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Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa,
Aberaeron, Ceredigion SA46 0PA
ceredigion.gov.uk

20/3/2025

Lisa Evans

01545 570881

Dear Sir / Madam

I write to inform you that a Special Meeting of the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held HYBRID - NEUADD CYNGOR CEREDIGION, PENMORFA, ABERAERON / REMOTELY VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE on Thursday, 27 March 2025 at 2.00 pm for the transaction of the following business:

1. **Apologies**
2. **Disclosure of personal interest (including whipping declarations). Members are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. In addition, Members must declare any prohibited party whip which the Member has been given in relation to the meeting as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.**
3. **Chair Announcements**
4. **School Organisation Code (Pages 3 - 10)**
5. **Update from the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Workstream (Pages 11 - 14)**
6. **To confirm minutes of the previous meeting and to consider any matters arising from those minutes (Pages 15 - 18)**

Members are reminded to sign the Attendance Register

A Translation Services will be provided at this meeting and those present are welcome to speak in Welsh or English at the meeting.

Yours faithfully



Miss Lowri Edwards
Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services

**To: Chairman and Members of Learning Communities Overview and
Scrutiny Committee**

The remaining Members of the Council for information only.

CYNGOR SIR CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to: Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 27 March 2025

Title: School Organisation Code

Purpose of the report: To provide information on the School Organisation process following the Member Workshop held on 14 January 2025

Reason Scrutiny have requested the information:

For Information

Cabinet Portfolio and Cabinet Member:

Councillor Wyn Thomas, Cabinet Member for Schools, Lifelong Learning and Skills

Background

At the request of Councillor Elizabeth Evans Leader of the Liberal Democrats, a full workshop was held to the Council on the 14th January, 2025 to provide information and ensure a full understanding of the processes followed in relation to proposals to restructure 4 rural primary schools in Ceredigion.

Officers gave the Council a comprehensive presentation that covered all areas of concern providing clear evidence that was conclusive proof of the integrity of the process and the thorough work of the officers.

The 25 **Elected** Members present spent a very extended period questioning and challenging the officers on the specific details presented.

Councillors confirmed at the end of the workshop they were completely satisfied with the process and were re-assured no evidence of misleading from officers had occurred.

However, the Elected Members felt that the matter should be put on the forward work programme of the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (as the appropriate public forum) for information, and to share as much information as possible whilst conforming with information protection guidelines.

It was decided that a joint statement from the three Leaders of the political groups will be released confirming their satisfaction with the evidence received.

Elected Members from across the political groups stated that they were **fully satisfied that they had not been misled by officers prior to, during or after the Cabinet meeting of 3 September 2024**

Current Situation

The purpose of this session is to provide the public with an overview of the evidence presented at the workshop. The evidence will address a number of contentious issues raised during the process and subsequently demonstrate the factual accuracy of the information presented.

The topics covered will include:

- Governance arrangements that provided the political mandate to undertake the work.
- Legislative data (for school re-organisation)
- Data accuracy.
 - PLASC
 - School Capacity
 - School transport costs
- Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Complaint.
- Welsh Language Commissioner Complaint.
 - Response from Ceredigion County Council.
- Estyn response to process.

Appendix A provides details of the process that is followed in relation to a rural school closure proposal and also the required information included within the statutory documents.

Wellbeing of Future Generations:

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why.

Not a policy or service change

Summary of Integrated Impact Assessment:

Long term:

Collaboration:

Involvement:

Prevention:

Integration:

Recommendation(s):

For information following the Member Workshop on the 14 January 2025

Reasons for decision:

To provide the public with an overview of the evidence presented at the workshop

Contact Name: Elen James

Designation: Chief Education Officer Corporate Lead Officer for Lifelong Learning & Schools

Date of Report:

Acronyms:

PLASC – Pupil Level Annual School Census

Appendix A

Flowchart and details of the required information included within statutory documents

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School Review Process

1. Key challenges document presented to **Infrastructure Scrutiny Workstream** aligned with 'Principles for ensuring a Sustainable Education' Document

2. Proposal Paper (for schools on Presumption against closure list – Annex F of the Code) presented to **Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** detailing the proposal

3. 'Proposal Paper' presented to **Cabinet (1)** for approval to proceed to consultation.

(a) Approve to proceed to publish **Statutory Consultation**

(b) Reject the proposal

(c) Offer an alternative option

4. Undertake **Statutory Consultation**.

5. 'Consultation Report' outlining responses to consultation and present any viable alternative options that would address the key challenges presented to the **Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

6. 'Consultation Report' presented to **Cabinet (2)**. Cabinet approval to proceed to publish **Statutory Notice**.

(a) Approve **Statutory Notice**

(b) Reject the proposal

(c) Offer an alternative option

7. Issue **Statutory Notice**.

8. Draft **Objection Report** presented to **Council** for approval and final decision

(a) Approve **Objection report** and the proposal

(b) reject the **Objection report** and the proposal

8. **Objection Report** and **decision letter** published on Council website

Step 1 - Ensure an effective and efficient infrastructure to meet our priorities

Scrutiny Workstream – this includes a selection of Councillors from the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. They will consider the key challenges and alignment of proposals with ‘Principles for ensuring a Sustainable Education Document’ in depth prior to being presented to the Scrutiny Committee.

Step 2 and 3 – Proposal Paper – The Local Authority is required to prepare a Proposal Paper for all schools on the Presumption against closure list (see Appendix F of WG School Organisation Code*)

The proposal paper must include:

- Quality and standards in education
- Need for places and impact of accessibility of schools (i.e. pupil no.’s and projections)
- Resourcing of education (i.e. surplus places) and financial implications
- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan
- Additional Learning Needs
- Ability of the schools to deliver the full curriculum at the Foundation Learning Phase and each Key Stage of education
- Community questionnaire
- The reason for closure proposal
- A list of the alternatives to closure that have been identified; and
- An assessment of the following for each of the reasonable alternatives that has been identified:
 - The likely impact on the quality and standards in education
 - The likely impact on the community
 - The likely effect of different travelling arrangements

The proposal paper should be presented to the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to being presented to Cabinet and a decision made on whether to proceed to statutory consultation. Cabinet should not make the decision as to whether to proceed to consultation until these preliminary requirements have been carried out and unless they are satisfied that implementation is the most appropriate response to address the key challenges identified as the reason for proposing discontinuance of the school.

Step 4 - Statutory Consultation – this involves the Local Authority publishing a Consultation Document detailing the proposal. The Consultation Document must be published on a school day. Consultees must be given at least 42 days to respond to the document, with 20 of these being school days. Section 3.4 of the WG’s School organisation code* includes a list of all consultees – these must receive a copy of the Consultation Document.

Step 5 and 6 - Consultation Report – The Consultation Report must include the main issues raised by consultees and the Local Authority’s response to these. This document should be presented to Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information. Cabinet to make a decision on whether to proceed with the proposal and issue the Statutory Notice

Step 7 - Statutory Notice – If Cabinet makes the decision to proceed with the proposal, the Statutory Notice must be published on a school day. The Objection period must last 28 days, to include 15 school days (in addition to the day on which it was published). Section 4.1 of the WG’s School Organisation Code includes a list of all consultees – these must receive a copy of the Statutory Notice. To be considered as a Statutory Objection, objections must be made in writing or by email and sent to the proposer before the end of the 28 days beginning with the day on which the notice was published

Step 8 – Objection Report – The draft Objection Report must be presented to Council for decision. The Objection Report and decision letter must be published on the Local Authority’s website within 7 days of the decision.

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Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 27 March 2025

LOCATION: Hybrid

TITLE: Update from the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Workstreams

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To provide feedback on the work of the workstreams

REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION:

BACKGROUND:

On 11 October 2012 as part of the forward work programme planning process, the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee established four workstreams for raising awareness, training purposes, exploring topics in greater detail and for identifying aspects which require further scrutiny. The workstreams have been reviewed and updated during 2022. The members of the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are divided between the workstreams, and the Chairman and Vice Chair attends and contributes to all three.

Ensure that local and national priorities are delivered effectively	Ensure equity for all pupils	Ensure an effective and efficient infrastructure to meet our priorities
Councillor: Chris James Caryl Roberts Euros Davies Rhodri Davies Elizabeth Evans Ann Bowen Morgan	Councillor: Chris James Caryl Roberts Marc Davies Amanda Edwards Mark Strong Ann Bowen Morgan	Councillor: Chris James Caryl Roberts Meirion Davies Endaf Edwards Gareth Lloyd

CURRENT SITUATION:

Ensure equity for all pupils

The 'Ensure Equity for all Pupils' workstream met on 19th October 2024 to visit Canolfan Padarn, Aberystwyth. This was an opportunity for Members to visit the 'Camu Mlaen' provision for post-16 pupils. Members were able to talk to staff about the provision, qualifications and experiences available to Ceredigion pupils who, at one point, had to leave the authority to attend residential colleges.

Camu Mlaen is a person centred approach that offers post 16 specialist education provision for young people with severe or complex needs. The local authority works in partnership with Adult Learning Wales and appropriate agencies to deliver a unique integrated provision, ensuring that young people receive the holistic support and opportunities they require, whilst being able to remain closer to home and to thrive and mature and build a future within their local community.

Camu Mlaen offers:

- Pre-entry educational provision (3 days a week)
- Local day centre services (2 days a week)

A person centred approach is adopted to ensure that the provision meets the needs of the young person whilst supporting them in moving towards their future goals. Targets identified are shared by all partners ensuring a cohesive approach with planned opportunities to develop and practice skills needed to thrive and prepare with confidence for adult life.

The Camu Mlaen model incorporated a supported and planned transition pathway from school to adult life. The course is designed for learners who may require significant support throughout their programme of study to enable them to make progress and ensure their wellbeing and safety. There is plenty of opportunity to practice skills in different environments and situations, which was observed by members of the workstream.

Ensure that local and national priorities are delivered effectively

Ensure an effective and efficient infrastructure to meet our priorities

Ensure Equity for all pupils

The workstreams arranged a visit to the new Ysgol Dyffryn Aeron school on the 19th of February 2025. An invitation was extended to all Councillors. 13 Members were in attendance.

A presentation was received from the Headmistress, Mrs Nia Thomas, providing information on the journey so far and the preparations undertaken when they welcomed some 180 children to the school in January 2025 (which she informed

will increase to 188 for the summer term). The area school amalgamated Ciliau Parc School, Dihewyd School and Felinfach School.

Members then had the opportunity to walk around the school. The classrooms were well equipped with desks, chairs, and teaching aids. Each classroom had a teacher who was actively engaged in teaching and interacting with the pupils providing modern, state of the art learning facilities for pupils. They used a variety of teaching methods to engage the pupils.

The facilities inside and outside were excellent, which included, large outdoor areas with outdoor play and learning areas. Ysgol Dyffryn Aeron has a range of modern amenities such as a 3G astro turf pitch as well as a Multi-Use Games Area.

Calon Aeron (ALN Centre) is equipped with the latest facilities to support pupils with Special Educational Needs, ensuring an inclusive and supportive environment for all pupils.

It was evident and reassuring to Members that the school are committed to providing the pupils with a holistic education. Members were extremely grateful to Mrs Elen James, Mrs Nia Thomas and all staff members and pupils for the opportunity to visit.

Wellbeing of Future

Generations:

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why.

No

Summary of Integrated Impact Assessment:

Long term:	N/A
Collaboration:	N/A
Involvement:	N/A
Prevention:	N/A
Integration:	N/A

RECOMMENDATION (S):

To note the work of the workstream

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

Contact Name: Lisa Evans
Designation: Scrutiny and Standards Officer
Date of Report: 1/03/25
Acronyms:

Minutes of the Meeting of LEARNING COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held at the Hybrid - Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron / remotely via video conference on Thursday, 6 February 2025

PRESENT; Councillor Chris James (Chair), Councillors Caryl Roberts (Vice-Chair), Euros Davies, Marc Davies, Meirion Davies, Rhodri Davies, Amanda Edwards, Endaf Edwards, Elizabeth Evans, Gareth Lloyd, Ann Bowen Morgan and Mark Strong

Also in attendance: Councillors : Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation. Councillor Gareth Davies, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement Services. Councillor Catrin M S Davies, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Customer Services. Councillor Matthew Vaux, Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Housing, Legal and Governance and Public Protection. Councillor Clive Davies, Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration. Councillors Alun Williams, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Through Age and Wellbeing, Councillor Keith Henson, Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services and Carbon Management, Councillor Wyn Thomas, Cabinet Member for Schools, Lifelong Learning and Skills.

Councillors Gwyn James, Keith Evans, Eryl Evans, Rhodri Evans, John Roberts, Ifan Davies, Hugh Hughes, Gwyn Wigley Evans

OFFICERS PRESENT: Eifion Evans, Chief Executive; Barry Rees, Corporate Director; Duncan Hall, Corporate Lead Officer, Finance and Procurement (S151 Officer); Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer Democratic Services; Elin Prysor, Corporate Lead Officer Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer; Elen James, Corporate Lead Officer, Lifelong Learning; Russell Hughes-Pickering, Corporate Lead Officer Economy and Regeneration; Carys Fowles, Assistant Accountant; Lisa Evans, Scrutiny and Standards Officer and Translators.

(1.30pm - 4.30 pm)

1 Apologies

None

**2 Disclosure of personal interest (including whipping declarations).
Members are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. In addition, Members must declare any prohibited party whip which the Member has been given in relation to the meeting as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.**

Councillor Chris James declared a personal interest with regards to any discussion relating to the Authority's Education Staff.

Councillor Gareth Davies, Cabinet Member, declared a personal interest with regards to any discussion relating to the Fire Authority.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bryan Davies declared a personal interest with regards to any discussion relating to the Authority's Education Staff.

3 **Report on the draft 25/26 Budget**

Each Overview & Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider the draft 25/26 Budget report presented to Cabinet on 21 January 2025 and the associated impact on the respective Services within its remit. The Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on the 6th of February 2025 at 1:30pm. Cabinet had considered and agreed 9 recommendations in relation to the draft 25/26 Budget report.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bryan Davies, presented the report on the draft budget for 2025/2026. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement, Councillor Gareth Davies, presented the remaining information. Duncan Hall, Corporate Lead Officer, Finance and Procurement, then provided a brief verbal update on the latest Budget situation.

The Leader of the Council raised an issue relating to the fire levy and the recent Independent Cultural Review of the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service. It was stated that the Council as a constituent Authority would want to scrutinise the situation and to ask questions of the Mid and West Wales Fire Authority.

There was an opportunity for questions and input from Cabinet Members and officers regarding the relevant service areas.

The main points raised during discussion were:

- Had the savings in relation to the review of schools been absorbed.
- The proposals put forward by the Independent Group in relation to Council staffing, want to safeguard the schools budget.
- How the funding formula for schools works.
- Are there opportunities for staff to work collaboratively with other authorities.
- Scrutiny should review services across the whole of the authority.
- Questions were raised in relation agency staff. A report on agency staff is due to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee in March.

Following discussion, Committee Members were asked to consider the following recommendations.

Recommendations: For the respective Services that are within the remit of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. To consider:
 - a) the overall draft 25/26 Budget position.

- b) the relevant elements of the Revenue Budget Movements.
 - c) the relevant elements of the Revenue Budget Cost Pressures.
 - d) the relevant elements of the Revenue Budget Reductions Proposals.
 - e) the relevant elements of the Fees & Charges proposals.
 - f) the relevant elements of the Multi-year Capital Programme.
2. To consider the options recommended by Cabinet on 21/01/25:
- a) A draft 25/26 Budget Requirement of £209.109m, resulting in a Council Tax increase (for the Ceredigion County Council component) of £13.94 per month for a Band D property (9.7%), which would include provision for a £230k investment in the Planning Enforcement Service and a £481k investment in the Waste Collection Service.
 - b) A draft 25/26 Budget Requirement of £209.234m, resulting in a Council Tax increase (for the Ceredigion County Council component) of £14.24 per month for a Band D property (9.9%), which would include provision for a £346k investment in the Planning Enforcement Service and a £481k investment in the Waste Collection Service.
3. To make recommendation(s) for Cabinet to consider on 18/02/25, as the Committee deems appropriate, in relation to the Budget.

Committee's recommendation:

Following discussion, Committee Members agreed that they had considered the recommendations 1 a) – f); and agreed to recommend to Cabinet:

Option **(b)** as the preferred option:

A draft 25/26 Budget Requirement of £209.234m, resulting in a Council Tax increase (for the Ceredigion County Council component) of £14.24 per month for a Band D property (9.9%), which would include provision for a £346k investment in the Planning Enforcement Service and a £481k investment in the Waste Collection Service

No further recommendations were made by the Committee for Cabinet to consider.

Reasons for recommendations:

To assist with the preparation of a balanced budget, to ensure appropriate scrutiny of the overall Budget being proposed and to make recommendation(s), as appropriate, for Cabinet to consider at their next meeting on 18th February 2025.

4 To confirm minutes of the previous meeting and to consider any matters arising from those minutes

It was AGREED to confirm the minutes of the Committee meeting as a true record, There were no matters arising from those minutes.

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Learning Communities Overview and
Scrutiny Committee held on 8 May 2025**

Chairman: _____

Date: _____