



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:

- Llanbedr Church in Wales 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 clarification that:

- senior staffing changes in the area had provided an opportunity for a wider area review to be undertaken and therefore it was appropriate for this review (which would include Llanbedr school) to be undertaken before the decision on the school was implemented. This was already planned in Wave 2 of the transformation programme.
- there had been a delay in issuing the closure notice for the school to close on 31st August 2022, as the Council was of the understanding that the Church in Wales Diocese proposed to make an objection to the Minister, which in the event did not happen.
- in relation to staffing costs, redundancy notices had not been issued to staff.
- in relation to the budget the delay in closure of the school would require reinstating the full year budget of £59k (which can be funded from the delegated schools contingency budget) and a further budget of £39.5k for 2023-24 (to August 2023 which will need to be funded from the overall schools delegated budget).
- major improvements at the school had been identified at £111k but only £98k was likely to be required for one year.
- in relation to the maintenance costs, this had been estimated at £137k. However, £110k may not be required so the likely cost was £27k.
- in response to the Committee's concerns about possible Estyn comment regarding delays in the transformation programme, the Director of Education indicated that Estyn had endorsed that the Council was making strong progress in implementing changes, and were monitoring progress which included the transformation programme. The Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys advised that he would be reassuring Estyn that the Council was reviewing these two schools only and not delaying the overall transformation programme.
- there had been no applications from existing pupils to move schools.
- it was projected that pupil numbers in the catchment area as a whole would be reducing which included a potential impact on the High School following the building of a new High School in Abergavenny by Monmouthshire Council.

2. The Committee expressed concern regarding:

- the significant costs of keeping the school open for a year with no additional educational outcomes.
- 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.
- the capacity of the transformation team to undertake a catchment review in such a short timescale.
- the impact of the delay on the welfare of pupils, staff and parents by the delay.
- the need for effective communications of timescales for the review to stakeholders.
- the potential for further Estyn criticism of the Council for delaying the transformation programme, which had been the case previously which led to a period of Estyn monitoring of the Council's Education Service.

3. The Committee commented that the only apparent advantage to keep the school open would be for the catchment review to be completed which would remove the risk of pupils moving to a school which might subsequently be earmarked for closure.

Scrutiny's Recommendation to Cabinet	Accept (plus Action and timescale)	Partially Accept (plus Rationale and Action and timescale)	Reject (plus Rationale)
<p>1 That the Cabinet considers the Committee's observations as set out above.</p>	<p>A catchment review in the Crickhowell area will commence in the autumn term, with initial findings to be presented to Cabinet in early 2023, which will enable the closure of Llanbedr C.i.W Primary School to continue with an understanding about the potential future configuration of schools in the area.</p>		

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