

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 23rd MAY 2016

Modernising Education Programme

Proposal to discontinue Llangennech Infant School and Llangennech Junior School and establish Llangennech Community Primary School

To consider and comment on the following issues:

1. The observations received and the Local Authority's responses following the consultation period (Consultation Report attached).
2. The publication of a statutory notice to implement the proposal.

Reasons:

- To comply with statutory procedures and guidance in relation to school re-organisation.
- To formulate views for submission to Executive Board/Council for consideration.

To be referred to the Executive Board for decision: YES – 20th June 2016

Executive Board Member Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Gareth Jones (Education & Children)

Directorate: Education & Children	Designations:	Tel Nos. / E-Mail Addresses:
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 23rd MAY 2016

Modernising Education Programme

Proposal to discontinue Llangennech Infant School and Llangennech Junior School and establish Llangennech Community Primary School

Background

Since the inception of the Modernising Education Programme, it has been set out to create Community Primary Schools to replace Infants and Junior Schools.

Following the retirement of the Llangennech Infants school Headteacher at the end of the Summer term 2013 a soft federation has already taken place with the Headteacher of Llangennech Junior school. On 24th September 2014, the Governing Bodies of both Llangennech Infants and Llangennech Junior schools resolved to pursue a formal federation as from April 2015.

The Authority now wishes to proceed with a proposal to create a Community Primary school to replace Llangennech Infants and Llangennech Junior schools. The details of the proposal are outlined below and in the Consultation Document.

The Local Authority currently offers full time learning provision for 4-11 year olds through the medium of Welsh and English at the Federated Llangennech Infants and Junior Schools. As part of the new 3 – 11 primary school that will include nursery provision, it is proposed to change the current linguistic categories of Llangennech Infant school (Dual Stream – (DS) and Llangennech Junior school (Dual Stream – (DS) to a new Welsh Medium – (WM) language category school which will increase the provision of Welsh Medium education in Carmarthenshire and will ensure that bilingualism is increased in the Llangennech area. It will ensure linguistic continuity from the nursery sector along the key stages to the secondary sector so that every pupil becomes fluent and confident in Welsh and English as detailed in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) (2014-2017).

Proposal

As a result of the small extension to the consultation period, the pre-election period and the high number of responses received during the consultation period; the dates for the proposal have changed below. This is to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for people to express their views and that the school holiday period does not impede on the process.

- To discontinue Llangennech Infant school on 31st August 2017
- To discontinue Llangennech Junior school on 31st August 2017
- As from 1st September 2017, to establish a new 3-11 Welsh Medium (WM) language category Community Primary School with nursery provision (hereinafter called 'Llangennech Community Primary School') on the existing sites and buildings of the current Llangennech Infants and Llangennech Junior schools. The current capacity of both schools will remain unchanged but will be reviewed and adjusted accordingly should the demands arise in the future.

In accordance with Executive Board's instructions, a formal consultation exercise was undertaken from 25th January 2016 to 18th March 2016. The results of the consultation exercise are contained in the attached report.

The Education & Children Scrutiny Committee are provided the opportunity to offer comment and a recommendation to the Executive Board whether or not publish a Statutory Notice. Should the Executive Board grant permission to proceed to Statutory Notice, the intention is to publish week beginning 5th September 2016.

If approved, following the end of the Statutory Notice period, an objection report which summarises any objections received by stakeholders, will be presented to the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee and Executive Board and ultimately County Council for determination.

Recommendation

That the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee endorses the proposal and recommends to the Executive Board the publication of a Statutory Notice.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES

Appendix A – List of Respondents to the Consultation Period

Appendix B – Executive Summary of Observations Received

Appendix C – Summary of observations received following the publication of the Consultation Document and Local Authority related responses

Appendix D – ESTYN response to the Consultation Document

	<p>Appendix E – Consultation with the Pupils</p> <p>Appendix F – Revised Options for Change</p> <p>Appendix G – Why are we promoting a bilingual education?</p>
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IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Signed: Gareth Morgans Head of Education Services

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	YES	YES	NONE	YES	YES	YES

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

Developments are consistent with the Authority's Corporate Strategy, Children and Young People's Plan and the Modernising Education Strategic Outline Programme.

Policy Implications

National Policy Considerations

Welsh Government Welsh-Medium Education Strategy (2010)

In 2010 the Welsh Government published its national policy for developing Welsh medium education across the nation. The following extracts from the national strategy set out the Welsh Government's views on the importance of Welsh medium education to outcomes for learners and to the ambition to develop bilingual citizens.

"Welsh medium education from the early years, with robust linguistic progression through every phase of education, offers the best conditions for developing future bilingual citizens.

A key focus is on supporting learners to achieve fluency in Welsh and English through Welsh medium education, from the early years onwards.

For children from non-Welsh speaking backgrounds, whose initial and main contact with Welsh is through school, this intensive Welsh medium provision is through a process of linguistic immersion.

Welsh medium education between the ages of three or four and approximately seven usually means delivering provision primarily through the medium of Welsh. At Key Stage 2 English language skills are also developed through appropriate use of the language as a subject and medium. A key consideration is the nature of the linguistic balance between Welsh and English and the intensity of Welsh required in order for learners to reach fluency in both Welsh and English over time. It is generally accepted that at least around 70% of curricular time should be through the medium of Welsh if learners are to acquire a sufficiently sound command of the language to enable them to use it across a broad range of contexts with confidence and fluency. The Welsh Assembly Government accepts this guiding principle for Welsh medium schools at primary and secondary level.

Learners in Welsh medium settings achieve comparable outcomes in both Welsh and English first language, which suggests the success of the sector in developing natural bilingualism.

The advantages that bilingualism can bring are well documented and include the promotion of cognitive skills, increasing mental agility and broadening speakers' range of cultural experiences. Research in Canada reveals that bilingualism enhances attention and cognitive control in children and older adults and in 2007 highlighted the impact of bilingualism on delaying the onset of dementia symptoms. Research findings published by the University of Edinburgh in 2009 revealed that speakers of two languages found it easier to focus on a range of tasks, blocking out potential distractions.

Welsh medium education from the early years, with robust linguistic progression through

every phase of education, offers the best conditions for developing young people who are truly bilingual.”

The Government’s Strategy sets targets for local authorities to increase the proportion of seven year old children being taught through the medium of Welsh.

There is a clear expectation that all local authorities incorporate the provisions and requirements of the national strategy in their own local Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, which are on a statutory footing.

Welsh Government Welsh Language Strategy 2012 to 2017 – A Living Language: A Language for Living

This national policy considers the conditions that are needed to promote a greater use of the Welsh language by children and young people in all aspects of their lives and proposes a set of high level actions to secure this goal.

The Strategy declares its aim as *“to increase the provision of Welsh medium activities for children and young people and to increase their awareness of the value of the language”* with the desired outcome being *“children and young people using more Welsh”*.

It includes the following statements related to education and schools:

“Over the last thirty years we have seen a considerable increase in the number of young people able to speak Welsh (from 14.9% of 3 to 14 year olds in 1971 to 37.2% in 2001). But these figures need to be treated with caution, since it is likely that over half of these are learning Welsh as a second language. As such, for many Welsh speaking children from homes without Welsh speaking parents/carers, the school provides one of the few opportunities for them to use the language.

Providing practical opportunities for children and young people to use Welsh ... the best way of developing a feeling of value towards using the language.

Among other factorsthe perceived value of the language as a skill for work ... important elements.

We ... face challenges within the education system to ensure that children and young people continue to choose Welsh medium education when making choices at key stages of the education – between the primary and secondary sectors, and between the secondary sector and further or higher education. While the Welsh Medium Education Strategy addresses these challenges, we believe that the success of those measures depends, to a great extent, on convincing children and young people of the value of Welsh, economically and culturally.”

Welsh Government – Increasing the Number of Communities where Welsh is the Main Language (December 2013)

In December 2013 the Welsh Government published the report of its Task and Finish Group that had been established to review the status of the Welsh language and advise on the actions required to regenerate the use of the language. The following brief statements from the report are relevant to the schools sector.

In his introduction the Group Chair declared *“we call on the education system to be progressive ... so that all young people can become fluent and confident in using Welsh and English.”*

Recommendations were made, with a particular focus upon Carmarthenshire and other targeted areas of Wales, for action to *“increase the number and percentage of pupils who are fluent in Welsh and English by the time they leave school.”*

Estyn

In November 2014 Estyn published a document entitled *“Linguistic Progression and Standards in Ten Bilingual Welsh Schools”* which reported the findings of its review into the linguistic progression of pupils in Key Stage 4 and identifying and sharing good practice in relation to bilingual education.

Included amongst the findings of the review are the following conclusions:

- *“In general, pupils who follow the most additional GCSE courses through the medium of Welsh have the best ability to discuss and write in Welsh”.*
- *“Pupils have the misconception that studying subjects through the medium of Welsh can hinder their academic success. In fact, pupils who follow their GCSE course through the medium of Welsh achieve as well as, if not better than, those who follow most of their GCSE course through the medium of English”.*

Local Policy Considerations

Carmarthenshire County Council Welsh Language Development Strategy

In 2013 Carmarthenshire County Council established a cross-party group of elected members to review the status of the Welsh language in the county following the outcome of the 2011 Census of the Population, which recorded a significant decline in the proportion of the population with Welsh language skills.

The group published a comprehensive report in early 2014 and at its meeting on the 15th April 2014 the County Council formally accepted the recommendations made by the group for the development of the Welsh language in the county.

The County Council adopted a total of 73 recommendations made by the group, including 21 that are directly related to the education service, including the following:

“The County Council works closely with the staff and governing bodies of Carmarthenshire’s dual stream schools in order for them to become Welsh schools.”

All of the schools related recommendations were integrated within the Carmarthenshire Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (2014 – 2017)

Section 85(1) of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 requires the County Council to produce a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for its area, keep the Plan under review and, if necessary revise it. Carmarthenshire County Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan has been adopted by the County Council and approved by the Welsh Government in accordance with Section 85(2) of the Act.

Section 2 of the Plan sets out a series of actions to realise the Council's objectives for the development of the Welsh language in its schools.

For Outcome 1, to increase the number of 7 year old learners who are educated through the medium of Welsh, the Plan includes a specific action to *"target 3 dual stream/transitional schools to transfer to being Welsh schools by 2017"*.

There are also targets to increase the percentage of learners achieving Level 4 Plus at the end of Key Stage 2, i.e. increasing fluency, and to increase the number and percentage of learners from Welsh/bilingual primary schools transferring to Welsh/bilingual secondary schools.

<p>2. Legal</p> <p>Appropriate consultation will need to be initiated in accordance with the relevant statutory procedures.</p>
<p>3. Finance</p> <p>Revenue implications will be catered for within the Local Management of Schools Fair Funding Scheme.</p>
<p>4. ICT</p> <p>NONE</p>
<p>5. Risk Management Issues</p> <p>The proposal to close Llangennech Infants and Llangennech Junior schools and open a new Llangennech Community Primary School and also change the language category from Dual Stream to Welsh Medium may impact on the demand for school places at the school and other schools in the Llanelli area. The situation will be monitored as part of the Schools Admission Process and ongoing data forecasting and analysis through the Authority's Modernising Education Programme.</p>
<p>6. Staffing Implications</p> <p>Staffing implications will be addressed in accordance with the County Council's Redeployment Policy and Procedures.</p>
<p>7. Physical Assets</p> <p>Arrangements are in place to install a Double Mobile classroom on the current Llangennech Infant school site. This will provide the school with additional accommodation but it will not increase the capacity of the new school. We will monitor the situation and will review the situation if the pupil figures continue to rise.</p>

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below:

Signed: Gareth Morgans Head of Education Services

1. Scrutiny Committee – Were consulted during the consultation period. The committee will be asked to consider and comment on the findings of the statutory consultation period on 23rd May.

2. Local Member(s) – Local members were formally consulted during the formal consultation period. Observations were received from Cllr. Gwyneth Thomas, Cllr. Gwyn Hopkins and Cllr. Theresa Bowen.

3. Community / Town Council – The community council were consulted during the formal consultation period. Observations were received from members of the community council.

4. Relevant Partners – Were consulted during the consultation period.

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations – Teaching and non-teaching unions were consulted during the formal consultation period. Observations were received from UCAC and UNISON.

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Title of Document	File Ref No. / Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Carmarthenshire's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2014-2017	http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/welshmededstrat/?lang=en
MEP Annual Report 2013/14 and Programme 2014/15	www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk County Council Agenda 14 th January 2015