and they would form the substance of a report to Cabinet who would consider the responses before making a decision whether to proceed with the proposal or not. Staff were then given the opportunity to ask any questions or to make any comments in relation to the matter.

Staff: In terms of the timings, obviously we have up until the 2nd of June to respond to the consultation, and then are we right in thinking there is a 28-day period for it to be discussed in Cabinet, does that take us to the 8th of July?

Marianne Evans: The consultation period will finish on the 2nd of June, then we start analysing the responses and creating the consultation report, and then the intention is that a report goes back to cabinet in July. Cabinet at that point have a choice, to proceed with the proposal or decide not to proceed with the proposal. If they decide to proceed, we will publish a statutory notice for 28 days and during that time people can write to us with their objections. At the end of that, those objections are analysed and put into a report which goes back to Cabinet again for the final decision, and even at that stage Cabinet can decide either way.

Staff: If they decide initially to proceed, and there are no objections, when can we expect to have a decision? There is anxiety from staff with regards to different time scales, and when exactly they will know.

Marianne Evans: Without checking, I think it will be late autumn term. It all depends on the level of responses as they will dictate which Cabinet meeting we can get to. For example, a consultation we carried out recently gave us 500 responses, which took a lot of time to analyse. If there are less responses, it takes less time, and we could get to an earlier Cabinet.

Staff: With it being fluid around the dates, it is difficult then to advise parents as some parents are thinking that if the school is going to close, they might move their children earlier.

Emma Palmer: It is certainly challenging, and I think the main thing from our point is that we follow the correct process, and that we take the time that is needed to consider the consultation responses fully. We give an indicative date when we plan this programme out, but we cannot just cement those timelines as we want to do things right and give that time. I do appreciate those challenges that this then presents.

Staff: If we cannot make parents aware until the end of the year, does that then affect the actual closing date if we were to close? Is it 12 months from the notice?

Marianne Evans: There is no change to the closing date, it would still be September 2022.

Emma Palmer then gave Sheridan Goodey from the Diocese of St Asaph, the chance to share any information regarding the process as the Council have been working alongside with her.

Sheridan Goodey: Just to reiterate, I have been working with the school with regards to responding to the consultation to try and help and support as much as possible. We have been working together to understand the process, and how it can be run as smoothly as possible and to ensure that we minimise as much stress as possible. Inevitably, this is going to be very stressful either way and I think we have acknowledged that this needs to be handled carefully.

Emma Palmer: Thank you Sheridan. It is certainly never an easy time, and it is a difficult period. Certainly, with a Code that we must follow, it feels very elongated, but we must give everyone the opportunity.

Sarah Christoforou: Even though the timeline is very long, if staff have questions they want to raise in the meantime, please ask, it does not mean you are accepting a decision either way. Please contact me yourselves or through the Headteacher if you do have any questions that come up in that time. I do not want you to sit and worry about that until a final decision has been made.

Emma Palmer: I think sometimes we attend meetings, and after you wish you had asked XYZ. The door is open for questions and the support arrangements are there, so thank you for reiterating that.

Lynette Lovell: I would just like to reiterate everything everybody has been saying there. We do appreciate how difficult situations are, and the situation we are in and the year we have had. We want to reassure you that well-being and working together is at the four fronts of everything we do and working through this process, recognising the stress it can cause but working through it together. We are here to work with you, and work through this in the right way going forward.

Emma Palmer: Thank you very much Lynette, absolutely.

There were no further questions and Emma Palmer brought the meeting to an end and thanked everyone very much for their thoughtfulness and comments and reminded staff once again to respond to the consultation documents, and how to do so.

2. Consultation meeting with Governors of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School

27th April 2021

Present

Governors:

Sian Owen (Chair)
Sue Oke
Cllr David Jones
C Jones
D Roberts
Gareth Davies
H Savage
L Mason

Officers:

Emma Palmer, Head of Transformation & Communications
Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer
Marianne Evans, Service Manager for Schools Transformation
Eurig Towns, Service Manager for School Improvement
Mari Thomas, Interim Schools Finance Manager
Sarah Christoforou, HR Business Manager (Schools)
Sarah Astley, Strategic Programme Manager, Transforming Education

Others:

Sheridan Goodey, Business Support Officer, St Asaph Diocese
Cllr Phyl Davies (observing)

Emma Palmer welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Powys County Council officers attending the meeting. The Governors of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School present in the meeting introduced themselves. It was explained that there would be a brief presentation with an opportunity for discussion, comments, and questions for the officers. Emma Palmer explained that there had been a meeting with staff earlier in the afternoon, that this meeting would be recorded for minuting purposes, but the recording will be deleted once minutes were completed.

Marianne Evans gave a Powerpoint presentation and explained that in February 2021, Powys Cabinet gave approval to proceed with a proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. The consultation commenced on 14th April 2021 and will finish on 2 June 2021.

The importance of the consultation process as a way for people to make their views known was emphasised.

The specific proposal is:

- To close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School from 31st August 2022, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools.

Emma Palmer then gave governors the opportunity to ask any questions or to make any comments in relation to the matter.

Governor: I was under the impression that because Castle Caereinion is a church school, that the final decision would not necessarily rest with the Powys Cabinet, but with Welsh Government?

Sheridan Goodey: No, it would only go to Welsh Government if it reaches that stage. Generally, it will follow the same process as for any other school. As Marianne gave you the timeline there, that is exactly what would happen, it would only go to Welsh Government in specific circumstances beyond that.

Governor: What are the circumstances in which the decision would get taken out of Powys' hands?

Sheridan Goodey: That is at another later stage. Normally it would just follow the same process.

Governor: Can you not give us the details of that procedure now then please?

Marianne Evans: There is an opportunity for the Governing Body and the Diocese to refer the final decision to the Welsh Government, and that is an option that church schools have right at the end of the process. If that happens, the Governing Body must state why they think the proposal is wrong, and Welsh Government will consider that. That process would then be in the hands of the Welsh Government.

Emma Palmer: Does that answer your question?

Governor: Well, under pressure yes from Marianne, but I didn't get an honest answer from Sheridan I felt, sorry about that.

Sheridan: My apologies, I didn't want to misquote, so I was going onto the Code to try and find you the specifics. In the cases where it does go to Welsh Government, it must be where there is a very very specific reason for objection at that point, that hasn't already been covered as part of the process. It is not something that would happen automatically, is what I was trying to say.

Governor: Is there a reason why this was just dropped on us only yesterday, and we haven't under the circumstances had a lot of time to prepare?

Headteacher: Just to clarify, the invites to join online came out yesterday, but we were notified of the meeting beforehand.

Governor: We have spotted errors in the consultation report, is that still then a fair consultation and would it still go forward?

Marianne Evans: Any issues raised, including if there are errors, can be put forward as consultation responses, and we can respond to them in the consultation report.

Emma Palmer: As Marianne has said, you don't have to wait until the end of the consultation period, you can raise things throughout the consultation period via email, or you can respond in writing. The team will start to work through the responses, as the authority has a duty to respond in relation to every contribution that is made under the consultation. That response is in the form of a formal consultation report, as Marianne set out. The formal report goes to Cabinet, before they make their decision on whether to proceed with the process and moving to a statutory notice period. It is important for you to know that the consultation report is published and is therefore available in the public domain.

Governor: In your initial comments, you spoke about the nearest suitable school. The nearest council-maintained school is in Berriew, but this is in a different catchment area to Castle Caereinion school. Will the fact that it is in a different catchment, affect its suitability as a receiving school?

Marianne Evans: What we have to do is to look at the whole area, and because Castle Caereinion is a Church in Wales School, the code requires us to ensure there are available Church in Wales places for those parents who wish a Church education for their child. Within the area, 4 miles away, Welshpool C. in W. School have surplus places, therefore if parents wanted Church education, they would be able to go there. In terms of the catchment, should there not be a school in Castle Caereinion, the admissions team would have to redefine the catchment areas for the remaining schools. This would then mean it is quite likely that if children went to Berriew, Berriew being in the Welshpool catchment, it would affect the transport as transport is available to your follow-on secondary school from the Primary School that you go to. There might be a time for a while when transportation would be slightly challenging for some parents because some pupils might have been refused transport to Welshpool High School, but parents could appeal as well if refused transport.

Governor: I have a difficulty here because traditionally the children from Castle Caereinion School went to Llanfair High School, but of late there has been a quite a move going to Welshpool High School. What will happen with that, will children still

be able to go to Welshpool High School, and will they still get free home to school transport to Welshpool?

Marianne Evans: They get free school transport to their closest or catchment school, so in terms of Secondary provision, if they have free transport to Welshpool that would continue.

Governor: So they would get free transport to Berriew school, presuming that Castle Caereinion closed, and from Berriew they would get free school transport to Welshpool School, even though they still live in Castle Caereinion?

Marianne Evans: Yes, according to the new admission policy that will come through next year, they would get transport to the secondary school for that catchment.

Governor: Have you looked at the area that children come from to Castle school?

Marianne Evans: Yes, we have looked at where all the children currently live, and we know which school is their closest school.

Governor: Yes, how many schools do we have the opportunity to go to?

Marianne Evans: There is a significant number of schools within a 10-mile radius of Castle Caereinion, so should the parents choose any one of those schools and there is a place in that school, then they will get a place. In terms of the transport policy, it is free transport to your closest or catchment school.

Governor: And they will be guaranteed free transport to those schools?

Marianne Evans: Yes, to the closest or catchment school you will have free transport, if they are eligible for that transport.

Governor: Will they still be able to go to Llanfair High School like the normal catchment they have now?

Marianne Evans: We would have to redefine the catchments as I said earlier, so if there wasn't a school in Castle we would be looking at the catchment areas for the remaining schools.

Governor: You are talking about the transport, is there going to be a big additional cost to the education department to transport these children to other schools rather than Castle?

Marianne Evans: Yes, the costs have been calculated and are in the consultation document. The estimated transport costs are around £32,300.

Emma Palmer: Just to confirm that as we move forward with the transformation programme, the transport policy will continually be reviewed. We reviewed it last year and there were a few decisions made by the Cabinet, and we have said it will continue to be reviewed, which we will do.

Governor: Just going back to the numbers and transport, are there going to be enough places in our nearest school if there are lots of schools facing closure?

Marianne Evans: Currently, we are only looking at Castle Caereinion in this catchment area. We know that there are enough places within other schools in this area for the pupils of this school.

Governor: Are you splitting the school up at all? For example, if the nearest school only has 21 places, how are we going to then fit in?

Marianne Evans: We know that the majority of pupils are closest to Berriew, and there are also some pupils that are closer to other schools. At this point in time, we expect there will be enough spaces Berriew for those closer to Berriew should they want to go there.

Governor: Yes, but what about those pupils that don't want to go to Berriew, are there places for everybody anywhere else? Have people been asked where they would like to go?

Marianne Evans: Nobody has been asked where they want to go yet, as we have to go through this process first before any decisions are made, but there are sufficient places in all of the other schools that would be closest.

Governor: And if not, transport would be provided to the alternative school of their choice?

Marianne Evans: Yes, if there is no room in their nearest alternative school then we will provide transport to the next nearest school. All schools have places in them.

Governor: They do not at the moment.

Marianne Evans: According to our data, there are enough places, but we will respond to that once we get to the consultation report.

Governor: Have you done a survey to find the numbers available across the schools for children? Meifod, Guilsfield and Llanfair primary?

Marianne Evans: Information on the number of places available in schools is on page 23 of the consultation document, and it is based on our PLASC 2020 data. We haven't had 2021 data yet, but we will be updating that as we take the process forward.

Governor: It was always the policy, that look at schools on a catchment basis, you look at all the primary schools within a given catchment. Why did the policy change to a policy of opportunism, or cherry picking, as now, as obviously there was a change. When did that come in and why?

Emma Palmer: I do not think it is a policy change, it is a change of approach. In terms of the transformation programme in the County when we look at things, we split it into 13 localities, and there won't be a locality untouched when we move through the transformation programme. What we found, is when you work on purely a catchment area basis, sometimes it can take a significant number of years before you see the change. With the requirements that we have in place to meet the recommendations that were set out by Estyn, we do not have the opportunity of several years before we see change, we needed to look at the strategy and what we are trying to achieve as a result of that. We have got change happening in several different places in the County, and the priorities are not the same for every area.

In the mid part of the County for instance, one school we had to prioritise is around condition, which is a different requirement compared to yourselves as such. We are fully aware of the infrastructure that we have in place across the county, and that it is not sustainable as it stands. We also have requirements of delivering the new curriculum and the ability to meet those requirements swiftly. Having done the extensive engagement we did, not last year, the year before because we have had the period of Covid, there was extensive engagement undertaken with a range of stakeholders and we took on board those comments when we pulled together the strategy approved by Cabinet last April. We then set out our intentions to meet the requirements of things raised during the engagements. It was therefore never a policy decision to do a catchment area, it was an approach. In some areas you have to look at a whole catchment or you won't be able to unlock the change. You have to do some things in a certain order to unlock the change elsewhere. It's very complex across the County.

Governor: There is now a presumption that the very last thing you do with a rural school, is to close it. Can you tell us the options that you have considered in Castle Caereinion, which is a rural school, and why you have decided that the only option is to close it?

Marianne Evans: There are several options in the consultation document that we looked at, which included federation, mergers and closure. We have assessed these very thoroughly and carried out SWOT analyses and assessed the factors against the School Organisation Code. The presumption against the closure of rural schools means that we have additional steps to follow in order to come to a preferred option and those steps were carried out as part of this process.

Governor: You mentioned federation, were there others?

Marianne Evans: There is a whole range of options that we have included, and I can share these on the screen. Would you like me to go through them?

Governor: I would like you to go through them and explain to me why you rejected each one of them.

Marianne Evans: The information is in the report, in the consultation document, page 46 and 47 onwards and the weaknesses and strengths of each are there. These include status-quo, which is go on as you are, Federation with Welshpool C. in W. School, the reasons are also there. There was also an option to merge with Welshpool C. in W. School, establishing a new school on two sites. The link with Welshpool Church in W. School is there because of the need to ensure sufficient Church provision is available. Close Castle Caereinion but retain the site as part of Welshpool C. in W. School. Merge with Berriew to establish a new school on two sites. Close Castle Caereinion but retain the site as part of Berriew. Merge with Berriew to establish a new school on the Berriew site. Option 8 merge with Berriew to establish a new school on the Castle Caereinion site. Close Castle Caereinion, pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools, and you can see from the consultation document that we have taken those through a SWOT analysis and assessed them against the Critical Success Factors and the School Organisation Code. There's a lengthy part of the consultation document which shows how we have reached the preferred option which we are consulting on.

Governor: Following on from that, in the assessment for each option, you've got option 7 and you have 2 question marks, "could be met", and option 9 is obviously 4. If those question marks, "could be met", then surely they should be ticked and that would be 4 and 4? Yet the only option seems to be to close and therefore option 7 should still be available to us.

Marianne Evans: We will respond to that in the consultation report, the process we use is a technical process but the reason we proposed this closure is the reasons stated there and a reason why we discounted the other options. There is also the opportunity for you to present alternative options, anybody can present an alternative option and we would then need to look at that in the consultation report.

Lynette Lovell: I think all of the points you have brought up are important, it's important that you make them clear in the consultation process. We are aware of the time we are in and the anxiety and stress it can bring. Please make sure your voice is heard, it is what the process is all about. Just to make you aware in terms of the staff and the children at the school, the support is there and Sarah Christoforou from HR is on the call tonight. She is working solely on transformation work, and we have a big programme of change and the support is there for staff at this time. I just wanted to make you aware as Governors, that we want to work alongside the staff to make sure that they have all their questions answered and yours too. If you have anything you want to bring up in the consultation, please do. It is about you and if

you have ideas and thoughts that could be looked at, it is an open consultation so please use it.

In the process so far we have been doing a number of consultations over the past couple of months, and the responses have been really good with a high level of response, through undertaking meetings like this and the process itself. We are having a lot of information and suggestions from people throughout, which will be taken into consideration when everything is presented before Cabinet. I wanted to ensure you that it will be done the best way we can. We know we have to see change in Powys moving forward but we need to do it in a way that everyone feels their voice is heard.

Emma Palmer: Can I please just check, are there any further questions anyone would like to raise whilst we are with you tonight? Otherwise, I am going to call the meeting to a close.

Emma brought the meeting to an end and thanked everyone very much for their thoughtfulness and comments.

3. Consultation meeting with the School Council of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School

19th May 2021 – Held virtually on Microsoft Teams

Present: Marianne Evans, Sarah Astley, Huw Rowlands – Powys County Council
Sarah Brian, Headteacher – Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School

Officers from Powys County Council met virtually via Microsoft Teams with representatives from the School Council of Castle Caereinion Church in Wales school to discuss the consultation to close Castle Caereinion Church in Wales school from 31 August 2022 with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools.

The School Council group consisted of 8 pupils.

Pupils gave a short presentation about Castle Caereinion School, which is transcribed below:

'We would like you to save our school because we are happy here. The lessons that we do are fun, we are learning new things all of the time! We have large classrooms that have lots of space to move around and to do lots of team work! We are excited about the new curriculum and think our school is going to be a great place to learn in this fun new learning style, with the four purposes.

As part of our new curriculum learning we are doing a whole school topic of green which is great as we get to chose what we want to learn about! We are also learning to speak a new language, Polish! We can say words like, Tak, Nie, Czesc, Dovidenia and Dziękuję Ci. We don't mind practising and getting it a bit wrong because we are all friends and no body laughs at you. We all help each other to learn and to get better.

We are like a family in Castle Caereinion CiW School. Everybody knows each other really well and we all look after each other. We are all friends but if we have to move to different schools we will lose our friendships as we will all be split up.

We have great outdoor areas that allow us to take our learning outdoors! We have our own pond to do pond dipping, seated areas and an outdoor classroom. We have raised beds where we can plant lots of different things. All of the garden areas are kept locked so that we can be kept safe inside them! We also have Forest Schools starting here and we are really excited about it!

When Covid goes away we will be able to go back to having lots of after school clubs, like craft club, coding club and sports club. We always do Christmas crafts too but couldn't last year because of Covid. If we go to another school we might not be able to stay to do after school clubs because our mummies and daddies would have

to pick us up as we would miss the bus. This wouldn't be fair, because we would never get to do the fun clubs that we can here in Castle school.

We will also be able to do school trips again, they are always great fun. We have been to the Senedd in Cardiff to learn about our capital city. We also went to the zoo!

Our school is great because we have so many great resources. We have our very own ICT suite with PCs. We also have laptops, ipads and chrome books that we can use in class! Each classroom has an interactive whiteboard and these have been great at helping us to join in live assemblies with Google, a range of famous authors on World Book Day and more recently with Keep Wales Tidy for our Climate Change week.

Our school is special because we have nice teachers who care about us and know us all really well.

Its better being taught in a smaller school because there are less children so we get to have more help from the teachers. The children are all really friendly too, in bigger schools not everyone is nice to you all of the time.

Our school is close to our Church which is really good because we can walk to our Church for services. We go there to learn about God and for special events like Christingle, Harvest and Easter. We also go there for RE lessons where we have role play sessions and act out Baptisms and weddings. Our vicar, Rev. Steve is able to come to our school lots and is able to teach us all about Jesus and God. He might not be able to come to us if we go to another school.

We also have the Impact teams come to visit us with their big bus. This won't happen if we don't go to a Church school. We all love it when the Impact bus comes! The people from the Church link in with us a lot, they hold messy Church clubs where we all get to do lots of really fun craft activities with the people from the community and the church.

Most of us live in the village so at the moment we can walk to our school. If our school closes we may not be able to walk to our school and that will mean putting more cars on the roads. That causes more pollution and that is not good for the environment.

Our village is growing too, we have more houses being built and people might not move here if there is no school. If you leave our school open then the new families will be able to send their children here and we can make even more friends. It's really good living in the same village as our school because we are able to meet up after school and play in the park. If we go to other schools our friends might live in different places so we would need to have lifts to go and meet them. This would be bad for the environment.

Our school is next door to the community centre. This is great because we get to have cake stalls, Christmas and Summer Fayres, school plays and tea mornings. All of the people from the village can get to come to these, so it helps us to work together as a Community. It is also a great chance for the older members of the community to get out of the house and to do something fun with us, the youngest members of the community.

In school we have Committees, like the School Council, Healthy Schools, Eco Schools and Criw Cymraeg. Because we are a small school we get to be in more than one of these clubs which is great! We work in our committees to make positive changes. The School Council organise fundraising events for things like Young Minds, Red Nose Day and World Book Day. We have a Healthy Schools Week coming up where we will learn all about being healthy and we will have a healthy tuck shop! Our Criw Cymraeg are really good and they are teaching us new words and phrases all of the time. We have got our Bronze Award and we meet with Mrs Andrew a lot as she is helping us to work towards our Silver Award for the Siatr Iait.

We have lots of great sports equipment and we have fun in our PE lessons using it! We are really looking forward to Covid going away so we can compete against other schools in sporting competitions!

Thank you for listening!

Following the presentation, the pupils were asked several questions and their responses are summarised below.

It was explained that the first question would have been **‘What do you like about Castle Caereinion school’**, however pupils have already answered that question in their presentation. Officers moved on to the second question:

Is there anything you don’t like about the school? Is there anything that could be better?

- No

It was explained that from time to time Powys County Council had to look at the schools in Powys, and sometimes some changes have to be made to some of the school. The Council has been reviewing Castle Caereinion School, and is wondering whether the school should close.

The consultation process was explained and the fact that no final decision had been made yet, it was still an idea and there was now an opportunity for people to say what they think. It was explained that the Council especially wants to hear what pupils think about this idea.

Do you all understand what we are here to speak to you about?

- Yes

If there was no school in Castle Caereinion, what would change for you as pupils?

- We would lose friends as they would be moving to a different school, so we would have to split from some of them.
- We wouldn't be able to meet together after school.
- We couldn't walk to school and we would have to drive to a different school and cause more pollution.

How many of you live in the village and walk to school now?

- 5 pupils put their hands up
- Many of us live in the village

If the school was to close which other school would you go to?

- Llanfair, Welshpool, Welshpool, Llanfair, Llanfair, Llanfair, Llanfair, Guilsfield

So a lot of you think you would go to Llanfair, but nobody would go to Berriew? Does nobody live closer to Berriew?

- Some live closer to Berriew but parental choice means that they would go elsewhere.

Is there anything else you can think of that would be different, or worse for you if there was no school in Castle Caereinion?

- If there was no school here, people would not want to move to this village
- You wouldn't be able to meet up with people in the village.

I'm getting the feeling that Castle Caereinion school is very important to you as a community, it's wider than just the school. Do you think you would feel part of the community if you move to a different school?

- No.

Why would that be?

- You would have to meet new children in a new school. Some could be mean to you. Here everyone is kind.
- If we don't go to the school we're not supporting the community.

A lot of you have mentioned going to Llanfair school if Castle Caereinion school closes. It's much bigger than Castle Caereinion school. Is there anything you think would be good about being in a bigger school?

- I would see my cousin
- More friends
- A wider group of friends
- Lots of friends

Is there anything that would be worse about going to a bigger school?

- We could get lost
- Difficult to make friends as other children will already have their friends
- More people could/might bully you
- You might get lost
- Being shy
- Feel like the odd one out

At the moment you're in 2 classes in Castle Caereinion school and there are a number of year group in each class. In a bigger school there would be less year groups in each class, maybe Reception and year 1 together, years 1 and 2 together, years 2 and 3 together, 4 and 5 together. Would that be a good or bad thing?

- It would be bad because I would be separated from my friend
- You wouldn't be able to see your friends

How would you feel things would change for your teachers if Castle Caereinion school closes?

- It would be hard for them to find a job
- People would lose their jobs
- Sad
- I would like them to try for work at Llanfair school

Do you have any other questions? Is there anything else you would like to add? Is there anything worrying you about the plans?

- Why do you need to close our school?

Officers explained that the Council has to look at all its schools. At the moment there are lots of schools across the whole of Powys. Some schools are very small and it's difficult to keep them going if they are small. We think pupils would have more friends and opportunities in larger schools.

- Why does it have to be our school? I've been to bigger schools and children were not kind to me, but they are here.

Officers explained that the Council is looking at other schools in Powys as well as Castle Caereinion – it's not only Castle Caereinion.

- What would you do with the school – sell it, knock it down, it wouldn't be suitable for houses as it's close to the community centre?

The school is owned by the Church in Wales, so they would decide what to do with the building.

- Are you closing the school just to save money?

No, the Council feels that there are more opportunities for pupils in larger schools as they have more opportunities to make more friends.

- I do have a friend who's in Welshpool and we don't talk and she is mean to me sometimes so I'm a bit concerned about that
- Would you be able to see year 1 and Reception kids at playtime at bigger schools?

Yes, you would see them at breaktime.

Officers asked the pupils how they feel about what the Council is doing? Are they happy, sad, worried?

- Worried and sad
- Sad

Officers explained what happens next, which is that this is a consultation period where everyone's views are being asked. Pupils were encouraged to send any further comments or views to the Council by 2 June 2021, when the consultation closes, and to ask their teachers if they need any help to do this.

After the 2nd June, a report summarising everything people and pupils have said during the consultation period will be prepared. It was explained that this would include all of the things pupils have said in today's meeting, as well as what governors and staff have said in meetings held with them, and what other people have said.

The report will then be considered by the Council's Cabinet. It was explained that they are the people who make the decisions in the Council, and they will look at all the comments made and decide if they want to close the school or not. If they decide not to carry on then that would be the end of this plan. If they decide to carry on, then what's known as a Statutory Notice would be published, formally saying that the

Council wants to close the school, and then there would be a 28 day period for people to respond, and to say if they don't agree. Another report would then need to be prepared and considered by the Cabinet.

There's still quite a way to go in the process, and no decision has been made yet, and if the process proceeds, no final decision will be made until just before Christmas. If Cabinet does decide in the end to close the school, that would be in September 2022.

Pupils were reminded once again of the opportunity to send in any further comments and were thanked for attending the meeting and giving their views.