



Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Observations to Cabinet on: 05-07-2022

The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee met on 29-06-2022 and considered the following documents:

- Llanfihangel Rhydithon School

The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee thank the Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys and officers for attending scrutiny.

Scrutiny made the following observations:

1. The Committee received assurances that:

- to date none of the current pupils had applied to move to other schools
- with regard to concerns about the potential budgetary impact on other schools in the County if the proposal were agreed, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation indicated that impact on the budget for 2022-23 would be funded from the delegated school contingency fund (£76.8k) and the impact on school budgets in 2023-24 (£32.3k) would be minimal and for the summer term only.

2. The Committee received clarification that

- the proposal was to allow time to gain an understanding of the potential to establish a Welsh Medium primary provision in the East Radnorshire area which might, or might not, be situated on the Llanfihangel Rhydithon school site, once the present school closed in August 2023.
- of the 34 pupils that would be at the school from September, over half of these pupils lived closer to other schools.
- the condition of the school (Category B) was not one of the reasons considered for the closure of the school.
- the report was not revisiting the original closure proposal. The School Organisation Code allows the Council to delay implementation of the decision to close the school. However, any new proposal coming forward (such as opening a Welsh Medium school) would be subject to the processes set out in the School Organisation Code.
- There were ongoing maintenance costs which would need to be funded, but that costs such as a replacement boiler would be funded from the capital budget and that there was sufficient in the capital budget to fund this.

3. The Committee questioned:

- why matters such as the transfer of the building to the community could not be considered outside the school closure process.
- the Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys's assertion that this site could become a site for a new Welsh Medium primary school. The WESP (Welsh Education Strategic Plan) states that new provision would be considered where the Council could guarantee growth in numbers of pupils. The

Committee was of the view that numbers in any new Welsh Medium provision in this area were likely to be initially extremely small, and remain so for a number of years. The Committee asked what the minimum requirement would be for a viable new Welsh Medium school, but the Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys could not provide this information until the review had been completed.

- the advantage of keeping the school open for a further year:
 - as the review of Welsh Language provision could be undertaken independently of the school closing and as the school would have to close in any case prior to any different provision (such as a Welsh Medium provision) being opened on the site so there would be a time delay between the two events.
 - particularly if the location was not deemed suitable following the review to host Welsh Medium provision for the area.

4. The Committee expressed concern:

- regarding the significant cost of delaying the closure with no additional educational outcomes for pupils.
- that use of the delegated school contingency fund is top sliced off all school delegated budgets and therefore unavailable to other schools in the county if spent in full.
- regarding the health and well-being of pupils, staff and parents at the school as the closure of the school was continuing and for any delay there needed to be a very clear communications plan to inform pupils, staff and parents.
- that support was made available for pupils and teachers to ensure an effective transition to new arrangements once the school closed.
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5. The Committee was supportive of the need to establish a Welsh Medium provision in the East Radnorshire area.

Scrutiny's Recommendation to Cabinet	Accept (plus Action and timescale)	Partially Accept (plus Rationale and Action and timescale)	Reject (plus Rationale)
1 That the Committee is supportive of the establishment of a Welsh Medium provision in the East Radnorshire area.	This issue will be explored and will be completed by December 2022.		
2 That the Cabinet is asked to consider and respond to the Committee's questions and concerns as set out in Sections 3 and 4 of the observations	Dependent on the outcome of the Welsh-medium review, the Council will explore potential options for the community to be able to utilise the school building.		

above.	Dependent on the outcome of the Welsh-medium review, support would be provided to pupils and pupils and teachers to ensure an effective transition to new arrangements once the school closed.		
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In accordance with Rule 7.27.2 the Cabinet is asked to provide a written response to the scrutiny report, including an action plan where appropriate, as soon as possible or at the latest within 2 months of the date of the Cabinet meeting i.e. by 05-09-2022

Membership of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee on 29-06-2022:

County Councillors:

G Thomas, GD Jones, L Roberts, M Beecham, A Davies, A Kennerley, C Kenyon-Wade, J Thorp, L Rijnenberg, B Davies, G Morgan, I McIntosh.

Co-Opted Members:

M Evitts, S Davies, K Chedgzoy