

CABINET REPORT
17 December 2013

Cabinet Member: Councillor Siân Gwenllian

Subject: School Organisation in Y Gader Catchment Area, Dolgellau

Contact Officer: Iwan T Jones – Corporate Director

The resolution sought/purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to explain the background and to update the Cabinet on school reorganisation in the Gader catchment area, Dolgellau.

A decision by the Cabinet is required on the following;

- i. Support for extending the work in order to create a range of models which will serve the catchment area in its entirety, with the aim of putting before the Cabinet specific recommendations for statutory consultation in accordance with Section 48 of the Schools Standards and Organisation Act 2013.
- ii. Authority to undertake an assessment in order to identify and measure the need within the catchment area for education provision of a specific category and designation as part of, and to meet the requirements of, the process of identifying recommendations in accordance with i. above.
- iii. To consider the possible financial implications and the options for meeting those implications, and thus guarantee that any further requirements for implementing this plan are included in the review of the asset management plan.
- iv. Since the Church Voluntary Schools come within the remit of the process, delegate to the Education Cabinet Member the task of conducting a pre-consultation with the Church if necessary, in accordance with the Schools Organisation Code 2013 requirements, before submitting a further report to the Cabinet on the favoured option, requesting permission to undertake a statutory consultation period on this option.

Views of the local members

I. BACKGROUND

I.1. In accordance with *Excellent Primary Education for Children in Gwynedd* discussions were held regarding education provision in the catchment area of Y Gader, Dolgellau since 2010.

I.2. In this report, the following matters are submitted;

- An update on the discussions in the catchment area and an outline of the work involved with fulfilling the vision for the catchment area

- An explanation of the need to undertake a needs assessment within the catchment area in terms of education of a category with specific designation.
 - The possible financial implications of the plans and options for meeting these implications, and following this an application for the Cabinet to guarantee the inclusion of any additional requirements for implementing the plan as part of the review of the asset management plan.
 - An explanation of the need to hold pre consultation talks with the Church which will be taken into consideration by the Education Cabinet Member when forming recommendations for the Cabinet prior to the start of the statutory consultation period.
- 1.3. A report was submitted to the Full Council on July 14, 2011 regarding the reorganisation of schools in the catchment area of Ysgol Y Gader. That report is an important context for this report and a copy is included at Appendix 1 (and copies of other relevant papers can be viewed on the Council website www.gwynedd.gov.uk/trefniadaethysgolion and www.gwynedd.gov.uk/thecabinet).
- 1.4. A further report was submitted to the Cabinet on July 16, 2013 (Appendix 2). That report described the difficulties involved with implementing the plan in one part of the catchment area due to technical problems with developing the site at Brithdir and also the financial implications. In view of this information and the need for reconsideration, an outline vision was adopted for the catchment area.
- 1.5. The essence of the outline vision would be to aim at ensuring the following outcomes:
- The same opportunities and experiences for all the pupils in the catchment area
 - More consistency across the entire catchment area
 - Better progression across the age range
 - Opportunities for sharing staff expertise and more opportunities in terms of professional development
 - Wider opportunities to co-ordinate public services, especially support for families
 - Strengthen the education provision across the catchment area and establish the foundation for collaboration, joint planning and joint development into the future.

There is a desire to ensure strong and sustainable education provision throughout the entire catchment area and across all sectors. This will involve looking at rationalising the number, nature and status of schools in some parts of the catchment area. If the vision is fully realised it will be possible to strengthen the education provision within Y Gader catchment area by setting the foundations for collaboration, joint planning and joint developing into the future.

- 1.6. The report explained the challenges which face the education system in the catchment area. More information regarding the statistical situation in the schools is included in Appendix 3. The main challenges are listed in this summary:
- During the last three years there has been a reduction of 6% in primary pupil numbers in the catchment area

- The reduction in pupil numbers is a cause for concern, in terms of some of the primary schools in the area and also the possible implications for the secondary sector. It becomes more difficult to maintain a curriculum and to uphold standards. Predications by the head teachers of the schools show that 3 of the rural schools will have fewer than 12 pupils by September 2016.
- Surplus places – The level of surplus places in rural schools stands at 47% - this is equivalent to more than 180 surplus places. We also have to note that one of the rural schools is beyond its capacity.
- Financial allocation and safety net – the cost per pupil in rural schools varies considerably between £4,142 and £10,616. In the catchment area, the average cost per pupil is £7,435 which is much higher than the County average for Gwynedd - £3,910. The rural schools receive additional funding each year to serve as a safety net to ensure that there is sufficient funding to employ a head teacher and teacher in every school. In the financial year 2013/2014 the rural schools in Y Gader catchment area received £199,929 additional funding.
- Leadership within the schools – head teachers and teachers at the individual schools make a great effort to maintain standards. This is difficult in some situations since there are head teachers in care at more than one of the schools and temporary arrangements in place at others. Five primary school head teachers in the area teach for 70% or more of their time.
- 31% (62 in number) of pupils living in Dolgellau move out of the town for their primary education. There are 202 primary age pupils living in the town of Dolgellau but only 140 of these pupils attend Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau.
- Pupil movements – this is one obvious characteristic of the catchment area. There is a large movement of pupils between school catchment areas. It was earlier noted that pupils move from the town of Dolgellau to the rural schools, but there is also movement between the rural schools themselves. One example is the fact that there are 25 pupils in Ysgol Y Clogau, but only 7 live within the Clogau catchment area - 8 come from Dolgellau, some from Barmouth and a number from other areas.

1.7. The report submitted to the Cabinet before the summer recommended moving ahead with part of the plan in order to implement the vision. The recommendation was to proceed and hold a consultation on developing a Lifelong Learning Community in the town of Dolgellau which would incorporate Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau and Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader. The report outlined the aim to ensure investment in the primary site which would solve some of the existing weaknesses and problems on the site. Also, it was recommended that substantial background work be carried out on the situation regarding the primary schools within Y Gader catchment area.

2. Update – Recommendation to extend the work and create other models which could realise the vision

- 2.1. In accordance with the decision of the Cabinet in July, preparations were made to hold a consultation on the proposal for the town of Dolgellau, and also considerable background work was carried out regarding the position of primary schools in the rural areas. Research was carried out on the following:
- Sites which could be developed as background work for developing possible models in the rural part of the catchment area
 - Initial work regarding possible models which could be developed for the rural part of the catchment area
 - Information regarding the resources needed to implement possible plans
- 2.2. Research work was carried out in terms of sites which could be developed within the catchment area after better understanding was obtained of Government expectations and standards along with any conditions set upon capital developments which receive funding from the Twenty First Century Schools Programme. In forming a brief for the background work on rural sites, consideration was given to the following:
- The principle of holding discussions in the catchment area to continue with rural education,
 - The fact that the number of rural education sites needs to be rationalised in view of the reduction in pupil numbers, the increase in the number of surplus places in the rural schools and the range in cost per pupil for providing education,
 - The principle of stabilising the education provision in the area, and strengthening the education provision within both the town and rural areas.
 - In terms of numbers, present numbers as well as predictions were considered, and also information regarding the location of pupils' homes.
- 2.3. There is a restricted choice of sites which could be developed as part of any model chosen. The size of the site, technical problems, travelling distance for the pupils and accessibility are all factors to be considered. In carrying out this initial work an estimated cost of possible developments is obtained and the cost implications are dealt with in part 3.2 of this report. This will need to be discussed by the Cabinet.
- 2.4. Initial work was carried out on the various model options which took into consideration what is possible in terms of sites, nature and situation of the catchment area and also the budget available through the Twenty First Century Schools Programme. In view of distances, ruralism, and restrictions regarding developing sites within Y Gader catchment area , the initial work revealed that models of Area Schools of one or more sites would offer the best solution to the challenge of providing education in the rural part of the catchment area for the future.
- 2.5. One matter that became evident when looking at model options was the challenge of ensuring that the provision is strengthened and that the same opportunities

given to pupils to benefit from the 'lifelong / all through' model across the catchment area.

- 2.6. On this subject, the Welsh Government has stated that a comprehensive and strategic bid is needed in order to qualify for the Government's share of the £3.6 million which has, in principle, been secured through the Twenty First Century Schools Programme.
- 2.7. The following are some of the conclusions reached as a result of the work carried out over the summer:
 - i. There are few options suitable for development in the rural area. It was also stated that the Cabinet should be aware of the possible capital implications in developing sites as part of any programme. This can mean developing more sites than originally intended, this is explained in full in part 3.2
 - ii. Consideration needs to be given to the geographical location of some sites, in the context of distances and travelling time for pupils.
 - iii. In terms of establishing an All Through School in the town – the challenge of securing fairness and opportunities for the pupils of the entire catchment area would be an important issue.
- 2.8. Having discussed this information with Local Members, it became evident that there was consensus over the fact that a plan which would best suit the whole catchment area was essential. There was a feeling also that it would be advantageous to form options of models which would serve the whole catchment area in terms of the type of model and in terms of the time scale for implementing any change.
- 2.9. In considering the case for change – we also have to consider the opportunities afforded by developing and establishing a new model in response to the situation:
 - Opportunities for strengthening the education provision in view of the reduction in pupil numbers
 - Opportunities for stabilising the pupil movement which is happening at present
 - Opportunities for improving collaboration between schools and for ensuring co-ordinated planning in order to avoid duplication of work and making sure that pupils' transition from one stage to the next is smooth.
 - Opportunities for ensuring that good practice and expertise are shared
 - Opportunities for looking at more effective methods of running an establishment.
- 2.10. When discussing extending the scope of the work, it was decided to wait before embarking on the consultation on the proposal for the town of Dolgellau and to consider following the path of assessing models at catchment area level. The following will give the Cabinet a taste of the type of catchment area models which could be considered:
 - Collaboration model
 - Model of collaboration through a trust
 - Federal model between different organisations within the catchment area

- Models of Area Schools on one or more sites in the rural area as satellites of a larger establishment with formal collaboration arrangement
- Establishing a follow through establishment with one category and legal designation and federation or a collaboration arrangement with another smaller establishment with a different category and designation
- Establishing one follow through school for the whole catchment area on a number of sites

2.11. There is further 'fine tuning' to be carried out on the options and assessments of need and of impact (linguistic, community and equality impact) to be held. But what we need to emphasise here is that extending the scope means considering a solution for the entire catchment area in order to fulfil the aims of the vision established.

2.12. A full options analysis and a pre consultation with the Church in Wales is required, before the preferred option to statutorily consult on is chosen. Then there will be a report to the Cabinet following the consultation where the decision is made whether or not to continue with the proposal. Should the Cabinet decide to continue, there will be a statutory notice published with a specific period for objecting the proposal. Following the objection period, unlike the process followed when re-organising previous areas, in accordance with the new School Organisation Code (006/2013), if an objection to the statutory notice is received, unlike past procedure, the matter will be decided locally. In certain situations this final decision can be referred to the Welsh Government. If this happens, the Welsh Government will decide whether to approve or reject the proposals, or approve it with modifications.

2.13. We request confirmation from the Cabinet on this in order to achieve the vision and note the aim of reporting back to the Cabinet on a favoured option before undertaking a statutory consultation.

3. CONSIDERATIONS

3.0.1. In this part of the report, we bring some matters to the attention of the Cabinet for consideration when assessing the proposal to extend the scope of the work in Y Gader catchment area.

3.1. THE FACTOR OF SELECTING A SPECIFIC CATEGORY AND DESIGNATION

3.1.1. Depending on the models developed, and as part of any consultation, consideration will have to be given to the technical matter of a 'legal' category and the designated religious character of any new establishment / establishments for the provision of education in Y Gader catchment area.

3.1.2. So that different models/options based on the entire catchment area can be compared, we need to understand the need for education provision of a specific category. At present there is a choice of community primary education provision or Voluntary Controlled primary education with a designated religious character (Church in Wales)

3.1.3. 7 of the primary schools in the catchment area and Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader are 'Community' schools with no religious designation, whilst Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau and Ysgol Machreth come under the Voluntary Controlled Category with a designated religious character (Church in Wales).

3.1.4. Before introducing the favoured option for the catchment area we need to establish whether we need to continue with the existing choice of community primary education and primary Voluntary Controlled education with a designated religious character.

3.1.5. The religious designation of a Voluntary Controlled School is important in terms of:

- The character of the school
- Membership of the governing body
- Ownership of the site

3.1.6. Schools are defined by law as belonging to specific categories. In Gwynedd there are Community, Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled schools. Further to this, Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled schools with religious character designation i.e. Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled Church schools can be designated with religious character i.e. a Church School.

3.1.7. The features and virtues of education in schools with religious designation are summarised in a document published recently by the Government– 'Faith in Education' (www.cymru.gov.uk). The document describes the features of schools of religious nature and notes the ethos and character of these schools.

3.1.8. The different features of the two religious status are shown in the table below:

	<u>Community Status</u>	<u>Church Status</u> (Voluntary Controlled School)
Ownership of land and school buildings	Local Authority The Local Authority is the owner/tenant of the school site and buildings	The Local Authority is a tenant of the religious body (the Diocese as a rule)
Funding responsibility	Local Authority	Local Authority
Staff employment and staff appointment	Local Authority No priority can be given on the basis of religion.	Local Authority When appointing a Head Teacher the Governing Body has the right to ask the head Teacher if he/she would support and develop the Christian character of the school.
Responsibility for auxiliary services	Local Authority	Local Authority
Admissions policy	Local Authority	Local Authority
Governing Body constitution	In accordance with Schools Organisation Regulations (Wales) 2005 Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998, parent representation, Education authority, Teachers, Staff, Community and Community Council.	In accordance with Schools Organisation Regulations (Wales) 2005 Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998, parent representation, Education authority, Teachers, Staff, Community and Community Council and Governors appointed by the Church.

Joint worship	Meet legal requirements for daily worship. The act of worship to be of Christian nature either totally or mainly.	Satisfy the legal requirements for daily joint worship. The worship will be of Christian nature either wholly or partly and can include elements of worship by the religious body.
Curriculum and Religious Instruction	Religious Instruction to be part of the school curriculum. Religious education syllabus agreed upon locally through SACRE	Religious Instruction to be part of the curriculum Christian values to be part of the school curriculum and at the heart of the school life. Religious education syllabus agreed upon locally through SACRE . Following consultation and democratic vote by parents/carers an application can be made for use of a religious body curriculum to be adopted for religious instruction.
Inspections	Estyn inspections only.	Inspection by Estyn. The Church can also conduct its own inspection of the religious life of the school (Inspection under Section 50 Education Act 2005).

- 3.1.9. Cabinet members will be aware that the Church is a core consultee in this situation. Discussions have been held with representatives of the Church in Wales Bangor Diocese and these discussions need to be continued as a result of extending the scope of the proposal.
- 3.1.10. When considering the technical details of this matter, full consideration should be given to the guidelines issued by the Welsh Government. The Cabinet should be aware that there is a new School Organisation Code (006/2013) which gives detailed guidelines regarding the statutory process involved with school organisation and the requirements regarding voluntary schools.
- 3.1.11. In the case of schools with specific designation, the need for such a provision in the area has to be assessed and evidence produced. This situation has to be dealt with appropriately and evidence given of the need and desire for education of a specific category.
- 3.1.12. At the moment, no assessment of the desire for provision of a specific category and designation has been held in the catchment area of Ysgol Y Gader. In the wake of the recommendation now to extend the discussion for the catchment area – we strongly suggest that work should be carried out on this issue. Understanding and gaining information on the level of need for a specific education provision would be useful when putting together a strong model or models for consideration in a formal statutory consultation and thus would be an important consideration for the Cabinet when reaching a decision on the proposal put forward.
- 3.1.13. Since there is a choice of provision under a category with specific designation in the primary sector within the catchment area at present, we suggest that an

assessment of the situation be undertaken across the catchment area and the support of the Cabinet is requested for the task of undertaking this assessment.

3.1.14. The School Organisation Code (006/2013) also sets a requirement because of the status of Voluntary Controlled status of two of the primary schools in the catchment area and the Authority will hold pre-consultation discussions with the Church before finally deciding to move ahead with the statutory consultation process. By holding pre-consultation discussions with the Church it will be possible for the Cabinet to discuss the views of the Church before deciding to hold a statutory consultation on the favoured option.

3.1.15. Since pre-consultation talks need to be held with the Church in Wales, the Cabinet is requested to delegate the right to hold these pre-consultation discussions to the Education Cabinet Member and then a report presented to the Cabinet in which the findings will be included as well as the favoured option. The Cabinet will be able to discuss the observations and the standpoint of the Church before deciding to hold a statutory consultation on any favoured model.

3.2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.2.1 One matter which requires consideration with regard to extending the discussion over the entire catchment area is the capital funding available to undertake any plan. Originally the aim was to reorganise the schools in the eastern part of Y Gader (which would include Machreth, Ieuan Gwynedd, Brithdir and Dinas Mawddwy primary schools), then Dolgellau town, with the western part of the area (Llanelltyd, Clogau, Ganllwyd and Friog primary schools), to follow. Based on this, when a SOP (*Strategic Outline Programme*) bid was submitted to the Welsh Government Twenty First Century Schools Programme, the eastern part of the area and Dolgellau Primary School were included in Band A of the programme, with the western part of the area in the second phase, namely Band B .

3.2.2 The Government approved the first step of the Council's SOP Band A bid in principle, namely the value of £36.22million to include the projects involving Y Berwyn, Meirion Dwyfor Special School, Groeslon area, Glancegin, Eastern part of Y Gader and Dolgellau Primary School. Funding for Band B, which includes the eastern part of Y Gader catchment area, has not yet been earmarked. In view of the fact that the proposal is to look at the catchment area in its entirety, we note that no capital funding has been earmarked for the whole catchment area.

3.2.3 To attract the Government's share of the £3.6million (which is £1.8m based on 50% contribution) which has been included and approved as part of the 21st Century Schools Programme for Y Gader catchment area, a comprehensive business plan will have to be formed in three steps (SOC - *Strategic Outline Case*, OBC - *Outline Business Case* and FBC - *Full Business Case*). The Cabinet has already committed to fund the Council's contribution of £1.8 million to fulfil these plans should the business plan not be successful.

3.2.4 In order to facilitate the process of developing options, an initial assessment was carried out of all the existing primary schools in the area. Information regarding sites which could be developed will be useful in assessing what educational models would best offer themselves for providing education in the area for the future. Of course, some of these options could be non-capital.

3.2.5 Depending on what model is developed, and thereafter favoured, it is estimated that the total cost of developing all the sites within the catchment area would be £4.62m. Therefore in view of the fact that £3.6million has been earmarked as part of the 21st Century Schools Programme, in order to extend the scope to the whole catchment area, we need to consider a way of finding the additional £1.02m which could be required.

3.2.6 Before discussing further steps with any plan which would involve expense on an additional capital development, the Cabinet would need to confirm whether there is a commitment to fund any additional capital requirements. Before embarking on a process of consulting on a favoured option we have to be certain that the source of funding is secure.

3.2.7 The Council's contributions for Twenty First Century Schools capital plans have been committed through the Asset Management Plan. In order to fund any additional requirement for capital funding which might be part of a comprehensive catchment area plan in Y Gader catchment area, there are some options which could be considered.

3.2.8 (1) An application for the Government to finance Band B earlier

Initial discussions have commenced with civil servants from the Welsh Government to find out if it is possible to attract band B funding earlier from the 21st Century Schools Programme. The message so far is that this cannot be carried out. Even so, there is a way of ensuring that the discussion remains open so that the Council can take advantage of any opportunities that might arise in the future for joint funding.

3.2.9 (2) Hold discussions with the Government to alleviate technical requirements of any development in order to ensure that the cost is proportionate to the need and ensures value for money

In addition, discussions will be held with the Government to see if it is possible to be flexible with the expected standards which are a condition of any grant funding. It is suggested that careful scrutiny should be applied to the cost of any capital plans which need developing so that they will conform with possible models and ensure value for money.

3.2.10 (3) The Council itself undertaking any additional costs

As a result of extending the scope of the plan, and following discussions on the options noted above (1 and 2) that the Cabinet guarantees including any remaining requirements from the Gader catchment area plans as part of the asset management plan review.

3.2.11 Therefore, the Cabinet is asked to consider the best way of responding to any capital needs in order to approve an additional contribution by the Council towards additional capital costs which might arise in order to fulfil the plan in its entirety in Y Gader catchment area. It is noted that the exact cost implications will not be clear until options of appropriate models have been developed and a definite favoured option identified. But it would be appropriate to receive confirmation of commitment towards capital costs before a consultation is held on a favoured option.

3.3 OTHER FACTORS

3.3.1 An assessment has been carried out of the possible factors, risks and alleviating methods to be discussed when taking steps towards extending the scope of the work in Y Gader catchment area and looking at the catchment area in its entirety.

3.3.2 Consideration needs to be given to the effect that expanding the scope will have on the timetable, taking into account that it will lead to a slippage to the original timetable of 6 months. The situation will need to be closely monitored as the project progresses.

3.3.3 Due to this slippage there is also an effect on the implementation timetable. This means that there could be no changes until 2017/2018.

3.3.4 Following the delay in the timetable, Y Gader project would need to be implemented between the other projects which have already been timetabled within the programme, this aspect will need to be monitored.

3.3.5 A full consideration of the issues involved with the matter of schools with a category with a specific designation is required. There is at the moment a choice of primary education provision between 'Community' education or 'Voluntary controlled with a religious designation (Church in Wales) and it will be necessary to ensure a full consideration of this takes place. In accordance with the School Organisation Code the Council needs to understand the need for the choice of education provision when re-organising.

3.3.6 Under the order of the new Code, there are circumstances where a proposal can be referred for a final decision by Welsh Government Ministers. If the Ministers rejected the proposal, discussions on re-organising education throughout the catchment area would have to be restarted, resulting in a time slippage, and it is very likely to mean losing 21st Century School Programme Band A capital investment. As a result, it would take at least a year to implement any non-capital change. In order to mitigate this risk appropriate considerations for the issues that could mean that the matter is transferred is needed.

3.3.7 When devising and evaluating models, careful consideration needs to be given to a suitable management structure. The challenge to appoint individual(s) of the right calibre to run the new school(s) would be part of any model in view of the problems recruiting and appointing head teachers in the County.

3.3.8 It will be necessary to ensure appropriate consideration of catchmental issues when developing models in order to attempt to consider models that would offer the same opportunities to all the children of the catchment.

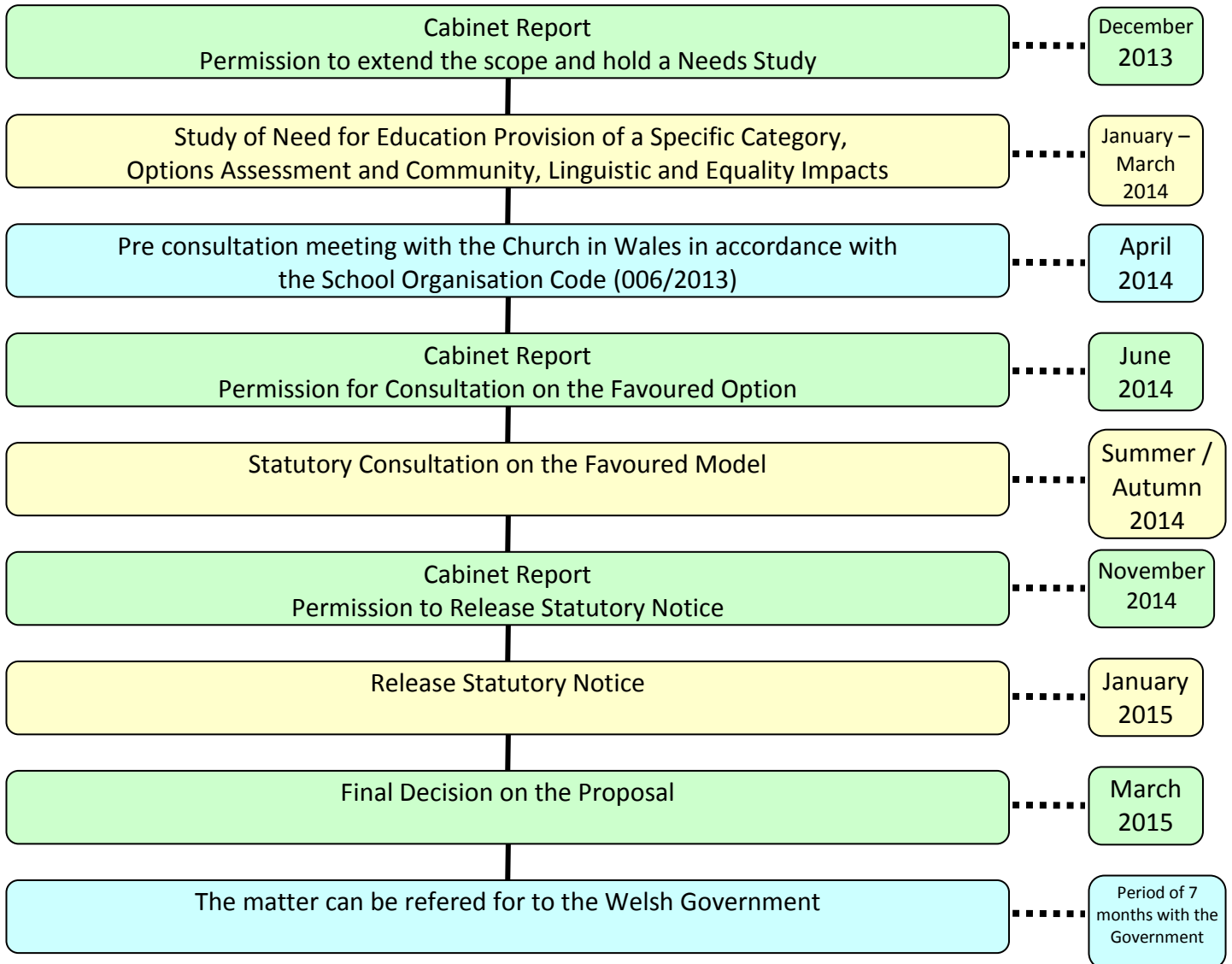
- 3.3.9 Depending on which option is favoured, it could mean consultation with consultees involved with 10 schools. This is substantially higher than the consultations held in the past. The consultations will need to be carefully planned.
- 3.3.10 In developing any proposal, consideration needs to be given to the best method of managing the change in view of the favoured option. There could be a number of changes in view of the number of schools in the catchment area. In order to manage the change successfully as much information as possible must be shared as the process goes forward.
- 3.3.11 If the direction is confirmed this will need to be communicated clearly. It is noted that discussions on the reorganisation of schools have been ongoing for a number of years in the catchment area, and that clarity regarding the steps intended to be taken needs to be ensured. A newsletter will be sent to the schools to draw attention to this report, and the outline timetable for the work that will need to be completed will be noted. It is also intended to hold a meeting of the Catchment Review Panel in the new year which will update the catchment.
- 3.3.12 One other issue that should be considered is the possibility of having several building developments happening within this catchment and possibly, in the wider area. When implementing other building projects in Meirionnydd there were some challenges, and careful consideration to the matters that raised with those projects will be necessary as the project proceeds with other plans in the area for the future.
- 3.3.13 The Government has requested a three step business case for the whole catchment. The case needs to be robust and comprehensive. If the proposal were to be rejected the way forward would need to be reconsidered. When developing the comprehensive business cases, close collaboration with Welsh Government's representatives will be necessary.
- 3.3.14 It must also noted that the matter raised in 3.2 of this report in terms of possible funding implications need to be considered.
- 3.3.15 Therefore, in asking the Cabinet to confirm the direction of the work we draw attention to these risks that members should be aware of:
- Slippage of up to 6 or 7 months in the timetable
 - There are considerable time restrictions in terms of the Twenty First Century Schools Programme window and the need to ensure that any capital investments are completed by the end of that period
 - Depending on the model favoured, there might be a need for capital funding in addition to the funding which is part of the Twenty First Century Schools Programme
 - We need to be aware of the need to deal with the matter of category and education provision designation within the area when developing strong models

4. TO SUMMARISE

- 4.1. Therefore, the recommendation after considering all the factors is for the Cabinet to approve expanding the scope of the work to include the whole catchment area and to enable the development of a range of models which would serve the entire catchment area.
- 4.2. At the moment there is a choice of community primary education provision and Voluntary controlled primary education provision with religious designation. In order to be able to compare different options/models on the basis of the entire catchment area we have to understand the need for education provision of a specific category. Before presenting the favoured option for the catchment area there is a need for better understanding of the need for the existing choice of provision, namely community primary education provision and Voluntary Controlled primary education provision with religious designation. Therefore, Cabinet members are asked to approve holding a needs assessment for education provision of a specific category and designation in the area in order to facilitate the completion of a full options assessment.
- 4.3. Following initial research work, it is possible that £4.62million will be needed to develop sites in the catchment area, with £3.6million of that sum already earmarked as part of Welsh Government Twenty First Century Schools Programme, based on a financial contribution of 50%:50% by Gwynedd Council and the Welsh Government. If the favoured model(s) lead to capital requirements in excess of the earmarked sum, there will be a need to ensure commitment towards those requirements before undertaking a consultation on the favoured model.
- 4.4. A recommendation is made to delegate to the Education Cabinet Member the right to hold a pre consultation meeting with the Church, in accordance with the School Organisation Code (006/2013), before submitting a further report to the Cabinet on the favoured option requesting permission to undertake a period of statutory consultation on that option. This will ensure that the Cabinet receives all the information before a decision is reached on whether to proceed with a period of statutory consultation.

5. NEXT STEPS

5.1. Subject to Cabinet decisions, these are the next steps in the process and an outline timetable:



6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1. Confirm expansion of the work to enable the task of creating a number of models which would serve the catchment area in its entirety, with the aim of submitting specific recommendations for statutory consultation to the Cabinet in accordance with Section 48 of the Schools Standards and Organisation Act 2013.
- 6.2. Approval for undertaking an assessment in order to identify and measure the need within the catchment area for education provision of a specific category and designation as part of, and to address, the process of identifying recommendations in accordance with i. above.
- 6.3. Guarantee that the Cabinet will address any further capital requirements, which could be as high as £1.02m for developing plans in the catchment area of Y Gader, as part of the review of the asset management plan, as a result of extending the scope of the plan, and following consideration of the options noted in 3.2.8 a 3.2.9 of this report.
- 6.4. Since Church Voluntary Schools are included in the process, delegate to the Education Cabinet Member the right to undertake a pre-consultation with the Church in Wales, if necessary, in accordance with the School Organisation Code 2013, before submitting a further report to the Cabinet with the favoured option, requesting permission to hold a period of statutory consultation on it.

Views of the Statutory Officers:

1. Chief Executive:

“The challenge of providing a sustainable service in a rural area is one that the Council faces in several fields. It is not surprising that education is one of those that needs early attention. The submitted report highlights two things that need to be seen in such discussions, namely, creativity while seeking a solution that is viable in terms of educational quality and cost of the provision and also aiming towards solutions that make sense within geographically appropriate communities. It now appears that a local consensus is developing around the proposals set out in the report and that is to be welcomed. However, as the report notes, there are financial implications to this in terms of capital costs but, as the Head of Finance suggests, giving priority to this in the Asset Management Plan is appropriate by accepting the implications of that to other capital plans.”

2. Monitoring Officer:

“The recommendations in the report involves a complex process which will need to address the interaction between a range of factors. It also anticipates undertaking specific consultation processes. It is important therefore that a careful eye is kept on the legal requirements which are relevant to the recommendations and their implementation.”

3. Chief Finance Officer:

“Currently the estimated cost of the development is noted, which will be a priority to fund in the asset management plan, remembering that school organisation in the catchment produces revenue savings. The current major risk is missing the relevant grants timetable, therefore unnecessary delay should be avoided.”

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Full Council Report 14 July 2011 –

http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk/gwy_pwyllgorau.asp?cat=7167&doc=26666&Language=1

Appendix 2 - Cabinet Report 16 July 2013 –

http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk/gwy_pwyllgorau.asp?cat=8071&doc=29860&Language=1

Appendix 3 - Maps and Data on schools in the Catchment Area, September 2013