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# THE COUNCIL 15/07/10

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**Present:** Councillor W Tudor Owen (Chairman)  
Councillor John Gwilym Jones (Vice-chairman)

**Councillors:** Stephen Churchman, Anwen Davies, E T Dogan, Dyfed Edwards, Dylan Edwards, Elwyn Edwards, Huw Edwards, Trefor Edwards, T G Ellis, Alan Jones Evans, Alun Wyn Evans, Jean Forsyth, Simon Glyn, Keith Greenly-Jones, Gwen Griffith, E Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, Siân Gwenllïan, Christopher Hughes, Dafydd Ll Hughes, Huw Hughes, Louise Hughes, O P Huws, Aeron M Jones, Anne Lloyd Jones, Brian Jones, Charles Wyn Jones, Dai Rees Jones, Dyfrig Jones, Eric Merfyn Jones, J R Jones, Linda Wyn Jones, R L Jones, W Penri Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, P.G.Lasen, Dewi Lewis, Dewi Llewelyn, Dilwyn Lloyd, June Marshall, Keith Marshall, J Wynn Meredith, Llinos Merks, Linda Morgan, Dewi Owen, W Roy Owen, Arwel Pierce, Peter Read, Dafydd W Roberts, E Caerwyn Roberts, Glyn Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, Liz Saville Roberts, Siôn Selwyn Roberts, Trefor Roberts, W Gareth Roberts, Dyfrig Siencyn, Ioan Thomas, Guto Rhys Thomas, Ann Williams, Gethin Glyn Williams, Gwilym Williams, J.W.Williams, Owain Williams, R H Wyn Williams and Robert J Wright.

**Also present:** Harry Thomas (Chief Executive), Iwan Trefor Jones and Dafydd Lewis (Corporate Directors), Dilys Phillips (Monitoring Officer/Head of Democracy and Legal Department), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Iwan Evans (Legal Services Manager), Gwen Carrington (Head of Social Services Department), Ann Lloyd Jones (Senior Manager - Adults Services), Marian Parry Hughes (Senior Manager - Children and Families Services), Meilys Haulfryn Smith (Senior Business Manager), Dewi Jones (Head of Education Department), Hefin Owen (Finance Manager – Development), Guto Rhys Huws (Support Services and Organisational Development Manager), Gruff Morris (Head of Planning Service) and Eleri Parry (Senior Committee Officer)

**Apologies:** Councillors Margaret Griffith, Sylvia Humphreys, Evie Morgan Jones, John Wynn Jones, Ieuan Roberts and Trevor Roberts

## 1 PRAYER

The meeting was opened with a prayer from Councillor Aeron Maldwyn Jones.

## 2 MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 May 2010 as a true record.

## 3 DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

- (i) Prior to the committee, a briefing note from the Monitoring Officer had been distributed to members regarding the item relating to the Reorganisation of the Berwyn Catchment Area Schools.

It was explained that everyone who was a governor of a school affected by the proposals should declare their interest at the beginning of the meeting; however, under the Code of Conduct every member who represented the Council on a primary school governing body was entitled to participate in full in the discussion and vote.

In relation to members whose relatives were pupils or staff at a school in the catchment area, it was explained that a member would have a personal interest if a decision on the matter was likely to affect the welfare or the financial situation of the person with whom they had a close personal connection. That interest would prevent a member from participating in the discussion should it be reasonable for a member of the public to regard as so significant that it would prejudice the members' judgement.

It was explained that the Council's Standards Committee was of the opinion that a parent, grandparent, grandchild, spouse, child, brother or sister relationship created too close a connection to allow dispensation in relation to specific schools. The committee had allowed dispensation for several members who had relatives in this category to participate in the general discussion and vote, but not in relation to the specific school with which they had a connection.

It was noted that it was intended to deal with the three recommendations separately, namely Ysgol y Parc first, then the Bala town schools with the other rural schools last. This order would allow members who had an interest with one school only to participate in the discussion on the other recommendations.

(i) The following members declared a personal interest in the item "Reorganisation of the Berwyn Schools" for the reasons noted:

- Councillor Elwyn Edwards as his grandchildren attended Ysgol Bro Tegid, Bala;
- Councillor Dylan Edwards due to a family connection with every school in Penllyn with the exception of Ysgol y Parc;
- Councillor Pat Larsen due to a family relationship (through marriage) with the head teacher of Ysgol y Parc;
- Councillor T G Ellis as his grand-daughters attended Ysgol Bro Tegid, Bala;
- Councillor John Pughe Roberts as his daughter attended Ysgol Bro Tegid, Bala.

The members were of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest, and they withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on the school(s) in question.

(ii) The following members declared a personal interest in the Notice of Motion regarding Barcud Derwen for the reasons noted:

- Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd as he was a former shareholder of Barcud Derwen;
- Councillor Dewi Llewelyn as he was a director of a Company which owned shares in Barcud;
- Councillor Aeron Maldwyn Jones as he was a shareholder of Barcud Derwen.

The members were of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest, and they withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on the item.

(iii) Councillor Alan Jones Evans declared a personal interest in relation to the Item "Reorganisation of Berwyn Schools" because he was a member of the Governing Body of Ysgol y Parc.

The member was of the opinion that it was not a prejudicial interest and he participated fully in the discussion on the item.

(iv) The following members declared a personal interest in the item "The Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services" for the reasons noted:

- Councillor Dafydd Lloyd Hughes as he worked as a community nurse in the learning disabilities field;
- Councillor Linda Wyn Jones as she ran a company which undertook work for the Council in the field of learning disabilities.
- Councillor J R Jones as his wife was a carer.

The members were of the opinion that it was not a prejudicial interest and they participated fully in the discussion on the item.

- (v) Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams declared a personal interest in the question relating to the transfer of the housing stock, as he was a former Council tenant and was now a tenant of Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd. Also in the item "The Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services" as his wife received care;
- (vi) The following members declared a personal interest in the item "The New Planning Committee" for the reasons noted:
- Councillor R Len Jones as he was the Chairman of the Arfon Area Committee;
  - Councillor Dilwyn Lloyd as he was the Vice-chairman of the Arfon Area Committee;
  - Councillor Alun Wyn Evans as he was the Chairman of the Meirionnydd Area Committee;
  - Councillor Dafydd Lloyd Hughes as he was the Vice-chairman of the Meirionnydd Area Committee;
  - Councillor Selwyn Griffiths as he was the Vice-chairman of the Dwyfor Area Committee;
  - Councillor Huw Price Hughes as he was a nominee for the Committee.

The members were of the opinion that it was not a prejudicial interest and they participated fully in the discussion on the item.

- (vi) Councillor R J Wright declared a personal interest in the item "The New Planning Committee" as he was the Chairman of the Dwyfor Area Committee. He did not participate in the discussions or vote on the matter.

### **3 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- (a) Condolences were expressed to the family of Councillor Bob Anderson who had died suddenly, and the Chair paid tribute to him.

Councillor Bob Anderson had moved to Caernarfon during the eighties to open a health food shop, and the town had become very close to his heart. He had thought the world of Caernarfon and he had contributed extensively to local public life.

He had served Caernarfon tirelessly and effectively for many years and he had committed himself to the work of improving and raising the profile of Caernarfon – his adopted town.

The Chairman had worked closely with Bob Anderson as members of Caernarfon Town Council and Gwynedd County Council, and he noted that he would be sorely missed and would not be easily replaceable.

- (b) Condolences were also expressed to the family of Emyr Williams, a Technical Assistant in the Highways and Municipal Department who had died suddenly and unexpectedly at the age of 23.

Emyr had been an extremely popular colleague and losing someone so young who had shown so much promise was a great shock and staff were extremely sad to have lost such an active, enthusiastic and likeable friend.

- (c) Condolences were also expressed to the family of Councillors Keith and June Marshall who had lost a grand-daughter, one of twins, recently. The Chairman noted that he was very pleased that the other grand-daughter was getting better, and he wished them well as a family.

Then condolences were extended to everyone else who had lost loved ones recently and the meeting was invited to stand in silence as a mark of respect and sympathy.

- (ch) Councillor Eric Merfyn Jones was congratulated on being chosen as President of the North Wales Agricultural Show this year. It was noted that the Show was one of the main attractions of the North Wales agricultural calendar and that he had presided over a very successful and enjoyable show.

#### **4 QUESTIONS**

##### **Question by Councillor Keith Greenly-Jones:**

"Gwynedd Council gave millions of pounds towards establishing the housing stock transfer, with the understanding that, if the transfer was successful, it would be returned in full by the Welsh Assembly.

The housing stock transfer took place on 12 April this year, when therefore can the Council expect to get its money back, and how much money did Gwynedd Council receive for the vans, lawn mowers etc?"

##### **Response from Councillor Trefor Edwards, Portfolio Leader - Housing**

"Thank you for the question.

- (i) The full Council had decided on 2 April 2009 to transfer the Council's Housing Stock to Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd in accordance with the wishes of 72% of the tenants. The transfer had been completed on 12 April 2010.
- (ii) During the process, expenditure had been incurred to establish Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd and the Council's money had been used temporarily to finance this. In accordance with the Assembly's guidelines, a transfer agreement had been drawn up which had set out the payment arrangements.
- (iii) Of the establishment costs, £2.9m had been received in April and, following an audit, in accordance with the usual procedure and timescale, a further £2.2m was expected in September, together with another £250k in May 2012.
- (iv) Only a proportion of the housing fleet had been bought by Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd, with the majority being on leasing agreements, which had now come to an

end. £190k had already been paid for vehicles, £50k for office equipment and IT and £240k for the contents of the stores and vans.

## 5 REORGANISATION OF THE BERWYN CATCHMENT AREA SCHOOLS

- (a) Submitted - the report of Iwan Trefor Jones, Corporate Director outlining the proposals for the reorganisation of Berwyn schools, setting out the rationale and asking for the Council's approval to the intention of moving to a statutory period where relevant.
- (b) The Council Chairman welcomed the public to the meeting, and it was explained that it was intended to discuss Ysgol y Parc first, then the urban schools and the rural schools last.
- (c) A presentation was given by Councillor Liz Saville Roberts, Portfolio Leader – Education.

At the beginning of the presentation, it was reported that the bid for capital funding by the Assembly towards building a new school in Bro Dysynni and improving resources and facilities at Ysgol Penybryn Tywyn, Pennal and Corris had been successful which had meant that a contribution of £5.5m would be made towards the total investment of nearly £8m in south Meirionnydd. Disappointment was expressed that the Ysgol y Groeslon and Ysgol Hafod Lon bids had been unsuccessful.

Reference was made to several reasons for the reorganisation of Gwynedd schools, namely:

- the poor condition of buildings;
- class sizes over 30 pupils;
- inadequate resources and facilities;
- large and medium sized schools losing staff;
- the number of children in the county reducing;
- numerous empty spaces;
- several schools in the safety net.

It was explained that the main objective of the strategy was to ensure better education for all the county's children and that it was dependent on the reorganisation process.

Reference was made to the ESTYN report on the Quality of Gwynedd Council Education Services. It was explained that the report had been critical of the Council due to its "lack of continuous progress in terms of schools reorganisation". It had also noted that political tensions had impeded change and improvement and that the Authority needed to get to grips with the high number of empty spaces.

It was added that there were 298 children in the Berwyn catchment area this year, and that it would be quite reasonable for all of them to attend a school in the town of Bala. However, it was noted that respect had been shown to the principle of differentiating between rural education and urban education. In this sense, she recommended retaining the network of rural schools around Bala, and promoting collaboration between them, with the development in the town of Bala. She emphasised that it would provide resources

and opportunities for the catchment area, and would establish a strong and robust model for the future.

It was reported that there had been only 27 children in Ysgol Bro Tryweryn this year. Consideration had been given to the appropriateness of closing Ysgol Bro Tryweryn, but having considered several factors, namely children travelling some distance to the school, the impact on the use of the Welsh language socially, the quality of the buildings and the potential for the school to come out of the safety net during the next three years, she recommended that the school remained open, and should collaborate with two other rural schools, and with the proposed development in the town of Bala.

It was proposed and seconded that the Council undertook a statutory consultation process in accordance with the requirements of the Schools Framework Standards Act 1998 during autumn 2010 on the proposal to close Ysgol y Parc by September 2012 and to offer spaces for the children of the catchment area in Ysgol O M Edwards, Llanuwchllyn. The Council would work with Community Leaders and Area Regeneration Officers to safeguard the community use of the Ysgol y Parc building.

- (ch) The Senior Development Leader thanked members and officers for the detailed work in reviewing the Catchment area.

It was explained that the scheme was an attempt to safeguard education in rural areas and secure investment in secondary schools and other vulnerable schools. Reference was made to other counties which were closing larger schools and it was emphasised that the Council had been trying to save as many rural schools as possible.

He noted that the cost of the safety net was increasing annually. He was afraid that the provision would disappear in the current economic climate and that small schools would have to close independently, without a scheme.

He noted that he respected the unique community of Parc, and that he was confident that the community would prosper without a school, because there were strong community leaders and active people there.

- (d) A presentation was given by Iwan Trefor Jones, Corporate Director.

It was reported that the Gwynedd Schools Reorganisation Strategy had been approved unopposed by the Council in April 2009.

He referred to some of the main features of the strategy, namely:-

- trying to ensure classes of a suitable size;
- seeking the best learning environment across the county;
- making the best possible use of resources within the education system;
- holding a local discussion to look at options by catchment area;
- considering specific proposals for catchment areas;
- holding language and community impact assessments.

It was further reported that, in December 2009, a period of statutory consultation in relation to the closure of five schools in Bro Dysynni, namely Aberdyfi, Abergynolwyn, Brynchrug, Llwyngwril and Llanegryn, and establishing a new area school had been

approved. Reference was made to the recent success of the bid for a grant of £5.5m by the Assembly towards the Scheme.

It was confirmed that 298 children attended six primary schools in the catchment area, and that the area had seen a reduction of 40% in the number of children since 1975 and consequently there were several empty spaces in the schools of the catchment area.

In response to the Board's request for further information regarding the implications of the community status of Ysgol y Parc, the Director explained that further work had been undertaken into this field. He confirmed that the Council owned the building, but that there was a lease between the Council and the community council to provide a community resource. A local committee managed the community resource and the Council contributed to the costs of maintaining the hall. He emphasised that the lease guaranteed the community use of the hall for the future; however, the arrangement would not prevent the closure of the school.

He explained that Ysgol O M Edwards was approximately 3 miles from Parc and that there were 50 children in that school. The school had capacity for 72 children and he explained that the authority would guarantee a place there for the children of the Parc catchment area and that they would be getting free transport to the school. He emphasised that increasing the number of children at Ysgol O M Edwards would give long term assurances to the school and would put it in a robust position for the future. It was also noted that there would be an opportunity to upgrade Ysgol O M Edwards as part of the scheme.

It was explained that closing Ysgol y Parc would create savings of £104,000. It was intended to allocate £30,000 to Ysgol O M Edwards in order to cope with the increase in the number of children, and to allocate £15,000 towards transport costs. There would be a minimum net saving of £59,000.

- (dd) In accordance with Procedural Rule 15(1) the Chairman received petitions from Councillor Elwyn Edwards, with 600 names along with 40 letters and a post card from the Welsh Language Society, asking the Council not to close Ysgol y Parc.

The Chair gave thanks for the petitions and correspondence which would be forwarded to the relevant service.

- (e) An amendment to keep Ysgol y Parc open and for the school to collaborate with Ysgol O M Edwards, Llanuwchllyn in the same way as Ysgol Ffridd y Llyn would collaborate with Ysgol Bro Tryweryn, was proposed and seconded.
- (f) The Leader of Llais Gwynedd Group stated that the Group, at the request of the residents of Parc, had agreed not to participate in the discussion.
- (ff) The member for Llandderfel addressed the committee.

At the beginning of his speech, and at the request of the Welsh Language Society, he thanked Gwynedd Council for what it had done to promote and protect the Welsh language throughout Gwynedd.

The member explained that, at a recent meeting, there had been unanimous agreement to close Ysgol Bro Tegid, Ysgol Beuno Sant and Ysgol Uwchradd y Berwyn, and to build a new Lifelong School on the site of Ysgol y Berwyn. He noted that establishing the school

would be groundbreaking and would create a saving of approximately £100,000 per annum for the Council.

At the same meeting, he explained that there had been a unanimous opinion regarding the four schools in Penllyn, and a collaboration scheme had been chosen, namely Ysgol Bro Tryweryn with Ysgol Ffridd y Llyn and Ysgol y Parc with Ysgol O M Edwards.

He noted that the language impact report had shown that Parc was one of the strongholds of the Welsh language, that the language was by now under threat throughout the county and that closing Ysgol y Parc would be nonsensical. It was noted that English was growing as the language of the playground in an increasing number of schools throughout the County; however, at Ysgol y Parc the children who came from non-Welsh speaking families learnt the language thoroughly.

He referred to the significant saving of closing Ysgol Bro Tegid, Ysgol Beuno Sant and Ysgol y Berwyn and establishing a new Lifelong School on the site of Ysgol y Berwyn and he noted that the financial saving created from closing Ysgol y Parc would be trivial. He also expressed concern that the Ysgol O M Edwards, Llanuwchllyn building was too small for additional children and he was afraid that the building would need to be extended and that the savings would consequently be reduced.

He pressed the members to safeguard the language and the community by supporting his amendment to keep Ysgol y Parc open.

(g) The member for Bala addressed the committee.

He noted that there was not justification for the closure of Ysgol y Parc.

He explained that the saving from closing the school would be trivial due to high transport costs; staffing costs and the costs of extending Ysgol O M Edwards to accommodate additional children. He referred to a lease between Gwynedd Council and the community council to provide a community resource. He noted that the lease was still viable and that it would not be possible for the Council to use the building to its own ends, it could not sell the building and there would be building maintenance costs for which the Council would be responsible throughout the duration of the lease. He emphasised that any financial savings were disproportionate.

He provided details on the language and community impact reports which had been commissioned by the Council. The member noted that he was very disappointed that the reports had not been included with the Council papers in order to assist the members to reach a balanced decision on the proposals. He explained that the reports had concluded that closing Ysgol y Parc would have a serious impact on the community and language of the whole of Penllyn and that the schools were important for the economic and cultural position of the area. He emphasised that there was a need for an economic impact assessment based on the final reorganisation model.

He referred to the ESTYN report. He emphasised that the education provided was of a high standard and that there was no educational justification for closing Ysgol y Parc.

Finally, he referred to some of the main objectives of the Council's Three Year Plan, namely sustaining communities by promoting economic developments; enabling people to remain in their communities, attracting young people and their families to the area,



supporting rural areas, continuing to protect and promote the Welsh language etc. He emphasised that the proposal to close Ysgol y Parc was entirely incompatible with several objectives within the Three Year Plan.

He emphasised that there was no valid evidence for the closure of Ysgol y Parc and he pressed members to support the amendment to keep Ysgol y Parc open.

(ng) The member for Llanuwchllyn addressed the committee.

He reported that he had been a member of the Ysgol y Parc Governing Body for over two years and that he had seen a rural school which had been in complete harmony with its community.

It was noted that 91% of Parc residents spoke Welsh, that the school was the area's language and culture powerhouse and that its future must be safeguarded in order to protect the language and culture.

He explained that he disagreed completely that a school of this size could not provide appropriate experiences for pupils and he referred to the children's everlasting experiences of winning at the Bala National Eisteddfod. He emphasised that each one of the pupils had been on stage, and that all the children in the school had participated in its activities.

He noted that the presumption that there was consensus in Parc to send the children to Ysgol O M Edwards, Llanuwchllyn was a mistake. He explained that the town of Bala was closer to several homes in the Parc catchment area and that sending the children to Bala rather than Llanuwchllyn would be much more convenient for many families. Concern was expressed that the Parc children would be separated between Llanuwchllyn and Bala and would consequently shatter their identity forever.

Reference was made to language and community impact reports which had concluded that there would be no negative impact of amalgamating the Parc and O M Edwards children due to the similar background of both areas. However, this was not true of amalgamating Ysgol y Parc with the town of Bala.

He expressed dissatisfaction regarding the high cost of transporting the children to Llanuwchllyn and regarding transporting young children such a distance.

Further concern was expressed regarding the after school activities, noting that they would be troublesome and impractical and consequently the children would be deprived of opportunities due to inconvenience and distance.

He pressed members to support the amendment which was totally critical for the community of Parc.

(h) Another member emphasised that the community of Parc was unique and that it would be impossible to recreate the community should it be shattered.

He also referred to the achievements of the small school at the Bala National Eisteddfod and other musical festivals and emphasised that all pupils at the school had participated in the activities.

It was explained that there was a broad range of facilities available in urban areas and that safeguarding schools in rural villages was a way of ensuring a better balance between the country and the town.

It was noted that there was no certainty that the children of the Parc catchment area would attend Ysgol O M Edwards and he expressed concern that the children would be separated and the community shattered.

He emphasised that the community of Parc was invaluable and he pressed members to support the amendment to keep the school open.

- (i) A member explained that he had abstained from voting when the matter had been discussed at the Council Board due to the lack of information regarding the community status of the school. He had by now visited the school and had been totally convinced that the school should not be closed.

He emphasised that there was no evidence for the closure of the school in terms of education provision. Also, there was no evidence that the number of children was reducing.

It was noted that Ysgol y Parc was a naturally Welsh speaking school and that closing the school would destroy the linguistic and cultural pattern of the area. He emphasised that it would undermine the Council's commitment to supporting the Welsh language and that it was contrary to the objectives of the Strategy for the Reorganisation of the County's Schools.

He agreed that the financial situation was an important consideration when reorganising the county's schools, but he emphasised that the saving from closing Ysgol y Parc would be trivial and he pressed members to invest in the education of the children of Ysgol y Parc by supporting the amendment to keep the school open.

- (i) Another member reported that the influx into the Gwynedd areas had been the biggest threat to the Welsh language. He noted that larger educational units in Welsh speaking areas were more robust and could assimilate incomers better than the small schools – in order to secure the future of the Welsh language. It was explained that the language impact report had noted that amalgamating Ysgol y Parc and Ysgol O M Edwards would have a positive impact on the Welsh language as it would create an educational unit with the capacity to assimilate incomers.

Furthermore, it was noted that some of the County's largest schools with up to 40 children in the reception class, were losing teachers. It was noted that several of these schools were in areas where the Welsh language was the language of the community and the language of the playground also. Reference was made to the inequality of the situation, emphasising that there was a duty to ensure fairness to all the County's children.

He pressed members to support the original proposal.

- (ii) A member noted that the Council had been spending too much on maintaining school buildings rather than on the education itself. Many of the county's children had consequently missed out and she emphasised that keeping Ysgol y Parc open would not solve the fundamental problem.

She explained that the Council should look at a future which included the country as well as the town. She emphasised that the original proposal safeguarded and strengthened three out of the four small schools around Bala and also created a strong centre in the town which would offer a future to the secondary school.

She referred to the recent success of the capital bid for building a new school in Bro Dysynni. She emphasised that a similar investment would not come to the Bala area should the Council not support the original proposal and, consequently, there would be no assurance or stability for primary or secondary education in the catchment area.

- (m) Another member reported that the world was changing and that arrangements needed to be adapted. He noted that seven small schools had closed in his area many years ago but the children's education had not suffered because of this.

He explained that he was a member of the Governing Body of Ysgol Llanrug. It was one of the largest schools in the county and the area was completely Welsh speaking and Welsh was also heard on the playground.

He reported that the school had received an excellent ESTYN report recently. Parents were very happy with the standard of education; however, they were unhappy with the standard of the building and staffing levels. He emphasised that large schools were subsidising the small schools and that the safety net was a stumbling-block for the large schools. He explained that he did not wish to see Ysgol y Parc closing, but he emphasised that we must be realistic and plan for the future. Members were reminded that the best education must be provided to all the county's children.

- (m) The Council Leader reported that he had had an opportunity to discuss the situation with the people of Parc. He noted that he was very grateful to them for being willing to try to collaborate and for their conduct when campaigning to keep the school open. He also thanked the local members for their hard work and their constructive contribution to the discussions.

However, he emphasised that the Council had adopted, unopposed, the Schools Reorganisation Strategy. The strategy was based on the need to maintain a sustainable education system for the future. He noted that the current situation was unsustainable. Reference was made to the significant investment by the Assembly in the new Tywyn area school and it was emphasised that lack of planning by the Council would lead to a lack of investment in the Bala area.

- (m) Another member noted that the Council faced difficult decisions in order to find savings, that there was conflict between finding savings and protecting communities but that he had been convinced that Ysgol y Parc should not be closed.
- (o) The Chief Executive reported that the financial situation had intensified since the beginning of the strategy and that the situation had become worse still since the Chancellor's emergency budget announcement. It was noted that the Corporate Director had predicted that the Council needed to save £47m over the next four years and he emphasised that it would not be possible to protect the schools to the same degree as in the past.

It was noted that the cost of the safety net continued to increase, that the number of schools which received the protection was on the increase and that it was the schools not

receiving protection that would have to shoulder the burden. He emphasised that not supporting the original proposal would have implications for the remaining schools and services within the county and he noted that there would be more difficult decisions in the future when some services would have to be eliminated altogether.

- (p) In closing, the Portfolio Leader – Education expressed great concern that not supporting the original proposal to close Ysgol y Parc could have an impact on the Council's bid for capital funding by the Assembly and that this would endanger all the developments in the town of Bala. She pressed members not to support the amendment.

In accordance with procedural rule 19(6), the following vote was recorded on the amendment not to close Ysgol y Parc and to ask it to collaborate with Ysgol O M Edwards, Llanuwchllyn in the same way as Ysgol Ffridd y Llyn would collaborate with Ysgol Bro Tryweryn.

**In favour: (28)** Councillors: Anwen Davies, Dylan Edwards, Elwyn Edwards, Trefor Edwards, T G Ellis, Alan Jones Evans, Simon Glyn, E Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, Christopher Hughes, Dafydd Ll Hughes, Louise Hughes, O P Huws, Aeron M Jones, Eric Merfyn Jones, Linda Wyn Jones, W Penri Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Dilwyn Lloyd, J Wynn Meredith, Llinos Merks, W Tudor Owen, Peter Read, Dafydd W Roberts, Ann Williams, Gwilym Williams, Owain Williams and Robert J Wright

**Against: (35)** Councillors: Stephen Churchman, E T Dogan, Dyfed Edwards, Huw Edwards, Alun Wyn Evans, Jean Forsyth, Keith Greenly-Jones, Gwen Griffith, Siân Gwenllïan, Huw Hughes, Anne Lloyd Jones, Brian Jones, Charles Wyn Jones, Dai Rees Jones, Dyfrig Jones, John Gwilym Jones, J R Jones, R L Jones, Dewi Lewis, Dewi Llewelyn, June Marshall, Keith Marshall, Linda Morgan, Dewi Owen, W Roy Owen, Arwel Pierce, E Caerwyn Roberts, Glyn Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, Liz Saville Roberts, W Gareth Roberts, Dyfrig Siencyn, Ioan Thomas, J.W.Williams, and R H Wyn Williams

**Abstentions (3)** Councillors Siôn Selwyn Roberts, Guto Rhys Tomos and Gethin Glyn Williams.

The Chairman reported that the amendment had failed.

A vote was then taken on the original proposal and the proposal was passed.

The proposals regarding the urban schools of Bala and then the other rural schools were proposed, seconded and passed.

In relation to the Lifelong School, the Portfolio Leader – Education emphasised that it had not been intended to build a new school but rather to undertake adaptations and improvements to the existing buildings.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) **To undertake a statutory consultation process in accordance with the requirements of the Schools Framework Standards Act 1998 on the intention to close Ysgol Beuno Sant, Ysgol Bro Tegid and Ysgol Uwchradd y Berwyn in order to establish a new Lifelong Community School in the town of Bala to be opened during the academic year of 2014-15.**
- (ii) **To undertake a statutory consultation process in accordance with the requirements of the Schools Framework Standards Act 1998 during Autumn 2010 on the proposal to close Ysgol y Parc by September 2012 and to offer spaces for the children of the catchment area in**

- Ysgol O M Edwards, Llanuwchllyn. The Council will work with Community Leaders and Area Regeneration Officers to safeguard the community use of the Ysgol y Parc building.**
- (iii) To promote collaboration between the schools of O.M. Edwards, Ffridd y Llyn and Bro Tryweryn and develop ways of enabling the schools to utilise the facilities and specialisation of the Lifelong Campus. This proposal has no statutory implications.**

## **6 THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATUTORY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

- (a) Submitted – the Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services on the performance and efficiency of Gwynedd Social Services in 2009/10 and to outline the matters agreed upon as the most important ones to be addressed during the coming year.
- (b) The Head of Department reported that the Joint Review had given an opportunity to show the citizens of Gwynedd and the Auditor that the Council had the ability to respond to the challenge and that she had been awaiting the official acknowledgement of the Auditor that he had been persuaded that the Council had accepted the challenge.

She explained that the Assembly's ten year strategy for social services clearly noted that the work field of social services could not be placed in a box as it touched all parts of the lives and communities of people – pre birth to end of life. One thing affected another and this was a substantial challenge in terms of planning and meeting needs.

- (c) A PowerPoint presentation was given detailing the context and process, the main achievements and challenges along with the priorities.

It was explained that the Annual Report had replaced the joint review and that there was a statutory expectation on all Councils through their Statutory Directors to submit this annual report publicly stating, without bias, how the service had performed and what were its priorities. It was a continuous system of self assessing efficiency, reporting on performance and collecting evidence and she emphasised that the evidence trail was all important.

It was explained that it had been agreed to submit an overview report which would be easy to understand and which promoted communication with citizens. It was noted that the evidence grids and the bank of evidence were all important elements of the report.

Details were given on the stages of drawing up the report, namely, self assessments by social services managers, challenging sessions with partners, briefing and challenging sessions with members, distributing 3000 user questionnaires and developing a Business Plan to implement the improvements noted.

It was emphasised that there was a significant change in the new procedure in terms of the basic principles, that the Statutory Director was personally responsible for the report and that it should be user-focused and that their input was key.

- (ch) Details were given on the main achievements.

It was reported that officers and the auditor were of the opinion that services were safe for the residents of Gwynedd in the field of child protection and the protection of vulnerable adults. The auditor had reported regularly that services were more consistent, that

management systems were more effective and that the workforce was committed and conscientious. Also there had been an improvement in performance and key indicators along with improvements in the quality and accuracy of data.

It was explained that they had succeeded in maintaining improvements whilst restructuring the adults and children fields. The number of foster parents had been increased and the service had managed to act within budgets. However, it was emphasised that there were significant challenges in the fields of learning disabilities, after-care, child referrals and disabled children and it would not be possible to reconcile the balances without changing the method of working.

In relation to the increase in foster parents, she emphasised that the support and acknowledgement for them was extremely important and that it had improved significantly in Gwynedd.

It was noted that the percentage of reviews for older people completed during the year had increased. Also, expenditure on external placements had reduced substantially and it was noted that there was an obvious link between this and the increase in foster parents. However, she noted that the number of adults with learning disabilities who received services had reduced in Gwynedd compared with other places in Wales. Expenditure was also lower in Gwynedd and work needed to be completed in the field in order to have a better understanding of the situation. It was noted that this would be a substantial challenge for the service.

It was emphasised that very positive observations had been given by users. 79.3% had agreed that it was easy to get clear information about services, 83.3% were happy with the response, 81.1% believed that their opinion was respected, 79.2% were of the opinion that the time before receiving the service was acceptable and 81.7% noted that they had been included in the decision making process on the assistance required. However, some matters needed to be improved, namely, there was concern regarding the waiting list for adaptations, there was a need for more information about the services, better customer care and contact with users. There was also concern regarding providing services in the chosen language.

- (d) Reference was made to the main challenges which the services faced.

It was explained that the number of referrals had significantly increased. An increase of nearly 10% had been seen last year in the children field and a 40% increase in the adults field during the last four years. There had not been an increase in the service's staffing levels. She emphasised that the performance had improved and the quality of the inspections should be praised and that the success in rationalising the provision and establishing more efficient and effective systems was an enormous credit to the managers and staff. However, she referred to major risks in the children field and it was noted that we must be careful in managing them.

She gave further details on the challenge of identifying suitable accommodation which was cost effective across the work field. It was noted that a business unit had been established and officers had been appointed. However, although arrangements had improved, it was explained that the process was slower than expected and that the way in which the Council changed its services needed to be speeded up, along with the method of commissioning and procurement.

- (dd) Details were given on the main priorities, namely implementing the strategic plans in relation to commissioning, ensuring a confident, knowledgeable workforce with the ability to plan for the future; continuing to improve reporting arrangements and the quality of information in relation to performance and data and engagement with partners.
- (e) In order to achieve and succeed, the Head of Department emphasised that we must act as a Council in relation to identifying needs in the fields of care, skills, information and resources of the whole Council. Also we would have to act as a care sector and empowering and maximising the abilities and knowledge of everyone in the sector which responded to the needs of the citizens of Gwynedd. In addition a provision was needed which would respond to the needs of users and could move quicker on the basis of evidence.

In closing, the Head of Department reported that significant progress had been made and that she was confident that the Council was ready to face the challenge. She thanked the committed and conscientious workforce of social services unreservedly.

- (f) The Head of Department, manager and the entire workforce were thanked for their heroic efforts in ensuring progress.

Members noted that the Joint Review had been a learning and educating process and had been of assistance to the service and to the Council to develop. Reference was made to the significant challenges which the services faced and it was emphasised that members also needed to respond to the challenges and provide strong leadership for the future.

In response to an enquiry, the Head of Department explained that the progress was to be attributed to a combination of features including working together as a team and workforce in the care field as well as a corporate team, a change of culture, establishing a business unit, introducing new systems and processes, enterprising and active staff etc.

The Chief Executive added that much of the success was also to be attributed to the robust and confident administration of the Head of Social Services Department. There was also an excellent team of confident and active senior managers and middle managers along with a committed and engaging workforce. The Chief Executive thanked them all for their successful efforts.

**RESOLVED to accept the report with thanks.**

## **7 THE NEW PLANNING COMMITTEE**

- (i) Submitted – the report of the Head of Democracy and Legal Department nominating members to the new planning committee, approving amendments to the Constitution as a result of establishing the committee and approving a special allowance to the Chair of the committee.
- (ii) It was reported that, at its meeting on 13 May, the Council had approved the establishment of a single county planning committee on the basis of political and area balance. Fifteen members would serve on the committee in accordance with the

following allocation:- Plaid Cymru – 7; Independent – 4; Llais Gwynedd – 2; Liberal Democrats – 1 and Labour – 1.

In order to try to ensure balance between the areas it had been agreed that the Business Group would nominate five members from each area from the names received to serve on the committee. However, due to concern that the Independent Group did not have representation from the three areas, the Business Group had agreed that six members from Arfon, five members from Dwyfor and four members from Meirionnydd should be granted to serve on the committee. There had not been unanimous agreement at the Business Group to the proposed procedure.

As the Council had decided in May that a third of the committee members should come from each area, it had been decided to put procedural rule 18 to one side in order to consider changing the area balance arrangement for the new planning committee in accordance with the following:- Arfon 6; Dwyfor 5 and Meirionnydd 4.

- (iii) A member expressed dissatisfaction that there were so many Meirionnydd area members on the new committee as the Snowdonia National Park Authority would deal with the majority of planning applications in the Meirionnydd area.
- (iv) Another member expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed balance. It was noted that there were 34 members in the Arfon area, 20 in the Dwyfor area and 21 in the Meirionnydd area and that balance of the new planning committee should reflect that allocation.

An amendment to change the area balance of the County Planning Committee to have seven members from Arfon, four from Dwyfor and four from Meirionnydd failed.

- (v) The Leader of Llais Gwynedd Group explained that he was unhappy with the political allocation of the new committee. He was of the opinion that the allocation was not an entirely accurate reflection of the Council's balance and that the Llais Gwynedd Group had lost out because of this. He explained that Llais Gwynedd Group had 12 members and the Independent Group 17 members on the Council. However, Llais Gwynedd Group had only two members on the County Planning Committee and the Council Board, but the Independent Group had four members on those two committees. He pressed to have three members each for Llais Gwynedd Group and Independent Group on the County Planning Committee.

The Chief Executive reported that the allocation of Llais Gwynedd Group and the Independent Group was very close and it was possible for the Council to change the political allocation in accordance with his desire. An amendment to this end was not proposed.

- (vi) A member expressed great dissatisfaction that the chairs of the area committees would lose his/her allowance. He noted that doing away with the allowance would undermine the status of the area committees and he asked for the special responsibility allowance for the chairs of the area committees to be reinstated.

The Monitoring Officer reported that the Independent Panel had decided that the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees, Licensing Committee, Audit Committee and Planning Committee were the only ones which would receive a special responsibility allowance. She explained that the area committees had not been on the list and, consequently, the Council did not have the right to pay an allowance to the Chairs of the Area Committees.



She noted that it would be possible to submit a request to the Independent Panel to pay a special responsibility allowance to the Chairs of the Area Committees.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) **To put Procedural Rule 18 to one side in order to reconsider the Council's decision in May 2010 in relation to the area balance of the new planning committee;**
- (ii) **To confirm the following political balance for the County Planning Committee:-**

Plaid Cymru	7
Independent	4
Llais Gwynedd	2
Liberal Democrats	1
Labour	1
- (iii) **To adopt the following area balance for the County Planning Committee:-**

Arfon	7;
Dwyfor	5;
Meirionnydd	4;
- (iv) **To authorise the Monitoring Officer to appoint members to the new committee in accordance with the aforementioned political balance and area balance and in accordance with the agreement of the Business Group, or if no agreement is reached, in accordance with the expressions of interest received from Council members;**
- (v) **To amend the Constitution in accordance with paragraph 9 in the report of the Monitoring Officer;**
- (vi) **To approve the changes to the members Allowances Scheme in accordance with paragraphs 10-12 in the report of the Monitoring Officer and submit a formal request to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales to be able to pay a special responsibility allowance to the Chairs of the Area Committees.**

## **8 NOTICE OF MOTION**

Submitted – the following notice of motion received by Councillor Ioan Thomas under Procedural Rule 13 along with an organisational notice under Procedural Rule 13(12) requesting that the matter be discussed at the Council without being referred to the relevant committee.

#### **RESOLVED to discuss the proposal at this meeting.**

The following motion was proposed and seconded:-

**“That Gwynedd Council writes urgently to Grant Thornton, the administrators of Barcud Derwen, to ask them to secure a meeting of the company’s creditors in Caernarfon.”**

The member explained that several local companies and individuals had been affected by the financial situation of Barcud, that several of them were in Caernarfon and the local area and that attempts should be made to secure a meeting of the Barcud Derwen creditors in Caernarfon.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) **to adopt the following notice of motion:-**  
**“That Gwynedd Council writes urgently to Grant Thornton, the administrators of Barcud Derwen, to ask them to secure a meeting of the company’s creditors in Caernarfon.”**
- (ii) **To authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department to act upon the motion.**

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 4.50 pm.

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**CHAIRMAN**