

## REPORT TO THE CABINET

16 September 2014

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Gareth Thomas

**Subject:** The future of special educational needs provision in Meirionnydd and Dwyfor.

**Contact officer:** Iwan T Jones – Corporate Director /  
Garem Jackson – Education Quality Improvement Officer / Project Leader

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### The decision sought / purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is for the Cabinet to consider observations following a statutory consultation on the proposal to relocate Ysgol Hafod Lon and Tŷ Aran Unit to the new site in Penrhyndeudraeth on 1 September 2016, increase the capacity of the school and add a residential element to the provision, and decide whether or not to issue a statutory notice on the proposal, and propose any amendments.

### Local member's views

Any observations by the Local Members will be presented in the meeting.

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The content of this report follows a statutory consultation on the proposal to develop a new special educational needs school in Penrhyndeudraeth, with a residential and short break provision, and to relocate Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran to the site. The report reflects the requirements of the statutory process and guidelines of the Schools Organisation Code 006/2013 that were published by the Welsh Government. This document includes the following:

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An analysis of the observations received during the consultation period will be produced. It was agreed during the statutory consultation that copies of the written responses would be sent to the Cabinet Members. It will be ensured that copies are available for the public to inspect (following personal information about individuals being edited in order to comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998) and they are available to view on the Council's website [www.gwynedd.gov.uk](http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk).

## I. INTRODUCTION

- I.1. At its meeting on 10 June 2014, a report was submitted to the Cabinet (**Appendix 1**) to request permission to undertake a process of statutory consultation, in accordance with the Schools Standards and Framework Act (Wales) 2013 to relocate Ysgol Hafod Lon and Tŷ Aran Unit to a new site in Penrhyndeudraeth on 1 September 2016, increase the capacity of the school and add a residential element to the provision.
- I.2. The report noted the case for change, the procedure for developing options and agreeing on the way forward, the rationale for selecting the preferred option to consult upon, and the details and costs of that option.
- I.3. The Cabinet approved the recommendation (**Appendix 2**).

## 2. THE STATUTORY CONSULTATION

- 2.1. The Statutory Consultation was undertaken in accordance with the Schools Organisation Code guidelines (006/2013) by the Welsh Government.
- 2.2. The period of the consultation was 23 June – 5 August 2014.
- 2.3. A consultation document (**Appendix 3**) was distributed either in paper form or via e-mail as an attachment to all the stakeholders who were on the Schools Organisation Code (006/2013) list and other relevant stakeholders that had been identified.
- 2.4. A paper copy of the consultation document was distributed to all the staff at Ysgol Hafod Lon and Tŷ Aran Unit, members of the governing body of Ysgol Hafod Lon and the parents / guardians of every pupil at Ysgol Hafod Lon and Tŷ Aran Unit.

- 2.5 Electronic copies were distributed to every primary and secondary school in Meirionnydd and Dwyfor.
- 2.6 The consultation document included information on the reason for change, the procedure for developing options and agreeing on the preferred option, the order and locations of consultation meetings, how to respond to the consultation and how to obtain further background details, including a background pack (**Appendix 5**). This background pack included an impact assessment of the proposal on the Welsh language, community and equality.
- 2.7 The equality assessment gave specific notice to different equality aspects such as ethnicity, gender, disability, language, religion and age. The assessment noted the current situation and noted the Council's duty under the Equality Act 2010 and the steps needed to ensure that the proposal considered and reacted appropriately to ensure individuals equality rights.
- 2.8 The consultation document and the background pack were also available to be viewed on Gwynedd Council's website, and paper copies were available to be viewed at Ysgol Hafod Lon, Tŷ Aran Unit, Ysgol Y Gader, the libraries of Dolgellau, Pwllheli, Penrhyndeudraeth, Porthmadog, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Bala, Tywyn and Gwynedd Council's offices in Dolgellau, Pwllheli and Caernarfon.
- 2.9 Paper copies of the consultation document and the background information pack were also available to anyone by contacting the project team. Phone and e-mail details were included in the consultation document.
- 2.10 After distributing the consultation document, observations were received from the Welsh Government which recommended including additional information to what had already been contained in the document. After creating a document containing this information, and obtaining the Welsh Government's approval, the appendix (**Appendix 4**) was distributed to all the stakeholders who had received the consultation document in the first place, and was added to the documents on the Council's website.
- 2.11 Meetings were held with the staff, children and governing body of Ysgol Hafod Lon and the staff of Tŷ Aran Unit.
- 2.12 Open days were held in Pwllheli, Dolgellau and Penrhyndeudraeth.

Meeting	Date
<b>Ysgol Hafod Lon - staff</b>	23/06/14 - 16:00
<b>Ysgol Hafod Lon – governors</b>	23/06/14 – 17:00
<b>Tŷ Aran Unit - staff</b>	26/06/14 - 16:00
<b>Ysgol Hafod Lon – school council (children)</b>	04/07/14
<b>Open day</b>	Open to all parents and any individuals or organisations or agencies that wished to attend
<b>Pwllheli – Dwyfor Leisure Centre</b>	07/07/14: 14:00 – 19:00
<b>Dolgellau – Glan Wnion Leisure Centre</b>	08/07/14: 14:00 – 19:00
<b>Penrhyndeudraeth – Memorial Hall</b>	09/07/14: 14:00 – 19:00

### **3. OBSERVATIONS RECEIVED DURING THE CONSULTATION PERIOD**

#### **3.1 Ysgol Hafod Lon – staff**

23 members of staff attended the meeting. Officers from Gwynedd Council gave a presentation outlining the content of the consultation document, the purpose of the consultation and how to respond to it. The staff were asked if they had any questions or comments following the presentation.

No questions or observations were received.

#### **3.2 Ysgol Hafod Lon – governors**

Two members of the governing body attended the meeting. It is important to note that the governing body of Ysgol Hafod Lon also has responsibility for Tŷ Aran Unit. Officers from Gwynedd Council gave a verbal presentation outlining the content of the consultation document, the purpose of the consultation and how to respond to it. The governors were asked if they had any questions or comments following the presentation.

The two governors stated that they would look at the consultation document in more detail before deciding on any observations.

#### **3.3 Tŷ Aran Unit – staff**

Three members of staff attended the meeting. Officers from Gwynedd Council gave a presentation outlining the content of the consultation document, the purpose of the consultation and how to respond to it. The staff were asked if they had any questions or observations following the presentation.

Two questions/observations were received.

#### **3.4 Ysgol Hafod Lon – children**

An experienced officer held a meeting with members of the School Council as representation of the children of Ysgol Hafod Lon. Eight members of the school council were present.

The officer offered to go to Tŷ Aran Unit but the staff were of the opinion that there would not be much value from talking to the pupils because of their needs, as they would not understand the consultation and it would maybe cause concern for them.

The response of the children at Ysgol Hafod Lon was very positive to the idea of a new school, and although some would have to travel further, they did not mind.

#### **3.5 Open Days**

Three open days were held in Pwllheli, Dolgellau and Penrhyndeudraeth between the hours of 14:00 and 19:00 in order to give people the opportunity to discuss and make observations on the statutory consultation. During our discussions with individuals they were given the opportunity to note any observations on the statutory consultation, either verbally or in writing.

Two observations were received in the Dolgellau meeting. There were no other objections or concerns to the recommendation on the day, but five people took a copy of the consultation document with them to consider the proposal in the consultation further.

### 3.6 Written observations (letters and e-mails)

11 written responses were received to the statutory consultation, either through a letter or e-mail. On the whole the responses received showed support to the recommendations in the consultation, with four responses sent specifically to support the proposal. Some concerns and questions had been raised, and these together with the Council's response to them can be seen below.

One response was received through a letter a week after the closing date of the consultation. This was from an individual who had attended the open day in Dolgellau and observations in the letter have been included in the minutes of the open day.

### 3.7 Observations by Estyn

Under the terms of the Schools Standards and Framework Act (Wales) 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultative documents to Estyn. The views and observations of Estyn were received on the consultation, and Gwynedd Council's response to them can be seen in **Appendix 7.1 and 7.2.**

## 4. RESPONSE TO THE OBSERVATIONS

4.1 The purpose of this part of the report is to present the Council's response to the observations that came to light during the statutory consultation period. The observations have come from the meetings in the schools, open days and written responses (letter and e-mail).

4.2 Four questions/observations that were relevant to the consultation were received from the meetings and 11 from the written responses.

Code for Comment	Observations	No. of responses with observation in them	Gwynedd Council's Response
<b>1</b>	<b>Jobs</b>		
1.1	Concerns that the school and employment opportunities are being taken from the area (Y Ffôr).	1	Although Ysgol Hafod Lon will move from Y Ffôr, every member of staff currently at the school will be offered the opportunity to move to the new site in Penrhyndeudraeth and we greatly hope that all the staff of the school and Tŷ Aran Unit will accept that opportunity.
<b>2</b>	<b>Community</b>		
2.1	The Community Council would wish	1	Half the new development costs of £12.4m will be

	to be a part of any discussion regarding the future of the building after the school has moved.		<p>financed from Gwynedd Council funds with the other half from a Welsh Government grant. The Council contribution will come from the Asset Management Scheme. Without being able to dispose of unused assets the Council is unable to finance new developments in this way and therefore it is highly likely we'll need to dispose of the present Hafod Lon site once it is closed.</p> <p>The Community Council will be consultees on any planning application to develop the site.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Observations on the continuation of Tŷ Meirion Unit</b>		
3.1	Tŷ Meirion should not be deprived of sufficient resources; there is a risk for resources in a brand new school to appear attractive, and this could be at the expense of the excellent education that is offered in Tŷ Meirion.	1	Tŷ Meirion will receive the exact same support and resources as it would have received in the future had we not been looking at changing the SEN provision in Meirion Dwyfor. Gwynedd Council acknowledges the importance and value of the service that is offered in Tŷ Meirion, and in accordance with the recommendation we are engaging upon, we intend to continue with the provision.
3.2	By closing Tŷ Aran, there must be caution that not all primary aged pupils are attracted to Penrhyndeudraeth, as this could have a detrimental effect on the numbers in Tŷ Meirion, since only the primary schools would be feeding Tŷ Meirion.	1	Every child will be individually assessed by SEN Moderation Panels and referred to the provision that is most suitable to his/her needs.
3.3	The Councillors are very aware of the excellent education and opportunities that Tŷ Meirion offer. They are also aware that the site on the land of Ysgol y Gader allows much integration with the mainstream, and that this provides educational and moral advantages to the pupils of Tŷ Meirion and the pupils of Y Gader. This situation is very unique and everything must be done to protect the community on the site of Y Gader.	1	In accordance with the recommendation we are engaging upon, it is intended to continue with the current provision at Tŷ Meirion, Dolgellau.
<b>4.</b>	<b>Comments on closing Tŷ Aran Unit</b>		
4.1	Feel that Tŷ Aran Unit operates exactly the same as Tŷ Meirion with children integrating into the mainstream; therefore why continue with one provision and not the other?	1	As a closer option than Penrhyndeudraeth is required for some children in the south of the county, because their physical conditions would make it difficult to travel far, we feel there is a good reason for continuing with Tŷ Meirion. As the travelling distances to the other two closest

			<p>secondary schools in the south of the county would be too far, and given that they are not fully adapted for disabled access at present either, Tŷ Meirion Unit is the only suitable option. Retaining Tŷ Meirion would therefore ensure continuation of access for disabled people (who need access to a mainstream curriculum) to a mainstream secondary school in Meirionnydd.</p> <p>Contrary to Tŷ Meirion, there is a greater choice of primary schools that can offer access for disabled pupils in the south of the County. Because of this choice, it is not envisaged that closing the provision in Tŷ Aran will create any problem if a place is required in the south of the county that is closer to a child's home if he/she has problems travelling to Penrhyndeudraeth.</p>
4.2	Feel that the Council has placed fewer children in Tŷ Aran Unit for some years in order to strengthen the case to close it.	1	The SEN Moderation Panels come to a professional opinion with regard to which placement is most suitable for the needs of individual children. If the panels were of the view that Tŷ Aran Unit was best in any individual case, those children would be placed there.
<b>5.</b>	<b>The name of the school</b>		
5.1	The name of the new school should be discussed and chosen by the children, parents and governors of Ysgol Hafod Lon and Tŷ Aran.	2	Naming the school will be the responsibility of the Governing Body of Ysgol Hafod Lon. Should the Governing Body feel that it would be appropriate to change the name, I'm sure they would include children and parents in the discussions.
<b>6.</b>	<b>Observations on the residential/respite unit</b>		
6.1	Agreement regarding the proposal to provide a residential provision, but feel that six beds are not enough.	2	The decision on a six bed residential/respite unit is based on work carried out by the Children and Supporting Families Unit. The design of the unit will mean that there is flexibility in the use of the beds to be able to respond to the demand for residential beds for children who will be attending the school or for children and families to have a short break provision.
<b>7.</b>	<b>Collaborating with Bangor University</b>		
7.1	We strongly recommend that the relationship with Bangor University and the academic sector continues in order to ensure practices, actions, programmes and training that will benefit every child.	2	Gwynedd Council is aware of the important collaboration that has been happening with Bangor University in the special needs field, and this relationship will continue into the future in the new school.
<b>8.</b>	<b>Collaborating with Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board</b>		

8.1	<p>BCUHB is named around funding in the consultation although there has been no consultation with the Continuing Care team. We ask that Health is included in the early stages of planning so that developments are able to meet the health needs of young people as well as their educational needs.</p>	1	<p>The Project Board decided to divide the project into clear specific phases with the first phase to agree on the educational and residential/respite need of the new centre in order to provide clear guidance to the Property Department so that it could start developing plans for the new provision.</p> <p>During this phase officers from the Health Board were invited to be members of the working group that discussed the options, and also to be part of design discussions with the architect where they had an opportunity to share their valuable input.</p> <p>We will now be able to focus on the next phase of the project, namely planning for opening the new school which will include agreeing which services will need to be provided there and how to ensure effective partnership working from the new centre. Including the relevant stakeholders, such as the Health Authority, in these discussions will be vital and we have already held a meeting with representation from Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board and agreed on officers to be members of the Project Board.</p>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Effect on Ysgol Bro Plenydd</b>		
9.1	<p>Ysgol Hafod Lon shares a site with Ysgol Bro Plenydd with railings dividing them. The children and staff of Ysgol Hafod Lon use the land of Ysgol Bro Plenydd to access the playing field. The members of Ysgol Bro Plenydd Governing Body have great concerns, namely:</p> <p>a) What will happen to the current building of Ysgol Hafod Lon afterwards?</p> <p>b) What if a private company buys Ysgol Hafod Lon?</p> <p>What about safeguarding the boundary between both buildings and protecting the privacy of the staff and pupils of Ysgol Bro Plenydd?</p> <p>c) Ysgol Bro Plenydd has concerns about Gwynedd Council's proposed plans. The Governing Body requires confirmation that</p>	1	<p>Gwynedd Council is currently reviewing its after-use policy for sites. Deciding on options for the future of Ysgol Hafod Lon site can take place following this review and in accordance with its guidelines.</p> <p>However, as half of the new development costs of £12.4m will be financed from Gwynedd Council funds with the other half from a Welsh Government grant. The Council contribution will come from the Asset Management Scheme. Without being able to dispose of unused assets the Council is unable to finance new developments in this way and therefore it is highly likely we'll need to dispose of the present Hafod Lon site once it is closed.</p> <p>When Gwynedd Council sells the site, it will, of course, need to consider the safety and privacy of the pupils and staff of Ysgol Bro Plenydd. This is a consideration given to any planning application to redevelop a site.</p> <p>Any current Ysgol Bro Plennydd safety issues is not relevant to this consultation. However, it might be possible to give considerations to</p>

	protecting safety and responding to some of the current safety 'issues' at Ysgol Bro Plenydd is part of its plans.		some of these if the site is developed.
9.2	A traffic agreement between both sites at present enable a one-way system. What about the future of this scheme?	1	The conditions of any sale of Ysgol Hafod Lon will need to ensure that it does not have a detrimental effect on the present safety arrangements for traffic.
9.3	There is a need to ensure a safe and convenient route for pupils to reach Ysgol Bro Plenydd.	2	Whatever will happen with the site of Ysgol Hafod Lon in the future, Gwynedd Council will of course ensure that a safe and convenient route remains for pupils to go to Ysgol Bro Plenydd.
<b>10.</b>	<b>The definition of the new School</b>		
10.1	As the new school is not noted as 'autism specific' there is concern that people will not think that the education is as good there as in other schools that note themselves as 'autism specific'. Although I see the benefits of not noting the School as 'autism specific', perhaps it would be useful to note that the new School will aim to provide 'autism-specific specialist provision' that is equal to other educational establishments that are noted as 'autism specific'.	1	Although we do not note that the new school will be 'autism specific', it is our aim to ensure a service for children with a wider range of special educational needs including more complex and intensive needs, which includes autism.
<b>11.</b>	<b>Location</b>		
11.1	It is of enormous concern that the site of the new Special School in Penrhyndeudraeth is far from any mainstream provision and that the opportunity to integrate is therefore lost.	1	There is a secondary school (Ysgol Eifionydd) and primary schools (Ysgol Eifion Wyn and Ysgol Cefn Coch) less than two miles from the possible site of the new school in Penrhyndeudraeth therefore there are opportunities to integrate that are near enough.
11.2	Are the electric cables that are near the site likely to create problems, in particular affecting the local radio/phone network?	1	The National Grid has confirmed that the cables running by the site of the new school in Penrhyndeudraeth will not cause any problems, including health problems, and will not affect any local radio/phone network.
11.3	Was the site of the old hospital over the road to Snowdonia Park considered as a possible location for the new school?	1	This site is unsuitable for a number of reasons e.g. not large enough, and a vast part of the existing buildings are listed, therefore it is not possible to demolish them. Therefore, because of its unsuitability, the site was not considered as a possible option for the new school.

## **5. A SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSAL**

5.1 By considering the comments received during the statutory consultation, including comments made by Estyn (**Appendix 7.1**), here is a summary of the Councils' response to the comments in regards to the consultation and the Council's recommendations following these considerations.

5.2 In general, the responses received during the staff, governors and children's meetings and the open days demonstrated a strong support for the recommendation to develop a new school and a residential and short term break unit in Penrhydeudraeth by re-locating Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran. Here are the responses to the main points raised in the consultation:

### **5.3 Developing options and agreeing the way forward**

There was an opportunity during the consultation to discuss and offer comments on the various options considered, the process of assessing the options and the favoured option as appears to the Council, the option on which a consultation was held.

No negative comments regarding the process of assessing the options and agreeing the way forward were received during the statutory consultation.

### **5.4 Improving education standard and provision**

It is anticipated that developing the new School with modern resources and provision for special educational needs will improve the children's opportunities and experiences and consequently the standard of their education.

Estyn noted in their comments (**Appendix 7.1**) that as a result of the re-locating nature of the proposal, the present leadership team will be kept. The proposal is likely to have a significant impact on improving educational provision and environment. The proposers anticipate that the specialist resources fitted in the new school will contribute significantly to the experiences and the provision available for the pupils and staff. This has the potential to improve the standard of education for the pupils.

As the proposal is based on a relocation of experienced staff it is unlikely to impact negatively on the delivery of the curriculum which is based on the national curriculum and tailored to meet the need of each individual pupil. The proposer has considered that the specialist resources installed in the new school will substantially add to the experiences and provision available to the pupils.

The only concern raised during the consultation is that pupils at Ty Meirion wouldn't benefit from the new provision. Despite the fact that Uned Tŷ Meirion is located some distance from Penrhydeudraeth there is an intention to offer an opportunity for the children attending Uned Tŷ Meirion to use the facilities in the new SEN school. We believe that integrating opportunities and following a mainstream curriculum that pupils will benefit from in Uned Tŷ Meirion will outweigh the ample opportunities of using the provision that will be available in the new school.

From the managerial perspective of the new procedure the Council intends to review the governing procedure of all special educational needs education provision across Gwynedd including the new School, Uned Tŷ Meirion and Ysgol Pendalar, in order to ensure the best managerial process for the future.

## 5.5 Choosing a site

There was an early agreement that the current Ysgol Hafod Lon site is completely unsuitable for servicing Meirionnydd and Dwyfor children and that the Porthmadog/Penrhyndeudraeth area would be the ideal location.

With this in mind 6 possible sites were recognised and following various site assessments it was agreed that Snowdonia Business Park would be the most suitable site (**Appendix 5**).

During the statutory consultation the majority of the beneficiaries agreed with the option to locate the School in Snowdonia Business Park, Penrhyndeudraeth, noting that it's central to the 2 areas.

One person raised concerns regarding the possible effects of the nearby electrical cables; however we have assurance from the National Grid that the cables won't cause any problems, including health problems, nor will they disrupt any local radio/phone network.

Therefore, the consultation has assured us that the location is a suitable choice for the new School.

## 5.6 Travelling

One of the main reasons for choosing a location for the new School in the Penrhyndeudraeth area was to reduce travelling distances for the majority of Meirionnydd and Dwyfor children, as it is a central location for both areas. Nevertheless, it has been recognised that travelling to Penrhyndeudraeth from some villages and towns in the further locations of South Meirionnydd would continue to be too far for some children due to their conditions. This means that suitable provision must be arranged for them closer to home. The Council is of the opinion that Uned Tŷ Meirion should remain open as the travelling distances to the two nearest alternative secondary schools in the south of the county is 30 minutes (schools that aren't currently fully adapted for disabled access), continuing with Tŷ Meirion would ensure continued disabled access for pupils (that that require access to mainstream curriculum) to a mainstream secondary school in Meirionnydd.

A question was received regarding the recommendation to close Uned Tŷ Aran arguing that it is as important as Uned Tŷ Meirion is for children from the south of the county to be able to receive mainstream education and to children that would find travelling to Penrhyndeudraeth difficult.

Gwynedd Council is of the opinion that there is more choice of primary schools that can offer access for disabled pupils in the south of the County and therefore it is not foreseen that discontinuing Tŷ Aran provision will cause any problem should there be demand in the future for a mainstream location in the south of the county which is closer to a child's home, due to problems relating to travelling to Penrhyndeudraeth.

No objections to the proposal to re-locate Ysgol Hafod Lon were received.

## 5.7 Short Break and Residential Provision

The Council intends to include a 6 bed unit for residential care and short break in the new centre. This facility would mean that fewer children would have to go outside the county for their education and would provide an opportunity for parents to send their children to the unit for short break care or make use of the fostering parents' provision as happens at present.

Whilst everyone welcomed the intention to open a residential/short break unit, some questioned the size of the unit suggesting that 6 beds wouldn't be enough. The decision on the residential/short break unit is based on work completed by the Children and Family Support Unit. This follows a recent assessment of numbers of out-of-county children that would be able to benefit from the residential provision, the demand for short break locations (with around 20 currently on the waiting list) and discussions with other counties regarding their experiences regarding usage and costs. The unit has been designed to offer flexibility regarding the use of beds in order to be able to respond to demands for residential beds for children that will be attending the school or periods of short breaks for children and families. Therefore, the Council is comfortable with the decision for a 6 bed unit.

## **5.8 Co-operation between agencies**

It is anticipated that the new provision will offer improved space for co-operating with agencies for the good of the child and there is an intention to recognise potential partners and continuing discussions with them to ensure that this takes place.

During the consultation a couple of agencies raised the fact that they are eager to collaborate therefore this is welcomed and we will hold discussions with them in the near future to start planning the collaboration.

## **5.9 Capital and revenue costs**

5.9.1 The capital costs of building the new provision has been estimated at £12.4m and all discussions around the requirements and design and what is possible has been conducted within this budget. It has been agreed in principal that £6.2m will be provided by the Welsh Government, pending Business Case approval, with the other £6.2m coming from Gwynedd Council.

5.9.2 In accordance with what was noted in the Cabinet Report of 10 June 2014 (**Appendix 1**) the favoured options' running costs are estimated at £2,820,860 and transport at £424,008, which is a total gross cost of £3,244,868.

As can be seen from the table below it is anticipated that the running cost of the preferred option will be £2,820,860 and transport costs of £424,008, which is a gross total of £3,244,868.

This compares with a present gross cost of £3,307,109 which means it would be £62,241 less.

An assumption has been made that we could attract an income of £183,333 from other Local Authorities paying for education and residential provision for children from their counties. We do not envisage any contribution from Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board towards residential costs of the new development.

This compares with an income of £144,000 from Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board towards out-of-county residential provision at present.

If the predicted income is realised it would result in a reduction of £101,574 to compare with the present net total.

	budget 2013/14	preferred option	+ / -	
Cost of provision	£2,859,390	£2,820,860	-£38,530	Lower cost
Transport cost	£447,719	£424,008	-£23,711	Lower cost
Gross total	£3,307,109	£3,244,868	-£62,241	Lower cost
Income	£144,000	£183,333	£39,333	Possible income increase
Net total	£3,163,109	£3,061,535	<b>-£101,574</b>	Possible difference

It must be noted here that there is a risk attached to the assumed income as there is no guarantee of income from other Local Authorities. Although a couple of Local Authorities have expressed an interest in the possibility of sending children to the new school as day or residential pupils in the future there is no guarantee that this will happen. There is a need for further work in order to try and gain a more concrete commitment from other Local Authorities.

Because of this risk there is the possibility that no additional income will be attracted. If so, as can be seen from the table below, Gwynedd Council will need to find a further £31,759 to its present budget towards the cost of the new SEN provision.

	Budget 2013/14	Preferred option	+ / -	
Cost of provision	£2,859,390	£2,770,860	-£88,530	Lower cost
Transport cost	£447,719	£424,008	-£23,711	Lower cost
Gross total	£3,307,109	£3,194,868	<b>£112,241</b>	Lower cost
Income	£144,000	£0	-£144,000	No income
Net total	£3,163,109	£3,194,868	<b>- £31,759</b>	Possible higher cost

\* The cost of provision is lower because there will be no need for a residential provision for 2 beds which means the running costs of the residential/short break unit will be lower.

The Children and Family Support Department and Education Department have agreed to cover any deficit if the income from other Local Authorities is insufficient to cover the running costs.

In order to reach a situation where there is no need to identify any extra money there would be a need to realise an income of £81,759 which is equivalent to slightly less than

offering one residential bed to another Local Authority, as can be seen from the table below.

	Budget 2013/14	Preferred option	+ / -	
Cost of provision	£2,859,390	£2,820,860	-£38,530	Lower cost
Transport cost	£447,719	£424,008	-£23,711	Lower cost
Gross total	£3,307,109	£3,244,868	-£62,241	Lower cost
Income	£144,000	£81,759	£62,241	Possible reduction in income
Net total	£3,163,109	£3,163,109	-£0	

No comments regarding the cost were received during the statutory consultation.

#### 5.10 Impact Assessments on the community, the Welsh language and equality

There was an opportunity during the consultation to discuss and offer comments on the Equality, Community and Welsh language impact assessments which were conducted in order to assess the possible impact any change would have on the children. These assessments, on the whole revealed that none of the options on which were consulted on caused any negative impact, rather were likely to improve some aspects regarding the community and Welsh language (see **Appendix 5**).

Estyn's comments on the consultation agree with this from the perspective of the Welsh language noting that the proposal is not likely to change the Welsh medium provision for the children involved, but it is likely to improve the Welsh medium provision in the local authority. The proposal enables the authority to offer education through the medium of Welsh for children that have to travel out-side the county for non-Welsh provision in general and an opportunity for them to converse in Welsh with peers and adults.

In regards to equality it is not anticipated that the option on which the consultation was held would have any negative impact on the pupils and would create some improvements. Nevertheless, Estyn were of the opinion I had not included a specifically clear reference to the way in which it will ensure that disturbance to pupils is minimised noting that this is especially true as any change is likely to disrupt pupils with Special Educational Needs.

As the intention is to re-locate Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran the current staff will also be offered a transfer to the new School. The hope is that this will reduce disruption when transferring from one site to another.

Despite not having including our plans in the consultation document our intention from the beginning was to try and ensure that the building and furnishing work for the new school is completed by the end of April 2016 in order to provide an opportunity for those children transferring from Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran to visit the new school during the summer term. The hope is that this will reduce the disruption caused to learners and facilitate the permanent move to the new school in September 2016.

**5.11** Following consideration of the responses to the statutory consultation the Council continues to hold the opinion that the option on which was consulted, which is the re-location of Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran to a new site in Penrhydeudraeth on 1 September 2016, increasing the schools' capacity and adding a residential aspect to the provision, remains to offer the best option for the future of special needs education in Meirionnydd and Dwyfor.

## **6. NEXT STEPS**

- 6.1 If the Council's Cabinet approves the proposal, a statutory notice will be published in accordance with the requirements of Section 48 of the Schools Standards and Framework (Wales) Act 2013.
- 6.2 The statutory notice will be displayed in prominent places within the catchment area of Ysgol Hafod Lon, Y Ffôr and the site of the new school and on the Council's website.
- 6.3 A paper copy or an e-mail containing a link to the Council's website will also be shared with relevant stakeholders.
- 6.4 A period of 28 days from the date of publishing the statutory notice will be allowed to respond to the notice.
- 6.5 At the end of this period a report will be submitted to the Council's Cabinet in order to make a decision on whether to implement the recommendation or not.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

To approve the proposal to relocate Ysgol Hafod Lon and Tŷ Aran Unit to a new site in Penrhydeudraeth on 1 September 2016, increase the capacity of the school and add a residential element to the provision, and publish statutory notices in accordance with Section 48 of the Schools Standards and Framework (Wales) Act 2013 in order to implement this.

## **VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS**

### **Chief Executive's comments**

This is an important stage in bringing the development of an important resource a stage closer. I approve the proposal.

### **Monitoring Officer**

The report reflects the detailed work that has been achieved in developing this scheme. As reported the School Organisation Code 2013 sets detailed requirements for the consultation process and the report addresses these requirements. The results of the consultation process are evaluated in detail along with other relevant factors to reach the recommendation.

## **Head of Finance**

I support the proposal to re-organise schools in a fair and reasonable manner, despite the challenge of striving to achieve these goals in a very challenging financial context.

In terms of the plan's capital implications, part 5.9.1 states that the plan is subject to the Welsh Governments' approval of the final business case. Furthermore, I confirm that the Council's Asset Management Plan has already committed to providing the necessary match funding – i.e. the Council has set aside £6.2m, which is 50% of the capital costs, for implementing the proposal to re-locate Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran to the new site in Penrhyndeudraeth.

In terms of permanent financial obligations (annual revenue budget) resulting from this proposal, part 5.9.2 of the report estimates "potential" annual savings of £101,574. Of course, it is to be welcomed in the current financial climate, although the risk should be noted as there is no assurance that the relevant income can be attracted from outside the county. In the context of this opportunity and risk, I understand that the Department of Education and the Department of Children and Family Support have thoroughly considered the plan within their savings strategy, and are clear that those Departments will be responsible for identifying any shortfall in the operating costs of the new school.