

SUBJECT:	SCHOOL ADMISSIONS POLICY 2025/26 INCLUDING REVIEW OF SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREAS
MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	10th April 2024

1. PURPOSE:

This report seeks to provide Members with an update on the recently concluded public consultation to review the catchment area for Usk Church in Wales Primary School as part of the September 2025/26 School admission arrangements.

This report also seeks to provide members with a copy of the consultation report analysing the responses received from consultees regarding the proposed changes.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Members review and agree the full content of this report, the attached consultation report (appendix 1) and the proposed School Admissions Policy 2025/26 (appendix 2).
- 2.2 On reviewing section 2.1, that Members agree to implement the following changes to determine the primary catchment school for the affected areas as part of the Council's school admission arrangements for the academic year 2025/26:
 - To extend the catchment area for Usk Church in Wales Primary School to incorporate the villages of Tredunnock, Llanhennock and Llandegveth. A map detailing the affected area is presented in the consultation report (appendix 1)
- 2.3 For Members to acknowledge that, in line with the admission arrangements for Charles Williams Church in Wales Primary School, the affected area will also remain within catchment for Charles Williams CIW

Primary until such time that the governing body consult to amend their catchment area. Monmouthshire County Council's admission arrangements will determine the catchment school for the affected area to be Usk CIW Primary School.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 The Council is the admission authority for all secondary schools and almost all primary schools within the county. It is therefore responsible for the admission arrangements that underpin the decision made for allocating school places.

3.2 Within the county, there are 4 Voluntary Aided Schools where the governing body form the admission authority for their school. These schools are:

- Archbishop Rowan Williams Church in Wales Primary School
- Magor Church in Wales Primary School
- Our Lady and St Michaels Roman Catholic Primary School
- St Marys Roman Catholic Primary School

All other schools within the county fall under the admission arrangements published by the Council.

3.3 The School Admissions Code Wales (July 2013) requires admission authorities to consult on its admission arrangements on an annual basis. In circumstances where significant changes are proposed, a more wider consultation is required with those affected by proposals. School catchment areas form part of the Council's admission arrangements, and any proposed changes should be undertaken within this framework.

3.4 School catchment areas were last reviewed in 2019, where the Council consulted on changes to secondary school catchment areas. The review undertaken focussed on two key factors:

- To ensure that Monmouthshire residents had a designated secondary catchment school within the County.
- To improve the alignment of primary and secondary catchment areas in support of transitional arrangements

3.5 The findings of this consultation were presented to Cabinet in March 2019 where a decision was made to implement the changes as proposed. The

catchment area for Goytre Fawr Primary school was aligned to King Henry VIII Comprehensive School, and the catchment area for Llandogo, Trellech and Usk Primary Schools were aligned to Monmouth Comprehensive School. The decision has resulted in all secondary age children now falling within the catchment area for a school that's within the county.

- 3.6 The next stage of the review of school catchment areas focuses on our primary school provision, where the majority of primary school catchment areas have been in place in their current form since local government reorganisation in 1996. In some cases, it could be questioned whether there is a rationale behind how some catchment areas are formed e.g. they may not be aligned to the nearest school, or in some cases may divide communities.
- 3.7 On 13th December 2023, the Council's Cabinet agreed to undertake a rolling programme of reviewing primary school catchment areas across the county. The Cabinet also agreed to commence this review by entering into consultation process on the following proposal:
- To amend the primary school catchment area for Usk Church in Wales Primary School to include the areas of Tredunnock, Llanhennock and Llandegveth as part of the 2025/26 admission arrangements. The affected area does not currently fall within the catchment for any primary school within Monmouthshire.
- 3.8 The Council engaged in an extensive consultation with all affected parties including the affected schools, governing bodies, parents and other interested parties to seek views on the above proposal.
- 3.9 The consultation commenced on 8th January 2024 and lasted for a period of 6 weeks, concluding on 19th January 2024. A consultation document was produced providing full details of the proposals and was made available to all relevant consultees.
- 3.10 During the consultation period, the Council provided consultees with the opportunity to share their views on proposals by completing an online survey published on the Council's website. Officers also arranged two public consultation sessions to allow consultees to ask any questions and raise any concerns on the proposals. Unfortunately, there were no consultees in attendance at these sessions.

- 3.11 On conclusion of the formal consultation, officers have produced a consultation report which sets out the consultation methodology together with the responses received to the proposals. This report is available under appendix 1 of this report for Members perusal.
- 3.12 Members are asked to review the content of the consultation report, acknowledging the key themes of support and concern towards the proposals. The consensus drawn from the consultation responses is that there is sufficient support to justify the implementation of proposals in readiness for September 2025/26 admission arrangements. Whilst there were a small number of concerns raised during the consultation, it is felt that the responses provided to the concerns can be mitigated and enable proposals to proceed.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)

An integrated impact assessment associated with the proposals has been completed and can be found under appendix 3. This assessment will be reviewed and updated to incorporate the feedback received during the consultation period.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

The options considered are to implement the proposed changes as presented, or maintain the status quo. Proposals have been formed in order to provide Monmouthshire families with the opportunity to access a school within the county. The results of the consultation suggest that the Council would be acting reasonably should proposals be implemented.

6. REASONS:

The School Admissions Code Wales (July 2013) requires admission authorities to consult on an annual basis on its admission arrangements. Where significant changes are proposed, a detailed consultation with affected parties is required. Changes to school catchment areas forms part of the admission arrangements and therefore any changes requires consultation under this framework.

The consultation process was undertaken to allow the Council to receive a public view on the previously raised concerns received over recent years relating to the primary school catchment arrangements within the affected area. The response received has enabled the council to consider an amendment to existing policy based on an informed consultation.

The recommendations put forward would achieve alignment between Primary and Secondary School catchment areas and provide the Monmouthshire families residing in the affected areas with Primary School catchment within the county.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

Tredunnoch, Llanhennock and Llandegveth

Charles Williams CIW Primary School is currently the designated catchment school for the affected area. Should the children known to be residing within the affected area chose to attend their catchment school and require home to school transport assistance, the home to school transport costs would be in the region of £41,580 per annum. However, there are no children currently receiving transport from the affected area to Charles Williams CIW Primary School so the costs of current provision is zero.

Usk CIW Primary School is the proposed new catchment school for the affected area. Should the children known to be residing within the affected area chose to attend their proposed new catchment school, they would receive an entitlement to free home to school transport, with the costs estimated to be in the region of £41,580 per annum.

In light of the above, the immediate financial impact associated with this proposal is thought to be in the region of £41,580 per annum.

Important: It is important to note that the above costs are estimates provided on the basis of current home to school transport costs, which are likely to increase by the implementation date of September 2025. Its also important to note that the Council may still have a duty to provide transport to the schools currently designated as catchment in circumstances where its deemed nearest and there is a parental preference. This will increase the costs over those quoted above.

8. CONSULTEES:

CYP DMT

SLT

Cabinet Member for Education

People Scrutiny Committee – 5th March 2024

“The committee acknowledged the background, rationale and consultation process for the proposed change of catchment area for Tredunnock, Llanhennock and Llandegvedd from Charles Williams Primary School in Newport to Usk Church in Wales School in Monmouthshire. The committee had heard that most responses were supportive of the change, although some had raised concerns about distance and travel options. Members recognised that the primary school catchment areas review will be a rolling programme, looking at each area of the county and assessing their suitability and need for change. The committee asked to be involved in the process through workshops and highlighted the need for the ward member to be engaged throughout. Members supported the proposals outlined in the report”

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Welsh Government School Admission Code 2013

10. AUTHOR:

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11. CONTACT DETAILS:

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