

MEETING	Council
DATE	15 July 2010
TITLE	Y Berwyn catchment-area schools re-organisation
PURPOSE	Outline proposals for Y Berwyn schools re-organisation, establish the rationale and seek Council approval to the aim of moving to a statutory phase when applicable
RECOMMENDATION	That the Council approve the proposals and recommend statutory consultation periods on the relevant proposals
REPORT BY	Iwan T. Jones, Corporate Director
PORTFOLIO LEADER	Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts

NOTE:

The contents of this report follows discussions held in the Y Berwyn catchment-area. The proposals reflect Gwynedd Council's requirements in accordance with the Council's schools re-organisation strategy. Clear guidelines have been issued by the Assembly Government regarding the statutory process that needs to be taken when amending a school's status. It is confirmed that the statutory consultation phase on these proposals will not commence until a statutory consultation has been approved by the Council.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Gwynedd Schools Re-organisation Improvement Working-group was established in June 2008.

1.2 15 meetings were held to discuss a range of evidence, including presentations by:

- Welsh Assembly Government
- ESTYN/Wales Audit Office
- The Welsh Language Society
- Schools and Supporters Alliance
- Head teachers representing small, medium-sized and large schools in Gwynedd
- National Association for Small Schools

1.3 During Spring 2009, the Improvement Working Group published its strategy *Excellent Primary Education for Children in Gwynedd*.

- 1.4 It was agreed that education needed to be reviewed throughout the county, catchment by catchment-area. Clear steps were set out for implementing the process.
- 1.5 It contained a list of aims and criteria to guide the reviews:
- Class sizes
 - Population and pupil numbers
 - The child's learning environment
 - The Community
 - Financial Resources
 - The Welsh Language
 - Geographical Factors
 - Exceptional circumstances
 - Newsletter 23/02
- 1.6 A range of specific criteria were developed around the above factors. When considering individual catchment situations against the criteria Tywyn was identified as the initial catchment-area for review, followed by Y Berwyn.
- 1.7 ***The strategy was approved unopposed by the Council on 2 April 2009.***
- 1.8 During October 2009, the initial catchment-area proposals were issued which recommended new arrangements for the Tywyn catchment-area. These were approved as a basis for statutory consultation. As regards Tywyn, the statutory consultation phase will be held during Summer 2010 and a further report will be presented to the Council's democratic group during September 2010.
- 1.9 Proposals for re-organisation of education in the y Berwyn catchment-area are outlined below.

2. Y BERWYN CATCHMENT-AREA REVIEW

2.1 Communication methods

- 2.1.1 Several forums were established to seek opinions as the Education Portfolio Leader developed her proposals, including:
- A Catchment-area Review Panel
 - Meetings with staff, governors and parents of every school
 - A session held for children and young people of the schools in the catchment

- An extra-ordinary meeting of the Catchment-area Review Panel to discuss language and community matters as part of the impact assessments
- Wider communication
- County Advisory Panel

2.1.2 It was also ensured that there was written information available to all interested parties.

2.2 Y Berwyn Catchment-area Review Panel

2.2.1 Y Berwyn Catchment-area Review Panel was established during November 2009. The initial meeting of the Panel was held on 4 November 2009. 4 further meetings were held on 2 December 2009, 4 February 2010, 23 March 2010 and 12 May 2010.

2.2.2 Delegates –a head teacher, chair of governors and parent-governor - represented each of the six primary schools in the catchment-area. Invitations were also extended to head teacher and chair of governors of Ysgol Uwchradd Y Berwyn, the 3 local councillors and a St Asaph Diocesan representative. A further invitation was extended to 3 councillors in neighbouring counties, namely Conwy and Denbigh, as well as the neighbouring schools in these counties. **24 permanent members who represented the catchment-area attended 5 meetings.**

2.2.3 The Panel received and discussed a range of evidence, including a pack of statistics on the area, agreed by the entire Panel as a full and accurate reflection of the situation. When preparing the statistical information, school representatives were requested to present their comments, challenge the contents of the papers and request any further information as required. At the end of the second Catchment-area Review Panel meeting held on 2 December 2009, **Catchment-area Review Panel members agreed that the statistical information presented was a full and accurate reflection of the situation in the catchment-area and that further requests from the catchment-area had been fully addressed.**

2.2.4 Information was also presented on:

- the financial context
- information on national developments including Government guidance on discussing proposals for schools re-organisation and new regulations for establishing patterns of collaboration between schools

2.2.5 At the request of the Catchment-area Review Panel, a lengthy list of possible options for re-organisation of schools in the area, was prepared.

The long list was refined to 7 main catchment-area models for further consideration. An analysis of the educational, management and financial implications of every proposal was received at the Panel meeting held on 4 February 2010, and a detailed discussion was held on the advantages and disadvantages of the available options at the Catchment-area Review Panel meeting held on 23 March 2010. The options are listed below:

- no change
- pattern of collaboration between schools in the town of Bala
- pattern of collaboration between rural schools in the area
- an area school in the town of Bala to replace Beuno Sant and Bro Tegid schools with the option to include Ysgol Uwchradd y Berwyn in the arrangement
- an area school in the town of Bala to include Beuno Sant, Bro Tegid and Bro Tryweryn schools with the option of including Ysgol Uwchradd y Berwyn in the arrangement
- closure of Ysgol y Parc and transfer pupils to Ysgol OM Edwards
- closure of all schools in the catchment-area and establish a new area school in the town of Bala with the option of including Ysgol Uwchradd y Berwyn in the arrangement.

2.3 Meetings with individual schools

2.3.1 The Education Portfolio Leader and the County Advisory Panel representative (Cllr Sian Gwenllian) visited every school in the catchment-area at the start of the process. The purpose of the visit was to meet head teachers to gain an understanding of the situations faced by individual schools.

2.3.2 A cycle of meetings was held with individual schools during the process during the period 1-18 March 2010. An open invitation was extended to staff, governors and parents to attend meetings separately. Opportunities were provided to discuss general issues including the specific models under consideration.

2.3.3 ***Therefore 21 individual meetings were held which took up 6 full days with representatives from individual schools, as well as a visit from the Portfolio Leader and County Advisory Panel representative.***

2.4 Children and Young People

2.4.1 During the initial Catchment-area Review Panel meeting held on 4 November 2009, it was suggested that children and young people's

views should be sought as the process went on. This was agreed by representatives of every school on the Catchment-area Review Panel.

2.4.2 Individual schools were notified that the session for children and young people would be held at Ysgol Uwchradd Y Berwyn on 11 March 2010. Schools were asked to organise a delegation of School Council members, and it was agreed that 3-4 children from each school should be included.

2.4.3 The head teacher of each school were invited to attend the session with the children and an agenda of the activities and the questions that were to be asked to the children and young people were sent to the head teachers. Head teachers had an opportunity to question the arrangements and offer improvements. No further comments were received from head teachers prior to the session.

2.4.4 The session held on 11 March 2010 was facilitated by specialist officers from the Council.

2.4.5 A range of activities were held to discover the views of children and young people on several subjects, including:

- class sizes
- age range within a class
- children's language medium outside the classroom
- travelling distances to the school

2.4.6 When concluding the session, children and young people were asked to suggest the type of facilities that they would like to see at a school.

2.4.7 A full report on the session was produced. In general, the children showed loyalty to their schools and teachers whilst recognising several resources that they would like to see at their schools. The report is presented as Appendix C to this report. The report also appears on the Council's web-site.

2.5 County Advisory Panel

2.5.1 In approving the strategy *Excellent Primary Education for Children in Gwynedd* unopposed, the Council allowed Improvement Working Group members to remain as a forum to support the Education Portfolio Leader as she led reviews catchment by catchment-area. That was done using the name *County Advisory Panel*. **Representatives from every political grouping on Gwynedd Council were invited.**

2.5.2 Four County Advisory Panel meetings were held to discuss developments at y Berwyn, on 7 December 2009, 28 January, 24 February and 24 March 2010.

- 2.5.3 The Panel proposed several options for re-organisation of the area's schools, alongside an analysis of models proposed by the Catchment-area Review Panel.
- 2.5.4 Every political grouping except one was represented on the County Panel. One Panel member resigned before the meeting held on 1 September 2009.
- 2.5.5 ***The models for the catchment area were carefully discussed by the County Advisory Panel and the members expressed their views.***

2.6 Community and Language Impact Assessment

- 2.6.1 As part of the process, the Dylan Bryn Roberts Consultancy was commissioned to hold an assessment of the potential language and community impact of the various re-organisation proposals.
- 2.6.2 Meetings were held with individual schools to gather information and findings. A questionnaire was prepared to obtain the views of staff, governors, parents and the wider community to the options. Electronically produced and hard copies of the questionnaire were disseminated.
- 2.6.3 Assessment results have had a core role in developing the proposals presented in this report.
- 2.6.4 The full reports appear on the Council web-site.

2.7 Written Communication

- 2.7.1 ***Four newsletters were prepared for dissemination to every school following every meeting except for one of the Catchment-area Review Panel. Hard copies were sent to the school to circulate to every parent, the newsletter was e-mailed to every school and the newsletters were published on the Council's web-site. The fourth summarised the proposals that would be submitted to the Council.***
- 2.7.2 All the Catchment-area's Review Panel papers were published on the Council web-site.
- 2.7.3 Contact details of officers involved in the work appeared on the web-site.

2.8 The Status of Process

- 2.8.1 Note that the activities undertaken thus far form part of the information gathering process when drawing up initial proposals.

2.8.2 The 021/2009 newsletter *School Organisation Proposals* was published on 18 September 2009. The new Newsletter relates to proposals that were statutorily published from January 2010 and which are thus relevant to these proposals.

2.8.3 ***It is therefore confirmed that the activities undertaken when drawing up these proposals do not form part of the statutory process of reviewing provision in the Y Berwyn catchment-area. The discussions thus far are in addition to those expected by the Assembly Government.***

3. PROPOSALS FOR THE Y BERWYN CATCHMENT-AREA

3.1 On 12 May 2010, the Education Portfolio Leader presented her proposals for schools re-organisation in the Y Berwyn catchment-area to the Catchment-area Review Panel, which were as follows:

- ***A new Lifelong Campus for the town of Bala*** to open during the school year 2014-15 and to include ***Beuno Sant, Bro Tegid and Ysgol Uwchradd y Berwyn*** schools. Officers will need to do further work on the management structure of the new campus.
- ***Close Ysgol Y Parc by September 2012***, offering a place for the catchment area's children at Ysgol O M Edwards, Llanuwchllyn
- ***Promote collaboration between Ffridd y Llyn, Bro Tryweryn and O M Edwards schools and the new Lifelong Campus.***

3.2 A summary of the rationale behind the proposals is provided here. A full analysis of the rationale for the proposals is provided in part 4 of the report, and there is further background information for Members in the following appendixes:

- Appendix A1.1 – A list of further background documents
- Appendix A1.2 – Questions and Answers
- Appendix A2 – Catchment Review Panel 1 minutes
- Appendix A3 - Catchment Review Panel 2 minutes
- Appendix A4 - Catchment Review Panel 3 minutes
- Appendix A5 - Catchment Review Panel 4 minutes
- Appendix B - Models for school re-organisation in the Y Berwyn catchment-area
- Appendix C – Information from the children and young people's consultation
- Appendix D1 – Newsletter 1
- Appendix D2 – Newsletter 2
- Appendix E1 – Models of collaboration
- Appendix E2 – Job descriptions

4. INFORMATION ON THE LIFELONG COMMUNITY SCHOOL (CAMPUS) AND RATIONALE FOR THE PROPOSALS FOR Y BERWYN CATCHMENT-AREA

4.1 In order to further clarify the rationale for the Berwyn catchment area proposal, more detailed information about lifelong learning school is presented below.

4.1.1 **What is meant by a Lifelong Learning School (Campus)?**

4.1.1.1 There is evidence from some areas of Britain that establishing lifelong learning arrangements can maintain sustainable focus for rural communities. It is a way of protecting rural provision in the face of high costs of maintaining small schools through co-ordinating schools management.

4.1.1.2 A lifelong learning campus can create an ethos and mutual expectations for pupils, staff and parents which offers **curricular** advantages through maintaining flexibility when planning and implementing the curriculum. Research indicates that the transitional phase from the primary to secondary school sets a challenge for children and that overall, achievement deteriorates during this period. Through creating a closer relationship between the primary and secondary sector, the uncertainty of the period for children could be reduced.

4.1.1.3 There is an opportunity to gain access to **specialist resources**. Establishing a lifelong learning arrangement also provides an opportunity to apply for national capital funding that is available to support innovative developments. This can meet the broader cultural requirements of catchment-areas. The Government's emphasis on developing 21st Century schools necessitates the provision of learning resources that fully utilise sustainability technologies, information technology and services for the community. This in turn can lead to maintenance savings through the provision of appropriate sustainable buildings.

4.1.1.4 There is an opportunity to **utilise staff specialisms** across the learning age-groups, also providing an opportunity for staff to learn from their peers, for pupils' educational benefit.

4.1.1.5 **Pupil well-being** could be supported when transferring from the familiar primary sector arrangements to the secondary sector. A system would be established to support pupils, which is suitable for pupils' age-group and needs, thus establishing a long-term relationship between parents and staff.

- 4.1.1.6 Experiences in other areas indicate that there is an opportunity to **support families** through providing integrated services to include health, child care services, training for adults, and a range of other services.
- 4.1.1.7 **A comprehensive language policy** could be developed throughout the primary and secondary sectors, including community-based activities and adult education..
- 4.1.1.8 As regards **school management**, there are opportunities to merge governing bodies and budgets. This could be done either formally or through a federal arrangement, providing scope for management savings.

4.1.2 **Why include Ysgol Uwchradd y Berwyn in the discussions?**

- 4.1.2.1 The *Primary Education of the Best Quality for Children in Gwynedd* notes the need to review primary schools organisation in the county catchment by catchment-area. It was however agreed locally that the secondary school needed to be involved in the discussions.
- 4.1.2.2 During Summer 2009, lengthy discussions were held in the Berwyn catchment-area on a paper circulated by the Welsh Language Society that outlined the notion of a lifelong community in the area. The principle was supported by Ysgol Uwchradd Y Berwyn, and at the Secondary School's request, it was agreed that the paper should be circulated to Catchment-area Review Panel members.
- 4.1.2.3 Following further discussions, the Catchment-area Review Panel agreed that the possibilities of developing models that included the Secondary School should be explored further.

4.1.3 **What does this mean for Y Berwyn?**

- 4.1.3.1 Under consideration here is a proposal to adapt the current site of Ysgol Uwchradd y Berwyn to develop a new lifelong site to include nursery, primary and secondary provision and other community provisions.
- 4.1.3.2 If accepted, the Lifelong School would be a school for 3 to 18 year old pupils (subject to the 16 plus review), which will include the current catchment area of ysgol Beuno Sant, Bro Tegid and Ysgol Uwchradd y Berwyn.
- 4.1.3.3 There would be one governing body and the school would be financed as one unit.
The school would be on a single site and will include several establishments merged into a single suitable site.

4.1.3.4 Below are some main recommendations for the lifelong model. Note that these are only recommendations and that managerial matters will be in the hands of the school and governors in the end:

- A Lifelong School to cover nursery, primary, secondary and community and cultural provision. In the case of Y Berwyn, as a starting point, adding a library and theatre provision to the campus should be considered. Local discussions will be held when further consideration will be given to this.
- There would be a need to establish a local board under the guidance of the head of the lifelong campus and include representatives of all facilities and services on the site.
- There would be a single governing body for the lifelong school and a single budget for the campus.
- One headteacher would assume responsibility for the entire school, with assistant sector heads to be responsible for primary and secondary sectors and any other facilities and services on the site.
- In the second management tier, a system of co-ordinators could be established with cross establishment responsibility for aspects such as Pastoral Care, Assessment or Community Activities.

4.1.3.5 It's too early to give exact costings for this development, but for reasons of efficiency, it is recommended that the current site at y Berwyn be adapted for the development. The exact cost of establishing a lifelong school would depend entirely on the nature of the development.

4.1.3.6 The Assembly Government expects the Council to prepare detailed applications for new developments during the 2010/11 financial year - identifying full costs and an implementation programme will form a core role of this work.

4.1.3.7 The proposed model for Y Berwyn catchment-area, recommends the rationalisation of the provision in the town – by closing two primary schools and the secondary school - develop a lifelong school in the town to serve the pupils of the three schools whilst safeguarding 3 of the 4 rural schools which currently educate pupils in the Penllyn rural area. The lifelong school and the 3 primary schools are expected to closely collaborate on the town's new facilities and the specialisations of all staff.

4.2 Class sizes

4.2.1 Currently, the average class size in the catchment-area is 19, with a range of 9 to 26.

- 4.2.2 A study of a range of evidence outlines the general view - confirmed in the Government's policy – that classes of over 30 pupils are unacceptable for under 7's and undesirable for 7-11 year olds.
- 4.2.3 In addition, recent research suggests that classes can be too small. Peter Blatchford noted in his publication "The Class Size Debate: Is Small Better" (2003) "...it may also be worth considering that class sizes can be too small" reporting that teachers have suggested "...the dynamics of the group could become flat and some children could dominate".
- 4.2.4 The strategy adopted by the Council on 2 April 2009 notes the ambition to secure classes of between 12-25 in pupil numbers.
- 4.2.5 If all the recommendations were to be realised, average class sizes in the catchment-area would slightly exceed 21, with numbers ranging from school to school from 13 to 25. If pupil numbers are increased (as projected by the schools), there will be no classes of fewer than 17 pupils in the catchment-area.

4.3 Pupil Numbers

- 4.3.1 There has been a reduction of 35% in pupils of primary school age in the catchment-area since 1975. According to statistics presented by individual schools and which were checked and confirmed during Catchment-area Review Panel discussions, an increase of around 12% is expected during the next 5 years.
- 4.3.2 Standards in education have a core role in the proposals. Although there is a general view that educational standards at small schools exceed those in larger schools, there is no evidence to support the hypothesis. Indeed, ESTYN report *Small Primary Schools in Wales(2003)* notes that there is no significant difference between educational standards at large and small schools, but "*...the smaller the school, the more challenging it often is for the teacher to match work to all pupils' learning needs. This is because, in these schools, teachers have to teach pupils of widely different ages and stages of development in the same class*". The report goes on to note that "*...it can be more difficult for teachers to match work to pupils' needs because pupils in each class may be of widely different ages and stages of development. This is particularly the case in the smallest schools (with up to 30 pupils), where there is 28% of unsatisfactory work compared with 8% of unsatisfactory work in schools with over 210 pupils.*
- 4.3.3 There are currently 3 two teacher schools in the catchment-area. Two schools are now three teacher schools with all of them providing education for fewer than 60 pupils at present. There is one four teacher school that provides education for over 100 children.

4.4 Child's Learning Environment

- 4.4.1 The strategy that was recently unanimously approved by the Council in April 2009 stipulates that teaching and learning environments have a core role in providing education of the highest standard.
- 4.4.2 The ESTYN report "An evaluation of performance of schools before and after moving into new buildings or significantly refurbished premises" (January 2007) confirms the above view. The report states that schools which had moved into new buildings or whose buildings had received substantial renovation, had witnessed an improvement in pupils' achievement and attainment (especially at certain schools in communities with a high level of social and economic deprivation), that Estyn inspections of individual schools indicate an improvement in quality of teaching, better staff morale, that attendance has been maintained and behaviour improved and that new buildings provide greater choice and better educational provision at the school including before and after school activities.
- 4.4.3 The Assets Management Plan estimates that approximately £606,350 needs to be spent on adapting the 6 primary schools in the catchment-area. The closure of Ysgol y Parc, and building a lifelong campus as a replacement for the town's two primary schools, would reduce the cost to approximately £236,600, a saving of approximately £370,000 (or over 60% of the costs of adapting and up-grading primary schools in the catchment-area). The proposal also highlights a development at Ysgol y Berwyn – substantial expenditure is required on developing the secondary school. In addition, it is recognised that the location and suitability of the town library on the school site is inadequate, and that there are significant concerns about the long-term future of Neuadd Buddug. The proposal provides an opportunity to develop a resource at the town that will meet the catchment-area's future educational, cultural and social needs.
- 4.4.4 Further discussions will be required with the town's schools to identify appropriate sites. It is also envisaged that other buildings in the catchment-area will need to be brought up to date so as to meet 21st Century educational needs. It is intended to submit an application to the Assembly Government's 21st Century Schools programme.

4.5 Leadership and staffing

- 4.5.1 Schools within the catchment-area currently receive a budget sufficient to fund the employment of 15 primary teachers, 6 of them being head teachers. If the new arrangements were to be enforced now, over 13 primary teachers (full-time) would be employed in the area. Further

discussions will be held as to the exact nature of the collaboration between schools in the rural area of Penllyn and the schools in the town. The Assembly Government's new regulations outline staffing options that may lead to the need for fewer head teachers. This will be at the discretion of individual schools.

- 4.5.2 The Lifelong Model in the town of Bala provides an opportunity to share specialisms and teacher numbers between the sectors.

4.6 The Community

- 4.6.1 An analysis of the community use of every school, and the contribution of schools, has been published in the statistical package. Also listed are resources (e.g. community centres, post offices, leisure centres).

- 4.6.2 Government guidelines (Circular 021/2009 Schools Organisation Proposals) on schools re-organisation, specifies expectations as regards the community. The factors included in the new circular were considered as part of the catchment area review.

- 4.6.3 When preparing the proposals, information was gathered and shared on community and language factors. Circular 021/2009 identifies factors that require consideration when drawing up the proposals. Information on the factors considered in a statistical analysis of the catchment-area is available on the Council's web-site.

- 4.6.4 A study of the possible impact of the various options has been commissioned from the independent advisers as part of the proposals development process. The reports have been posted on the Council's web-site.

4.7 Financial Resources

- 4.7.1 A total of £1,046,247 (without including SEN units and devolving integration) is allocated to the 6 primary schools in the Y Berwyn catchment-area in 2009/10. This equates to £3,750 per pupil on average, although the amount for schools ranges between £2,950 and £7,428.

- 4.7.2 Total organisation allocation for the new catchment-area – based on the current allocation and having taken estimated additional transport needs of £15,000 into consideration – would be £963,666. As regards revenue costs, establishing the new arrangements would represent an annual saving of £104,199 less £15,000 transport therefore £89,199, a saving of 8% of the catchment-area revenue budget. Note that additional savings could possibly be made from the lifelong campus management structure but that the exact nature of the lifelong campus will be developed over the coming months.

- 4.7.3 Two of the 6 schools in the area receive £39,091 in addition to the usual allocation through the minimum staffing protection policy that guarantees at least a head teacher and teacher at every school and a head teacher and assistant in schools with fewer than 15 pupils. If this proposal was to be realised, one of these two schools will be closed.
- 4.7.4 If the proposals are approved, the Council will continue to work on a scheme to retain a percentage of any savings within the catchment-area throughout the re-organisation process across the county, so as to meet the county's strategy aims. Consultation on the proposed scheme is currently being implemented and an up-date will be presented during Summer 2010.

4.8 The Welsh Language

- 4.8.1 An analysis was presented of the language background of every school – based on information gathered when preparing a Language Assessment of every school in the county during spring 2008 – in the statistics package. Schools were offered the opportunity to challenge the evidence, which was done by some. The subsequent analysis was agreed upon.
- 4.8.2 When developing the proposals for the catchment-area, consideration was given to the language compatibility of school.
- 4.8.3 A Language Impact Assessment of the various models considered in the catchment-area, was commissioned when developing this proposal. This is done in compliance with Assembly Government requirements in the Circular 021/2009. The whole report is published on the Council web-site.

4.9 Geographical Factors

- 4.9.1 The aim was to limit travel wherever possible. The submitted proposal meets strategy requirements as regards travel, to limit travel to no more than 30 minutes each way.
- 4.9.2 As Ffridd y Llyn and Bro Tryweryn schools are already Area Schools since their establishment during the 1960s/1970s, several children already travel considerable distances to school. This was considered when developing the proposals.

5. JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THE PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Further justifications for the proposals are noted below.

- 5.2 The new arrangements will provide an equal opportunity for all children within the catchment-area to be educated in reasonably sized groups as well as opportunities to more regularly collaborate and play with peers.
- 5.3 They provide more staffing assurance in the catchment-area and teachers will have an opportunity to share various specialisms and provide the pupils with that expertise. Classes will contain a smaller range of abilities and will therefore facilitate planning and teaching by the teachers. The recommendation to develop a Lifelong Campus provides an excellent opportunity to secure an educational and cultural powerhouse in the Berwyn area. It is crucial that every school in the area – in the town of Bala and the surrounding rural area – has the opportunity to utilise the facilities in the new building and the specialisation of the range of staff there.
- 5.4 The proposals provide the best balance between providing effective teaching in efficient establishments while providing a choice for parents. No child will have to travel more than 30 minutes to the primary school once the proposals have been implemented.
- 5.5 The proposals take into account the school building requirements of schools in the area and the LEA's aims when developing schools that are appropriate for the 21st century. The composite catchment-area plan envisages building a new lifelong campus and adapting the remaining schools in the area to make them fit for purpose. It is intended to apply for capital funding to the Government in accordance with the 21st Century Schools strategy.
- 5.6 Developing a robust and stable learning community has a core role in providing children with the best opportunities. Stabilising the situation could release head teachers, teachers and support staff to focus on developing a curriculum that provides children with the best opportunities.
- 5.7 The proposals envisage developing a community-based focus for every school in the area. Twenty-first Century schools need to provide services that draw the community and school together, promoting education for adults, pre and after school clubs, and other community-based activities. It is intended to consider up-grading the town library and to include cultural provision in the new lifelong campus. Serious consideration will be given to developing the use of other school buildings in the catchment-area and to maintaining community provision in the village of y Parc.
- 5.8 Creating stability would secure the medium-term future of the 3 rural schools in the area and enable community planning around those schools.

- 5.9 Fully implementing the proposals would release substantial savings, saving 8% of the revenue budget and over 60% of the maintenance and adaptation costs.
- 5.10 Alternative options were considered for schools re-organisation within the catchment-area but in the Portfolio Leader's view, the submitted proposals provide the best balance between maintaining educational standards, ensuring schools that are financially viable, reducing recruitment difficulties, maintaining accessibility to schools, enabling the development of an innovative lifelong campus in the town of Bala and providing opportunities to develop school buildings that are suitable for 21st Century needs in accordance with the requirements of this particular area.
- 5.11 A range of meetings have already been held with schools, head teachers, governors, staff, parents and children.
- 5.12 If the Council approves these proposals, a statutory consultation phase will follow for those schools which face a statutory change and a further report on the findings of that process will be submitted to the Council before a final decision is made.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 This report was presented to the Gwynedd Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee for comments (24 May 2010) and the recommendations were approved.
- 6.2 The report was then presented to the Council Board on 15 June 2010. The decision is noted below:
- a) that officers complete the research into the implications of the community status of Ysgol y Parc, in order to submit the information for the full Council's consideration on 15 July.
 - b) to recommend that the full Council approves the following proposals for
 - undertaking the statutory consultation process as required by the the Schools Standards Framework Act 1998:-
 - (i) to establish a new lifelong campus in the town of Bala to open during the 2014-15 school year to include Ysgol Beuno Sant, Ysgol Bro Tegid and Ysgol Uwchradd y Berwyn and officers will need to do further work on the managerial nature of the new campus.
 - (ii) to close Ysgol y Parc by September 2012, providing places for children in the catchment-area at Ysgol O M Edwards, Llanuwchllyn

and that the Council works with Community Leaders and Area Regeneration Officers to safeguard the community use of the Ysgol y Parc building. It is intended to move towards a statutory consultation period on the proposals – with the Council's consent – during October 2010.

- (iii) To promote collaboration between O M Edwards, Ffridd y Llyn and Bro Tryweryn schools and develop ways of enabling the schools to utilise the facilities and specialisation of the Lifelong Campus. This proposal has no statutory obligations.

6.3 In accordance with the request by the Board, this report has been strengthened to reflect the need for more details about the lifelong school (campus). In addition, the Board asked officers to undertake further work on the community status of the Ysgol y Parc. More information is presented on this Appendix A1.2.

6.4 If the Council were to approve the proposals, it would be a requirement to hold a statutory consultation phase on the proposals with each individual school that faces closure or altered status, in compliance with Assembly Government guidelines as outlined in Circular 021/2009 *Schools Organisation Proposals*.

6.5 Circular 021/2009 clearly notes the Assembly Government's expectations of local authorities in developing proposals.

6.6 The statutory consultation period would include:

- Regular discussions when preparing a statutory consultation document.
- Publication of the statutory consultation document
- Formal meetings with school staff, governors and parents to discuss the statutory consultation document
- A period of no less than 4 weeks to receive written comments and responses to the statutory consultation document
- At the end of the statutory consultation period, those involved in the consultation would be expected to provide a report for the attention of the Council, summarising the matters raised during the consultation along with further comments. The Council would then have an opportunity to decide whether the school closure or amending schools status process should proceed.
- If it is decided to proceed, statutory notices would be issued per school, clearly stating the aims for that school. The statutory notice would be circulated to the specific schools and other relevant establishments, and copies placed in public places in the area and on the Council web-site. Formal written objections to the statutory notice must be submitted within 2 months.

- At the end of the period for submitting statutory notices, the issue would be re-submitted to the Council Board for confirmation. If the Board decided to proceed with the proposal, and unless formal objections were received, the decision could be confirmed. If formal objections were received, the issue would be transferred for consideration by the Education Minister at the Welsh Assembly Government.

6.7 The Council is therefore asked to approve moving towards the statutory consultation period in accordance with the above.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 To undertake the statutory consultation process as required by Schools Standards Framework Act 1998 on the intention to close Beuno Sant, Bro Tegid schools and Ysgol Uwchradd y Berwyn (Berwyn Secondary School) in order to establish a new Lifelong Community School in the town of Bala to open during the school year 2014-15.

7.2 To undertake in Autumn 2010 a statutory consultation process as required by the Schools Standards Framework Act 1998 on the intention to close Ysgol y Parc by September 2012, providing places for children in the catchment-area at Ysgol O M Edwards, Llanuwchllyn. The Council would work with Community Leaders and Area Regeneration Officers to safeguard the community use of Ysgol y Parc building.

7.3 To approve the proposal to promote collaboration between O M Edwards, Ffridd y Llyn and Bro Tryweryn schools and to develop ways of enabling the schools to utilise the facilities and specialisation of the Lifelong Campus. This proposal has no statutory implications.

A. View of the Local member

B. The view of the Statutory Officers:

1. Chief Executive

“Obviously, a lot of detailed work and discussions have occurred to the recommendations that have been put forward, and they must be assessed in the light of the criterion that were placed, which are specified in paragraph 1.5 of the report. I understand that it was the decision of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Meeting, following thorough consideration on the matter, was to accept the recommendations in the report. It is a cliché to say that a basic alteration like this is certain to be the opposite opinion of some, however it is the responsibility of the Borad and the Council to consider the proposals that are preferable in the criterions' context that have already been identified and to offer a clear guideline on the way forward.

2. Monitoring Officer amended comments

As the report emphasises it seeks approval for proposals which can be taken forward for statutory consultation. If the Council approves then a report will be presented at the conclusion of the consultation period and only then will the decision to serve statutory notices be taken

3.Chief Finance Officer

“The proposals of the relevant Working Group that have been put forward in part 4 of the report is evidence of thorough work that has been completed by elected memebre, headteachers, teachers, governors, officers, and others, in order to move on with the process of reviewing the re-organisation of primary schools in the Berwyn catchment area. I confirm that appropriate input was given to the report by Finance officers and the presence of the relevant Finance Manager in meetings of the Berwyn Catchment Are Review Board, and the figures in the report are either the accurate correct costs or a reasonable estimate (where appropriate). I note that this challenging strategy is dependant on enticing a capital grant from the Assembly which will fund a substantial percentage of the projects cost. The proposals that have been put forward should not be compromised or postponed in order to ensure the viability of the proposed procedure.

I support the recommendations that have been put forward and encourage relevant members to continue with immediate reviewing of school reorganisation. Delaying with school organisation would involve higher financial losses to all schols and that the Council, once again, would loose out on substantial capital grants that are available from the Assembly for new competent schools.”

C. Background Papers

Please see appendix A1.1 for contact details and how to view these papers

021/2009 Assembly Circular Schools Organisation Proposals

Primary Education of the Best Quality for the Children of Gwynedd – Full Council 2 April 2009

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Report (24 May 2010)

Papers and minutes of local discussions

Newsletters sent during the local discussions

Language Impact Assessment

Community Impact Assessment

Ch. Policy Implications