

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

**CABINET EXECUTIVE
27 February 2024**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Pete Roberts
Portfolio Holder for a Learning Powys

REPORT TITLE: Llangedwyn C. in W. School – Objection Report

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 19th December 2023, the Council published a Statutory Notice proposing to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet members of the outcome of the statutory objection period and the objections received.
- 1.3 The report includes a recommendation to proceed with implementation of the proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2024.
- 1.4 The report is supported by the following appendices:
 - **Appendix A** – Statutory Notice
 - **Appendix B** – Objection Report
 - **Appendix C** – Updated Impact Assessments

2. Background

- 2.1 Llangedwyn C. in W. School is a small English-medium primary school located in the village of Llangedwyn in the Llanfyllin catchment area of North Powys.
- 2.2 It currently operates as part of a formal federation with Llanfechain C. in W. School. Ffederasiwn Dwy Afon was established in 2018. The Federation has a single governing body and headteacher that are responsible for both schools.
- 2.3 Pupil numbers at Llangedwyn C. in W. School have decreased significantly over recent years. Current pupil numbers at the school are as follows¹:

¹ Teacher Centre, 14th February 2024

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Llangedwyn C. in W. School	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	7

- 2.4 In the Summer of 2022, the Council updated and relaunched its Strategy for Transforming Education², and also published a work programme for Wave 2 of implementation of the Strategy. This includes a commitment to restart and conclude the review of the Llanfyllin / North Welshpool catchment, which commenced in 2020. This restarted in April 2023.
- 2.5 In September 2023, the Council's Cabinet considered a paper which outlined the findings of the review and presented an indicative preferred way forward. The preferred way forward included the possible closure of Llangedwyn C. in W. School, however this would be subject to the Statutory Process as outlined in the School Organisation Code (2018).
- 2.6 The paper considered by Cabinet included a recommendation that a proposal paper was prepared in respect of the closure of Llangedwyn C. in W. School, for consideration by Cabinet in October 2023.
- 2.7 On the 10th October 2023, Cabinet considered a proposal paper in respect of Llangedwyn C. in W. School, and approved the following recommendation:

'It is recommended that Cabinet approves commencing the statutory process on the following proposal:

- To close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School.'

Consultation

- 2.7 Consultation on the proposal to close Llangedwyn C.in.W Primary School was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code (2018) from the 12th of October 2023 to the 23rd of November 2023.
- 2.8 A Consultation Report listing the issues raised during the consultation and the Council's response to them was published. This was considered by Cabinet on the 19th of December 2023.
- 2.9 At the meeting on the 19th of December 2023, Cabinet agreed to proceed with the publication of a Statutory Notice in order to proceed

² Available at <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/9344/Transforming-Education-Strategy>

with the process to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st of August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School.

Statutory Notice

2.10 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 19th of December 2023, the Council published a Statutory Notice proposing the following:

- i. *‘To discontinue Llangedwyn Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Llangedwyn, Oswestry, Powys, SY10 9LD, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Llanfechain, Oswestry, Powys, SY22 6UQ.’*

It is proposed to implement the proposal on 31st of August 2024.’

2.11 The Statutory Notice was published on the 10th of January 2024 for a period of 28 days, in accordance with the guidance within the School Organisation Code (2018). A copy of the Statutory Notice is attached as Appendix A.

2.12 The objection period ended on the 7th of February 2024.

Objections

2.13 16 objections were received during the statutory objection period.

2.14 The objections received and the Council’s response to the issues raised in the objections are listed in the Objection Report, which is attached as Appendix B.

3. Advice

3.1 Having considered the objections received, it is recommended that the Council proceeds with implementation of the proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2024, as outlined in the Statutory Notice (Appendix A).

3.2 The reasons for this are as follows:

- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers at Llangedwyn C. in W. Primary School.
- Would reduce the Council’s overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- Revenue saving to the Council
- The Council would no longer need to maintain the Llangedwyn building
- Pupils would attend a larger school where they would be part of a larger cohort of pupils

- Pupils would be able to transfer to a school they are already familiar with
- Pupils would be able to continue to access Church in Wales provision

4. Resource Implications

4.1 The amount of funding provided to schools is driven by the funding formula. Any change to the formula funding provided will impact on the Council's revenue budget. Based on the current formula, it is estimated that implementation of the proposal would result in annual revenue savings to the Council of around £56.4k. This overall figure comprises a potential saving on Schools' delegated funding of over £91.0k and estimated additional transport costs of £34.6k. The proposal is expected to have no impact on the costs of delivering a catering service. These figures do not include any estimated redundancy costs.

4.2 Llangedwyn C. in W. School is currently projecting a carry forward deficit of £17k at the end of financial year 2023-24. If the school remains open the cumulative deficit is estimated to rise to £142k by 31 March 2026.

4.3 The Scheme for Financing Schools also states the following in section 3.7.2:

'In order to ensure effective stewardship of the resources available to schools, the Authority may impose additional restrictions on a school scheduled to close, including but not limited to:

- Restriction of expenditure to agreed plans
- Removal of powers of virement'

The Council and the governing body have signed a deficit agreement which includes spending restrictions. The budget position by September 2024 is estimated to be as follows:

	2023-24	2024-25
In year Surplus/(Deficit)	(20,305)	(26,443)
Bfwd Balance	3,596	(16,709)
Cfwd Balance	(16,709)	(43,152)

4.4 Based on the current school condition data report it would cost approximately £90k to bring the building up to current standards, however this figure is expected to rise due to construction industry inflation experienced. If the proposal is implemented this cost would be avoided.

4.5 The Llangedwyn C. in W. School building is not owned by the Council. It is likely that there may be some costs related to clearing the building

so that it can be transferred back to its owners. This would be in the region of £10k (based on costs of disposing other school buildings recently) and would be a one-off cost funded from the Council's Corporate Transformation budget.

- 4.6 Implementation of the proposal would require involvement from a number of service areas, including staff from the Schools Service, Finance, HR and ICT. These service areas have been kept informed of the development of the proposal throughout the statutory process.
- 4.7 Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the report and supports the recommendation. Every opportunity to minimise the budget deficit incurred by the School must be actioned. Any subsequent remaining deficit will fall on the Council.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Legal: The recommendations can be supported from a legal point of view as the correct process has been followed.
- 5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: " I note the legal comment and support the recommendations".

6. Climate Change & Nature Implications

- 6.1 Implementation of the proposal would impact on travel arrangements for pupils currently attending Llangedwyn C. in W. School. This could have a negative environmental impact, as additional home to school transport would need to be provided to transport pupils to their nearest alternative school. However, Llangedwyn is not currently the closest school for the majority of pupils attending the school, so the number of pupils impacted by this would be minimal – it is possible that there would be a reduction in travel for some pupils.
- 6.2 In addition, running a single school site would be more environmentally friendly than running two, due to a reduction in the use of heating and electricity amongst other factors.

7. Data Protection

N/A

8. Comment from local member(s)

- 8.1 Cllr Aled Davies, Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant and Llansilin

'Llangedwyn CIW school has served the children and the local community well over the last 200 years, and the school has been well served by excellent teachers and governors, past and present. But the

simple truth is that there are not enough children in the area to maintain the school and prepare the children for their next steps in education. The vast majority of pupils do not live locally and Llangedwyn is not their nearest school.

However, there are issues that must be addressed before closure:

1. The backlog in maintenance at Llanfechain school and other local Powys schools that these children may possibly attend as their closest school.
2. The transfer of any Powys owned assets, such as playing fields, to the local community to ensure that there are sporting facilities available for the community including the very successful Llangedwyn Football Club, which played a vital role in the development of one of the most talked about current football league players.
3. Support any potential development of a Nursery within the school building to help support young working families.

If the decision is taken to close this precious community school, all efforts should be made to ensure that the next few months are the best ever for the remaining pupils and staff and the community must celebrate the success that the school has had in shaping the lives of its past pupils.'

9. Integrated Impact Assessment

- 9.1 An initial impact assessment was considered by Cabinet on the 10th October 2023.
- 9.2 In addition, a range of draft impact assessments were produced as part of the consultation documentation. These included an Integrated Impact Assessment, an Equalities Impact Assessment, and a Community Impact Assessment.
- 9.3 The draft impact assessments were updated to reflect issues raised during the consultation period and the updated impact assessments were considered by Cabinet on the 19th December 2023 when considering whether or not to proceed with the publication of a statutory notice.
- 9.4 These have been further updated following the objection period, and the updated versions are attached as Appendix C.
- 9.5 The Overall Summary from the Impact Assessment is as follows:

'The aim of the proposal is to improve the educational provision for learners. However, whilst this impact assessment has identified some positive aspects, in particular relating to ensuring the best strategic management of the Powys schools estate, the assessment has also

identified some negative aspects; these primarily relate to the impact on the community of Llangedwyn due to loss of educational provision from the village.'

10. **Recommendation**

- To consider the Objection Report in Appendix B in respect of closing Llangedwyn C. in W. School.
- To approve the proposal to close Llangedwyn C. in W. School from the 31st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to Llanfechain C. in W. School.

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