

SUBJECT:	OUTCOME OF THE STATUTORY CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF YSGOL GYMRAEG Y FENNI
MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	5TH JUNE 2024

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the recent statutory consultation exercise concerning the proposals to increase the capacity of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni to 420 places through its relocation to the former Deri View Primary School site.
- 1.2 This report presents the consultation report (appendix 1) to Cabinet and seeks their approval to proceed with the next stages of this statutory process, namely, to publish the required statutory notices.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 note the feedback from the consultation stage of this process, presented through means of the consultation report found under appendix 1.
- 2.2 agree to publish the required statutory notices in line with School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to increase the capacity of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni from 317 places to 420 places (with effect from 1st September 2025) through its relocation to the former Deri View Primary School site.

Statutory notices will be published on the 17th June 2024 for a period of 28 days ending on the 16th July 2024.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The School Organisation Code (2018) places responsibility on local authorities in Wales for ensuring that there are sufficient and suitable school places across the County to educate its children and young people.
- 3.2 The Council has a responsibility under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2018 to consult with appropriate stakeholders when considering any significant school reorganisation proposals.
- 3.3 Members will be aware of their previous commitment to relocate Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni to the former Deri View primary school site as part of the band B proposals that involved the establishment the 3-19 School in Abergavenny. At their meeting on 17th January 2024, Cabinet gave their approval to engage with key stakeholders on these proposals, which would see the capacity of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni rise from 317 places to 420 places (plus a 60 part time place Meithrin).
- 3.4 The statutory processes concerning these proposals commenced on 29th January 2024, and ran for a period of 6 weeks (including 20 school days) concluding on 11th March 2024.
- 3.5 The consultation report attached under appendix 1 represents the Council's responsibilities in line with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2018 to produce a report seeking to inform interested parties of the outcome to the consultation by means of:
 - Summarising each of the issues raised by consultees.
 - Responding to these by means of clarification, amendment to the proposal, or rejection to the concerns with supporting reasons.
 - Setting out Estyn's view (as provided in its consultation response) of the overall merits of the proposal
- 3.6 During the 6 week consultation window, the Council received 18 formal responses to the proposals, with an additional two responses coming from the Education Achievement Service (EAS) and ESTYN.
- 3.7 Officers also held engagement sessions with staff, governors and parents (including interested parties) of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni. The feedback from these sessions have been included within the attached consultation report for members information. It was reassuring to receive such supportive feedback from these important stakeholders who are directly affected by the proposals put forward.

- 3.8 Of the 18 formal responses, 10 (56%) were fully supportive of proposals put forward, with a further 6 responses (33%) supporting aspects of the proposals. However, after unpicking the detail behind these 6 responses we are reassured that all 6 are supportive of the actual proposal itself but have asked for the Council to give consideration to other factors concerning the provision of Welsh medium education. The Council has therefore taken forward that 16 out of 18 (89%) responses received from the community are supportive of proposals.
- 3.9 In addition to the above, responses have been received from both Estyn and the Education Achievement Service, who appear to be fully supportive of the proposals put forward. Their full responses have been detailed in the consultation report.
- 3.10 The Council received 2 responses (11%) from respondents that were not supportive of the proposals, taking the view that investment into Welsh medium education is not a priority for the taxpayers within Monmouthshire. We are reminded that the numbers of Welsh medium learners are increasing within the County, and that we have statutory duty to continue with this upward trend in line with the Wales 2050 strategy.
- 3.11 In line with the School Organisation Code (November 2018), the consultation report is able to make recommendations to the Council's Cabinet on how proposals should proceed. The options available are:
- 1) To publish the proposals as consulted on
 - 2) To publish the proposals as consulted on with any appropriate modifications.
 - 3) To abandon the proposals and maintain the status quo.
 - 4) To significantly recast the proposals and reconsult

The recommendation to Members is that option 1 "To publish the proposals as consulted on" is endorsed in light of the consultation responses received.

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 2. This assessment will be reviewed and updated to incorporate the feedback received during the consultation period.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 The revised Code sets out the following requirement:

‘Following the consultation period, when the proposer is reviewing the proposal prior to publication the proposer is required to carry out a further assessment for the proposal and each of the alternatives that were set out in the proposal paper. This involves the same matters that the proposer was required to assess in formulating the proposal:

- (a) the likely impact on quality and standards in education,
- (b) the likely impact on the community and
- (c) the likely effect of different travelling arrangements.

The purpose of this further assessment is to take account of any further information that has come forward through the consultation or otherwise.’ In its consultation report, the proposer is required to explain its assessment of the proposal and the reasonable alternatives identified, how this assessment differs from their earlier assessment (if at all) and its assessment of any further reasonable alternatives. Finally, the proposer is required to confirm whether it considers the implementation of the proposal, (wholly or partly) to be the most appropriate response to the reasons it identified for the proposal and give reasons for its conclusion.’

A further assessment of the alternative options that were considered prior to the consultation period has been undertaken and is provided below:

5.2 **Option 1** – Do nothing and maintain the status quo. This would mean there would be no change to existing provision, and that Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni would remain on its current site with its current published capacity. Following the consultation period there were only a small number of respondents (2) that felt the Council should not be investing in Welsh medium education within the Abergavenny cluster.

The Council has considered the responses and maintains the view that there is a need to improve the teaching and learning facilities for those accessing Welsh medium education within the area, alongside the opportunities to allow for growth of the Welsh language to support the targets in our Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and National Welsh 2050 strategy.

5.3 **Option 2** – Build a new Welsh medium Community Primary school in Abergavenny to replace Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni. There were a small number of respondents (1) who felt that the ideal solution would be to build a brand new primary school for Welsh medium education within the cluster. Whilst we acknowledge that this would provide the ideal option, the Council do not feel that this is a feasible option to take forward, largely due to there being no suitable sites for the new primary school and the funding

available does not allow for a new build. The former Deri View primary school site will be vacant and provides excellent teaching and learning facilities for the Welsh medium community, whilst offering a prompt solution to relieving the accommodation pressures currently experienced on the current Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni site.

- 5.4 **Option 3** – Increase the capacity of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni on its current site. The Council did not receive any feedback during the consultation stages of this process to support this option. The Council continues to hold the view that the capacity on the existing site cannot be increased to meet the requirements for a two form entry school, and certainly not within the funding that is available. This option would also leave a purpose build 420 place school with excellent facilities vacant.
- 5.5 **Option 4** – Relocate Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni to the site formerly occupied by Deri View Primary School. The majority of consultees engaging in this process were supportive of this option.

Our preferred option remains to be option 4, which is to utilise existing accommodation available at the former Deri View Primary School site in order to increase the capacity of Welsh medium education within the area to 420 places. This option is not only the most financially viable but delivers excellent teaching and learning facilities and a prompt solution to relieving the accommodation pressures currently experienced on the current Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni site.

6. REASONS:

- 6.1 The proposal demonstrates our commitment to increasing the number of children accessing Welsh medium education and meets our targets outlined within our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). It also is supportive of the National Wales 2050 strategy

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 The Council's adopted SOP that formed the proposals to establish a new 3-19 School also identified the relocation of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni to the former Deri View Primary school site. Capital funding in the region of £1million was identified and agreed during this process to support the relocation and undertake any required refurbishment works associated with this proposal.

- 7.2 The proposal would also result in an increase in capacity of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni to become a provision for 420 pupils / two form entry. The school will continue to be funded in line with the adopted funding formula which will allow for the recruitment of additional staff as numbers on roll at the school increase.
- 7.3 The Council currently funds the rental of temporary accommodation located on the site of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni which would be released should proposals be implemented.

8. CONSULTEES:

CYP DMT
SLT
Cabinet Member for Education

People Scrutiny

"The Committee undertook thorough scrutiny of the proposal for relocating Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni and offered its support"

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Welsh Government School Organisation Code 2018

10. AUTHOR:

Matt Jones, Access Unit Manager

11. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644585

E-mail: matthewdjones@monmouthshire.gov.uk