

SUBJECT:	PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO SECONDARY SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREAS
MEETING:	INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER DECISION
DATE:	3rd AUGUST 2022

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to highlight to Councillors an area of Monmouthshire that does not have a designated secondary school catchment area, and make recommendations for remedial action.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To note the content of this report, which highlights an area of Monmouthshire without a designated English Medium Secondary School catchment area
- 2.2 To agree that the affected area should be placed into the catchment area for Monmouth Comprehensive School for the reasons identified in this report
- 2.3 To agree to write to Welsh Ministers seeking their approval to vary the published admission arrangements for the academic year 2022/23 onwards.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Background to Secondary School catchment areas

- 3.1 Monmouthshire County Council is the admissions authority for all community schools within the county. With this brings responsibility for the admission arrangements that apply for each of our community schools, including the designated catchment areas.
- 3.2 Catchment areas in Monmouthshire form a significant part of the Council's admission arrangements for the following reasons:
 - They assist in the planning for the provision of school places, enabling us to monitor and track demand within designated areas to ensure that the number of school places is sufficient
 - They form a key part of the local authority's oversubscription criteria, where there are more applications for a school than there are places available,

ensuring that those residing within the catchment area for a school are afforded priority.

- They form part of the criteria for assessing eligibility for free home to school transport, which is currently awarded to the nearest or catchment school if the distance criteria is met (1.5m Primary and 2m Secondary)

Secondary catchment review 2018

3.3 In 2018, Monmouthshire County Council undertook a review of secondary school catchment areas, specifically focussing on the catchment area for King Henry VIII and Monmouth Comprehensive Schools. The aims of this catchment review were:

- To address some areas of the county which did not fall within the catchment area for a Monmouthshire school.
- Where possible, to align Primary and Secondary School catchment areas to support transitional arrangements.
- Where possible, to address areas whereby the catchment school is not necessarily the nearest school.
- To seek to address any imbalances within existing school catchment areas to ensure robust arrangements for the planning for school places.
- To review school catchment areas through the ongoing development of school reorganisation proposals.

3.4 The areas of Usk, Goytre and immediate surrounding areas were identified as a priority for review as they did not have a designated secondary catchment area for a school within the county. The catchment for Usk, Goytre and immediate surrounding areas had been in place prior to Local Government reorganisation in 1996, and therefore the designated secondary school catchment area was Caerleon Comprehensive School. This status impacted significantly on the families within the area and their ability to both secure and access school places within Monmouthshire.

3.5 Following an extensive consultation exercise undertaken in 2018, the Council agreed to implement amendments to the catchment areas for King Henry VIII and Monmouth Comprehensive School, more specifically:

- the catchment area for Goytre Fawr Primary School was aligned to King Henry VIII Comprehensive School
- the catchment area for Usk Church in Wales Primary School was aligned to Monmouth Comprehensive School

3.6 The amendments identified under 3.5 were implemented as part of the September 2020 admission arrangements, and has since brought the following benefits to affected residents:

- increased opportunities to secure a secondary school place within Monmouthshire
- enabled free home to school transport to a Monmouthshire secondary school
- helped to secure robust transitional links between primary and secondary schools, keeping cohorts of pupils together.

Why the need to vary the determined admission arrangements?

3.7 The catchment review undertaken in 2018 resulted in almost all areas of Monmouthshire falling within the catchment area for a Monmouthshire Secondary School. However, the areas of Tredunnock, Llanhennock, Llandegveth, Llansoar and Llangybi were not amended as part of this review and therefore Caerleon Comprehensive School remained catchment for these areas. The reasons for this decision were:

- The affected areas form part of the catchment area for Charles Williams Primary School, which is situated in Newport City Council and feeds into Caerleon Comprehensive School. It therefore made sense to recognise and support the existing transitional links.
- The close geographical proximity to the Newport boundary meant that Caerleon Comprehensive School appeared overall to be the parental preference for families within the area, based on existing trends.
- The option of placing the affected area into the catchment area for a Monmouthshire secondary school would result in significantly increased travelling distances for the young people residing within the area.

3.8 The Councils amended catchment area was implemented for September 2020. Unfortunately, since this time, Newport City Council have undertaken their own review of secondary school catchment areas and have implemented an amended catchment area for Caerleon Comprehensive School, which now stops at the Newport City Council boundary. This decision has left the areas of Tredunnock, Llandegveth, Llanhennock, Llansoar and Llangybi without a designated catchment for an English Medium secondary school.

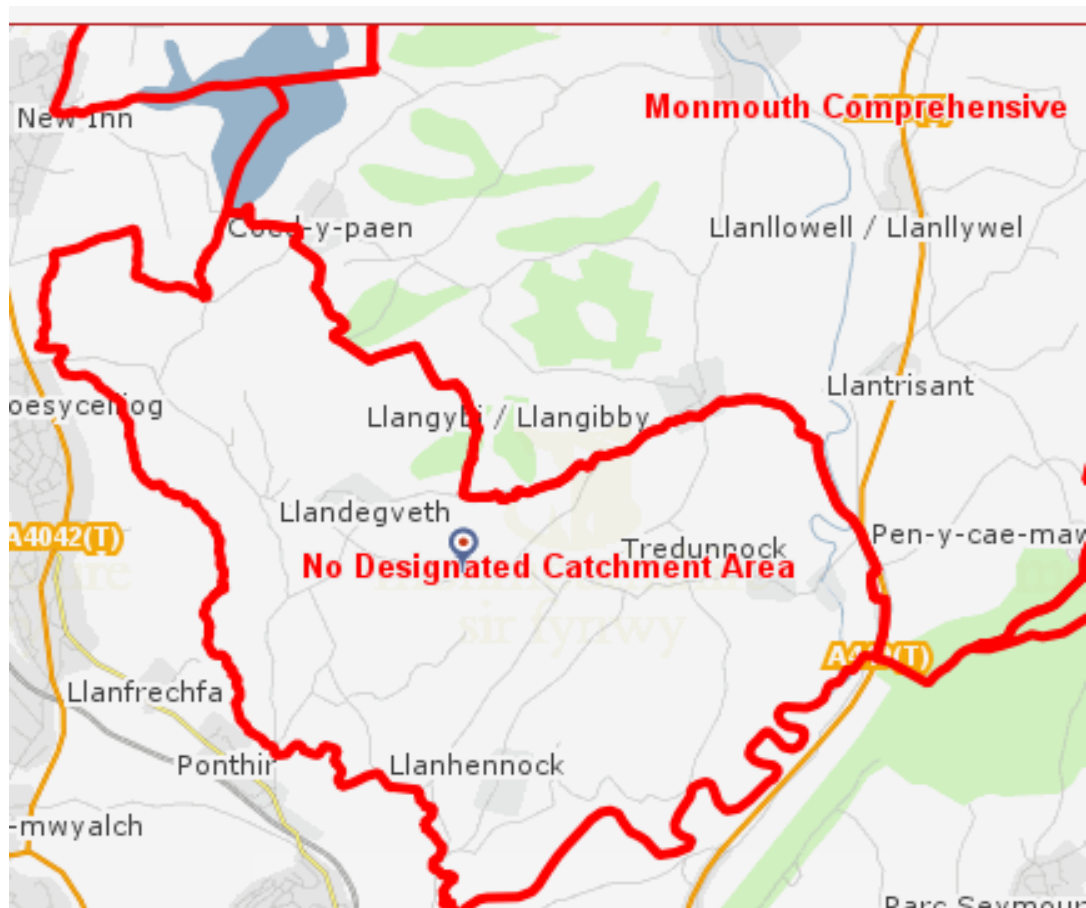
3.9 The significance of this position is that:

- Children residing within this area are no longer afforded priority for school places at Caerleon Comprehensive School, as it is no longer the designated catchment school. Due to regular oversubscription at Caerleon Comprehensive

School, there is a significant risk that affected children will be unable to obtain places at Caerleon Comprehensive School going forward.

- As the affected area does not form part of the catchment area for a Monmouthshire secondary school, there is currently no priority afforded to affected children in order to obtain school places in county.
- The home to school transport policy for secondary age pupils provides transport to the catchment or nearest (suitable) school over a distance criteria of 2 miles. As things stand, a secondary school within county can neither be considered as nearest or catchment, and therefore children from this area will not be able to obtain free transport to any secondary school in county.

3.10 The affected area is illustrated on the map below. In line with the criteria identified within the current School Admission and Transport policies, families residing within this area are now at a disadvantage when it comes to obtaining school places and receiving transport assistance.



Proposals

3.11 The School Admission Arrangements for the academic years 2021/22 and 2022/23 have been published, which results in the affected area being left without a designated

catchment area for an English Medium Secondary School. However, in line with section 2.20 of the School Admissions Code Wales (July 2013), published admission arrangements can be varied with approval of Welsh Ministers in set circumstances, for example, “where there has been a major change of circumstances”.

- 3.12 In light of the above, it is proposed that an application is made to Welsh Ministers proposing that the catchment boundary for Monmouth Comprehensive School is extended into the affected area with effect from September 2022.

Projected number of pupils affected

- 3.13 The table below identifies the number of children that are currently residing within the affected area and therefore do not currently have an English Medium secondary catchment School. The numbers identify the children that will transition from primary to secondary school between September 2021 and September 2027.

Transition from Primary to Secondary	Number of Pupils Affected
Sep-22	7
Sep-23	1
Sep-2	5
Sep-25	4
Sep-26	4
Sep-27	4
Total	25

It is recommended that Monmouth Comprehensive School is considered to be the new catchment school for the affected area. Whilst the school often finds itself in a position of oversubscription, we do not anticipate an in catchment pressure for those transitioning from primary to secondary school, meaning the above numbers can be absorbed should parental preference require, and applications are made by the relevant closing dates.

4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Consideration has been given to the various options available to resolve the current position:

Option 1 Do Nothing and maintain the status Quo of having no designated secondary school catchment

Strengths	Weaknesses
There would be no additional costs to consider through home to school transport entitlement	Pupils living within the affected area will not have a designated catchment school which will impact on their eligibility for school places
	Pupils living within the affected area will not have an entitlement to receive transport to a Monmouthshire School
	Pupils living within the affected area who attend Usk CIW Primary are unlikely to be able to transition with their peers
	With the lack of catchment School, free home to school transport would be provided to the nearest suitable school, which is likely to be a school within Newport

Option 2 Amend the catchment area for **Monmouth Comprehensive School** to incorporate the affected area

The estimated travelling distances associated with this proposal are:

Tredunnoch (NP15 1LY)	18.8 miles
Llanhennoch (NP18 1LT)	20.4 miles
Llansoar (NP18 1LS)	18.3 miles
Llangybi (NP15 1PD)	16.7 miles

Strengths	Weaknesses
The affected school would have a designated catchment school in county, so would receive priority for school places.	Increase in home to school transport costs due to eligibility for transport to the catchment school
Pupils living within the affected area will meet the eligibility criteria for free transport to a Monmouthshire School	Whilst this option is more financially viable than options 3-5, travelling distances are further.
PTU have confirmed that there are existing transport links from the surrounding areas to Monmouth Comprehensive School make this option the most financially viable	Limited capacity for new arrivals into the affected area who are already of secondary age, as places are often filled with out of county residents

We do not anticipate an in catchment pressure for those transitioning between Primary and Secondary so pupils should be accommodated if applying by the specified closing date	
Of the 25 existing pupils within the area, a large proportion attend Usk CIW Primary which has transitional links with Monmouth Comprehensive	
The affected area is more connected to Usk / Monmouth than it is other clusters within the County	

Option 3 Amend the catchment area for **Chepstow School** to incorporate the affected area

The estimated travelling distances associated with this proposal are:

Tredunnoch (NP15 1LY)	13.5 miles
Llanhennock (NP18 1LT)	18.4 miles
Llansoar (NP18 1LS)	20.3 miles
Llangybi (NP15 1PD)	17.0 miles

Strengths	Weaknesses
The affected area would have a designated catchment school in county, so would receive priority for school places.	Increase in home to school transport costs due to eligibility for transport to the catchment school
Pupils living within the affected area will meet the eligibility criteria for free transport to a Monmouthshire School	PTU have confirmed that there are no existing transport links to Chepstow School from the affected area, which would make it less financially viable when comparing to option 2
We do not anticipate an in catchment pressure for those transitioning between Primary and Secondary so pupils should be accommodated if applying by the specified closing date	There are no established transitional links between Usk CIW Primary School and Chepstow School.
There is sufficient capacity across all year groups for new arrivals into the affected area who are already of secondary age.	The children from the affected area who attend Usk CIW Primary school would be unlikely to be able to transition to Secondary School with their peers
Generally shorter travelling distances than option 2	The affected community is not seen to be connected to the Chepstow area

Option 4 Amend the catchment area for **Caldicot School** to incorporate the affected area

The estimated travelling distances associated with this proposal are:

Tredunnoch (NP15 1LY)	12.7 miles
Llanhennock (NP18 1LT)	13.0 miles
Llansoar (NP18 1LS)	14.9 miles
Llangybi (NP15 1PD)	16.7 miles

Strengths	Weaknesses
The affected area would have a designated catchment school in county, so would receive priority for school places.	Increase in home to school transport costs due to eligibility for transport to the catchment school
Pupils living within the affected area will meet the eligibility criteria for free transport to a Monmouthshire School	Whilst Caldicot School has been identified as the nearest Monmouthshire school for the affected area, PTU have confirmed that there are no existing transport links to Caldicot School from the affected area, which would make it less financially viable when comparing to option 2
We do not anticipate an in catchment pressure for those transitioning between Primary and Secondary so pupils should be accommodated if applying by the specified closing date	There are no established transitional links between Usk CIW Primary School and Caldicot School.
There is sufficient capacity across all year groups for new arrivals into the affected area who are already of secondary age.	The children from the affected area who attend Usk CIW Primary school would be unlikely to be able to transition to Secondary School with their peers
Caldicot School would be the nearest Monmouthshire School for the majority of the affected area, meaning shorter travelling distances	The affected community is not seen to be connected to the Caldicot area

Option 5 Amend the catchment area for **King Henry VIII Comprehensive School** to incorporate the affected area

The estimated travelling distances associated with this proposal are:

Tredunnoch (NP15 1LY)	16.1 miles
Llanhennock (NP18 1LT)	17.4 miles
Llansoar (NP18 1LS)	16.2 miles
Llangybi (NP15 1PD)	15.0 miles

Strengths	Weaknesses
The affected area would have a designated catchment school in county, so would receive priority for school places.	Increase in home to school transport costs due to eligibility for transport to the catchment school
Pupils living within the affected area will meet the eligibility criteria for free transport to a Monmouthshire School	PTU have confirmed that there are no existing transport links to King Henry VIII Comprehensive School from the affected area, which would make it less financially viable when comparing to option 2
We do not anticipate an in catchment pressure for those transitioning between Primary and Secondary so pupils should be accommodated if applying by the specified closing date	There are no established transitional links between Usk CIW Primary School and King Henry VIII Comprehensive School.
There is sufficient capacity across all year groups for new arrivals into the affected area who are already of secondary age.	The children from the affected area who attend Usk CIW Primary school would be unlikely to be able to transition to Secondary School with their peers
Shorter travelling distances than option 2	The affected community is not seen to be connected to the Abergavenny area

The preferred option is option 2, as this supports the original aims of our catchment review undertaken in 2018, which was to firstly provide Monmouthshire families with a Secondary school catchment inside of the County, and secondly to establish catchment areas that support transitional links between Primary and Secondary Schools.

5. REASONS:

The Council has a responsibility to provide access to school places for all young people who reside within the County.

Following the decision made by Newport City Council to remove the affected area from the catchment area of Caerleon Comprehensive School, there is no longer a secondary catchment designated to the families residing within that area.

The status quo means that the families within the affected area are more disadvantaged than other families across Monmouthshire who have a designated secondary catchment, as they do not currently receive priority for places at any Secondary School and are not eligible for free home to school transport to any Monmouthshire Secondary School.

The proposals outlined within this report will reinstate an equitable position for the affected families, and enable introduction for the academic year 2022/23, pending approval of Welsh Ministers.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The costs associated with this proposal purely relate to the impact on home to school transport. The historic position has been that, in the vast majority of cases, free Home to School Transport has been provided to Caerleon Comprehensive School as both the nearest and catchment school for the affected area.

The decision implemented by Newport City Council will now result in a reduction in the number of young people obtaining places at Caerleon Comprehensive school, as they are no longer afforded priority as in catchment applicants. The consequences of such are that the Local Authority will need to provide transport to an alternative school at an increased distance to that of Caerleon Comprehensive, which will increase home to school transport costs.

The Passenger Transport Unit have been consulted during this review process and have confirmed that the proposals to establish Monmouth Comprehensive School as the new catchment school for the affected area would be most financially efficient option when compared to the other 3 secondary schools within the County. This is due to having existing transport links to Monmouth Comprehensive which could be adjusted to accommodate the young people residing within the affected area.

The estimated additional costs associated with providing the children affected with free home to school transport to Monmouth Comprehensive School over the next 5 academic years are:

Transition from Primary to Secondary	Number of Pupils estimated to require transport	Cost per day	Cost per annum
Sep-22	2	£40	£7,600
Sep-23	1	£40	£7,600
Sep-24	5	£80	£15,200
Sep-25	4	£80	£15,200
Sep-26	4	£80	£15,200
Total	16		

The above has been calculated on the assumption that the existing vehicle would need to increase in size from a 4 seater to 8 seater in September 2022, and then to a 16 seater in September 2024.

The costs provided by the Passenger Transport Unit are estimates based on current rates and do not factor in the anticipated increases in contract prices, for example, due to rising fuel prices.

7. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

This assessment has been undertaken with no negative impacts identified.

8. CONSULTEES:

CYP DMT
SLT
Neighbouring Local Authorities
Passenger Transport Unit

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Welsh Government School Admission Code 2013
School Organisation Code (2013)

10. AUTHOR:

Matt Jones, Access Unit Manager

11. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644585

E-mail: matthewdjones@monmouthshire.gov.uk