

EXECUTIVE BOARD

TUESDAY, 26TH JULY, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor E. Dole [Chair]

Councillors:

H.A.L. Evans, L.D. Evans, M. Gravell, D.M. Jenkins, G.O. Jones, T.J. Jones, P.A. Palmer, L.M. Stephens and J. Tremlett

Present in respect of Minute No. 8:

Councillor A.P. Cooper, Chair of the Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee

Present as observers:

Councillors S.M. Caiach, D.M. Cundy, T. Devichand, J.S. Edmunds, W.G. Hopkins, P. Hughes-Griffiths, B.A.L. Roberts, G. Thomas and J. Williams.

The following Officers were in attendance:

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| Mr M. James | - | Chief Executive |
| Mr C. Moore | - | Director of Corporate Services |
| Mr J. Morgan | - | Director of Community Services |
| Ms R. Mullen | - | Director of Environment |
| Mr R. Sully | - | Director of Education & Children |
| Mr P. Thomas | - | Assistant Chief Executive |
| Ms W. Walters | - | Assistant Chief Executive |
| Mr I. Jones | - | Head of Leisure |
| Mr S. Pilliner | - | Head of Transport & Engineering |
| Ms L. Rees Jones | - | Head of Administration & Law |
| Mr G. Morgans | - | Chief Education Officer |
| Mr S. Davies | - | School Modernisation Manager |
| Mrs D. Hockenhill | - | Media & Marketing Manager |
| Mr I. Llewellyn | - | Forward Planning Manager |
| Mr G. Williams | - | Assistant Solicitor |
| Mrs M. Evans Thomas | - | Principal Democratic Services Officer |
| Mr M. Hughes | - | Democratic Services Officer |

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen: 10.00 a.m. - 12.50 p.m. and 1.50 p.m. - 3.30 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

| Councillor | Minute No. | Nature of Interest |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Councillor L.D. Evans | 19 – Model Time off Policy for Schools | Her daughter teaches in the county. |
| Councillor G.O. Jones | 19 – Model Time off Policy for Schools | His wife teaches in the county. |

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| Councillor J. Tremlett | 23 – Proposed New Public Car Park, King Street, Laugharne | She owns property on King Street, Laugharne. |
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3. MINUTES - EXECUTIVE BOARD

3.1. 20TH JUNE, 2016

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on the 20th June, 2016 be signed as a correct record.

3.2. 4TH JULY, 2016

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on the 4th July, 2016 be signed as a correct record.

4. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE BY MEMBERS

The Chair advised that no questions on notice had been submitted by members. However, he had received notification from Councillors D.M. Cundy, T. Devichand and J.S. Edmunds that they would like to ask questions in relation to agenda item 7 and these would be addressed under the appropriate item later in the meeting.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

5.1. QUESTION BY MRS KAREN HUGHES TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

“There have been a number of failures on the consultation process with the headmaster admitting on the 26th April that they had been naive about the consultation process. We have received correspondence confirming the school were aware of a proposal from the LEA in September 2014, followed by a proposal letter in January 2015 to the school which makes reference to 5 issues which were agreed as a package which had to be taken as a whole. With the insistence that the package must be accepted by the governors and LEA as a whole and already accepted in February 2015 it does make us wonder if this was already a ‘done deal’. Why wasn’t this made public to all stakeholders in September 2014 showing openness and transparency?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“The consultation process has been conducted in compliance with the statutory School Organisation Code. The Education and Children’s Services Department has been in discussion with the governing bodies of both schools for a few years regarding the potential for the current proposal and correspondence has been exchanged between the parties. The Department has shared correspondence on this issue with objectors, demonstrating openness and transparency. School governing bodies have statutory responsibility for their schools and discussions between the local authority and schools on proposals for change always commence with a

conversation with governing bodies. Discussions and consultations with other people and groups of people take place at the appropriate stages in the process in line with statutory expectations.

No final decision has yet been made on this proposal. Should the Executive Board resolve to proceed to the next stage in the process, through the publication of a statutory notice, there will be another opportunity for interested parties to make their representations, which will be fully considered before a final decision is made.

The correspondence exchanged between the Director of Education and Children's Services and the governing bodies was intended to establish an agreement between these parties on the principles of the proposal and how it could be implemented, whilst also addressing other separate factors, such as how restricted space in the infants school could be addressed and how planning gain funding available for the area could be usefully applied.

The Director's letter of the 29th January 2015 to the Chair of the Governing Body of Llangennech Infants School, copied to the Chair of the Governing Body of Llangennech Junior School, makes it clear that it will be necessary for the County Council to undertake a statutory process to constitute a new primary school in place of the current two separate schools, to extend the age range of the school and to establish the new school as a Welsh medium school and highlights the timing challenges for completing the statutory process.

The letter also refers to a commitment to provide an additional double mobile classroom to assist with space pressures at the infants school (this has now been done) and agrees to release planning gain money for investment in the schools, through agreement with the Department. The fact that the new modular building has already been installed at the school clearly establishes that this element is not connected to the statutory proposal.

Reference to a "package for the development of primary sector provision" in the Director's letter can, therefore, be clearly identified as seeking an agreement in principle.

The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan was formally adopted at the meeting of the Executive Board held on the 28th July 2014, with the minutes of this meeting being received by the County Council at its meeting held on the 10th September 2014. It is evidently, therefore, a matter of fact that the WESP is Council policy. The WESP sets out the broad strategy for language development within the education service. Where progress requires change at individual schools in terms of the proportion of the curriculum delivered through either language a statutory process will be required, involving a consultation on each specific proposal. This is what is happening at Llangennech currently."

Mrs Hughes asked the following supplementary question:-

"Do you agree that the consultation process has only paid lip service to people and there is no real care for the community at large or providing

for their needs?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"I think I will be referring to some of the points you raised in the other answers that follow so if you are not happy with the answers that follow on, please come back to me and I'll get you an answer."

5.2. QUESTION BY MR STEVE HATTO TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

"We have exchanged extensive correspondence with CCC with one subject concerning safety risks involved when transporting pupils to alternative English Medium Schools. One of the main concerns is that families who are unable to drive would have to walk with small children in all weather conditions over 2 miles depending on where in Llangennech they live. They would have to cross a busy 40 mph road and three motorway slip roads to reach their designated school. However, LEAs outlook on this states: that it is parental choice not to enrol our children at Llangennech and therefore it is parental responsibility to transport their children to other schools. However, the English Medium is being withdrawn by the Local Education Authority. It is not parent's choice to remove children from Llangennech but is a course of action forced upon us to take our children to a suitable English Medium. Not every child is able to learn through the medium of Welsh due to various reasons. However, there are 170 surplus Welsh medium places available in the local area at Brynsierfel and Furnace. But the three alternative English medium schools Bryn, Bynea and Hendy are already over capacity. No regard has been given to the 91 houses being built in Hendy, the 700 plus houses planned for Pontardulais and also in Bynea. Surely this would have a major impact on the surrounding schools. Currently any family in Llangennech speaking either welsh or English can have their child taught in either of the official languages of Wales. Is it not the case that this choice of education at the local school is being removed and people requiring their child to be educated in one of the official languages will be discriminated against... If the English Medium is removed can you please explain how is this parental choice? And where will you provide alternative English Medium Education for our children?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"The proposal of the Education and Children's Services Department is that future provision for all pupils in the new Llangennech Primary School should be through a Welsh medium designation, as happens successfully already in many schools across Carmarthenshire, and that local children should attend Llangennech school.

As is set out in the report to the Executive Board the proposal is consistent with national policy to expand Welsh medium education in order to develop increasing numbers of fully bilingual young people and to enable more children to benefit from the advantages of bilingualism, confirmed by evidence gathered through research internationally, also set out in the

report.

It is the County Council's preference that children attend their local school and the Department believes that a Welsh medium primary school in Llangennech will continue to offer high standards of education to children.

It is the Department's intention that all current pupils remain at Llangennech school and continue to receive their education through the current language arrangements until they leave for secondary school. The proposals will not, therefore, affect current pupils. The school will continue to provide sufficient support for all current pupils through the medium in which they currently receive their education so there is, consequently, no need for any child to be moved from the school.

The County Council is obliged to facilitate parental preference only where this is consistent with the effective delivery of education and the efficient use of resources. No parent has a right to demand a place at any particular school for their child or children. School places are allocated on the basis of the Council's published admissions policy, which favours children attending their local or "designated" school. Children are admitted to a school other than their designated school upon application by parents when places are available and subject to the over-subscription criteria set out in the published admissions policy.

The County Council is not proposing alternatives to Llangennech school for local children. It is the Local Authority's desire that all current pupils remain at the school and that in the future local children attend their village school, receiving their education principally through the medium of Welsh, with English being taught as a subject in Key Stage 2 and used as a medium for instruction in some other lessons in the later years of the school.

Should parents elect to place their children in alternative schools they will do so in full consideration of all the factors that apply, including standards at alternative schools, transport implications, etc. If parents elect to place their children in alternative schools that are neither the designated nor nearest school these parents assume full responsibility for transporting their children to school.

It is the belief of the Department, based upon international evidence and local experience, that children benefit from a truly bilingual education, which provides wider skills development, such as cognitive ability, task understanding and flexibility, enhanced powers of concentration, etc, and that all children should receive these opportunities. Evidence demonstrates that true bilingualism can only be achieved in the local context though children receiving a Welsh medium education.

It is true that there are currently some surplus places at Ysgol Y Ffwrnes and Ysgol Brynsierfel. The new Ysgol y Ffwrnes was built to ensure adequate capacity to meet projections in the Llanelli area where demand for Welsh medium primary education has been increasing over recent years. It was fully recognised that the new Ysgol Ffwrnes would have surplus places at the point of opening but these would be taken up over a period of a few years.

Having regard to applications for school places for September 2016 the Department expects that there will be 400 children attending Ysgol Gymraeg Ffwrnes next year, compared to a school capacity of 480, with the early years classes at the school full or almost full, indicating that the school will be full in a few years time. At Ysgol Brynsierfel a total of 209 pupils are expected to be registered at the school in September, compared to a capacity of 243.

The Welsh Government expects local authorities to endeavour to manage surplus school places within a tolerance of 10% overall across all schools, accepting that figures at individual schools will vary as a consequence of a number of factors. The School Organisation Code notes that “some spare places are necessary to enable schools to cope with fluctuations in numbers of pupils”. The Welsh Government regards a single school as having excess surplus places if it has more than 25% of its places empty. Neither Ysgol y Ffwrnes nor Ysgol Brynsierfel fall into this category.

This Council’s school organisation proposals routinely consider future housing developments and the demand that these can produce for school places. The objective of the Council’s proposals for the Llangennech schools is that local children attend Llangennech school in future. The Council does not intend that any local child should seek a school place outside Llangennech, other than in the infrequent incidence of a specific additional learning need in which case the Council will work with parents to identify the most appropriate arrangement. It is for this reason that no reference is made in the Consultation document to potential housing development in Hendy or any other school area.

The County Council will continue to monitor demand for places at Hendy School, in particular with regard to new housing developments being built in the locality and will respond as appropriate. The Council’s Modernising Education Programme includes provision for investment at Hendy school in the medium term to expand and modernise the school’s premises and facilities and it should be possible to align this investment with a need to increase capacity, should that need arise.

The City and County of Swansea’s Local Development Plan (LDP) draft deposit is due to be published for consultation in the summer of 2016. This draft plan includes a significant allocation of over 700 residential units in Pontarddulais. Discussions with officers at the City and County of Swansea confirm that they are planning to develop schools within the community of Pontarddulais to meet all need arising from their LDP in due course, as required by the development timeline. This is a matter for Swansea local authority to resolve.”

Mr Hatto asked the following supplementary question:-

“If the parents of children currently in the school’s English stream decide that siblings need to be taught through the medium of English then they would need to be taken to a different school, possibly out of county. Any parent concerned could not be in two places at once. They would have to withdraw the elder child or children from Llangennech Community School

so that the school run is viable. Would the county then be liable for travel arrangements to the new school?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"That would be a parental choice so we would not be liable for transport to the new school."

5.3. QUESTION BY MS JULIA REES TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

"From the information supplied by the LEA, it is clearly evident that the figures have been manipulated by individuals to bolster a particular scenario. There are 121 pupils in the school that do not live in Llangennech. But there are 96 children from the village travelling to other schools out of the area. 81 of them are attending an alternative English medium school. If the 81 children could attend their community school, the figures would then show more of a 50/50 demand for English and Welsh in the community of Llangennech. Parents who sought English medium education in the past at Llangennech have been turned away because the school was full. But this wasn't the case, as some parents proved during a tribunal, and who were then offered a place at Ysgol Llangennech. Why were English medium places refused when the capacity for English medium was half the capacity of Welsh classes? How can the school publicise its green credentials when it will support transporting a large number of pupils into and out of the village?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

The pupil figures presented in the Consultation Document are those in being at the time of the annual statutory pupil count in January 2015.

The latest figures for January 2016 are as follows:

Llangennech Infants School

The total number of pupils is 210, with 161 children residing within the catchment area and 49 pupils residing outside the catchment area.

Llangennech Junior School

The total number of pupils is 236, with 175 children residing within the catchment area and 61 pupils residing outside the catchment area.

Both Schools Combined

Aggregated together the totals for both schools are – the total number of pupils is 446, with 336, or 75%, living in the catchment area and 110 children, or 25%, living outside the catchment area.

In January 2016 there were 96 children living within the catchment area of the Llangennech schools attending other schools. Of these, 16 children attended

Welsh medium schools, 7 attended dual stream schools and 73 attended English medium schools, with a significant number of 39 children, over half those leaving the catchment area, attending Bryn school. 3 of the children attended faith based schools.

It is relevant to note that due to the configuration of the catchment area of the Llangennech schools a significant number of children living in the south of the catchment area reside closer to other schools than they do to the Llangennech schools. Prominent among these is Bryn School which receives 39 pupils from the Llangennech catchment area who live in or close to Penllwyngwyn Road, Hendre Park, Harddfán, Bryn Uchaf and Pendderi Road and live much closer to this school.

The Llangennech schools are able to accommodate all children living within the catchment area. These children receive preference to children living outside the catchment area under the established admissions policies.

No children from within the Llangennech schools catchment area have been denied a place at Llangennech schools by the County Council as the statutory Admissions Authority.

The published Admissions Numbers for the Llangennech schools apply to the school as a whole and do not consider language choice. Children can only be admitted to the schools by the local authority as the statutory admissions body. Schools do not have the right to admit pupils themselves or to decline places. The County Council has not refused a place to any child residing within the catchment area, irrespective of language preference.

The movement of pupils between school catchment areas is a common circumstance across the county in both urban and rural areas.

Schools are categorised according to an assessment against a national framework set out by the Welsh Government. The framework takes into account the standards achieved by pupils, the attendance of pupils, the quality of leadership at the school and the school's capacity to improve. The categorisation framework does not take matters such as language designation or admissions arrangements into account."

Ms Rees asked the following supplementary question:-

"You state that no child has been refused at Llangennech School on the basis of language selection so please can you explain why both of my sons were refused places at Llangennech Infant School despite the English stream classes for their year being 29 places under capacity and the Welsh stream classes for their year being over capacity by 11 places. Yet their refusal letter stated that the English stream was "at capacity and that the addition of a further pupil to the current numbers would present severe difficulties for the school". How can this be construed as anything other than an intentional engineering of figures to favour Welsh medium inclusion over English medium?"

Response by Councillor G.O Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“That is something I am not aware of and I will have to find out more about that and I will certainly investigate to see what is happening.”

**5.4. QUESTION BY MRS MICHAELA BEDDOWS TO COUNCILLOR
GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION &
CHILDREN**

“Special Educational Needs: No consideration has been given for children with special educational needs who are usually advised to only go in an English medium stream or the language of their home environment .Children with global delay struggle with one language let alone two, therefore by removing the dual stream it would exclude these children from attending the school. Children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder really cannot cope with change in routine, so if they were to start then struggle in a Welsh Medium school and then have to move to an English Medium school that change would have a massive impact on them. Many children with learning difficulties, especially ASD feel very isolated even in a supported environment. If they were made to attend a school out of the area this would isolate them further from the community as a whole. How has this been overlooked and why has it not been addressed?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“Carmarthenshire County Council’s policy is that all its schools should be inclusive, with children with additional learning needs being educated in a mainstream setting alongside their peers wherever possible. In the vast majority of cases this is achieved, with all children benefiting.

Whilst the system is designed to meet the needs of learners though an universal and inclusive approach for a small number of children with significant and complex additional needs this is not always possible and specialised provision offers a more appropriate learning setting.

In order to make sure that the needs of all learners are met the schools system in Carmarthenshire includes a range of provision for children with additional needs. A specialist school or unit offer education to children with the most profound or complex needs where a mainstream setting is either not suitable for the children’s needs or where parents prefer an alternative setting. Selected secondary and primary schools across the county include specialised units for children with particular needs, such as autism, sensory impairment or speech and language delay. The Education and Children’s Services Department provides specific additional support in schools wherever practicable so that as many children as possible remain in their local school. Whilst the Council’s preference is to meet the needs of all children in a mainstream setting wherever possible this is not always practicable.

All pupils with additional learning needs have specific individual plans based on their circumstances and a tailored support programme is provided according to need. Generally, an additional learning need is not a barrier to learning two languages. It is important to assess and monitor progress in each or all of the languages that a child is using or learning, including sign and visually supported communication systems required for some pupils, particularly as the stronger developed language can be used to support and build learning through a lesser

developed language medium. Staff are required to differentiate the curriculum and make reasonable adjustments to the language of instruction and response in order to accommodate additional needs and ensure access to the curriculum and learning progress. At times it may be appropriate to target additional support in one language for a period to consolidate and accelerate learning, e.g. in literacy. There will be rare instances, however, where a child may be diagnosed with a condition that is not conducive to a fully bilingual education. In these circumstances a package of support is identified by professional practitioners and discussed with parents. Arrangements are made for the child to attend an appropriate school where their needs can be met. It may be the case that on a small number of occasions the needs of an individual child cannot be met at the local school as, notwithstanding the Council's commitment to inclusive education, it is simply not practicable to meet all needs at every school. In the last five years the Educational and Child Psychology Service has been involved in only one or two cases each year where a move of school has been advised. To place this into context, Carmarthenshire's school system serves around 27,000 pupils in total and so the frequency of pupil movement for additional learning needs is very low indeed.

It is this Council's experience that the vast majority of pupils with a wide range of additional learning needs and abilities are successful in our schools irrespective of the language of instruction but the Council does acknowledge that there will be a very few children whose needs cannot be met other than through provision at a specialist unit.

For the Llangennech proposal the support provided to children currently in the schools with additional needs will continue through the medium in which they currently receive their education. Should the proposal be implemented, all future pupils will receive this support mainly through the medium of Welsh, with appropriate adjustments being made to meet pupils' individual additional needs."

Mrs Beddows asked the following supplementary question:-

"As it now seems the Council's policy of enforcement of the Welsh language, is it also now the Council's policy that inclusion for children with special educational needs in Llangennech, it only seems that this is offered through the medium of Welsh for children that are Welsh speaking. So children who need an English education are going to be sent to special units or special schools needlessly, out of their community school, simply because of a language barrier."

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"I refer back to part of my answer. At times it may be appropriate to target additional support in one language for a period to consolidate and accelerate the learning. There will be rare instances, however, where a child may be diagnosed with a condition that is not conducive to a fully bilingual education. Can I emphasise the word rare there."

5.5. QUESTION BY MR KARL HARRIES TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

The Chair advised that Mr Harries was unable to attend today's meeting and had requested him to ask the question on his behalf.

"I am a parent of 3 former pupils and grandfather of two current pupils at Llangennech School, one of whom was nonverbal at age 4 and has learning disabilities. All of my children attended Llangennech School through the Welsh medium. My wife and I being non Welsh speakers watched them struggle and were unable to help them. This left us with a feeling of helplessness that we would not wish upon any parent let alone a parent of a child with learning disabilities. This in itself is a very stressful and demanding task without the addition of a language barrier. I would like to ask if actual proof and not conjecture and the constant use of the word belief can be provided in order to substantiate claims which state that Welsh medium education is as successful if not more successful than English medium education for children who have a learning disability? With emphasis placed upon children with significant learning disabilities, nonverbal children and moreover children with disabilities from non Welsh speaking homes."

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

I am sorry to learn of Mr Harries experiences with his children and grand children at school in Llangennech and I very much hope that their circumstances are by now much improved. I am advised, however, by the Council's professional officers that Mr Harries' family's experience is not typical of the position across schools in Carmarthenshire. It is always difficult to generalise when considering the circumstances of children with a physical or learning disability as the needs of an individual child can be very specific.

It is also difficult to present absolute proof as requested by Mr Harries as we are not at liberty to make public the circumstances of individual children and so we have to rely upon generalisations in a debate such as this, accepting that there is always likely to be an exception that can be pointed to.

I can say to Mr Harries and others that the general comments that I am able to offer draw upon the advice of experienced professionals. I can also say with complete confidence that I have witnessed at first hand the dedication of our officers who support children with additional needs and the care that our officers exercise towards them.

Generally, an additional learning need is not a barrier to learning two languages. It is important to assess and monitor progress in each or all of the languages that a child is using or learning, including sign and visually supported communication systems required for some pupils, particularly as the stronger developed language can be used to support and build learning through a lesser developed language medium.

School based staff and peripatetic staff are required to differentiate the curriculum and make reasonable adjustments to the language of instruction and response in order to accommodate additional needs and ensure access to the curriculum and learning progress. At times it may be appropriate to target additional support in one language for a period to consolidate and accelerate learning, e.g. in literacy.

There will be rare instances, however, where a child may be diagnosed with a condition that is not conducive to a fully bilingual education. In these

circumstances a package of support will be identified by professional practitioners and discussed with parents. Arrangements are made for the child to attend an appropriate school where their needs can be met. It may be the case that on a small number of occasions the needs of an individual child cannot be met at the local school as, notwithstanding the Council's commitment to inclusive education, it is simply not practicable to meet all needs at every school.

In the last five years the Educational and Child Psychology Service has been involved in only one or two cases each year where a move of school has been advised. To place this into context, Carmarthenshire's school system serves around 27,000 pupils in total and so the frequency of pupil movement for additional learning needs is very low indeed.

In conclusion I can only repeat that I am sorry that Mr Harries feels that this approach has not succeeded sufficiently well in the case of his family."

5.6. QUESTION BY MR DARREN SEWARD TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

"You have stated that as an Authority you are endeavouring to increase the number of bilingual pupils within Carmarthenshire and have developed a policy in order to delivery this strategy. We contacted Mr. Sully on the 29th June requesting information as to which schools had already gone through this process prior to Llangennech and which were the ones programmed to follow the initiative after Llangennech. In his response Mr. Sully stated that, I quote, 'The situation at other schools has no bearing on the proposal for Llangennech'. Can you please outline that the imposition of Welsh Medium education at Llangennech is part of a wider policy strategy being pursued by the Authority?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

The proposal for the schools in Llangennech is consistent with the County Council's strategic programme to expand Welsh medium education and the development of bilingual young people across the county of Carmarthenshire, as set out in the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).

Carmarthenshire County Council has a statutory responsibility under Part 4 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) for its area with the explicit aim of improving planning of the provision of education through the medium of Welsh, for improving the standards of that education and of the teaching of Welsh.

In April 2014 the County Council formally adopted a comprehensive strategy for the development of the Welsh language in Carmarthenshire, endorsing the recommendations of a politically balanced group of elected members that had examined in depth the status of the Welsh language in the county in the wake of the 2011 census of the population. The strategy requires action on 73 points, 21 of which apply to the education service. All relevant recommendations and actions from the strategy have been incorporated within Carmarthenshire's WESP.

The Plan seeks to achieve the following specific outcomes relevant to the

Llangennech schools proposal:

- *To increase the number of 7 year old learners who are educated through the medium of Welsh.*
- *More learners continue to improve their language skills as they move from primary to secondary school.*
- *More students have higher language skills in Welsh.*

It also sets out to achieve the specified outcomes and aims by means of the following actions:

- *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.*
- *Target three dual stream schools to transfer to being Welsh medium by 2017.*

It is important to note that the WESP requires all primary schools in Carmarthenshire, including English medium schools, to move along the language continuum, progressively expanding the proportion of education that is delivered through the medium of Welsh, with a view to ensuring that in time all children leaving primary school are fully bilingual.

The pace at which schools will be able to expand bilingualism and Welsh medium education will depend upon local circumstances but the expectation for progress applies to all schools. The schools in Llangennech have been identified as having the potential to move quickly to become Welsh medium due to the progressive increase in numbers in the Welsh stream over recent years, as evidenced by the data. Furthermore, standards across both schools have been consistently good, demonstrating that the children are succeeding well in all subjects and are able to thrive through a Welsh medium education.

Mr Seward asked the following supplementary question:-

“Can you please advise us of which schools have already undergone the immersion programme and which ones are due to follow the same process and for these when are they planned exactly to be done?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“Unfortunately, I cannot discuss what other individual schools are doing, it is down to their Governing Bodies and I am not in contact with those Governing Bodies at present.”

5.7. QUESTION BY MS NIKKI LLOYD TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

The Chair advised that Ms Lloyd was unable to attend today's meeting and had requested him to ask her question on her behalf.

“Change for a community or organisation is generally seen as a good thing. Change for change sake is seen as counter-productive. Change based on no demand is to be avoided at all costs. Following a recent FOI request regarding the supply and demand of Welsh books within the library at Llangennech we have been advised the following.

English Books 5,186 stocked - 13,909 lent within the year = over twice the demand of stock.

Welsh Books 531 stocked 10% of English Stock - 414 lent within the year = under demand on availability.

Total books lent = 14,440 Welsh lent = 2.8% of all books

From this relatively simple piece of research that not only are you attempting to socially engineer a change within the school but through your actions are attempting to socially engineer a community which has no demand or leaning towards a pure Welsh approach. Do you agree?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“Whilst the proposals for change at the Llangennech schools are primary aimed at securing enhanced educational outcomes for children a consequential benefit could be the increased use of the Welsh language in the community over time. In the view of the County Council this would be a welcome outcome.”

5.8. QUESTION BY MR NIGEL HUGHES TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

“Parents have been subjected to many contradictions regarding the languages taught in reception classes leaving them confused and distressed at the impact this situation might be having on their children. Gareth Jones has recently made a statement refuting the claims that 'Llangennech Infant's School has acted illegally in terms of language provision in the foundation phase.' He goes onto state that 'The County wishes to reassure all parents that this allegation is completely untrue. Provision at the school is entirely appropriate and the school wishes to preform to high standards with pupils achieving good outcomes.' It is interesting to note that this statement does not actually elucidate anything...but adds to the confusion.

Mr Rob Sully stated in the Scrutiny meeting of the 23rd May 2015 that Reception Classes were Welsh, but teachers at the new parents meeting held a couple of weeks ago were told it is taught in English Welsh English.

Carmarthenshire County Council have also stated that reception class are welsh learning to some parents who have contacted them. The children's homework and reading books are completely in Welsh.

We are concerned that figures have been engineered and English Stream was not naturally declining but hurdles placed in parent's way to achieve the Welsh Medium goal. Were the Local Authority aware about the false information being provided to parents about the reception classes and the differing views and also

confirm the date it changed to Welsh, who proposed it and how was it communicated to affected persons such as parents?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

*"I stand by the statement I made to the press a few weeks ago, to which Mr Hughes refers, on arrangements within the infants' school. I also consider that the content of my statement is very clear. My statement declared that "Llangennech Infants School has **not** acted illegally", rather than what is presented in the written question. The present arrangements in the school are that all pupils in the reception classes are taught principally through the medium of Welsh, with English used as a facilitator according to the needs of individual children. Parents of pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 classes presently have the option to place their children in either the Welsh stream or the English stream.*

These arrangements have been introduced through discussion between the school and parents. A Council officer was party to the discussions at the request of the school. As the initiative was progressed by the school I am not able to confirm the date on which the arrangements were introduced. All the data and figures used within the development of the proposal are factual. Neither I nor the Education and Children's Services Department are aware of any alleged false information being given to parents."

Mr Hughes asked the following supplementary question:-

"Who is going to be held accountable for this false advertisement which is seeing children leave the school now and the truth is emerging and the trust is lost?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"I understand your concerns with the comments you made. I am not aware of the e-mail and will deal with that when I see the e-mail."

5.9. QUESTION BY MS KAZ DEACON TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

The Chair advised that Ms Deacon was unable to attend today's meeting and had requested that he ask the question on her behalf.

"On page 28 of the Consultation document it shows all children within Derbyn 1 and Derbyn 2 classes of Llangennech Infant School are in Welsh medium, please can you confirm the exact date the language category changed from bilingual to Welsh medium for these classes?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"The arrangements to immerse children in the Welsh language in the reception (derbyn) classes have been introduced through discussion between the school and parents, with some advice from a Council officer. As the initiative was progressed by the school I am not able to confirm the date on which the

arrangements were introduced.”

5.10. QUESTION BY MR ROBERT WILLOCK TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

“On the programme week in week out Councillor Campbell said and I quote” Research shows over many years when you provide choice the numbers of Welsh medium decreases. So you have a dilemma if you provide choice fewer people opt for various reasons but with a level of compulsion you are giving young people those opportunities to be bilingual. Even though this level of compulsion or lack of choice contravenes article 2 of the first protocol to the European convention on human rights. Do you agree with Councillor Campbell’s remarks?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

In making his comments as part of the television programme referred to by Mr Willock Councillor Campbell was expressing his personal views on this issue and in doing so I expect that he was drawing upon his experience as a professional language and educational consultant, with knowledge of the situation across Wales.

Our experience here in Carmarthenshire has been that over recent years the number and proportion of parents preferring a Welsh medium education has been increasing. This is evidenced by the data and, indeed, reflects the situation in the Llangennech schools where the number and proportion of children in the Welsh language stream has been increasing whilst the numbers and proportion in the English language stream have been decreasing.

I am advised that the Council’s proposals in this matter do not in any way contravene European or domestic law.

It is my view that choice is an important issue in the consideration of this proposal with the most important aspect of choice being that which is available to children as they progress through their education and early lives. The Council’s proposal to develop bilingual children by the time they leave primary school gives children a choice as they move forward to secondary school. The most effective way of developing bilingual children in the primary sector is to immerse them in Welsh medium education. It is generally accepted in the education profession that studying Welsh as a second language does not develop truly bilingual young people.”

Mr Willock asked the following supplementary question:-

“Is the Executive Board Member entering this meeting with a blind eye and a closed mind?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“Certainly not, that is why I’m here this morning to answer your questions and to be as honest as I possibly can about them.”

5.11. QUESTION BY MR DEAN BOLGIANI TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

“Following on from the potential benefits of bilingualism which have been highlighted such as health and educational achievements but Llangennech is a green flagged, bilingual school. Surely the local authorities’ efforts should be focused upon increasing Welsh within English Medium schools and possibly making them Dual Stream. This would increase and promote bilingualism in its truer sense whilst also giving parents increased choices. This type of strategy would capture a larger percentage of the Carmarthenshire school population and is a unifying approach as opposed to divisive. Can you explain why Llangennech is being targeted under new policy?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“Carmarthenshire County Council has a statutory responsibility under Part 4 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) for its area with the explicit aim of improving planning of the provision of education through the medium of Welsh, for improving the standards of that education and of the teaching of Welsh. The Council is required to set targets for the aims.

Carmarthenshire’s Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2014-2017 has been approved by the Welsh Government in accordance with the requirements of the Act. The Plan seeks to achieve the following specific outcomes relevant to the Llangennech schools proposal:

- To increase the number of 7 year old learners who are educated through the medium of Welsh.*
- More learners continue to improve their language skills as they move from primary to secondary school.*
- More students have higher language skills in Welsh.*

The Plan also includes the following aim:

- Increase the provision of Welsh medium education in Carmarthenshire and 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.*

The Plan sets out to achieve the specified outcomes and aims by means of a number of actions, 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.*
- Target three dual stream schools to transfer to being Welsh medium by 2017.*

It is important to note that the WESP requires all primary schools in Carmarthenshire, including English medium schools, to move along the language

continuum, progressively expanding the proportion of education that is delivered through the medium of Welsh, with a view to ensuring that in time all children leaving primary school are fully bilingual.

The schools at Llangennech have been identified as having the potential to move quickly along the language continuum. Over recent years the number of children in the Welsh language stream has increased progressively whilst the number in the English language stream has been decreasing, so the move to Welsh language provision across the school is a natural progression. Standards across both schools have been consistently good, demonstrating that the children are succeeding well in all subjects and are able to thrive through a Welsh medium education.”

Mr Bolgiani asked the following supplementary question:-

“Are these potential learners and Welsh as a second language learners not of value in promoting and supporting the Welsh language and have they been taken into account as part of a Welsh Language Impact Assessment?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children

“English is not being taken away from the Llangennech School, it will be taught as a subject to a very, very high standard and that is what happens in these schools. Certainly English will be a major factor in the school as well and it will also be used to teach and support in other subjects.”

5.12. QUESTION BY MS ORLA WILLIAMS TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

“International studies have shown that only inclusive equal status of dual languages actually increase use of both languages into young adulthood. Current CCC and WG policy of excluding non-Welsh speaking families is not cost effective and does not positively promote the Welsh language. Are the Council aware that a high percentage of those leaving the dual English and Welsh stream in Llangennech go on to do well at GCSE Welsh and continue studying Welsh or chosen subjects through the medium of Welsh in Bryngwyn and Coleg Sir Gar?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“International evidence, cited by the Welsh Government in its published documentation, confirms that the most effective way of developing bilingual children is to immerse them in the less common language whilst also developing their skills in the more common language. The Welsh Government also promotes that for children who are from non-Welsh speaking families that immersion in Welsh in school is particularly important in embedding the language.

The Council is aware that some children from Llangennech Junior School have chosen to attend secondary schools such as Bryngwyn, which although not categorised as a Welsh medium school has been expanding its Welsh medium provision to offer increased choice to learners. The County Council commends

Bryngwyn school for its progressive attitude towards language choice and it actively encouraging other secondary schools to introduce similar programmes.

The important point of note in this regard is that children in the Llangennech schools who have studied though the Welsh language have a choice as they move into secondary school with regard to the proportion of their secondary education that they follow in either the Welsh or English languages. If they had not followed their primary education predominantly through the medium of Welsh they would not have this choice.

Pupils from the English language stream will have followed a Welsh second language programme up to GCSE level and most will have secured a qualification in this subject. It is now widely accepted in education circles that studying Welsh second language does not develop truly bilingual young people. In fact the curriculum reform underway currently across Wales recognises this and new standards Welsh language competencies are set to be developed over the coming few years."

Ms Williams asked the following supplementary question:-

"If Carmarthenshire County Council is truly interested in increasing the use of Welsh in an inclusive way, bringing in non-Welsh speaking families, wouldn't you have developed clear strategies that would develop beyond the age of 11 and that would have impact to increase the number of Welsh speakers, such as myself?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"There is a policy for secondary schools as well. That is being developed and Bryngwyn is a prime example and other schools in Llanelli are following on in the same way as well."

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5.13. QUESTION BY MS SARAH MARTIN TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

The Chair advised that Ms Martin was unable to attend today's meeting and had requested that he ask her question on her behalf.

"On P138 of the consultation report the summary/conclusion from Estyn's states "In Estyn's opinion, the proposal to merge the two schools is likely to maintain the current educational standards. However, the proposal does not provide sufficient detail about the alternative options and arrangements available to those pupils who may choose to follow their education through the medium of English should the English stream at Llangennech close". The report time and time again cites it will be a parent's choice to send the child elsewhere yet there will be no coverage of cost and alternative English provision is deemed to be full. The local government response to Estyn on p140 also concurs stating "...the proposer does not give sufficient consideration to the effect of ending English medium provision on the pupils who may wish to follow their education through their medium of English". Although current students are considered what viable alternatives are there for future students who do not wish to follow a Welsh education and how can

the council justify a proposal that is not backed by both Estyn and local government?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"The County Council has acknowledged the comments made by Estyn and responded within the Consultation Report by noting the Council's desire that all local children will attend the local school in Llangennech. Should, however, some parents elect to place their children elsewhere the Council has identified possible options of alternative schools at which parents could apply for places. These are examples of adjacent alternative schools but there are others available. In responding to a school organisation proposal Estyn will neither support nor oppose a proposal. They will express a view on their interpretation of the impact of a proposal on provision for children. Crucially in this regard Estyn declare their opinion that "the proposal to merge the two schools is likely to maintain the current educational standards". Given that standards in both current schools are good this opinion from Estyn should be reassuring for parents. The narrative on page 140 of the Consultation Document which refers to "the Local Government Response" is actually the response of this local authority, Carmarthenshire County Council, to the comments made by Estyn in their submission which require further clarification. I apologise if this was not entirely clear."

5.14. QUESTION BY MRS LAURA PEARCE TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

The Chair advised that Mrs Pearce was unable to attend today's meeting and had requested that he ask her question on her behalf.

"During the last meeting it was clear that the committee / chair understands the many benefits of bilingualism from an early age and how a dual stream school offers this and indeed this was repeatedly referred too. To be very clear, Llangennech School is currently a dual stream school offering bilingualism to children from both English and Welsh families locally in a close knit community. Three of my children have been through or are in the English stream and 2 are in the Welsh stream, this choice has been fundamentally important depending on them as individuals (none have special needs). My question regarding this is quite simply, how can it possibly be a benefit to remove one language (The English language) from a dual stream (bilingual) school - how is one language (Welsh) better than two (Welsh and English) when the very essence of bilingualism is 2 languages?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"The County Council's strategy is founded upon the understanding that schools are a critically important component in developing children so that they are fully bilingual by the time they leave primary school. International evidence, cited by the Welsh Government in its published documentation, confirms that the most effective way of developing bilingual children is to immerse them in the less common language whilst also developing their skills in the more common language. The Welsh Government also promotes that for children who are from

non-Welsh speaking families that immersion in Welsh in school is particularly important in embedding the language.

It also important to note that within a Welsh medium education children also have their English language skills developed.

Furthermore, the evidence of recent years at the Llangennech schools is that children in the Welsh language stream achieve good standards in both the English and Welsh languages. Children in the English language stream, however, do not achieve equally high skills in the Welsh language as they follow a Welsh second language programme.

The evidence also confirms that children in the Welsh language stream from non-Welsh speaking homes achieve consistently good outcomes in all subjects, including the English language”.

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5.15. QUESTION BY MRS MAUREEN JONES TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

The Chair advised that Mrs Jones was unable to attend today’s meeting and had requested that he ask her question on her behalf.

“I am a former pupil of Ysgol Llangennech, my sisters, my daughter, my grandchildren and great grandchildren have attended, or are currently attending Llangennech schools.

Could I please ask why, after over 60 years of successful bilingual education taught through the medium of English and Welsh, many years of excellent reports, and a proven record, that Carmarthenshire County Council feels the need to split a close community, with the school at its heart, and alienate those who choose, often for social, personal, or disability reasons, English medium education for their children, and promote single stream education.”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“The County Council’s Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) seeks to secure the benefits of bilingualism for all children in Carmarthenshire. The WESP is founded upon the policy framework laid down by the Welsh Government, which draws up evidence from international research on the educational benefits of bilingualism, which can include the strengthening of cognitive skills, increased mental agility, enhanced powers of concentration and an ability to focus on a range of tasks, blocking out potential distractions. Beyond education, research in Canada suggests that bilingualism can help delay the onset of dementia symptoms. I expect that it will increasingly become the case that young people in Wales who are bilingual will have broader career prospects than their monolingual peers. Being bilingual or multilingual also broadens individuals’ cultural experiences and can enhance career prospects.

International evidence, cited by the Welsh Government in its published documents, confirms that the most effective way of developing bilingual children is

to immerse them in the less common language whilst also developing their skills in the more common language. The Welsh Government also promotes that for children who are from non-Welsh speaking families that immersion in Welsh in school is particularly important in embedding the language. It is my belief that every child should receive the opportunity to develop as a fully bilingual young person within the local education system so that their life opportunities are maximised and that the most effective way to achieve this is through Welsh medium education in the primary phase.”

5.16. QUESTION BY MS SALLY ANN THOMAS TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

“In this climate of austerity, cutbacks and uncertainty, why is CCC spending so much time, money and valuable resources on FIXING a school that is NOT BROKEN? Llangennech is a very successful green, bilingual, dual stream school, whose motto is "Education for ALL". Wouldn't this valuable money and resources be better spent on yellow and amber English medium schools to strive for them to achieve a high standard of bilingual dual stream education like Llangennech?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“The County Council is promoting the current proposal for primary education in Llangennech as it firmly believes that this is in the best interests of children's education. The Llangennech schools are, indeed, very successful and the proposal seeks to improve even further the opportunity for children attending the schools to secure continually improving outcomes. Generally speaking it is more expensive to operate a dual stream school than a monolingual school so should the proposal succeed it will deliver greater financial efficiency over time.”

5.17. QUESTION BY MRS EMMA LOMAS TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

“Following the report provided by Carmarthenshire County Council regarding the responses from the consultation process we have been approached by several parents stating that their proforma's were not included in the document, even though they had been submitted and receipts received. From the responses received it would appear that there is strong support for keeping the dual stream with a total of 154 recognised responses as well as a signed petition of 505 signatories (which has already been submitted). The against group have been open in sharing their names and relationship to the school whilst the for campaigners have continued with the clandestine approach of not wishing to be named with over 30 anonymous entries. Many of the pro change consultees were past teachers, councillors, head teachers and current staff. It was suggested that the responses were relatively equal with for and against. The total number of those against compared to those for is a ratio of 5:1. How is this considered to be equal when the consultees for supporting the change do not appear to include many parental opinions and a vast number of those against the change do not appear to have been included?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education

& Children:-

“The Consultation Report included within the papers before the Executive Board includes all submissions received by the Education and Children’s Services Department by the extended date for the closure of the consultation period on the 18th March 2016. The Department has checked all the submissions received and is able to confirm this position, whilst noting that three respondents expressed their desire that their comments are not made public. Accordingly these three responses have been discounted for the purposes of the Consultation Report.

The original closure date for the submission of responses, set in accordance with the School Organisation Code, was the 11th March 2016 but at the request of some people the Director of Education and Children’s Services agreed to extend the consultation period by one week to the 18th March to allow all interested parties ample time to submit their views. A considerable exchange of correspondence has continued with various interested parties after the closure of the consultation period but in order to ensure compliance with the School Organisation Code and to ensure that all parties are treated equitably and consistently only submissions received by the 18th March have been included in the Consultation Report.

The decision on whether or not to proceed with the proposal must, by virtue of the law, be made on the grounds of the best interests of learners. It is, therefore, the educational merits that must be the determining factor in decision making, rather than the number of responses received either in favour of or against the proposal. All persons or organisations have a right to express their views, irrespective of their individual status. Should any person or organisation consider that they have made a submission by the 18th March 2016 and it has not been included in the Consultation Report they are invited to formally write to the Department setting out the details and providing evidence of their submission.

Should the proposal proceed to the next stage of the statutory process all interested parties will have a further opportunity to make representations to the County Council following the publication of a statutory notice before a final decision is made.”

Mrs Lomas asked the following supplementary question:-

“In a just and fair society trust is fostered by transparency and openness. How can this process be deemed transparent and open when so much evidence points to the manipulation of statistics and the misleading of parents by those entrusted with the care of their children.”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children

“I understand your comments but everything is as open and transparent as it possibly can be.”

5.18. QUESTION BY MRS JACQUELINE SEWARD TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

“It is acknowledged that the Welsh Assembly led by the Labour Government has set out a vision to increase the Welsh language in Wales across various aspects of life. The Assembly has confirmed in writing that no targets have been given regarding the Welsh language so how this is implemented is at the discretion of each Local Authority. For example, the Counties of South Wales such as Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Cardiff each have a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan that aim to increase Welsh without using authoritarian approaches. We are not aware of any headline deliverables within any political manifesto to forcibly change the existing language choices at primary schools within the County without consideration for the preferences of choice of parents and the community being taken into account. Can you please advise under what mandate and promises made to the electorate by members is this initiative is being undertaken?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“Carmarthenshire County Council, like all other local authorities in Wales, has a statutory responsibility under Part 4 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) for its area with the explicit aim of improving planning of the provision of education through the medium of Welsh, for improving the standards of that education and of the teaching of Welsh. The Council is required to set targets for the aims.

In April 2014 the County Council formally adopted a comprehensive strategy for the development of the Welsh language in Carmarthenshire, endorsing the recommendations of a politically balanced group of elected members that had examined in depth the status of the Welsh language in the county in the wake of the 2011 census of the population. The strategy requires action on 73 points, 21 of which apply to the education service. All relevant recommendations and actions from the strategy have been incorporated within Carmarthenshire’s WESP. The language strategy received cross-party support from elected members when it was adopted at a meeting of the full County Council.

As is set out in the report to the Executive Board the proposal is consistent with national policy to expand Welsh medium education in order to develop increasing numbers of fully bilingual young people and to enable more children to benefit from the advantages of bilingualism, confirmed by evidence gathered through research internationally, also set out in the report.

The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan has been subject to public consultation during its preparation and subsequent review. Its contents have, therefore, been subject to a test of public opinion in line with statutory requirements.”

Mrs Seward asked the following supplementary question:-

“Do Plaid Cymru advocate iron fisted policies over democratic ones and is their goal to eradicate English medium schools from the county?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“I hear you mention Plaid Cymru there but it was a cross-party agreement and that was agreed at County Council as well by everybody.”

5.19. QUESTION BY MRS KATE WARNER TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

“In complying with the Schools Standards & Organisation Wales Act (2013), the Welsh Government directed every Local Education Authority in Wales to produce a 'Welsh in Education Strategic Plan' to implement its policy of expanding Welsh medium education. Carmarthenshire County Council complied with the Government's directive and produced the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan which was approved by the Welsh Government.

If the proposal for Llangennech School is not implemented, surely the Council would not be then complying with the Welsh Government's approved 'Welsh in Education Strategic Plan' for Carmarthenshire. Is this interpretation correct?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“The interpretation offered by Mrs Warner is, in my opinion, fair and reasonable. This County Council has clearly declared its strategic intention to develop Welsh medium education within its published Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, which has been subject to public consultation during its preparation and subsequent review. The WESP is a matter of formal Council policy and the proposal for the schools in Llangennech is founded upon this policy.”

5.20. QUESTION BY MRS ELIN GRIFFITHS TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

“Bilingualism offers many benefits and research shows that children who understand more than one language have the ability to think more flexibly and creatively. Two languages can offer economic benefits when searching for a job in the future, it enables communication with a wider range of people, the ability to experience two different cultures and gives people the opportunity to be part of all aspects of social life. Does the Executive Board agree that no child should be at a disadvantage, educationally, socially or economically, therefore by agreeing that Llangennech Infant and Junior schools continue along the language continuum, assurance will be given that each child will enjoy the same benefits?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“I agree very much with the benefits of bilingualism as set out by Mrs Griffiths and agree wholeheartedly that every child should have the opportunity to access these opportunities. I also believe that the most effective way of securing these benefits for our children is through a Welsh medium education in primary school.”

5.21. QUESTION BY MR OWAIN GLENISTER TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

“Considering the pressure on Carmarthenshire County Council to respond to the

Welsh Language Measure 2011, i.e. to provide core services through both languages, does the Executive Board consider that developing individuals with the ability to communicate effectively in two languages is essential as a long term strategy when trying to develop a workforce that can provide services through the medium of Welsh and English. If so, do you feel that this change to Ysgol Llangennech will give children better opportunities to develop into bilingual adults, and therefore more likely to secure a post in the public sector?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"I agree with Mr Glenister that the proposals for the Llangennech schools, founded upon the objectives set out in the County Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, will support learners in not only developing their language skills in English and Welsh but in their broader education and personal development also.

The new language standards that apply currently to all councils in Wales, and will in time apply across the public sector, introduce additional service provision demands which will require greater numbers of people with high level Welsh language skills. It seems inevitable, therefore, that young people who are fully bilingual will be better placed in the jobs market than their monolingual peers and stand to have strengthened career prospects by comparison."

Mr Glenister asked the following supplementary question:-

"Considering the recent report by Donaldson along with the fact that a high number of national statistics prove without a doubt that bilingualism is of benefit, is it timely therefore to consider that Welsh education is not only a way towards bilingualism but is also an effective way of strengthening understanding of our culture and heritage."

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"The Donaldson report will be essential to the development of education over the next decade. I hope that we have the right leaders here in Carmarthenshire to lead on this. We have innovative schools already in place. And I think Carmarthenshire will lead on the Donaldson report in Wales. Welsh is integral part of the report."

5.22. QUESTION BY MRS HELEN MAINWARING TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

"As Labour was leading the Council when the 'Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2014-2017' was announced in 2013, which stated the intention to change dual stream schools into Welsh schools, does the Labour Party's commitment to this policy remain the same, and can we have the same assurance, now that the Leadership of the Council has changed, that this Strategic Plan will continue to have the support of the Councillors and be implemented in the same way?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“The County Council’s Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) was formally adopted at a meeting of the County Council on the 10th September 2014 and enjoyed cross party support.

The present administration of the County Council, a Plaid Cymru and Independent Group coalition, remains committed to the contents of the Plan and its implementation. The Executive Board does not include any Labour councillors presently.

As Executive Board Member for Education and Children’s Services, and a member of the Plaid Cymru Group, I am not able to speak on behalf of the members of the Labour Group of the Council.”

Mrs Mainwaring asked the following supplementary question:-

“Can you give us an assurance that his discussion will not be used for political purposes and that councillors will look at it based on the research and firm evidence in favour of the advantages of bilingualism and avoid the temptation to use it for political gain?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:

“I cannot guarantee that, only as far as Plaid Cymru is concerned, and I know that our party will be supportive.”

5.23. QUESTION BY MR HYWEL DAVIES TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

The Chair advised that Mr Davies was unable to attend today’s meeting and had requested that he ask his question on his behalf.

“Are members of the Executive Board aware of the fact that the Assembly has a cross-party commitment to create a bilingual Wales and that employers are increasingly looking for bilingual skills as recent legislation insists that public bodies must provide services in the language choice of the customer?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“The County Council is aware of the Welsh Government’s policy framework for the Welsh language and the place of the Welsh language within education.

The Welsh Government has placed statutory duties upon all councils in Wales with respect to the Welsh language and it’s place within education. In response to this Carmarthenshire County Council has prepared its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and has formally adopted it as policy. At the heart of the Plan is a programme to develop and expand Welsh medium education and the bilingual capabilities of school pupils.

The advent of the Welsh Language Standards for all councils in Wales, and in time

the wider public sector, will increase the importance of bilingual skills for young people in the future and in my view those who possess these skills will have enhanced career prospects.”

5.24. QUESTION BY MRS CATHRIN JONES TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

“Have members of the Executive Board read the recent research in Canada that proves that bilingualism can have a positive impact on the brain in later life by keeping it alert and helping to reduce the possibility of suffering dementia?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“I am aware of the research in Canada referred to as it is cited in the Welsh Government’s Welsh-medium Education Strategy (2010) and is often referred to in other international research on the topic of bilingualism.

There is consensus across a range of international research and evidence that bilingualism brings with it many educational advantages for individuals, including the strengthening of cognitive skills, increased mental agility, enhanced powers of concentration and an ability to focus on a range of tasks, blocking out potential distractions. Being bilingual or multilingual also broadens individuals’ cultural experiences and can enhance career prospects.”

5.25. QUESTION BY MR MARTYN WILLIAMS TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

“In Welsh medium and Dual stream schools, there is a specific emphasis on developing Welsh through immersion methods across all areas of learning of the Foundation Phase, whatever language the child speaks at home. The ‘Welsh in the Foundation Phase’ report by Estyn published in December 2013 states “that the standards in pupils’ language, literacy and communication skills are similar to those in English-medium schools and settings, and are line with the expected level at that age”. Therefore does the Executive Board agree that Welsh in the Foundation Phase is successful in providing children from Welsh speaking homes and English speaking homes the best start in their education?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“As Executive Board Member for Education and Children’s Services I do agree that immersion in Welsh during the Foundation Phase offers children the best possible start in their education through an opportunity to develop fully bilingual skills and to enable them to benefit from the further educational advantages that international research has shown are given to children who are developed bilingually.

International evidence, cited by the Welsh Government in its published documents, confirms that the most effective way of developing bilingual children is to immerse them in the less common language whilst also developing their skills in

the more common language. The Welsh Government also promotes that for children who are from non-Welsh speaking families that immersion in Welsh in school is particularly important in embedding the language.”

5.26. QUESTION BY MR MICHAEL REES TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

As a retired primary school teacher in Carmarthenshire with my final post as a Deputy Head Teacher in a Llanelli school, I would like to ask a question about the strength of a Welsh language education. My wife and I were both brought up in entirely English speaking homes, however, we decided to send our children through Welsh medium education. As English speakers we as parents experienced no problems with our childrens' homework, rather the opposite as it enhanced our knowledge and understanding. During my years in teaching, I did experience teaching in dual stream schools. I have seen at first hand that teaching Welsh as a second language in dual or English medium schools is an overall failure and that dual streams do dilute the Welsh language as is so evident on the playground. Does the Executive Board agree with my observations that the most effective education to produce totally fluent bilingual children - speaking, reading and writing in English and Welsh is a Welsh language medium education?

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“As Executive Board Member for Education and Children’s Services I do agree that immersion in Welsh during the Foundation Phase offers children the best possible start in their education through an opportunity to develop fully bilingual skills and to enable them to benefit from the further educational advantages that international research has shown are given to children who are developed bilingually.

It is now widely accepted in education circles that studying Welsh second language does not develop truly bilingual young people. In fact the curriculum reform underway currently across Wales recognises this and new standards Welsh language competencies are set to be developed over the coming few years.

International evidence, cited by the Welsh Government in its published documents, confirms that the most effective way of developing bilingual children is to immerse them in the less common language whilst also developing their skills in the more common language. The Welsh Government also promotes that for children who are from non-Welsh speaking families that immersion in Welsh in school is particularly important in embedding the language.”

5.27. QUESTION BY MRS RHIANEDD RHYS TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

“Between 2000 and 2006, the number of children at Ysgol y Ffwrnes had doubled and as a result of this, and other reasons, a new school was built to ensure that there were sufficient places, according to the projections, for the naturally increasing demand by parents for Welsh medium education in the Llanelli area. As these extended early years classes at Ysgol Ffwrnes are full or close to being full

for September 2016, does the Executive Board agree that this concrete evidence is the only way to ensure that this continued demand for Welsh medium education in the Llanelli area, which ensures that children leave primary school bilingual, is to ensure that Llangennech Infant and Junior schools continue along the language continuum and change to a Welsh medium school? “

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“In 2008 the County Council conducted a piece of work to assess the future demand for Welsh medium education in and around the town of Llanelli. The finding of this exercise was that demand was growing and that additional Welsh medium places were needed.

As a consequence a decision was taken to invest in new and expanded Welsh medium places across the town.

The Council took the opportunity of a project to provide new premises for Ysgol Gymraeg y Ffwrnes to expand the number of places at that school, more than trebling the size of the school. Since its opening in 2014 the school has proved very popular with the early years classes in the school either full or very full. In September 2016 it is expected that there will be 400 children registered at the school, compared with the school’s capacity of 480. On the basis of recent trends it is expected that school will be full in a couple of years.

The Council has also provided new premises for Ysgol Gymraeg Brynsierfel, which has maintained healthy pupil numbers.

I believe that the change of language category in Llangennech is a natural progression for the schools, evidenced by the increasing numbers opting for Welsh medium provision over recent years, which will provide consistent opportunity for children across the school to develop as fully bilingual learners by the time they leave for secondary school.”

5.28. QUESTION BY MRS MANON WILLIAMS TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

The Chair advised that Mrs Williams was unable to attend today’s meeting and had requested that he ask her question on her behalf.

“Ysgol Dewi Sant, the first Welsh medium school in Wales to be adopted by the local authority, was opened in 1947. Since then, Welsh medium education has expanded considerably in Wales in general, not as a result of promotion by local authorities, but mainly due to increasing demand by parents, as seen in Llangennech schools. Today, there are over 387 Welsh medium primary schools in Wales and this continues to increase gradually, at the same time the percentage of primary school aged children who received Welsh medium education increased from 18.8% in 2000/01 to 24% in 2014/15. Considering the success and the benefits of this type of teaching and bilingualism in general, which have been recognised world wide, will this Council now consider backing up the wisdom and far-sightedness of parents by actively promoting and marketing Welsh medium education?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"I share Mrs Williams' pride that the first Welsh school of the modern era was established here in Carmarthenshire, in the form of Ysgol Gymraeg Dewi Sant, and I too celebrate the growth in Welsh medium education across Wales over the intervening years. We within Carmarthenshire County Council have been working hard through our Modernising Education Programme for a number of years to meet increasing demand for Welsh medium education in our urban centres, especially Llanelli, where the new enlarged Ysgol y Ffwrnes has been created specifically for this purpose, as well as addressing the poor quality of the former school premises.

Carmarthenshire County Council has a progressive and clearly expressed strategy for the development of Welsh medium and bilingual education in the form of its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), which has been formally adopted by the County Council as policy. The WESP sets out a comprehensive programme of language development for schools and children across Carmarthenshire. It establishes the Council's broad strategy to develop bilingualism through the education service, principally by means of expanding Welsh medium education. The local authority has set out to "increase the provision of Welsh medium education in Carmarthenshire and ensure linguistic continuity from the nursery sector along the key stages to the secondary sector so that every pupil becomes fluent and confident in both Welsh and English languages." As an explicit part of the strategy the Council has made a commitment to "work closely with the staff and Governing Bodies of Carmarthenshire's dual stream schools in order for them to become Welsh medium schools."

In addition to proposals for Dual Stream schools the WESP expects every school, including schools that are currently designated as English medium, to progress along the language continuum, to increase the proportion of education that is delivered through the Welsh language. Clearly the pace at which schools will be able to expand bilingualism and Welsh medium education will depend upon local circumstances but the expectation for progress applies to all schools. The schools in Llangennech have been identified as having the potential to move quickly to become Welsh medium due to the progressive increase in numbers in the Welsh stream over recent years, as evidenced by the data.

Through my role as the Executive Board Member for Education and Children's Services I am eager to ensure that as many children as possible have the opportunity to develop as fully bilingual young people, enjoying all the wider benefits that international research has shown bilingualism brings to a young person and to their personal development and career opportunities."

5.29. QUESTION BY MRS SIAN LLOYD TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

"Does the Executive Board agree with me that national data published over recent years by the Welsh Government and Carmarthenshire Education Authority shows clearly that pupils from Welsh schools or streams perform better in external tests and assessments in core subjects (including English as a subject) than pupils in

English medium schools or streams, which shows that Welsh medium schools have clear educational benefits?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“The evidence in Carmarthenshire is that children who receive their education though the medium of Welsh generally achieve as well as children receiving their education through the medium of English in all subjects, including English language and other core subjects. This includes children from homes where Welsh is not the main language.

In November 2014 Estyn published a report on the findings of its examination of outcomes in ten bilingual secondary schools and commented that “... (some) teachers and pupils have the misconception that studying subjects through the medium of Welsh can hinder their academic success. In fact, pupils who follow their GCSE courses through the medium of Welsh achieve as well as, if not better than, those who follow most of their GCSE courses through the medium of English”.

The Department holds the view that Welsh medium education is the most effective means of developing bilingual children by the time they leave primary school and that this form of education offers children additional personal development and educational benefits.

Furthermore, evidence gathered internationally through research demonstrates that children who are developed bilingually benefit from additional learning capacity, including enhanced cognitive ability, improved task understanding and flexibility, enhanced powers of concentration, and so on.”

5.30. QUESTION BY MR CURTIS ROBERTS TO COUNCILLOR GARETH JONES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

The Chair advised that Mr Roberts was unable to attend today’s meeting and had requested that the Chair ask his question on his behalf.

“Can the Executive Board confirm, on the basis of their long term experience of introducing the Welsh language to children with special educational needs, with many having come from non-Welsh speaking homes, that this hasn’t had any negative effect on their education or development as individuals?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“Carmarthenshire County Council’s policy is that all its schools should be inclusive, with children with additional learning needs being educated in a mainstream setting alongside their peers wherever possible. In the vast majority of cases this is achieved, with all children benefiting.

Whilst the system is designed to meet the needs of learners though an universal and inclusive approach, for a small number of children with significant and complex additional needs this is not always possible and specialised provision can

offer a more appropriate learning setting.

The Education and Children's Services Department provides specific additional support in schools wherever practicable so that as many children as possible remain in their local school.

All pupils with additional learning needs have specific individual plans based on their circumstances and a tailored support programme is provided according to need. Generally, an additional learning need is not a barrier to learning two languages. It is important to assess and monitor progress in each or all of the languages that a child is using or learning, including sign and visually supported communication systems required for some pupils, particularly as the stronger developed language can be used to support and build learning through a lesser developed medium. Staff are required to differentiate the curriculum and make reasonable adjustments to the language of instruction and response in order to accommodate additional needs and ensure access to the curriculum and learning progress. At times it may be appropriate to target additional support in one language for a period to consolidate and accelerate learning, e.g. in literacy. There will be rare instances, however, where a child may be diagnosed with a condition that is not conducive to a fully bilingual education. In these circumstances a package of support is identified by professional practitioners and discussed with parents. Arrangements are made for the child to attend an appropriate school where their needs can be met. It may be the case that on a small number of occasions the needs of an individual child cannot be met at the local school as, notwithstanding the Council's commitment to inclusive education, it is simply not practicable to meet all needs at every school. In the last five years the Educational and Child Psychology Service has been involved in only one or two cases each year where a move of school has been advised. To place this into context, Carmarthenshire's school system serves around 27,000 pupils in total and so the frequency of pupil movement for additional learning needs is very low indeed.

It is this Council's experience that the vast majority of pupils with a wide range of additional learning needs and are successful in our schools irrespective of the language of instruction but the Council does acknowledge that there will be a very few children whose needs cannot be met other than through provision at a specialist unit."

The Chair expressed his thanks to all the questioners for their questions and attendance at the meeting and to Councillor Jones for responding.

6. QUESTIONS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD BY THE EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:-

6.1. QUESTION BY MR DARREN SEWARD

"Carmarthenshire County Council has produced a document describing its proposal to CLOSE/DISCONTINUE Llangennech Infants and Llangennech Juniors school and open a new Welsh Medium only Llangennech community primary school. Why is CCC pushing the Welsh assembly directives on Welsh language so far when it is not happening in other counties like Swansea, Neath, Port Talbot and Newport??"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education

& Children:-

“Carmarthenshire County Council has a statutory responsibility under Part 4 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) for its area with the explicit aim of improving planning of the provision of education through the medium of Welsh, for improving the standards of that education and of the teaching of Welsh. The Council is required to set targets for the aims.

In April 2014 the County Council formally adopted a comprehensive strategy for the development of the Welsh language in Carmarthenshire, endorsing the recommendations of a politically balanced group of elected members that had examined in depth the status of the Welsh language in the county in the wake of the 2011 census of the population. The strategy requires action on 73 points, 21 of which apply to the education service. All relevant recommendations and actions from the strategy have been incorporated within Carmarthenshire’s WESP.

Carmarthenshire’s Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2014-2017 has been approved by the Welsh Government in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

The Plan seeks to achieve the following specific outcomes relevant to the Llangennech schools proposal:

- *To increase the number of 7 year old learners who are educated through the medium of Welsh.*
- *More learners continue to improve their language skills as they move from primary to secondary school.*
- *More students have higher language skills in Welsh.*

The Plan also includes the following aim:

- *Increase the provision of Welsh medium education in Carmarthenshire and 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.*

The Plan sets out to achieve the specified outcomes and aims by means of the following actions:

- *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.*
- *Target three dual stream schools to transfer to being Welsh medium by 2017.*

It is important to note that the WESP requires all primary schools in Carmarthenshire, including English medium schools, to move along the language continuum, progressively expanding the proportion of education that is delivered through the medium of Welsh, with a view to ensuring that in time all children leaving primary school are fully bilingual.

Every local authority in Wales has a responsibility to respond to the Act and the

Welsh Government's Welsh Medium Education Strategy and is accountable individually to the Welsh Government."

6.2. QUESTION BY NIKKI LLOYD

"There are 121 pupils currently in the School who are not living in the village of Llangennech. However, there are 96 children living in the village travelling to other schools, out of area. Only 15 of those children are attending Welsh medium so that leaves 81 attending alternative English medium. Why such a differentiation? Some of these could have had places in Llangennech but have been turned away making the English stream look as if it is declining."

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"The pupil figures presented in the Consultation Document are those in being at the time of the annual statutory pupil count in January 2015.

The latest figures for January 2016 are as follows:

Llangennech Infants School

The total number of pupils is 210, with 161 children residing within the catchment area and 49 pupils residing outside the catchment area.

Llangennech Junior School

The total number of pupils is 236, with 175 children residing within the catchment area and 61 pupils residing outside the catchment area.

Both Schools Combined

Aggregated together the totals for both schools are – the total number of pupils is 446, with 336, or 75%, living in the catchment area and 110 children, or 25%, living outside the catchment area.

In January 2016 there were 96 children living within the catchment area of the Llangennech schools attending other schools. Of these, 16 children attended Welsh medium schools, 7 attended dual stream schools and 73 attended English medium schools, with a significant number of 39 children, over half those leaving the catchment area, attending Bryn school. 3 of the children attended faith based schools.

It is the County Council's preference that children attend their local school and it is upon this principle that school places are planned.

However, it is the case that some parents choose schools for their children other than the designated catchment school and they do this for a number of reasons, e.g. access to extended family for working parents, ease of transporting children, proximity of the home to schools, reputation, faith character, etc.

The County Council is obliged to facilitate parental preference only where this is consistent with the effective delivery of education and the efficient use of

resources. No parent has a right to demand a place at any particular school for their child or children. School places are allocated on the basis of the Council's published admissions policy, which favours children attending their local or "designated" school. Children are admitted to school other than their designated school when places are available.

The Admission to School: Information for Parents booklet states – "Parents can state a preference for a school, which is not the designated catchment area school. Subject to the limit on the number of pupils who can be admitted into the school not being exceeded and the correct procedures being followed, then admission will be granted."

It is relevant to note that due to the configuration of the catchment area of the Llangennech schools that a significant number of children living in the south of the catchment area reside closer to other schools than they do to the Llangennech schools. Prominent among these is Bryn School which receives 39 pupils from the Llangennech catchment area who live in or close to Penllwyngwyn Road, Hendre Park, Harddfán, Bryn Uchaf and Pendderi Road and live much closer to this school.

The Llangennech schools are able to accommodate all children living within the catchment area. These children receive preference to children living outside the catchment area under the established admissions policies.

No children from within the Llangennech schools catchment area have been denied a place at Llangennech schools by the County Council as the statutory Admissions Authority.

The published Admissions Numbers for the Llangennech schools apply to the school as a whole and do not consider language choice. Children can only be admitted to the schools by the local authority as the statutory admissions body. Schools do not have the right to admit pupils themselves or to decline places. The County Council has not refused a place to any child residing within the catchment area, irrespective of language preference.

The movement of pupils between school catchment areas is a common circumstance across the county in both urban and rural areas."

6.3. QUESTION BY NIKKI LLOYD

"We have already had one parent that we know of refused a place in Bryn due to 54 requests for only 30 places. Hendy is full also, where are you going to provide provision for parents who want or NEED to educate their children in English medium?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"In the school admissions round for September 2016 a total of 54 applications were received for Bryn school compared with the Admissions Number of 30.

Of the 54 applications only 8 were from children residing in the Bryn school catchment area. 7 were on behalf of children residing in the Llangennech schools

catchment area.

Places were offered to 30 children, up to the published Admissions Number, in accordance with the criteria published in the document “Admission to School – Information for Parents 2016/2017”.

The admissions process continues and it will be a number of weeks yet before the final position is known.

If this pattern continues into future years it is likely that places at Bryn school could be available for children residing in the Llangennech catchment area, but places cannot be guaranteed, as is the position at all other schools across the county.

However, it is the Local Authority’s intention that all current pupils remain at Llangennech school and that in the future local pupils attend the village school, receiving their education principally through the medium of Welsh. It is important to note that the proposal will not affect current pupils at the school and pupils receiving their education through the medium of English will continue to do so until they leave for secondary school. The school will continue to provide sufficient support for current pupils through the medium in which they currently receive their education.

Should the proposal be implemented sufficient support will be provided to all new pupils studying through the medium of Welsh. It is important to note that all teachers are expected to differentiate all pieces of work based on the needs of the pupil. The schools currently offer a range of support to pupils and parents from non-Welsh speaking families and are committed to increasing provision as necessary to meet the future needs of families. “Athrawon Gymraeg a Ddwyieithrwydd”, specialist Welsh language development teachers, who provide support to schools around the county, and currently attend the schools twice a week, will continue to support the school to offer additional assistance to children as required.

All pupils with additional learning needs receive specific support identified in individual plans based on their personal circumstances. All necessary support will continue to be provided for each individual currently attending the Llangennech schools through the medium in which they currently receive their education. Should the proposal be implemented, all future pupils will receive this support mainly through the medium of Welsh. In the majority of cases an additional learning need is not a barrier to learning two languages. It is our experience that the vast majority of pupils with a wide range of additional learning needs and abilities are successful in all of our schools irrespective of the language of instruction. It is acknowledged, however, that in a small number of cases the specific needs of individual children require provision that it is difficult to meet in an inclusive mainstream setting. For these few children specific provision is made in a school that is able to meet the child’s needs. Whilst the preference of the local authority is that children attend their local school for a small number of children with particular needs this is not always possible. Where a child has specific needs identified by professional practitioners and a particular school is identified that can meet the needs of the child that is not the local school the Council’s transport policies provide that the child may be eligible for transport to and from school.”

6.4. QUESTION BY ROBERT WILLOCK

“Out of the 121 children currently in the school 91 are attending Welsh medium. Why is this so when the new Furnace school is under capacity by 132 places and Brynserfiel under by 38.5 Pupils according to section 2.3 of the consultation document. There's surplus capacity at Welsh Mediums which is not in alignment with School Organisation Code 2013 which states no more than a 10% surplus. There are 1,710 as per Carmarthenshire Councils website surplus places in all welsh medium primary schools in Carmarthenshire figures taken from ccc own website. So doesn't justify any further spaces being created. The School Organisation code 2013 states when developing proposals relevant bodies should have regard to Local plans for economic or housing development. Why has there been no regard given to the 91 houses being built in Hendy and 700 plus houses planned for Pontardulais? Surely, this would have a major impact on the surrounding schools. Hendy is one of the nearest schools for English medium if this proposal goes through. However, Llanedi school is facing closure and advised to relocate to Hendy. Hendy school are already nearing full capacity and as a dual stream are earmarked for changing to Welsh Medium Only. The other nearest English medium is the Bryn School but the county have already been issuing reject letters as they have received 54 applications so far and only have 30 spaces. As well as the proposed new school being unfit for purpose as it does not serve the community it's meant to support, English speaking children appear to have no nearby alternatives?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“For the spring term 2016 there are a total of 446 children attending the Llangennech schools, 210 in the infants school and 236 in the junior school.

Overall, taking both schools together and excluding the children in the reception classes, 73% of children are in the Welsh stream and 27% are in the English stream.

Children are attending the language streams according to parental preference and as agreed between the school and parents. Data confirms that over recent years the number and proportion of children attending the Welsh stream has been steadily increasing whilst the number and proportion attending the English stream has been declining.

The new Ysgol y Ffwrnes was built to ensure adequate capacity to meet projections in the Llanelli area where demand for Welsh medium primary education has been increasing over recent years. It was fully recognised that the new Ysgol Ffwrnes would have surplus places at the point of opening but these would be taken up over a period of years.

The Welsh Government expects local authorities to endeavour to manage surplus school places within a tolerance of 10% overall, accepting that figures at individual schools will vary as a consequence of various factors. The School Organisation Code notes that “some spare places are necessary to enable schools to cope with fluctuations in numbers of pupils”. The Welsh Government regards a single school as having excess surplus places if it has more than 25% of its places empty.

It is true that a number of Carmarthenshire's Welsh medium schools have surplus

places. These schools are predominantly in rural areas where there has been a decline in the number of young families and the number of children. This situation is not an indicator of a decline in the demand for Welsh medium education but an indicator of the demographic change facing many rural communities, with a generally ageing population.

Through its Modernising Education Programme Carmarthenshire County Council has removed approximately 3150 surplus places from its primary schools estate over the past 15 years, predominantly in rural areas, demonstrating that Carmarthenshire County Council is effective at managing surplus places.

This Council's school organisation proposals routinely consider future housing developments and the demand that these can produce for school places. The objective of the Council's proposals for the Llangennech schools is that local children attend Llangennech school in future. The Council does not intend that any local child should seek a school place outside Llangennech, other than in the infrequent incidence of a specific additional learning need in which case the Council will work with parents to identify the most appropriate arrangement. It is for this reason that no reference is made in the Consultation document to potential housing development in Hendy or any other school area.

The County Council will continue to monitor demand for places at Hendy School, in particular with regard to new housing developments being built in the locality in the foreseeable future and with regards to the review of Llanedi school and will respond as appropriate. The Council's Modernising Education Programme includes provision for investment at Hendy school in the medium term to expand and modernise the school's premises and facilities and it should be possible to align this investment with a need to increase capacity, should that need arise.

The City and County of Swansea's Local Development Plan (LDP) draft deposit is due to be published for consultation in the summer of 2016. This draft plan includes a significant allocation of over 700 residential units in Pontarddulais. Discussions with officers at the City and County of Swansea confirm that they are planning to develop schools within the community of Pontarddulais to meet all need arising from their LDP in due course, as required by the development timeline. This is a matter for Swansea local authority to resolve."

6.5. QUESTION BY JACQUELINE SEWARD

"Following the closure of a school and the consequential loss of a language stream, provision should be offered to at least equivalent standards to learners according to the School Organisation Code 2013. However, Llangennech is currently Green. Hendy is yellow and the Bryn is Amber. How is this equivalent?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"The questioner correctly notes the categorisation of Llangennech, Bryn and Hendy schools for 2015.

The County Council intends that children from Llangennech should receive their primary education in the local school, which is performing to high standards presently and categorised as Green.

Should parents elect to place their children in alternative schools they will do so in full consideration of all the factors that apply, including standards at alternative schools, transport implications, etc.

The County Council is not proposing alternatives to Llangennech school for local children. It is the Local Authority's intention that all current pupils remain at the school and that future prospective pupils attend the village school, receiving their education principally through the medium of Welsh.

English medium options have been identified in the Consultation Document as required by the School Organisation Code, along with all the relevant information for comparison purposes, but it is not the Council's intention that children from Llangennech seek an alternative school."

6.6. QUESTION BY NIGEL HUGHES

"The consultation document is a flawed document that does not recognise those disadvantaged by the proposals from within Llangennech village. To state that there is nobody affected by these proposed changes is naïve and ignorant and shows that the Authority has failed to show 'due regard' under the Public Duty Act to those affected by simply saying they don't exist. In doing so, they have not covered the Health and Safety aspects or capacity issues at alternative schools. If walking to Hendy for example, crossing a dual carriageway, will put lives at risk. There is a CrashMap available online which shows along that particular route, one accident occurring every 2 months on average. Therefore, this consultation simply exposes a rush to a predetermined outcome irrespective of any views that were to be gathered throughout the process. We believe that we can evidence the fact that either the LEA or the governing body or both have failed to comply with The School Organisational Code 2013 and possibly the law. Do you think this is acceptable to put young children at risk daily?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"The Consultation Document and the consultation process comply with the requirements of the School Organisation Code.

The County Council's proposal intends that children from Llangennech attend the local school.

If the proposal is implemented children residing within the Llangennech school catchment area who attend Llangennech school will benefit from the local authority's admissions policy and transport to school policy, which takes full account of safety considerations.

Should, however, parents decide to place their children in alternative schools where places are available they do so in full consideration of all the factors that apply, including transport implications."

6.7. QUESTION BY DARREN SEWARD

"Is there need for additional nursery places in the area when we already have two

providers? Specific factors need to be taken into account for proposals to add or remove nursery classes as outline in the School Organisation Code 2013. Relevant bodies should take into account specific factors: the standard of nursery education and the sufficiency of accommodation and facilities offered both in the classroom and outdoors, and the viability of any school that wishes to add nursery places; whether there is a need for additional nursery places in the area; the levels of demand for certain types of nursery education e.g. Welsh medium or provision with a religious character; the effect of the proposals on other institutions, including private and third sector providers; and the extent to which proposals will integrate early years education with childcare services or are consistent with an integrated approach. Within the consultation document, there is no evidence that these have been taken into consideration and the effect of the proposals on other private sector providers?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“There are presently 4 registered childcare providers in Llangennech, 2 of which are commissioned to provide part-time nursery education and 1 of which is able to deliver through the medium of Welsh.

The County Council acknowledges that there will be implications for these 2 providers should the proposal proceed as the funding they presently receive for providing part-time nursery education will cease.

Whilst the provision of nursery education across Carmarthenshire is delivered through a “mixed economy” model of schools, independent sector organisations and private companies it is the view of the County Council that nursery education is more effectively delivered in a school setting wherever practicable under the professional guidance of qualified teachers and under the leadership of a professional head teacher. Locating nursery provision on a school site is generally considered to be preferable as it facilitates a child’s entry to full time education more effectively. It is generally the model favoured by Carmarthenshire schools.”

6.8. QUESTION BY MICHAELA BEDDOWS

“Special Educational Needs: No consideration has been given for children with special educational needs who are usually advised to only go in an English medium. Stream or the language of their home environment. Children with global delay struggle with one language let alone two, therefore by removing the dual stream it would exclude these children from attending the school. Children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder really can’t cope with change in routine, so if they were to start then struggle in a Welsh Medium school and then have to move to an English Medium school that change would have a massive impact on them. How has this been overlooked and why has it not been addressed?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“Carmarthenshire County Council’s policy is that all its schools should be inclusive, with children with additional learning needs educated in a mainstream setting alongside their peers wherever possible. In the vast majority of cases this is achieved with all children benefiting.

Carmarthenshire's school system serves around 27,000 pupils and whilst the system is designed to meet the needs of learners through an universal and inclusive approach for a small number of children with specific additional needs this is not always possible and specialised provision offers a more appropriate learning setting.

In order to make sure that the needs of all learners are met the schools system in Carmarthenshire includes a range of provision for children with additional needs. A specialist school offers education to children with the most profound or complex needs where a mainstream setting is either not suitable for the children's needs or where parents prefer this alternative setting. Selected secondary and primary schools across the county include specialised units for children with particular needs, such as autism, sensory impairment or speech and language delay. The Education and Children's Services Department provides specific additional support in schools wherever practicable so that as many children as possible remain in their local school. Whilst the Council's preference is to meet the needs of all children in a mainstream setting wherever possible this is not always practicable.

All pupils with additional learning needs have specific individual plans based on their circumstances and a tailored support programme is provided according to need. Generally, an additional learning need is not a barrier to learning two languages. There will be rare instances, however, where a child may be diagnosed with a condition that is not conducive to a fully bilingual education. In these circumstances a package of support is identified by professional practitioners and discussed with parents. Arrangements are made for the child to attend an appropriate school where their needs can be met. It may be the case that on a small number of occasions the needs of an individual child cannot be met at the local school as, notwithstanding the Council's commitment to inclusive education, it is simply not practicable to meet all needs at every school.

It is the Council's experience that the vast majority of pupils with a wide range of additional learning needs and abilities are successful in our schools irrespective of the language of instruction but the Council does acknowledge that there will be a very few children whose needs cannot be met other than through provision at a specialist unit.

For the Llangennech proposal the support provided to children with additional needs will continue through the medium in which they currently receive their education. Should the proposal be implemented, all future pupils will receive this support mainly through the medium of Welsh."

6.9. QUESTION BY STEVE HATTO

"Figures manipulated – From the information supplied by the LEA as the groups knowledge of the school it is clearly evident that the figures have been manipulated by individuals to bolster a particular scenario. We can evidence that the current English streams at the school make up over 30% of the total number of pupils. The consultation states Llangennech infant school total pupils in 2015 had 186 in Welsh stream. This is not a true figure as it includes all pupils in Derbyn 1 and 2 which totals 94 pupils, irrelevant of it they are registered to continue into the English stream they have been falsely identified for the purpose of the consultation document as Welsh stream pupils. Also if we factor in the 27% coming from

outside areas, together with a potential loss of English Stream, current projections will show that Llangennech School will have over 50% of pupils coming from outside the area. Do you believe, that we then have ‘the right school, in the right place and can you confirm if these figures are correct?’

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“The figures presented in the Consultation Document are accurate as at January 2015. The point made by the questioner that in Derbyn 1 and Derbyn 2 classes all children receive a bilingual education, but predominantly though the medium of Welsh, with a choice of language stream available when the children enter Year 1, is correct.

There are no separate streams in the reception (derbyn) classes. All children benefit from immersion in a predominantly Welsh medium provision, with English being used as a means of supporting access to the Welsh language by cross reference.

The current pupil figures are as follows:

Llangennech Infants School

All 118 pupils in the reception classes are taught principally through the medium of Welsh, with English used as a facilitator according to the needs of individual children.

Of a total of 116 pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 classes, 88, or 76%, attend the Welsh stream and 28, or 24%, attend the English stream.

Llangennech Junior School

Of a total of 235 pupils 167, or 71%, attend the Welsh stream and 68, or 29%, attend the English stream.

Both Schools Together

Combining the figures for both schools and excluding the pupils in the reception classes, 73% attend the Welsh stream and 27% attend the English stream.

These figures confirm that a significant majority of parents, many of whom are not themselves Welsh speaking, favour Welsh medium provision.

The Department believes that creating a Welsh medium school in the Llangennech area does provide the right school in the right place, providing all pupils with the opportunity to develop as fully bilingual young people by the time they leave for secondary school.”

6.10. QUESTION BY KAREN HUGHES

“There are approximately 11 dual Stream Schools in Carmarthenshire which according to the Welsh Language Strategy, are being earmarked for Welsh Medium only. It must be recognised that not all these schools will be suitable

based upon their logistics as they will be dual stream for a reason, so how and who is assessing the demand and suitability? Has an horizon scanning exercise been conducted for Llangennech community i.e to assess how the village/population of Llangennech will look in 5, 10, 15 years time? With an increased number of new builds, an influx in migration, being close to the M4 corridor, can we confidently say that Welsh Medium Only will meet these demands when 80% of the population is already English speaking. After all, 27% of pupils are coming from outside areas and village figures do not show an increase in demand for Welsh. The Welsh Language Strategy Impact has also not been assessed properly if at all. There is no reference to English speakers having less of an appreciation of the cultural heritage of Wales if they attend English Medium only, more people are likely to try the Welsh stream if they know they can fall back to English within the same school. This will have the adverse effect. The use of Welsh within the community is minimal and does not support the linguistic demographics or the stats from the 2011 census. Why aren't these risks being factored in?"

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

"There are currently 10 Dual Stream schools in Carmarthenshire, as categorised by their governing bodies, including the two Llangennech schools.

The proposals have been prepared in response to Carmarthenshire County Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and the Welsh Medium Education Strategy (WMES). The local authority has a responsibility to "increase the provision of Welsh medium education in Carmarthenshire and ensure linguistic continuity from the nursery sector along the key stages to the secondary sector along the key stages to the secondary sector so that every pupil becomes fluent and confident in both Welsh and English languages." In order to be able to increase the provision of Welsh medium education it has been resolved that "the County Council work closely with the staff and Governing Bodies of Carmarthenshire's dual stream schools in order for them to become Welsh medium schools."

All schools will be assessed at the appropriate time to determine their capacity to develop language provision.

In addition to proposals for Dual Stream schools the WESP expects every school, including schools that are currently designated as English medium to progress along the language continuum, to increase the proportion of education that is delivered through the Welsh language. Clearly the pace at which schools will be able to expand bilingualism and Welsh medium education will depend upon local circumstances but the expectation for progress applies to all schools. The schools in Llangennech have been identified as having the potential to move quickly to become Welsh medium due to the progressive increase in numbers in the Welsh stream over recent years, as evidenced by the data.

It is the belief of the County Council that all children benefit from a truly bilingual education, which provides wider skills development, such as cognitive ability, task understanding and flexibility, enhanced powers of concentration, etc, and that all children should receive these opportunities.

It is noted that some members of the community are unable to speak the Welsh language and that many children attending the school come from non-Welsh backgrounds. It is, therefore, important for the local authority to increase the provision of Welsh medium education in order to promote bilingualism in the area and to ensure that every pupil becomes fluent and confident in both Welsh and English languages.

There is a national priority in Wales, shared by Carmarthenshire County Council, to increase the number of people in our communities who are able to speak Welsh and use it in their everyday lives. Schools are regarded to be a critically important component in developing children so that they are fully bilingual by the time they leave primary school. International evidence, cited by the Welsh Government, confirms that the most effective way of developing bilingual children is to immerse them in the less common language whilst also developing their skills in the more common language. The Welsh Government also promotes that for children who are from non-Welsh speaking families that immersion in Welsh in school is particularly important in embedding the language.

The County Council acknowledges that the nature of communities changes over time and that social mobility continues to increase. The Council considers that this point reinforces the need to embed Welsh medium education in as many communities as possible in order to bolster the language and provide as many children as possible with the opportunity to develop as truly bilingual citizens and to benefit from the personal advantages that bilingualism brings.

Bilingualism will increasingly over time become an employment skill. For example, all public organisations in Wales are subject to new statutory Welsh language standards and progressively over time will need to recruit increasing numbers of Welsh speakers to deliver services. Possessing Welsh language skills will increasingly over time over give individuals a competitive advantage when seeking employment.

Rather than being an impediment, possessing skills in the Welsh language is seen by many universities, inside and outside Wales, as an additional skill, which can offer benefits when a young person is competing for a place to study.”

6.11. QUESTION BY ROBERT WILLOCK

“The Community Impact Assessment is not actually an Impact Assessment at all. It has not recognised any risks or risk assessed them (given a positive, negative or neutral rating). One would expect consideration to be given to the impact on neighbouring schools, impact on parents and families, impact on pupils, travel implications, impact of community demographics, environmental impacts, impact upon community activities, impact on residents. These are the areas which are likely to be negatively assessed and have totally been overlooked! Why?”

Response by Councillor G.O. Jones, Executive Board Member for Education & Children:-

“The Community Impact Assessment and other assessments set out in the Consultation Document have been developed according to the requirements of the School Organisation Code, which is the standard that applies in developing school organisation proposals.”

The Chair thanked all the questioners for submitting their questions to the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee and to Councillor Jones for his responses.

7. ADJOURNMENT

At this point in the proceedings the Chair drew members' attention to the time and proposed that the meeting stand adjourned for lunch.

As Councillor Devichand was unable to return for the reconvened meeting, she sought permission from the Chair to ask her question before the adjournment.

In accordance with CPR 11.1 Councillor Devichand asked whether the Executive Board Member agreed that it was not the intention of the Labour Welsh Assembly Government or the Welsh Language Board to take away the choice and democratic right of a community to change the language category of the school without due consideration for the adverse effects on the community of Llangennech?

The Executive Board Member for Education & Children stated that he was unable to speak on behalf of the Labour government, however, he was awaiting guidance from Cardiff on the movement along the language continuum.

Councillor Devichand asked whether the Executive Board Member agreed that language should not be a barrier causing concern and division in a community and limit people's choices in their academic or working life?

The Executive Board Member agreed and pointed out that that was why the consultation was being held, to make sure that the children have the best possible opportunities in their future life.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the remainder of the business on the agenda should stand adjourned until 1.50 p.m. that day.

8. RECONVENED MEETING

The meeting reconvened in the Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen at 1.50 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor E. Dole [Chair]

Councillors:

H.A.L. Evans, L.D. Evans, D.M. Jenkins, G.O. Jones, T.J. Jones, P.A. Palmer, L.M. Stephens and J. Tremlett

Present as observers:

Councillors S.M. Caiach, D.M. Cundy, J.S. Edmunds, W.G. Hopkins and G. Thomas

The following Officers were in attendance:

| | | |
|--------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Mr M. James | - | Chief Executive |
| Mr C. Moore | - | Director of Corporate Services |
| Mr J. Morgan | - | Director of Community Services |

| | | |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Ms R. Mullen | - | Director of Environment |
| Mr R. Sully | - | Director of Education & Children |
| Mr P. Thomas | - | Assistant Chief Executive |
| Ms W. Walters | - | Assistant Chief Executive |
| Mr J. Fearn | - | Head of Property Maintenance & Construction |
| Mr S. Pilliner | - | Head of Transport & Engineering |
| Ms L. Rees Jones | - | Head of Administration & Law |
| Mr G. Morgans | - | Chief Education Officer |
| Mr S. Davies | - | School Modernisation Manager |
| Mrs D. Hockenull | - | Media & Marketing Manager |
| Mr I. Llewellyn | - | Forward Planning Manager |
| Mr G. Williams | - | Assistant Solicitor |
| Mrs M. Evans Thomas | - | Principal Democratic Services Officer |

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen : 1.50 p.m. - 3.30 p.m.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M. Gravell.

9. MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE LLANGENNECH INFANT SCHOOL AND LLANGENNECH JUNIOR SCHOOL AND ESTABLISH LLANGENNECH COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Board considered a report and received a presentation on a proposal to discontinue Llangennech Infant School and Llangennech Junior School and establish Llangennech Community Primary School.

Following the retirement of the headteacher of Llangennech Infant School at the end of the summer term 2013 a soft federation was established with the headteacher of Llangennech Junior School. On 24th September, 2014 the Governing Bodies of both school resolved to pursue a formal federation as from April, 2015.

The Local Authority currently offered full time learning provision for 4-11 year old through the medium of Welsh and English at the federated Llangennech Infants and Junior Schools. As part of the new 3-11 primary school which would include nursery provision, it was 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 would increase the provision of Welsh medium education in Carmarthenshire and would ensure that bilingualism was increased in the Llangennech area. It would ensure linguistic continuity from the nursery sector along the key stages to the secondary sector so that every pupil would become fluent and confident in Welsh and English, as detailed in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2014-17.

As a result of a 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 had changed. This was in order to ensure that sufficient time was allowed for people to express their views and that the school holiday period did not impede on the process. It was therefore proposed:-

- (i) to discontinue Llangennech Infant School on 31st August, 2017;
- (ii) to discontinue Llangennech Junior School on 31st August, 2017;
- (iii) 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 Junior Schools. The current capacity of both schools would remain unchanged but would be reviewed and adjusted accordingly should the demand arise in the future.

In accordance with the Executive Board's instructions at the meeting held on 4th January, 2016 (minute no. 15 refers) a formal consultation exercise was undertaken from 25th January to 18th March, 2016, the results of which were appended to the report.

If the decision was made to proceed with a Statutory Notice, it would be published the week beginning 5th September, 2016. If approved, following the end of Statutory Notice period, an objection report summarising any objections received by stakeholders would be presented to the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee, Executive Board and ultimately to Council for determination.

In accordance with CPR 11.1 Councillor D.M. Cundy asked, should the dual stream system be abandoned in Llangennech, the local English medium schools in Bynea, Bryn and Hendy will be under severe pressure for places from September this year with the newly completed developments and proposed new builds in the area, combined with the added influx of children from Llangennech requiring English medium education, what is the plan and the budget allocated for the inevitable upgrades needed to these schools in the next few years?

The Executive Board Member explained that the Authority's school organisational proposals take into account future housing developments in view of the demand that they can produce for school places. The objective of the proposals for Llangennech School is that local children attend that school in the future. The Council does not intend that any local child should seek a school place outside Llangennech. The Council will continue to monitor the demand for places at Hendy School with particular regard to new housing developments being built in the locality. The MEP includes provision for investment at Hendy to expand and modernise the school and it should be possible to align this investment with the need to increase capacity, should that need arise. The residential development in Pontardulais is a matter for the City and County of Swansea.

In accordance with CPR 11.1 Councillor J.S. Edmunds asked the Executive Board Member for Education & Children whether the Executive Board would consider allowing the status quo to remain at Llangennech and avoid the detrimental effect that the proposals are having on the community of Llangennech and adopt greater strategic thinking for the remaining 9 months of the administration to avoid the current position being mirrored in other areas of Carmarthenshire.

The Executive Board Member for Education & Children reminded Councillor Edmunds that the process is very democratic and several consultation periods are undertaken before a final decision is made by Full Council.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

7.1 that the observations received following the initial consultation period and the Authority's responses thereto be noted;

7.2 that the publication of a statutory notice to implement the proposal be approved.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TASK & FINISH GROUP FINAL REPORT 2015/16 - CAR PARKING CHARGES

The Executive Board was informed that the Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on the 15th May, 2015, had agreed to establish a Task & Finish Group to research different approaches to car parking charges that could be applied in the county.

Following consideration of a report on Llanelli Car Parks at its meeting held on 28th September, 2015 (minute no. 14 refers), the Executive Board also requested that the Group explore the option of introducing a pay on exit system at the Llanelli multi-storey car park in lieu of the pay and display/pay on foot system.

The review had culminated in the formulation of 11 recommendations following the consideration of a range of evidence and information from a wide variety of sources over a series of meetings held between September 2015 and April 2016.

The Chair of the Task and Finish Group thanked all who had been involved in its deliberations.

It was noted that the recommendations being put forward would need to be set against the resource implications.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the recommendations of the Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group on Car Parking Charges, as detailed within the report, be endorsed.

11. CARMARTHENSHIRE ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY

The Board considered the Carmarthenshire Road Safety Strategy 2016-2020 which aimed to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on the county's roads, in line with national casualty reduction targets set by the Road Safety Framework for Wales which had to be achieved by 2020.

It was noted that the Authority would continue to invest in road safety through funding of road safety education, evaluation and engineering and continued support for enforcement action by the Police. Officers would also continue to engage in collaboration and partnership working to deliver road safety education initiatives and identify sites for enforcement and engineering intervention.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Carmarthenshire Road Safety Strategy 2016-2020 be endorsed.

12. REVENUE BUDGET OUTLOOK 2017/18 - 2019/20

The Board considered a report detailing the current financial outlook and providing an update on the current financial model covering the next three financial years. The report outlined proposals for taking forward the budget preparation for the three year period 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20

RESOLVED

- 9.1 that the initial budget outlook and the significant financial challenges it poses be noted;
- 9.2 that the proposed approach to identifying the required savings be endorsed;
- 9.3 that the proposed approach to the budget consultation be endorsed.

13. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR REPORT 2015/16

The Executive Board was reminded that Council, at its meeting held on the 24th February, 2015 (Minute 8 thereof refers), had adopted the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy. In line with that policy the Board received the Annual Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator Report which outlined the Authority's Treasury Management activities in 2015/16 and summarised the activities that had taken place during 2015/16 under the headings of: Investments; Borrowing; Treasury Management Prudential Indicators; Prudential Indicators; Leasing and Rescheduling.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that the Annual Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator Report 2015/16 be received.

14. SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV)

The Board was provided with a brief summary of the process followed since its decision to proceed with the Solar Photovoltaic (PV) project at its meeting held on 27th July, 2015 (minute 3 refers).

An additional report was considered by Council on 10th March, 2016 (minute 11 refers) when it was agreed that the scheme be funded as part of the Capital Programme and Councillor D.M. Jenkins, Executive Board Member for Resources, was appointed to sit on the Board of the Community Benefit Society, Egni Sir Gâr.

Although it had been agreed that the Council should invest directly in Egni Sir Gâr, up to a maximum of £1.5m, there was no authority for the Council to purchase shares in Egni Sir Gâr.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Council purchases shares in Egni Sir Gâr to the value of the final investment, up to a maximum of £1.5m.

15. PARC HOWARD MASTERPLAN

The Board considered an updated masterplan for Parc Howard in Llanelli. The

park is managed by the Environment Department while the Mansion House (Museum) is managed by the Leisure Division within the Communities Department.

Whilst elements of the masterplan may be longer term aspirations, possibly delivered through, or in partnership with, the Parc Howard Association (PHA) or Friends of Parc Howard Group, five priority areas had been identified for immediate progress:-

- New play facilities to cater for toddlers, juniors and teenagers within the park;
- Car parking provision that would encourage greater use of the facilities and be essential to facilitate sensitive commercial development of the park;
- Sensitive commercial use of the ground floor of the mansion house and possibly the walled garden area to the rear;
- Re-vamping of the museum display on the first floor, including a community room, and the realisation of the Heritage 6 project (a collaboration between Archives, Museums and Libraries developing a website to digitise the heritage of Carmarthenshire through a community driven website based on 6 themes: People, Places, Events, Periods, Industry and Sport);
- Refurbishment of the bandstand.

£150k had been identified from departmental reserves for the playground improvements. Car park improvement costs would need to be confirmed but were anticipated to be in the region of £100k. After initial capital investment the commercial use of the ground floor of the mansion and the walled garden should bring an income into the park which should help reduce future running costs. The re-vamp of the museum and delivery of the Heritage 6 project was anticipated to cost in the region of £30k. Costs for the repair to the bandstand were yet to be confirmed but would probably be circa £50k (probably via grant bid or external funding in conjunction with PHA).

RESOLVED

13.1 that the Parc Howard Masterplan be received;

13.2 that the allocation of £150k from departmental reserves for the installation of two new playgrounds within the park be endorsed;

13.3 that the byelaws associated within the park be reviewed/revoked in order to align with current and future use;

13.4 that the parking provision within and around the park be reviewed and the sensitive commercial development opportunities for the ground floor of the mansion and the rear walled garden area be explored.

16. PEMBREY COUNTRY PARK MASTERPLAN

The Board considered the first draft of an updated masterplan for Pembrey Country Park. The draft document had been prepared with the aim of prompting further discussion whilst giving an indication of how zones within the park could be developed. Much more detailed work would be required on the masterplan within

input from planning and design. The masterplan would also need to fit into the wider regeneration masterplan for Pembrey Peninsula and the Llanelli Coastal Belt.

Three priority areas had been identified for immediate progress:-

- Improvements to the site entrance and park signage;
- New shower and toilet block(s) for the caravan and camping site;
- Visitor hub and café for the park.

The following areas would also be developed in terms of further design and costing:-

- It was anticipated that the restaurant building, a large and structurally sound building, could be clad and re-furnished to incorporate some much needed indoor activities for the park e.g. soft play, indoor climbing, table top games, action walls, small arcade;
- Creation of a new beach sports zone near to the beach front kiosk and incorporating a new themed play facility and a beach volleyball/soccer area.

It was difficult to estimate the costs at present without any site investigation works or detailed specifications. Some of the aspirations outlined in the masterplan could be delivered as later phases through private sector investment or internal invest to save bids. New facilities within the park needed to be sensitively designed with a consistent branding. One option would be to progress via design and build with fixed budgets for each development. Possible costs could be within the following parameters:-

- Entrance circa £75k
- Shower and toilet block circa £200k
- Visitor hub and café circa £600k
- Indoor activity centre circa £450k
- New beach sports zone circa £250k

£250k had already been identified in the 2016/17 capital programme for Pembrey County Park, however, a proportion of this was already earmarked for works to the Ski Centre café (circa £30k) whilst £50k had already been spent on the replacement of play equipment in the junior play area. Further investment was planned at the Ski and Activity Centre, creating new adventurous activities such as a climbing wall, adventure play area, zip wire etc.

All of the above would require extensive design and planning input. Ideally, the priority developments would be in place for the 2017 Spring/Summer season, however, this was challenging. The use of framework partners or external development partners would greatly assist in terms of progressing these elements quickly.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

14.1 that the Pembrey County Park draft masterplan be received;

14.2 that the resource implications for the following be noted:-

- re-configured park entrance, including signage and barrier system – circa £75k;
- shower and toilet block(s) for caravan and camping site – circa £200k;
- visitor hub and café – circa £600k.

17. JAPANESE KNOTWEED AND OTHER INVASIVE NON-NATIVE PLANTS

The Board was informed that the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014 introduced major changes to the powers available to tackle anti-social behaviour problems. It was introduced by the government with no additional resources for implementation.

The powers of the above-mentioned Act included “Community Protection Notices” which could be issued by Councils, the Police and designated social landlords where behaviour has such a detrimental effect on the quality of life of the locality and is persistent and unreasonable. Such notices could require a person to stop the offending behaviour or take positive action to avoid further anti-social behaviour.

The Police & Crime Commissioner had realigned the arrangements of the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) function by withdrawing funding from each of the Councils in Dyfed Powys (who were providing specific ASB officers) and consolidated this role in Gwalia in 2015. The role of the officers in Gwalia was to support other agencies in supporting Anti-Social Behaviour Area Problem Solving Group meetings and victim support, however, they have no enforcement role as with the previous arrangements.

In light of the fact that Gwalia have no enforcement role, any enforcement falls on either the Council or the Police Authority.

Having regard to invasive, non-native plants, including Japanese Knotweed, guidance issued by the Home Office suggested that this power (service of Community Protection Notices) may be used to require landowners to take steps to control such plants on their land. In light of the fact that this was guidance, there was no legal obligation on agencies to implement and thereby carry out enforcement.

There were practical difficulties in using this power:-

- There are few means available to landowners to physically tackle Japanese Knotweed and these were of limited effect. It was quite possible that the requirements specified in a notice may not actually work;
- The available methods were also expensive, which would provide recipient of a notice with a valid ground of appeal;
- If a complaint is received that knotweed has spread from another property onto the complainant’s land, notices would have to be served on both landowners;
- The above factors would result in the investigation and enforcement to remediate to be very time consuming and therefore very resource intensive on officers;
- The Police Authority would only take action where such plants had been illegally moved;
- The Authority had literature regarding invasive non-native plants on the

- website with signposting/links to additional information regarding control methods;
- (g) The Authority had a programme in place to control any invasive non-native plants on Council land.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

- 15.1 That the Authority will not respond to or take any formal action with regards to requests on private properties regarding Japanese Knotweed or other invasive non-native plants;**
- 15.2 That the Authority will sign-post customers to the guidance available on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs website with regards to how to remove and safely dispose of such plants;**
- 15.3 That the Authority will continue to implement its programme of control of invasive non-native plants on its property;**
- 15.4 That the Authority makes representations to the WLGA regarding the need for additional funding for Local Authorities to control invasive plants.**

18. DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE - CARMARTHESHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Board was reminded that Council, at its meeting held on 11th November, 2015 (minute 12 refers), approved the publication of the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for formal consultation. The consultation period took place between 24th February and 8th April, 2016 and in total 59 representations were received from a range of organisations, interested parties and members of the public, details of which were set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

It was noted that the draft SPG had been prepared to support and elaborate on the policies and provisions contained in the Adopted Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan (LDP). It was not the purpose of the SPG to devolve policy matters from the LDP or from national policy.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- 16.1 That the representations received be noted;**
- 16.2 To proceed to formally adopt the Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan, including the proposed amendments;**
- 16.3 That officers be given delegated authority to amend any typographical or grammatical errors.**

19. MODEL TIME OFF POLICY FOR SCHOOLS

[NOTE: Councillors L.D. Evans and G.O. Jones had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Board considered the Model Time Off Policy for Schools, which was an adaptation of the Corporate Time Off Policy.

The Authority had a range of time off policies and procedures detailing the statutory and contractual time off that employees may request for authorisation from their line managers. Currently, each of these policies was listed separately in the Human Resources policies and guidance A-Z on the Council's Intranet website and managers might need to check a number of documents to find the policy which applied to their situation.

Whilst schools were able to access these documents, schools' governing bodies would need to adopt each of these policies individually. The Model Time Off Policy for Schools had been designed as an easy reference document to navigate through the range of time off that employees may request.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Model Time Off Policy for Schools be endorsed for adoption.

20. POTENTIAL ACQUISITION OF GUILDHALL, CARMARTHEN

The Chair informed the Board that he was inclined to discuss this item in the public forum and proposed that the exemption be removed accordingly.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the exemption be lifted and the report considered in the public forum.

The Board proceeded to consider a report detailing options for the possible purchase of the Guildhall, Carmarthen.

Following the decision by HM Courts to close the Guildhall building and subsequently dispose of it, several organisations, councillors and the general public had expressed strong views that, due to the historic importance and nature of its grandeur architecture, the Guildhall should be retained in public ownership and kept for the benefit and use of the people of Carmarthenshire.

Officers of the Authority have had extensive discussions and negotiations with the agents acting on behalf of HM Courts for a possible purchase of the building. Following a joint instruction by the Council and the owners an independent valuation was undertaken by the District Valuer and the value set at £225,000. Despite the challenges and limitations presented by the building the District Valuer remained of the view that, due to its heritage and historical importance to Carmarthen, the valuation was deemed to be at open market value. As a Grade 2 star listed building with a lack of DDA infrastructure and with a somewhat restricted layout, the Council's favoured use of the building would only become evident when full consultation had taken place with relevant stakeholders. In order to aid its decision making, the Council has to make several assumptions based on potential service use. However, should the Council decide to pursue this interest, detailed work would need to be undertaken in order to properly ascertain what use may or may not be appropriate both in terms of practicalities and deemed appropriate by CADW/Planners.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to proceed with the purchase of the Guildhall at the consideration set by the District Valuer.

21. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED pursuant to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items as the reports contained exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

22. WIND STREET - TIRYDAIL LANE JUNCTION, AMMANFORD - LAND ACQUISITION

Following the application of the public interest test it was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED**, pursuant to the Act referred to in minute number 21 above, to consider this matter in private, with the public excluded from the meeting as it would involve the disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information).

The Executive Board considered a report seeking approval to commence land acquisition and the use of Compulsory Purchase powers, as considered necessary, in connection with a key redevelopment scheme.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

20.1 that the commencement of the acquisition of land required for the project be approved;

20.2 that the use of Compulsory Purchase powers as considered necessary be approved in principle.

23. PROPOSED NEW PUBLIC CAR PARK - KING STREET, LAUGHARNE

[NOTE: Councillor J. Tremlett, having earlier declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item, left the meeting prior to the consideration and determination thereof.]

Following the application of the public interest test it was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED**, pursuant to the Act referred to in minute number 21 above, to consider this matter in private, with the public excluded from the meeting as it would involve the disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information).

The Executive Board considered a report seeking approval to commence land acquisition and the use of Compulsory Purchase powers, as considered necessary, in connection with a key redevelopment scheme.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to continue with the capital investment into a new public car park in King Street, Laugharne on the terms outlined in the report.

[Please note that these minutes reflect the order of business itemised on the agenda for the meeting, which may differ from that on any webcast recording as the Chair has discretion at the meeting to vary the order of business on the agenda, if required.]

CHAIR

DATE