***Dear Community Councillors***

We had now received preliminary details of Powys County Council’s Formal Consultation into the closure of Gwernyfed. The consultation is to take place over 42 days and will commence on 4th April. They appear intent on holding no more than one large-scale public meeting, which is scheduled for 7.00pm on 20th April. (We await details of any further events to be held in local primary schools – but these are unlikely to be open to the public.)

Our Chair of Governors, Rev. Ian Charlesworth has written to Powys County Council on numerous occasions to press the case for consultation to be open and accessible to every section of the community and to address the concerns of every affected group. As yet he has received no satisfactory reply.

It appears that PCC is placing huge emphasis on the planned meeting at Gwenyfed High School on 20th April. They have indicated that they intend to hold the event in the sports hall, and to simulcast proceedings to the drama studio plus the dining hall. Together, these have a capacity of over 900. They clearly intend this to be a barometer of local support. If we fail to fill these spaces, it will be interpreted as apathy, and all arguments in support of Gwernyfed High School may be fatally weakened as a consequence. It is therefore of the greatest importance that every Community Council does its very best to bring every available member to this meeting, and for you encourage every club, society and individual possible in your area to come as well. We once again emphasize that this is not an issue which only affects school-age children. If the school were to close, then the sports and arts facilities would also be lost. We would lose a significant local employer, and there would be little to attract young families to stay in the area.

We understand that Powys CC is proposing to make this a ticketed event, so we will contact you as soon as we have details to let you know how to register for tickets. (*You may also be wondering how a ticketed event can satisfy the statutory requirement for open public consultation; we are wondering that too! The School Governors will be contesting this decision and will bring you any updates as and when we get them.)*

As well as keeping you up-to-date with PCC’s plans and arrangements for the meeting, we will also be able to help people or groups who do not have access to the internet to make their online bookings. We also hope to be able to assist with transport for people to travel to and from the meeting. Please let us know if you have any requests, suggestions, or offers of assistance in this regard.

*What else can you do?*

1. ***Assert your right to be consulted***

Write or email to Arwel Jones (who holds the education portfolio on Powys County Council) and to Ian Roberts, (Head of Schools Service). Demand to be informed at the earliest stage about all events and consultation activities in your area. Press the case for Community Councils to be fully consulted and for representatives to attend one of your meetings to address the Community Council.

1. ***Write***

Write or email to Arwel Jones and to Ian Roberts (see above) to explain the opposition of your community to the plans to close Gwernyfed High School. Describe the ways in which your community will be disadvantaged by closure, and note any businesses or organisations that will suffer.

All correspondence should also be copied to Carwyn Jones (First Minister), Huw Lewis( Education and Skills Minister) and Leighton Andrews (Minister for Public Services): only in this way can we ensure that Powys’ neglect of due process, plus the extent of public concern, is noted at Welsh Government level. Although this decision resides at County level, we have reason to believe that the conduct of our Education Department is already attracting concern at higher levels.

1. ***Conduct a Community Impact Assessment***

A Community Impact Assessment demonstrating the various ways in which closure would affect organisations and businesses in your immediate area is one of the most influential things you can do . The assessment shouldn’t just include the children and families who will be directly affected, but anyone who makes use of the facilities at GHS.

***4. Organize your own event***

A drop-in events or public meeting can be a great way of carrying out your Community Impact Assessment, and gauging the real level of support (or opposition) in your area. It is also an effective way to publicize the School’s Public Meeting on 20th April.

We have plenty of ideas to help run a lively and informative event, and would be very happy to arrange for one of our team to come along to help and to tell people about the proposals in detail. Email me if you’d like more details.

1. ***Share***

Make sure that as many people as possible get to hear about the threat to Gwernyfed High School. Mobilize as many as possible to come to the meeting on 20th April, and get people writing – both to the press and to Powys County Council (contacts above). Please contact us if you would like copies of our leaflets and handouts to distribute in your area.

***5 Let us help you to help us!***

We would be happy to arrange for a representative from the School Governors to visit your next community council meeting to explain the proposals in more detail, and to discuss the things we can do to support the campaign to retain Gwernyfed High School in the heart of our community.

Kindest regards

Andrew Jones