

MEETING	COUNCIL
DATE	16 December, 2010
TITLE	School re-organisation in Tywyn
PURPOSE	Seek the Council's support for recommendations for the reorganisation of schools in the Tywyn catchment area
RECOMMENDATION	To approve the recommendations
AUTHOR	Iwan Trefor Jones, Strategic Director
PORTFOLIO LEADER	Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts

The content of this report follows a period of discussion held in the Tywyn catchment-area, the Council's decision to move to Statutory Consultation on the proposals, and Statutory Consultation conducted during Summer 2010. The proposals reflect Gwynedd Council's requirements in line with the Council's schools re-organisation strategy.

There is analysis of comments presented through the statutory consultation in the appendixes of this report. It was agreed during Statutory Consultation meetings that minutes of the meetings and copies of written responses would be provided to Elected Members through their political groups. Copies will be made available for public inspection (subject to redaction of personal information about individuals in order to comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998) and can be viewed at Council Offices (the Education Department) in Caernarfon, Pwllheli and Dolgellau and Tywyn Library.

A report on the statutory consultation was presented to the 30 November 2010 meeting of Gwynedd's Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee and to the Council Board on 14 December 2010.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Gwynedd Schools Re-organization Improvement Working Group was established in June 2008.
- 1.2 15 meetings were held where a range of evidence was discussed, including presentations by:
 - Welsh Assembly Government
 - ESTYN/Wales Audit Office
 - Welsh Language Society
 - Schools Alliance and Supporters
 - Headteachers representing small, medium and large sized schools in Gwynedd
 - National Association for Small Schools
- 1.3 In Spring 2009, the Improvement Working-group published its *Excellent Education for Gwynedd's Children* strategy.
- 1.4 It was agreed that education needed to be reviewed throughout the county per catchment-area. Clear steps were set for conducting the process.
- 1.5 It contained a list of aims and criteria that should be borne in mind when holding the reviews:
 - Class sized
 - Pupil population and numbers
 - A child's learning environment
 - The Community
 - Financial Resources

- The Welsh language
- Geographical factors
- Exceptional circumstances
- Circulars 23/02 and 021/2009

1.6 A range of specific criteria were developed around the above-mentioned factors. Measuring the criteria against situations in individual catchment-areas, Tywyn was identified as the initial catchment-area for review.

1.7 *The strategy was unanimously accepted by the Council on 2 April 2009.*

2. Tywyn Catchment-area Review

2.1 *Communication Methods*

2.1.1 Several forums were established to seek views as the Education Portfolio Holder developed her proposals, and these forums included:

- Catchment-area Review Panel
- Meetings with staff, governors and parents of every school
- A session for children and young people
- More widely based communication
- County Advisory Panel

2.1.2 It was also ensured that there was written information available for everybody who expressed an interest.

2.2 *Tywyn Catchment-area Review Panel*

2.2.1 Tywyn Catchment-area Review Panel was established during Spring 2009. The first Panel meeting was held on 21 May 2009. 4 further meetings were held on 18 June, 6 July, 10 September and 24 September 2009.

2.2.2 An invitation was extended to a delegation – headteacher, chair of governors, and parent governor – from each of the eight primary schools in the catchment-area. An invitation was also extended to the headteacher and chair of governors of Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn and the 6 local councillors. ***5 meetings were attended by 32 permanent members who represented the catchment-area.***

2.2.3 The Panel received and discussed a range of evidence, including a package of statistics about the area that was agreed upon by the entire Panel as a full and fair reflection. When preparing the statistical information, school representatives were asked to present their comments, challenge the contents of the papers and request any additional information as required. At the end of the second meeting of the Catchment-area Review Panel held on 18 June 2009, the ***Catchment-area Review Panel members agreed that the statistical information presented fully and accurately reflected the situation within the catchment-area and that further requests from the catchment-area had been fully responded to.***

2.2.4 Information was also presented on:

- the financial context
- information on national developments including Welsh Assembly guidance on establishing patterns of co-operation between schools

2.2.5 The panel presented 9 possible individual options for re-organizing the area's schools at the meeting held on 18 June 2009. The County Advisory Panel added 4 other options (see below). An analysis was received of the educational, managerial and financial implications of every proposal

at the Panel meeting held on 6 July 2009, and a detailed discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the options was held at Catchment-area Review Panel meetings held on 6 July and 10 September 2009. The options are listed below:

- no change
- co-operation between Penybryn (Tywyn) and Aberdyfi schools
- establish Ysgol Aberdyfi as a Foundation Phase centre for Tywyn and Aberdyfi communities with Ysgol Penybryn providing Key Stage 2 education
- co-operation between Aberdyfi, Pennal and Dyffryn Dulas (Corris) schools
- co-operation between Pennal and Dyffryn Dulas (Corris) schools
- co-operation between Bryncreg, Abergynolwyn, Llwyngwrl and Llanegryn schools
- a new area school to serve the communities of Bryncreg, Abergynolwyn, Llwyngwrl and Llanegryn
- co-operation between Llwyngwrl and Friog schools
- establish 3 federal schools in the catchment-area with the others remaining as foundation phase schools
- close Llwyngwrl, Llanegryn and Abergynolwyn schools and adapt the site at Bryncreg to receive pupils from the three schools
- close Ysgol Aberdyfi and offer a place to children from the catchment-area at Ysgol Tywyn
- establish a primary school (3-11 year olds) for the catchment-area at Tywyn, closing every primary school except for Dyffryn Dulas (Corris)
- establish a lifelong school (3-16) for the catchment-area at Tywyn, closing every primary school except for Dyffryn Dulas (Corris).

2.3 Meetings with individual schools

2.3.1 The Education Portfolio Holder and the representative of the County Advisory Panel (Cllr. Simon Glyn) visited every school in the catchment-area at the start of the process. The purpose of the visit was to meet headteachers and observe and gain an understanding of the situations of individual schools.

2.3.2 Following the initial meeting of the Catchment-area Review Panel, the 6 local councillors in the catchment-area agreed that they too should visit every school. This was done prior to the second Catchment-area Review Panel meeting.

2.3.3 Two cycles of meetings were held with individual schools during the process, between 1-5 June 2009 and 14-21 September 2009. The initial cycle was restricted to staff and chair of governors, whilst staff, governors and parents received an open invitation to attend separate meetings during the second cycle.

2.3.4 ***Therefore, 32 individual meetings were held across 12 full days with representatives from individual schools, as well as a visit from the Portfolio Holder and County Advisory Panel representative.***

2.3.5 The second cycle of meetings held between 14-21 September 2009, provided an opportunity for schools to receive information about the Catchment-area Review Panel's discussions and suggest ideas on the individual options and catchment-area models under consideration.

2.4 Children and young people

2.4.1 During the initial Catchment-area Review Panel meeting held on 21 May 2009, it was suggested that the views of children and young people should be sought as the process proceeded. This was agreed to by the representatives of every school at the Catchment-area Review Panel.

- 2.4.2 At the beginning of September 2009, therefore, individual schools were informed that the session for children and young people would be held at Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn on 14 September 2009. Schools were asked to organise a delegation of School Council members, and it was agreed that 3-4 children from every school should be included.
- 2.4.3 The headteacher of every school were invited to accompany the children when travelling to the session and a programme of the activities and the questions that it was intended to ask children and young people was sent to the headteacher. Headteachers had an opportunity to question the arrangements and suggest amendments. No further comments were received from headteachers prior to the session.
- 2.4.4 The session was facilitated on 14 September 2009 by the Council's specialist officers.
- 2.4.5 A range of activities were held in order to discover children and young people's views on several subjects, including:
- Class sizes
 - Age range within a class
 - Children's language medium outside the classroom
 - Travel distance to the school
- 2.4.6 When concluding the session, children and young people were asked to suggest the kind of facilities that they would like to see at a school.
- 2.4.7 A full 13 page report was produced on the session. In general, children showed loyalty to their schools and teachers whilst also identifying several resources that they would like to see at their schools. The report was disseminated with the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee papers on 8 October and again with the Council Board papers on 3 November 2009.

2.5 County Advisory Panel

- 2.5.1 When unanimously approving the strategy, the Council authorised the Improvement Working Group members to continue as a forum to support the Education Portfolio Holder as she led reviews throughout the catchment-areas. This was done using the title *County Advisory Panel. Representatives from every group on Gwynedd Council were invited.*
- 2.5.2 Four County Advisory Panel meetings were held to discuss developments at Tywyn on 22 April, 24 June, 1 September and 14 September 2009.
- 2.5.3 The Panel suggested several options for re-organizing the area's schools, alongside an analysis of models proposed by the Catchment-area Review Panel.
- 2.5.4 Every political grouping was represented on the County Panel. A Panel member resigned before the meeting held on 1 September 2009.
- 2.5.5 ***The majority of the County Advisory Panel approved the Portfolio Leader's proposals.***

2.6 Written communication

- 2.6.1 ***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 schools to circulate to every parent, the newsletter was e-mailed to every school and the newsletters were published on the Council web-site. The fourth summarized the proposals that would be submitted to the Council.***
- 2.6.2 All the Catchment-area Review Panel's papers were published on the Council web-site.

- 2.6.3 Contact details were provided of those officers who were involved with the work, on the web-site.
- 2.6.4 *It is therefore confirmed that the activities that were undertaken when drawing up these proposals are not part of the statutory provision review process in the Tywyn catchment-area. The discussions thus far are additional to that which is expected by the Assembly Government.*

3. Tywyn Catchment-area Proposals

- 3.1. On 24 September 2009, the Education Portfolio Holder presented her proposals for the re-organization of Tywyn catchment-area schools to the Catchment-area Review Panel, namely:
- ***A new Area school in the Brynchrug or Llanegryn catchment-area*** to open during the school year 2013-14. This involves the ***closure of Abergynolwyn, Brynchrug, Llwyngwril and Llanegryn*** schools once the new school is ready. Due to the concern raised by certain schools about the period between the announcement of the proposals and the opening date of the new school, a commitment was given that the Council would support the schools to remain open in the meantime. However, in exceptional circumstances - e.g. extremely low pupil numbers, difficulties in recruitment of headteachers and staff – arose in the meantime, the Council will need to hold discussions with the specific schools.
 - ***Close Ysgol Aberdyfi by September 2011***, offering a place for children within the catchment-area at Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn
 - ***Promote co-operation between Pennal and Dyffryn Dulas, Corris schools.***
- 3.2. The rationale for the proposals was set out in full in the paper presented to Council in December 2009. The proposals took account of criteria identified by the *Excellent Education for Gwynedd's Children* strategy and Assembly Government requirements contained in Circulars 23/02 and 021/2009.
- 3.3. The proposals were approved by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee (8 October 2009), the Council Board (3 November 2009) and the full Council (10 December 2009) as a basis for formal consultation.

4. The Statutory Consultation

- 4.1 In line with the statutory requirements and Welsh Assembly Government guidance, Gwynedd Council undertook a period of statutory consultation on the proposals with relevant stakeholders from 7 June 2010.
- 4.2 Prior to the commencement of the statutory consultation, informal meetings were held with governors of relevant schools were during the week of 17 May 2010.
- 4.3 A Statutory Consultation paper was prepared and disseminated to relevant consultees in areas served by Ysgolion Abergynolwyn, Aberdyfi, Brynchrug, Llanegryn, Llwyngwril and Penybryn during the week of 24 May 2010. As further information became available on possible sites for the proposed new area school in Bro Dysynni, further documentation was released to consultees on 14 July 2010. The date for the closure of the consultation period was therefore extended by a fortnight to 13 August 2010.
- 4.4 Statutory consultation meetings were held with staff, governors and parents at each of the affected schools between 7-17 June 2010. Due to poor attendance at the statutory meeting at Ysgol Penybryn on 7 June, a further opportunity was given to the school to meet with officers in July 2010. Minutes of these meetings were taken by Council officers and circulated to the relevant schools. They are attached at Appendix A. The meetings were held on the following dates:

School	Date	Meetings
Penybryn	7/6/10	Separate meetings for staff, parents and governors. Due to miscommunication resulting in poor attendance, the meetings were repeated on 13 July 2010
Aberdyfi	8/6/10	Separate meetings for staff, governors and parents. At the school's request, members of the wider community were also permitted to attend the parents meeting.
Llanegryn	9/6/10	Separate meetings for staff, governors and parents.
Llwyngwriil	10/6/10	One meeting for staff. At the school's request, one meeting was opened up to governors, parents and members of the wider community.
Bryncrug	14/6/10	Separate meetings for staff, governors and parents
Abergynolwyn	15/6/10	One meeting for staff and another for parents and governors with the agreement of the school

- 4.5 It was agreed during Statutory Consultation meetings that minutes of the meetings and copies of written responses would be provided to Elected Members through their political groups. Copies will be made available for public inspection (subject to redaction of personal information about individuals in order to comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998) and can be viewed at Council Offices (the Education Department) in Caernarfon, Pwllheli and Dolgellau and Tywyn Library.
- 4.6 The relevant Government circular also requires that pupils are offered the opportunity to take part in the consultation. The Council offered schools two ways of achieving this – either by sending appropriate officers to speak with pupils or by preparing a written exercise document to be completed by children under their teacher's direction. An analysis of responses received is attached at Appendix C.
- 4.7 By 13 August 2010, 175 responses had been received in total from the Tywyn catchment area. A breakdown of the responses received is provided below:

School	Letters	E-mail	Other	Total
Aberdyfi	33	1	1	35
Abergynolwyn	0	0	0	0
Bryncrug	7	2	0	9
Llanegryn	10	2	0	12
Llwyngwriil	63	13	36	112
Penybryn, Tywyn	1	3	1	5
General	1	1	0	2
TOTAL	115	22	38	175

5. Comments received during the Statutory Consultation period

- 5.1 An analysis has been made of all responses and a quantitative report on the comments received and the Council's response to those comments is attached at Appendix B.
- 5.2 The responses have been split into two sections. Section 6 deals with responses from Ysgolion Abergynolwyn, Bryncrug, Llanegryn and Llwyngwriil on the proposal to close all four and replace them with a new area school. Section 7 deals with the proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi and transfer pupils to Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, and to open a nursery class at Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn.

5.3 During Summer 2010, it became clear that Abergynolwyn parents intended to move their children to Ysgol Brynchrug. For that reason the Council Board decided in October 2010 that a statutory consultation should be held on a specific proposal to close Ysgol Abergynolwyn by 31 March 2011. The consultation period closed on 26 November 2010.

5.4 Further information on the Council's response is included below.

6. Responses from Abergynolwyn, Brynchrug, Llanegryn and Llwyngwrl

6.1 The written responses and comments received during statutory meetings at the four schools largely focused on the issues outlined below:

- community issues
- educational issues
- quality and sustainability of school buildings
- the accuracy of information provided before and during the consultation process
- transport
- finance
- the Welsh language
- criticism of the Council's conduct during the local discussions

6.2 Following the closure of the consultation period, a group linked to Ysgol Llwyngwrl presented a report outlining an alternative proposal which envisaged keeping the school open and adapting the building to encourage greater energy-efficiency. While the proposal was not presented in time to be considered part of the statutory consultation, some comments on the proposal are included in Appendix B. Detailed responses to the points raised are included in the appendices to these reports. In general, the Council feels that the original proposal should be taken forward.

6.3 In addition, parents of pupils attending Ysgol Abergynolwyn agreed during Summer 2010 to send their children to Ysgol Brynchrug from September 2010. For this reason, a new statutory consultation has been conducted on a new proposal to close Ysgol Abergynolwyn by 31 March 2011.

6.4 Educational standards

6.4.1 The schools generally provide education of a satisfactory standard. Schools generally have scored grades 2 and 3 in recent ESTYN inspections. There is every reason to expect that the delivery of a new building with modern facilities, the establishment of larger and more robust classes and the creation of a larger pool of teaching and support staff will maintain and improve educational standards. The proposal should help provide a broad and balanced curriculum.

6.4.2 Class sizes at the four schools currently vary from 7 to 17. The strategy notes that the aim should be to secure class sizes of between 12-25 pupils. It is envisaged that there will be larger groups of children in the new area school – if 95 children attended the school, there would be 4 classes of 2 age-groups containing over 20 children.

6.4.3 Leadership is key to driving up educational standards. Recent experiences in the area have suggested that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find qualified and suitable applicants for headships. Establishing a single area school will create a larger group of staff and provide greater freedom for a Headteacher to develop managerial and administrative skills, releasing class teachers to teach.

6.5 Travel

6.5.1 Gwynedd Council's strategy for primary education notes its aim of ensuring that pupils do not travel more than 30 minutes one way to school. The proposal to establish an area school to

replace the four schools will mean that no pupil will be required to travel more than 8 miles to school. Travel times should therefore meet the target.

- 6.5.2 Some consultees, particularly in the Llwyngwriil area, expressed concern that the route from Llwyngwriil to the site of the new school was unsafe. The road south from Llwyngwriil is a main 'A' road and is used extensively by public and private transport. There is no reason to believe that the road is more dangerous than any other much-used highway.

6.5 Accessibility

- 6.5.3 Gwynedd Council does not currently provide adult supervision, other than the driver, on school buses.

- 6.5.4 The four schools will be replaced by a brand new area school which meets the requirements of the 21st Century. Accessibility issues will clearly be given full and proper consideration in the design process. Across the 4 schools, it is estimated that there is a maintenance post-accumulation of £170,000, that £40,000 needs to be spent on fire precautions, £61,000 to ensure that two schools meet DDA requirements, and £530,000 to make the buildings fit for purpose. The Assets Management Plan therefore envisages that over £800,000 needs to be spent on renovating and adapting the 4 school buildings.

- 6.5.5 The Government's capital programme to support the development of *21st Century Schools* notes the desire to develop community schools that meet the requirements of this century. During Summer 2010, Gwynedd Council successfully bid for capital funding to support the building of a new school and to upgrade three other primary schools. The capital funding to realise this proposal is therefore in place.

6.6 Capacity

- 6.6.1 The area has experienced a significant decline in the number of pupils attending the four schools, and consequently an increase in surplus places, over the past 35 years. Pupil numbers have declined from 176 in 1975 to 94 in 2010 with the result that 65% of places in the four catchment areas are unfilled.

- 6.6.2 110 primary age pupils currently live in the four catchment areas. The schools anticipate that around 84 pupils will attend the schools by 2013. Given the large proportion of primary age pupils who currently receive their education outside the four catchment areas, and given the probable attractiveness of a purpose-built new school, it would be natural to assume that around 95 pupils would be eligible to attend the new area school as their catchment school by 2013-14.

- 6.6.3 Taking the above into account, the school will be designed to cater for around 105 pupils, allowing for WAG guidance that new schools should be built with a 10% surplus capacity to allow for growth. Surplus places would therefore be reduced from 151 (65%) to around 10 (10%).

6.7 Finance

- 6.7.1 The Education Department's minimum staffing protection policy is implemented at the four schools. The County will spend £416,300 during 2009-10 to maintain a minimum of a headteacher and teacher at every school which has more than 15 pupils and a head and assistant in schools with fewer than 15 pupils. £90,184 of this is spent in the Tywyn catchment-area, and £64,051 of this amount between the four schools. The proposed new area school would not lie within the minimum staffing level protection policy.

- 6.7.2 The total allocation for the 4 schools in 2009/10 is £527,299. If the proposal to establish an area school is approved, the budget for the new school would be £298,997, which is a saving of £228,302

- 6.7.3 Transport will need to be provided for pupils to the new school in accordance with the Council's transport policy. Based on today's prices, an additional cost of £64,000 is envisaged. It will therefore reduce the expected saving to £164,302.
- 6.7.4 Savings realised by the closure of the four schools will be maintained within the Education budget. A further commitment has been made that 20% of the savings will remain within the catchment area for the duration of the county-wide review process.

6.8 Community Impact

- 6.8.1 Over 10% of the population of the 4 catchment-areas are educated at schools other than these four. It is likely that a new area school will be an attraction and keep children within the catchment-area.
- 6.8.2 A summary of the community based facilities and community use of the schools' facilities is provided in the statistical analysis agreed by every school. Factors that require consideration when preparing proposals. Information on those factors that were considered in a statistical analysis of the catchment-area is available on the Council's web-site.
- 6.8.3 The 021/2009 Welsh Assembly Government School Organisation Proposals Circular notes that bodies bringing forward proposals for school reorganisation must consider community factors in formulating proposals.
- 6.8.4 A full and independent Community Impact Assessment was carried out on the proposals (available to be viewed on the Council's website). The assessment found that the closure of four village schools and their replacement with one central area school could impact negatively on the individual communities. The report makes a number of recommendations which could be taken to mitigate the negative impact of closing schools. The Council will endeavour to implement many of these, including supporting communities in producing business plans for the purchase of the school building for community purposes and to provide advice to local businesses. The local area regeneration officer will work closely with communities.
- 6.8.5 Three of the relevant communities have independent community centres. Ysgol Bryn-crug is a designated community-focussed school which is the base for a number of community activities. The Council has given an undertaking that community provision will be maintained within Bryn-crug and with the Council's support if the school is closed and the new area school located elsewhere. The Community Hall element of the school is provided for through a formal lease which creates legal obligations between the Council and the Community Council for the maintenance of the hall..

6.9 Language impact

- 6.9.1 The 021/2009 Welsh Assembly Government School Organisation Proposals Circular also notes that bodies bringing forward proposals for school reorganisation must consider the potential impact of reorganisation on the Welsh language in formulating proposals.
- 6.9.2 A full and independent Language Impact Assessment was also completed and is available on the Council's website. The report found that this proposal offers an opportunity to strengthen the use of Welsh both within and outside the classroom in Bro Dysynni. A separate piece of work on the use of Welsh outside the classroom has also been carried out with some pilot work in the Tywyn area.

6.10 Equalities impact

6.10.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on the proposals. It was found that no significant adverse effects could be expected from the proposal. Indeed, as the proposal necessitates the building of a brand new school, any concerns on accessibility will be dealt with appropriately.

6.11 Consideration of alternatives

6.11.1 Proposers are required to give due regard to alternative proposals. Options considered during the review process included:

- The federalisation of Ysgolion Abergynolwyn, Brynchrug, Llanegryn and Llwyngwriil
- The closure of seven of the eight schools in the catchment area and the creation of a new area school in Tywyn town.
- Federalisation of Ysgol Llwyngwriil with Ysgol y Friog

6.11.2 The Council considered that the option which appeared to meet its requirements as outlined in its *Excellent Education for Gwynedd's Children* strategy and Welsh Assembly Government circular 021/2009 was the preferred option, and on that basis it initiated a statutory consultation.

6.11.3 The full proposals for the Tywyn area have been supported by the allocation of capital grant funding by the Welsh Assembly Government.

6.12 Location of Area School

6.12.1 A major concern raised throughout the review and consultation processes was the location of the proposed area school. During the review process, Gwynedd Council officers identified a long list of 20 potential sites. Once the Education Portfolio Holder put this option forward as her preferred model, officers narrowed the long list down to 9 sites. Informal meetings were held with governors of the four schools to discuss the 9 possible sites. Following these meetings, a shortlist of 5 possible sites was drawn up and information on these sites disseminated to consultees on 14 July 2010. Further technical work reduced these to 3 potential sites. The Council Board decided on 27 July 2010 that it supported proceeding with a site identified as "Site 8 – Talybont" which lies between the villages of Llanegryn and Brynchrug. The Board retained the right to consider two further sites, namely Site 1 (outskirts of Llanegryn) and Site 8 (outskirts of Brynchrug).

6.12.2 During Summer 2010, discussions were held with the owners of the three parcels of land. It became clear that the owner of Site 8 did not want to sell the site to the Council, while the owners of the other two sites were prepared to enter into negotiations with the Council. As Site 8 also required the Snowdonia National Park Authority to give special dispensation for its development, it was decided that Site 8 was not a practical option.

6.12.3 On 2 November 2010, the Council Board considered the two remaining sites and decided to favour Site 1 on the outskirts of Llanegryn. The site was favoured largely on technical issues and the centrality of Llanegryn relative to the new catchment area.

6.12.4 Some respondents during the consultation period identified their concerns about the location of the proposed area school, generally favouring that it should be located within their own community. Following the Council Board's decision on 2 November 2010, letters of opposition were received from the governors of Abergynolwyn and Brynchrug. It is accepted that the location of the school is an emotive matter but it is felt that Site 1 offers the best opportunity of supporting rural education in the Dysynni area into the future. Discussions with landowners continue.

6.12.5 As noted elsewhere in this report, the Council is committed to supporting the continuation of community provision from the current Brynchrug site. The Council has developed a policy which governs the approach to the disposal of school sites which was approved by the Council Board on 15 September 2009. In essence, it is anticipated that some sites will be disposed of at favourable

rates to the local community while some will be sold at the market value. Council regeneration officers will be available to support communities wishing to put together a business case for the purchase of the local school building.

6.13 Accuracy of information presented by the Council and the conduct of the statutory period

6.13.1 The statistical information published in the statutory consultation paper was agreed by representatives of all schools at the Catchment Area Review Panel meetings.

6.13.2 The statutory consultation period was conducted in accordance with the Welsh Assembly Government's expectations.

7. Aberdyfi and Penybryn, Tywyn

7.1 Ysgol Aberdyfi provides education for 20 pupils aged 3-11. Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn provides education for 208 pupils aged 4-11. There are two parts to this proposals, namely:

- The closure of Ysgol Aberdyfi by 31 August 2011 with the provision of places at Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn
- A statutory amendment to the admissions policy at Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, to allow for the creation of a nursery class

7.2 The written responses and comments received during statutory meetings at the two schools and with the two nursery groups in Tywyn largely focused on the issues outlined below:

- community issues
- educational issues
- quality and sustainability of school buildings
- the accuracy of information provided before and during the consultation process
- transport
- finance
- the Welsh language
- criticism of the Council's conduct during the local discussions
- the potential impact on local nursery groups

7.3 Detailed responses to the points raised are included in the appendices to these reports. In general, the Council feels that the original proposal should be taken forward.

7.4 Educational standards

7.4.1 Ysgol Penybryn is a very good school which received five Grades 1 and two Grades 2 in a May 2010 ESTYN inspection. Ysgol Aberdyfi last received a full inspection in 2005 which found the school to have serious weaknesses. Two reinspections – in 2006 and again in 2007 – found that some progress had been made but that important shortcomings remained.

7.4.2 The proposal envisages adapting and upgrading the buildings of Ysgol Penybryn to make them fit for the 21st Century. There is every reason to expect that the upgrading of the building with modern facilities can only improve on the education delivered at Penybryn. For Aberdyfi pupils, the establishment of larger and more robust classes and access to a larger pool of teaching and support staff will maintain and improve educational standards. The proposal should help provide a broad and balanced curriculum.

7.4.3 Class sizes at Aberdyfi are currently 10. Class sizes at Ysgol Penybryn are currently on average slightly below 25, although there are variations. The strategy notes that the aim should be to secure classes of between 12-25 pupils. Through the closure of Ysgol Aberdyfi and transferring the catchment-area's pupils to Ysgol Penybryn, it is envisaged that there will sufficient additional finance to follow the pupils to maintain 1.5 teachers or a teacher and assistant.

- 7.4.4 Closing the school and moving the children to Penybryn would involve providing opportunities for children at Aberdyfi to learn in larger groups with their peers.
- 7.4.5 Leadership is key to driving up educational standards. Recent experiences in the area have suggested that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find qualified and suitable applicants for headships, and Ysgol Aberdyfi has been led by temporary headteachers for a number of years. Ysgol Penybryn has recently appointed a new permanent headteacher.

7.5 Travel

- 7.5.1 Gwynedd Council's strategy for primary education notes its aim of ensuring that pupils do not travel more than 30 minutes one way to school. Over one-third of Aberdyfi resident primary pupils already attend Ysgol Penybryn. The proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi and provide places for Aberdyfi-resident pupils at Ysgol Penybryn would require around 20 pupils to travel an additional 4 miles to Tywyn. Travel times should therefore meet the target. If the proposal is implemented, all pupils living in Aberdyfi would be entitled to free transport to Ysgol Penybryn in accordance with the County's school transport policy.
- 7.5.2 Aberdyfi is served by good public transport links, including public buses and trains. The road from Aberdyfi is of good quality.
- 7.5.3 Gwynedd Council does not currently provide adult supervision, other than the driver, on school buses.

7.6 Accessibility

- 7.6.1 Ysgol Aberdyfi is in good condition. However, the Assets Management Plan estimates that there is a maintenance post-accumulation of £37,000, that £9,500 needs to be spent on fire precautions, and £57,000 to make the building fit for purpose. The Assets Management Plan therefore predicts that over £100,000 needs to be spent on renovating and adapting the school building. Ysgol Penybryn is also in good condition. There is a maintenance post accumulation of £44,500; £9,500 needs to be spent on fire precautions and £95,000 to make the building fit for purpose. Substantial expenditure is also required on meeting DDA requirements of approximately £77,953. This amounts to expenditure requirements of approximately £225,000.
- 7.6.2 The Government's capital programme to support the development of *21st Century Schools* notes the desire to develop community schools that meet the requirements of this century. Gwynedd Council successfully bid for capital funding to support the building of a new school and to upgrade three other primary school including Ysgol Penybryn. The capital funding to realise this proposal is therefore in place.
- 7.6.3 The successful bid for Tranche 3 Capital Funding for the Tywyn area proposed upgrading the quality and suitability of buildings at Ysgol Penybryn. Accessibility issues will clearly be given full and proper consideration in the design process.

7.7 Capacity

- 7.7.1 Pupil numbers at both schools jointly have reduced by 27% between 1975 and 2009. The population of Ysgol Aberdyfi has reduced from 66 to 21 during this period, representing a reduction of nearly 70%, whilst the population at Ysgol Penybryn has reduced from 248 to 209 (16%). Ysgol Aberdyfi envisages an increase in pupil numbers over the next few years to around 25 pupils. Ysgol Penybryn envisages a slight increase to around 210.
- 7.7.2 Around 30 primary age pupils currently live in Aberdyfi and around 181 in Tywyn. The vast majority of pupils resident in the two catchment areas currently receive their education in one of the two schools.

7.7.3 75% of places at Ysgol Aberdyfi, and 35% of places at Ysgol Penybryn, are empty. Once the proposal is implemented, empty places at Ysgol Penybryn would reduce to approximately 27%. The Government guidance is that there are a “significant number” of empty places when there are more than 25% and more than 30 empty places (national indicator); with a recommendation that the aim be to ensure that no more than 10% of places are empty. However, the proposal also envisages allowing Ysgol Penybryn to create a nursery class. Should this happen, surplus places could be reduced to around 20%.

7.8 Finance

7.8.1 Ysgol Aberdyfi comes within the Education Department’s minimum staffing protection policy. The County spent £416,300 during 2009-10 to maintain a minimum of a head and teacher at every school which has fewer than 15 pupils and a head and assistant at a school with fewer than 15 pupils. £90,184 of this is in the Tywyn Catchment Area, £22,212 in Ysgol Aberdyfi. The staffing reduction protection policy is not implemented at Ysgol Penybryn.

7.8.2 Ysgol Aberdyfi’s allocation in 2009-10 was £128,803. If the school is closed, it is envisaged that up to £56,360 will follow the school’s pupils to Ysgol Penybryn. It is envisaged that there will be additional annual transport costs of approximately £15,000 that would release a saving of £57,443 back to the Education Department for allocation to other schools.

7.8.3 Savings realised by the closure of the four schools will be maintained within the Education budget. A further commitment has been made that 20% of the savings will remain within the catchment area for the duration of the county-wide review process.

7.9 Community Impact

7.9.1 Around 30% of Aberdyfi’s primary-age population is currently educated in Tywyn.

7.9.2 A summary of the community based facilities and community use of the schools’ facilities is provided in the statistical analysis agreed by every school. Factors that require consideration when preparing proposals. Information on those factors that were considered in a statistical analysis of the catchment-area is available on the Council’s web-site. Aberdyfi is well-served by a number of community facilities, including a village hall, shops, pubs and restaurants. Little use is made of the building by the community, although pupils do contribute to community events.

7.9.3 The 021/2009 Welsh Assembly Government School Organisation Proposals Circular notes that bodies bringing forward proposals for school reorganisation must consider community factors in formulating proposals.

7.9.4 A full and independent Community Impact Assessment was carried out on the proposals (available to be viewed on the Council’s website). The assessment found that the closure of Ysgol Aberdyfi and the provision of places at Ysgol Penybryn would have a neutral effect on the community due in part to the number of businesses operating within the village. However, the report makes a number of recommendations which could be taken to mitigate the negative impact of closing schools. The Council will endeavour to implement many of these, including supporting communities in producing business plans for the purchase of the school building for community purposes and to provide advice to local businesses. Local area regeneration officers will be available to assist communities in this respect.

7.10 Language impact

7.10.1 The 021/2009 Welsh Assembly Government School Organisation Proposals Circular also notes that bodies bringing forward proposals for school reorganisation must consider the potential impact of reorganisation on the Welsh language in formulating proposals.

7.10.2 A full and independent Language Impact Assessment was also completed and is available on the Council's website. The report found that this proposal offers an opportunity to strengthen the use of Welsh both within and outside the classroom in the area, and would have a neutral impact on Aberdyfi. A separate piece of work on the use of Welsh outside the classroom has also been carried out with some pilot work in the Tywyn area.

7.10.3 The provision of nursery education to all Tywyn and Aberdyfi resident 3 year olds would strengthen the use of Welsh.

7.11 Equalities impact

7.11.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on the proposals. It was found that no significant adverse effects could be expected from the proposal on the educational experiences of Aberdyfi-resident children. There may however be an impact on the two nursery groups currently operating in Tywyn town.

7.12 Consideration of alternatives

7.12.1 Proposers are required to give due regard to alternative proposals. Options considered during the review process included:

- The federalisation of Ysgol Aberdyfi with Ysgol Pennal and possibly also Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas, Corris
- The closure of seven of the eight schools in the catchment area and the creation of a new area school in Tywyn town.
- Federalisation of Ysgol Aberdyfi with Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn.

7.12.2 The Council considered that the option which appeared to meet its requirements as outlined in its *Excellent Education for Gwynedd's Children* strategy and Welsh Assembly Government circular 021/2009 was the preferred option, and on that basis it initiated a statutory consultation.

7.12.3 The full proposals for the Tywyn area have been supported by the allocation of capital grant funding by the Welsh Assembly Government.

7.13 Accuracy of information presented and the conduct of the statutory period

7.13.1 The statistical information published in the statutory consultation paper was agreed by representatives of all schools at the Catchment Area Review Panel meetings.

7.13.2 The statutory period was conducted in accordance with the Welsh Assembly Government's expectations.

8. Ysgol Abergynolwyn

8.1 During Summer 2010, with continued decline in the number of pupils attending the school and the retirement of the headteacher, staff, governors and parents met to discuss the possibility of moving pupils to Ysgol Brynchrug from September 2010.

8.2 Parents of all Abergynolwyn pupils agreed, therefore from September 2010 no pupils are educated at Ysgol Abergynolwyn.

8.3 The school no longer has a headteacher but continues to employ a teacher and a caretaker. The teacher has been redeployed at other schools in the area – notably Ysgolion Brynchrug and Penybryn – while the caretaker continues to take responsibility for the maintenance of the site of Ysgol Abergynolwyn.

- 8.4 Following further discussions with governors during September 2010 it was decided to proceed to a period of statutory consultation on a proposal to close the school by March 2011. The consultation closed on 26 November 2010.
- 8.5 The statutory consultation period began on 1st November 2010. A statutory meeting was held jointly with staff, governors and parents on 15 November 2010. The consultation closed on 26 November 2010. The statutory consultation document and minutes of the statutory meeting with staff, governors and parents are included in Appendix D. Pupils were provided with an opportunity to offer their comments on the proposal in a written exercise conducted by their present teachers at Ysgol Brynchrug and their comments are attached to this report in Appendix D.
- 8.6 Seven written responses were received by the close of the statutory consultation period. All of these outlined opposition to the Council Board's decision on 2 November 2010 (regarding the location of the proposed school,) that it favoured locating the proposed new area school to serve Abergynolwyn, Brynchrug, Llanegryn and Llwyngwril at a site on the outskirts of Llanegryn village.
- 8.7 None of the responses dealt directly with the proposal to close Ysgol Abergynolwyn by 31 March 2011.
- 8.8 The Council is of the view that the closure of Ysgol Abergynolwyn in 2011 and the transfer of pupils to Ysgol Brynchrug does not materially affect the overall proposal for the Dysynni area:
- none of the three remaining schools currently provide education for more than 30 pupils aged 4-11
 - while the closure of Ysgol Abergynolwyn removes the smallest classes from the area, average class sizes for groups educating four year groups – now stand at 15.
 - The condition and suitability of school buildings remains an issue which would be met by the creation of a brand new area school
 - Welsh Assembly Government capital grant funding has been secured to build the new area school and to upgrade three other schools in the area
 - Staff recruitment and retention issues remain
 - Many Dysynni resident pupils continue to be educated outside the area, and the creation of the new school should prove attractive to parents, pupils and staff
 - Significant savings of around £164,000 would be realised by the implementation of the original proposal, albeit in two stages.

9. Summary of the proposals

- 9.1 Noted above are a list of facts and indicators that outline the rationale for the proposals.
- 9.2 Through the new arrangements, all children in the catchment-area will receive an equal opportunity to be educated in reasonably sized groups as well as opportunities to work together and play together with peer-groups more regularly.
- 9.3 Fewer headteachers will be required in the catchment-area and teachers will have an opportunity to share various specializations and offer that expertise to the pupils. The age range within classes will be less and will therefore facilitate teachers planning and teaching.
- 9.4 The proposals offer the best balance between providing effective education in efficient establishments when providing parents with an option. No child will have to travel more than 30 minutes to the primary school, once the proposals are implemented
- 9.5 The proposals take into account the needs of school buildings in the area and the LEA's aims when developing schools that are appropriate for the 21stC. The composite catchment-area plan

- envisages the building of a completely new school with a further three schools being adapted to make them fit for purpose. It is intended to apply to the Government for capital funding in accordance with the 21st Century Schools strategy.
- 9.6 Developing a robust and stable learning community is core to providing children with the best opportunities. Through stabilizing the situation, headteachers', teachers and support staff could be released to focus on developing a curriculum that provides children with the best opportunities.
- 9.7 The proposals envisage the development of a community based focus for every school in the area. 21st Century schools need to provide services that draw the community and school together, promoting education for adults, before and after school clubs, and other community-based activities.
- 9.8 Creating stability would ensure a medium term future for the 4 primary schools in the area and enable community-based planning to take place around those schools.
- 9.9 If the proposals were to be fully implemented, substantial savings would be released, saving 14% of the revenue budget and over 60% of the maintenance budget as well as adjustment requirements.
- 9.10 Alternative options were considered for re-organisation of schools within the catchment-area but in the Portfolio Holder's view, the submitted proposals provide the best possible balance between maintaining educational standards, ensuring that schools are financially viable, reduce staffing difficulties, maintain accessibility to schools and provide an opportunity to develop school buildings that meet 21st Century requirements in accordance with the needs of this particular area.

10 Journey through the Council's democratic cycle

- 10.1 A report was presented to Gwynedd's Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on 30 November 2010, All the recommendations were supported by the Committee.
- 10.2 The report will was presented to the Council Board on 14 December 2010. A verbal report on the Council Board's deliberations and recommendations will be given during the full Council meeting.

11. Next steps

- 11.1 If the Council approves these proposals, statutory notices will be published immediately to:
- close Ysgol Abergynolwyn by 31 March 2011 and provide places at Ysgol Brynchrug
 - close Ysgolion Brynchrug, Llanegryn and Llwyngwrl and open a new area school by the 2013-14 academic year
 - close Ysgol Aberdyfi by 31 August 2011.
- 11.2 If it is decided to proceed, statutory notices will be issued per school, clearly stating the aims for that school. The statutory notice will be circulated to the specific schools and other relevant establishments, copies of it will be placed in public places in the area and on the Council's website. Not less than a 2 month period will be allocated for presentation of formal written objections to the statutory notice.
- 11.3 At the end of the period for issuing statutory notices, the matter will come before the Council Board for the intention to be confirmed. If the Board decides to proceed with the proposal, and that no formal objections have been received, the decision can be confirmed. If formal objections have been received, the matter will be transferred to the Minister for Education in the Welsh Assembly Government.

12. Recommendations

- 12.1 To approve the proposal to close **Ysgol Abergynolwyn** by 31 March 2011 and to Issue statutory notices to that effect.
- 12.2 To approve the proposal to discontinue **Bryncrug, Llanegryn and Llwyngwriil schools** during the school year 2013-14. and to issue statutory notices to that effect to with the aim of formally closing the schools once the new area school is open.
- 12.3 To approve the commencement of a consultation process under Section 28 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 for the establishment **of the area community school** to open during the school year 2013-14 on Site 1 at Llanegryn subject to the outcome of the proposal to discontinue Bryncrug, Llanegryn, Llwyngwriil and Abergynolwyn schools.
- 12.4 To approve the proposal to discontinue **Ysgol Aberdyfi** by 31 August 2011 providing places for children in the catchment-area at Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, and to publish statutory notices to that effect .
- 12.5 To make a prescribed alteration to **Ysgol Penybryn**, Tywyn, by permitting Ysgol Penybryn to admit pupils of nursery age in line with the Council's policy from September 2011 and to issue statutory notices to that effect.

A. Views of the Local Member:

B. The Views of the Statutory Officers:

1. Chief Executive:

“The report responds to the formal consultation. The proposals seek to place a clear and sustainable direction for Tywyn schools catchment area. It is reassuring that there are as many responses to the consultation. I understand that the Scrutiny Meeting have approved the proposals.”

2. Monitoring Officer:

“The consulting process that is reported on is a statutory requirement and when deciding with reference to the catchments’ re-organisation the Council must take into account the results of the consultation by evaluating the matter and deciding on the appropriate way forward. This report has been the subject of consultation with the Council’s Legal Service and I do not have any further comments to make regarding propriety.

3. Chief Finance Officer:

“The report desires approval to the recommendations (on page 20) as the most recent stage of the statutory process in the wake of previous decisions and through work by elected members, heads, teachers, governors, officers, and others by trying to move forward appropriately with reviewing organisation in primary schools within Tywyn catchment area. In the main report, (pages 1 to 20) 2009/10 financial figures are used in consistency with the previous reports to the Board on 03/11/2009 and to the Council on 10/12/2009 (the most recent data was available at that time) and was also used in each of the subsequent statutory consulting meetings during the summer of 2010. In that context, I confirm accuracy of those financial figures with regard to school allocation and transport. The business care continues to be strong, in spite of a decrease since then in the total of primary school pupils in the catchment, and as I mentioned in the report ‘Proposal to Close Abergynolwyn School’ to the Board on 12/10/2010, I confirm there are obvious reasons to support the recommendations that are before to be implemented immediately.”

C. Background Papers:

- 021/2009 Assembly Circular Schools Organisation Proposals
- Primary Education of the Best Quality for the Children of Gwynedd – Full Council 2 April 2009
- Report to the Council Board 15 June 2010
- Papers and minutes of local discussions
- Newsletters sent during the local discussions
- Language Impact Assessment
- Community Impact Assessment
- Equality Impact Assessment
- All correspondence received during the statutory consultation period

CH. Policy Implications:

APPENDIX A: MINUTES OF STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETINGS

A1: Aberdyfi Consultation Meetings

ABERDYFI STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

8 June 2010 18:00

STAFF MEETING

9 members attended including head teacher, teaching staff, assistants and support staff.

Welcome and presentations:

The Head of Education welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced the officers and Cllr Liz Saville Roberts, the Education Portfolio Holder.

It was mentioned that all the meetings thus far had been non-statutory and that the consultation phase had begun on 7 June 2010 and would continue until 30 July 2010.

The Head of Education presented the statutory consultation paper and it was noted that there would be opportunities to pause after each sub-section to receive comments and questions.

It was noted that the statutory document contained some errors. The errors were discussed and an undertaking was given that the authority would write to all consultees outlining and correcting the errors.

Background and why the proposal was being presented:

An explanation was provided for presenting the proposal

It was asked whether there would be a guarantee that £57,000 of finance would follow the children of Ysgol Aberdyfi to Ysgol Penybryn, and what guarantee was there of how the funding would be used by Ysgol Penybryn? Is there a risk that cuts in the Ysgol Penybryn budget would mean that the school would not be employing additional staff but would instead simply reduce the scale of staff cuts?

It was noted that the £57,000 outlined in the paper would be follow pupils to Ysgol Penybryn should every pupil opt to attend that school. It was noted that this would provide an opportunity for Penybryn to employ the equivalent of an additional teacher and a teaching assistant. It was however explained that it would be up to Ysgol Penybryn to employ an additional teacher but that the funding would transfer with the children. It was explained that Ysgol Penybryn also faced cuts and that it was understood that the additional £57,000 could possibly be used to reduce cuts as much as it would lead to a budget increase.

It was also explained that it was intended to retain 20% of the savings identified within a catchment-area through re-organising within that catchment-area.

There would be more teachers at Penybryn which would allow for a wider range of teaching specialisms. Children would have an opportunity to interact with children of the same age-group. Staff noted a feeling that a small school provided better opportunities as there were fewer children and that this provided better opportunities for them to undertake activities and nobody is left out.

Will funding for use of buildings following school closures also return to education?

Communities would be provided with an opportunity to present a business plan to support any desire to use the building for community purposes. Any receipts received by the Council from the sale of closed schools would transfer to Gwynedd Council's Assets Management Scheme so as to fund developments across the entire range of the Council's property, not only education.

There was criticism of the consultation paper for identifying additional opportunities at Ysgol Penybryn as this suggested that education at Ysgol Aberdyfi was inadequate

It was noted that this was not the implication, rather a statement of fact that Ysgol Penybryn is a school of very high quality and that this had been confirmed by an Estyn inspection held during Summer 2010.

Advantages and disadvantages

It was noted that many advantages and disadvantages could be listed but that a selection had been noted on the consultation paper. It was noted that anybody wishing to do so would have an opportunity to send comments in to add to this list.

It would be disadvantageous for the children not to interact with other children outside school hours.

It was noted that there were more disadvantages than those listed on the consultation paper. There was specific mention of the link between the school and the community and the school's status as a Welsh language resource within a community that did not possess many Welsh resources.

The point was accepted and it was mentioned that these points could be summarized in responses during the consultation period.

Impact of the proposal

What would happen to staff in the event of the school's closure?

It was mentioned that the Council would encourage schools such as Penybryn to try and safeguard additional posts created by the closure of Ysgol Aberdyfi for staff at Aberdyfi in the first instance. However, it was emphasised that governors are responsible for staff appointments and that the ultimate decision would be theirs. The Council will strive to ensure that help and opportunities are available across the county.

Staff expressed concern that similar posts would not be available locally. The staff expressed concern that similar posts would not be available locally due to re-organisation of neighbouring catchment-areas at the same time. Staff outlined their concern for the future as they had mortgages, children etc.

If no suitable alternative posts were available locally, then the usual redundancy procedures would apply. Staff were urged to contact their unions to ensure that the package that they are offered is appropriate if and when the time arrives.

Guidance was sought on the Council's transport policy

The council's transport policy notes that free transport is available for children to the school in the catchment-area or the school closest to them.

The staff noted that they felt that nursery education was better at a school than at a cylch meithrin. It was mentioned that Aberdyfi was unaware of the change in nursery age at Penybryn.

It was explained that this is the statutory consultation that is ongoing at Penybryn – this would enable nursery children of Aberdyfi to continue to receive nursery education at a school.

Funding development of nursery provision at Penybryn

It was explained that an application to the value of £7m had been sent to the Assembly and that approximately £1.5m of the application would be for improvement of facilities at Penybryn, Pennal and Corris schools.

This news was welcome as they felt that the buildings of two of the schools within the catchment-area were wholly unsuitable.

What would happen to the proposals in the area if the application for capital funding from the Government was not approved?

It was explained that the Council had set aside some funding to build new schools created by the reorganisation process. This funding could therefore be used at Bro Dysynni if necessary, but that the Council would need to consider whether it was able to provide funding to improve resources and facilities at the other 3 schools.

Next Steps

The process and arrangements from now on were explained and the minutes from this meeting and all the other meetings in the catchment-area as well as any comments received during the statutory consultation period would be included in a report to the Council's committees.

It was asked whether the comments received during the statutory consultation phase would be valid as formal objections following the publication of the statutory notice.

It was explained that the comments presented during the consultation would be invalid for the formal objections period should the Council decide to issue statutory notices to close Ysgol Aberdyfi. A formal objection would have to be sent during the appropriate period if anybody was so inclined to do. If an objection is received during the period following the publication of the statutory notice, then the matter would be transferred to the Assembly Government for a decision. It was explained that this could take months.

It was said that several letters had been sent which had not received responses.

It was explained that officers and councillors had tried to respond to all letters and e-mails received, Councillor Roberts explained that she had received a letter requesting a response to a previous letter and it was passed on to the officers to respond to and that this had been done, It was promised that receipt of all correspondence would be acknowledged so as to ensure that any comments are received.

There was a request not to close Ysgol Aberdyfi until the Area School opens at Bro Dysynni so as to enable them to have the same opportunities as the remaining staff within the catchment-area.

The comment was accepted and staff were instructed to mention this during the consultation.

Why close Aberdyfi first when other schools (Abergynolwyn) are in a worse situation?

Ysgol Abergynolwyn is part of the scheme in Bro Dysynni.

Will the Councillors be aware of the feelings at Aberdyfi?

Any comments received will be presented in the papers submitted to the Council committees - everybody was urged to send the comments and points that they wish to convey to the Councillors by 30 July 2010.

The accuracy of the information on the school's facilities mentioned in previous reports was questioned.

It was explained that this information had been taken from questionnaires completed by head teachers in 2007. The head teacher was asked to submit this comment so that it could be included in the committee's report.

ABERDYFI STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

8 June 2010 19:00

GOVERNORS AND PARENTS MEETING

At the governors' request, the meetings organized for governors and parents were combined. The governors also expressed a wish that members of the community and the school's protection committee be invited. This was agreed to.

40 attended the meeting.

Welcome and introductions

The Head of Education welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced the officers and Cllr Liz Saville Roberts, the Education Portfolio Holder, to the audience.

It was noted that thus far, all the meetings had been non-statutory and that the statutory consultation period had commenced on 7 June 2010 and would continue until 30 July 2010.

The Head of Education presented the statutory consultation paper and it was noted that there would be an opportunity to pause after each sub-section for comments and questions.

It was noted that the statutory document contained some errors. The errors were discussed and an undertaking was given that the authority would write to all consultees outlining and correcting the errors.

Background and why the proposal is presented

The proposal and safety-net were explained. It was noted that £22,212 was being allocated to Ysgol Aberdyfi in addition to the formula allocation so as to guarantee at least a head teacher and teacher for the school. If parents at Aberdyfi opted to send their children to Penybryn, £57,000 would transfer to Penybryn.

An opinion was expressed that the paper had not been disseminated to give adequate time for the school representatives to scrutinise it properly. It was asked when this document was prepared as there had been insufficient time to read it.

The Chair of Governors noted that the document had been received before half term but it had not been easy to disseminate although every effort had been made to share it.

It was explained that the paper had been manually disseminated the week before half term and that the meeting was being held for the purpose of presenting the paper and that the deadline for response was 30 July 2010.

It was asked whether the comments received would be fully forwarded to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Any correspondence received would be included in its entirety in the report to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

How much time beforehand would Committee members receive the report? Will this provide adequate time for them to read it?

The usual time given is a week but in this instance as it is likely that the paper will be lengthy, a request will be made to send it earlier so as to provide an opportunity for members to properly read the paper.

Will the councillors have the opportunity to vote on every separate proposal? It was felt that the procedure used when the vote was cast at the Full Council – namely taking all Tywyn votes together – was unfair.

Further advice will be required on this point but an undertaking was made that the message would be taken back.

It was felt that children do not develop the same through interacting with children of the same age as they would through interaction with older children.

Small schools consisting of a mixed age-group provide better education than larger schools.

The opinion of Council officers was sought about the merits of small schools and whether there was an officer on the education department's management team who valued the merits of small schools.

Estyn notes that having classes of children of the same age-group is important. The background to the strategy document and how it was created was explained.

Evidence was received from a wide spectrum of establishments including Estyn, Gwynedd schools, National Association for Small Schools, The Welsh Language Society and others. It was explained that the Councillors would decide from now on. The councillors supported the strategy after receiving evidence from the above-mentioned establishments.

A feeling that reports were being prioritised over the opinion of local people.

From where does Estyn's evidence come?

Estyn publishes reports not only on schools but on any establishment that is involved with education, including the education department.

A feeling that the consultation paper presented a 'one-sided argument' in what should be a consultation.

It was explained that the paper set out possible advantages and disadvantages for the purpose of consultation.

It was noted that the first series of meetings in the Tywyn catchment-area was unique in Gwynedd and that this had prepared models for consultation and that this had not occurred in other counties.

The 'Gwynedd Together Strategy' notes that there should be planning to make areas attractive to young families and children. It was asked how the closure of Ysgol Aberdyfi would attract these young people to Aberdyfi?

Advantages and Disadvantages of Closure

It was noted that a large number of advantages and disadvantages could be listed but that the consultation paper listed a selection. It was noted that anybody wishing to do so would have an opportunity to send comments to add to this list.

It was explained that any savings would be re-invested in the education system and that a consultation on a proposal to keep 20% of any savings made in the catchment-area would remain in the catchment-area during the re-organisation process so as to assist the pattern of new education during an unstable period in any new system. At the end of the county re-organisation process, all savings would transfer to the county education budget.

It was mentioned that Ysgol Aberdyfi, in addition to Ysgol Penybryn, also provided a high standard of education.

The response was that Ysgol Penybryn is a very good school and that Estyn had confirmed this during an inspection held in 2010.

If a prison came to Tywyn, it would attract new families and increase the number of pupils at Penybryn.

If the admissions age at Ysgol Penybryn changed to admit children at 3 years instead of at 4 years, Ysgol Penybryn could be oversubscribed and would not have space to accommodate all the children in future.

It was noted that there was currently room at the school, but that the situation would have to be reviewed in future if the situation changed.

It was proposed that point 3.5 is misleading. Ysgol Penybryn also faces cuts and if children at Aberdyfi attend Penybryn, then they will be in the same situation.

It was noted that several parents intended taking their children to Machynlleth and that therefore they will go out of the county.

It was noted that the financial projections were based on every pupil from Aberdyfi transferring to Penybryn. Of course, if fewer pupils transferred to the school, the financial projections would be different.

A feeling was noted that it was not a 'balanced' document so as to give reasons for and against.

Impact of the proposal

Why had Tywyn been selected to commence the review process?

When the strategy and matrix were drawn up in order to priorities catchment areas for review, the Tywyn catchment-area emerged as the area that was in most urgent need of review. When accepting the strategy, the Council decided to begin the process in Tywyn.

Several points were noted objecting to the closure proposal:

If Gwynedd Council had assisted Aberdyfi to give the right level of support for the head teacher years ago, then children would not have left the school for other schools. They were not given adequate funding to support them at that time.

There is a community hall over the road which children attend to participate in activities – such use is invaluable.

It was mentioned that foundation phase provision is good at Aberdyfi.

Adding another bus to take children to Penybryn would be dangerous as there is no space for additional bus parking.

Will the council pay for new school clothes for the children?

Children participate in community-based activities and the community forms part of the school. The Urdd and community dinner are held at the hall in which all the children participate. There is a danger that this will be lost if the school closes.

Small schools feature more prominently in community activities.

If Ysgol Aberdyfi were to close, a valuable resource would be lost. It is a good 20th Century school and the council would surely make a substantial saving if it was closed

Promoting Small Schools presented a document to the Assembly which noted if all schools with under 90 pupils in Wales closed; it would represent a saving of 2%.

It was felt that the Council was seeking 'property hotspots' to sell at a good price. There would be no purpose to build new houses as there would not be a school here.

Why had the Language Impact Assessment not been held during the catchment-area review?

Assembly guidelines were received following the process at Tywyn and consequently, Gwynedd Council is the first county to hold such an assessment.

Will the Language Impact Assessment Report go to the Council?

Yes.

What will happen to the building?

As part of the process, the local community will have an opportunity to prepare a business plan to take possession of the building for community use.

Information was requested on the ownership of the school site. The response was that the building and surrounding land was Council property. The reply was doubted and officers were asked to investigate further and copies of the original documentation were requested.

The comments were gratefully received and an undertaking was given that further investigations would be made.

It was explained that a bid had been presented to the Assembly for grant funding to carry out construction work in the Tywyn area, and if successful, part of it would be used to develop the facilities at Penybryn, Pennal and Corris schools. There is no certainty that the grant would be awarded to Gwynedd by the Assembly Government but the Council has funding that has been earmarked for the construction of an area school but that does not include carrying out improvements to the other schools. The Council would have to be contacted to request funding for this.

One parent felt that she had not been given the choice to send her child to the new area school and many of the parents do not wish to send their children to Penybryn.

There was dissatisfaction that the Council were willing to keep Ysgol Abergynolwyn open for a further three years despite it having fewer pupils than Aberdyfi.

There is a breakfast club at Aberdyfi but not at Penybryn.

How is Penybryn going to ensure children's safety when going on and disembarking from buses? Every bus company has a duty of care for each child. An individual had witnessed much noise and shouting on one bus which recently passed by at Tywyn.

Concern about children's safety on school buses and that it would be difficult for them to find the correct bus to take them home.

One former parent noted that she had 3 children who had attended Ysgol Aberdyfi and who had gone on to Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn and that she was very proud of their development.

Next steps

The following steps were outlined:

- The next steps in the process and that comments could be sent by 30/7/2010. The comments will then be included in the report that would be sent to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.
- That comments received during this statutory consultation period would not be considered as formal objections after the Statutory Notice has been presented and that further comments would have to be sent to the publication of the statutory notice. If there was an objection during this period, then the application would be transferred to the Assembly Government for decision. It was noted that it could take the Assembly Government some months to decide.

Would the pack of objections be transferred to the Assembly?

Yes

Who is the Minister for Education?

Leighton Andrews.

What if the Assembly does not agree with the decision?
Further discussions would be held in the catchment-area.

What are Cllr. Roberts' impressions of Ysgol Aberdyfi?
She expressed her first impression when visiting the school for the first time in 2009 that it was a pleasant building but struck her as an empty building. She noted that she had to balance schools requirements and those of education within the whole county.

It was noted that the Council would make enquiries whether the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee report could be sent out sooner so as to ensure that the members had time to read it properly before the meeting.

It was asked who sat on the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee?
It was explained that the information was available on the Gwynedd web-site.

It was mentioned that Nick Bourne would be visiting the school at 12:00 on Friday and that everybody was welcome to attend the meeting.

Everybody were thanked for attending the meeting and despite a difference of opinion, it would be fair to state that we all have the children's best interests at heart.

Cllr. Roberts noted that it is not easy to take decisions of this sort but that planning for the next 20+ years was required.

A2: Abergynolwyn Consultation Meetings

ABERGYNOLWYN STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

15 June 2010 17:00

STAFF MEETING

Attended by 3 staff members

Welcome and introductions

The Head of Education welcomed everybody to the meeting.

It was noted that thus far, all meetings held had been non-statutory and that the statutory consultation phase had commenced on 7 June 2010 and would end on 30 July 2010.

The Head of Education presented the statutory consultation paper, and it was noted that there would be an opportunity to pause after each sub-section to receive comments and questions.

Background and why the proposal is being presented

It was reported that a statutory consultation was being held between 7 June and 30 July 2010 regarding closure of Ysgol Abergynolwyn. It was explained that if the proposal was agreed to, it is intended to build a new area school for Bro Dysynni to cover the current catchment-areas of Abergynolwyn, Bryncrug, Llanegryn and Llwyngwrl.

It was mentioned that staff, governors and pupils will have an opportunity to express a view. It was added that the staff could consult with the pupils at the school or that officers from the education department would do so with the children at the school. It was added that there was an opportunity to present comments and any additional documentation to Gwynedd Council Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting to be held on 23 September 2010.

An explanation was provided why the proposal was being presented:

- Financial reasons; and it was explained that Ysgol Abergynolwyn received £19,359 due to safety-net protection.
- Reasons for numbers of unfilled places – 76% unfilled places at Ysgol Abergynolwyn

Advantages and Disadvantages of Closure

The advantages and disadvantages of school closure listed in the paper were noted, and it was explained that the principal points were noted and the list of advantages and disadvantages could be added to through responding to the consultation. The comment was added that the minimum number of staff required had been estimated through assuming that 90 children would attend the proposed school.

It was asked what would happen to the savings through closing the four schools?

It was explained:

- that the intention is to retain 20% of the savings within the Tywyn catchment-area until the Council completes the process of reviewing all schools within the county
- that the funding will not be available until September 2013 and that education officers and heads of schools within the catchment-area would decide on funding allocation

It was asked what would happen to staff?

As regards staff appointments, it was explained that initially there would be a system for appointing a Headteacher, followed by the rest of the team. This would occur before the school opens. It was added that the staff could contact staff in the Education Department should they require information about their personal circumstances as regards dismissal.

Impact of the proposal

It was reported that if the proposed plan was implemented, Ysgol Abergynolwyn would close by 31 August 2013 and that the children would have 3 options when selecting a school:

- i) attend Bro Dysynni Area School
- ii) attend another school if that is closer than the area school
- iii) apply as a pupil from outside the catchment-area to another school if there is a place

It was asked what would happen to the school building if the school was to close?

The Head of education explained that the community would have an opportunity to develop a business plan for the building and that the Council would hand over responsibility for the building to them if the business plan was approved. If the community expressed no interest, the building would be put on the open market.

It was also noted:

- That the Council intended to support any travel requirements during the period of change i.e. children currently being educated at the school.
- The opportunities that may arise when providing nursery provision at a new school, and the possibilities of providing more extensive child care.
- That a bid for capital funding had been presented to the Assembly to build the new school, and also carry out improvements to other schools within the Tywyn catchment-area and that a response to the bid was expected during the summer.

The staff mentioned that they welcomed development to look at child care provision at the proposed school and that it would attract parents.

Next steps

Explained and noted:

- Next steps in the process, and that there was a possibility that an objection raised during the statutory notice period would imply a delay of almost 7 months in obtaining a decision from the Assembly.
- That a new governing body will be established for the new school with representatives from the 4 schools. It was explained that they will be responsible for making staff appointments and that appointing a headteacher would be the initial step. It was added that they would firstly look at the current staff at the 4 schools and if a suitable candidate was not found, that they would retain the right to look beyond the catchment-area.
- That there was support available for staff during this phase whilst recognizing that there was uncertainty, but that they could contact the Education Department with questions or for support.

Location Options:

School staff and governors looked at the 5 options of a possible location for the new Area School. The options were gone through and an opinion was expressed by placing different coloured dots to express scheme preferences:

Site 1 = 1 dot priority 3

Site 8 = 7 dots Priority 1 and 1 dot priority 2

Site 9 = 1 dot Priority 1 and 6 dots priority 2

Everybody were thanked for attending and contributing to the meeting.

ABERGYNOLWYN STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

15 June 2010 18:00

GOVERNORS AND PARENTS MEETING

6 governors and the Local Member as well as two staff members attended the meeting.

Apologies were received from 3 of the governors.

Welcome and presentations

The Head of Education welcomed everybody to the meeting.

It was noted that all the meetings held thus far had been non-statutory and that the consultation phase had begun on 7 June 2010 and would continue until 30 July 2010.

The Head of Education presented the statutory advisory paper and it was noted that there would be an opportunity to pause after each sub-section to receive comments and questions.

Background and reason for the proposal

An explanation was provided:

- Regarding the discussion that has led to the statutory meeting, explaining that thus far, the discussions held had been non-statutory,
- That the consultation phase would continue until 30/7/2010, and that comments from the consultation would then be presented to the Scrutiny Committee, Board and the Full Council, including the minutes of this meeting.

The reasons why the proposal was being presented were expanded upon:

- Financial reasons; and it was explained that Ysgol Abergynolwyn received £19,359 due to safety net protection.
- Reasons for numbers of unfilled places – 76% of unfilled places at Ysgol Abergynolwyn

An explanation was provided regarding the aim to re-cycle savings within the education system, and also, as a consequence of discussions held at the Tywyn Catchment-area Panel, of the intention to retain 20% of savings within the catchment-area throughout the transitional phase. How the money was used would be determined through discussions with education officers and headteachers.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Closure

The advantages and disadvantages of school closure, listed in the paper, were noted, and it was explained that the principal points were given. Anybody wishing to do so was welcome to add to the list of advantages and disadvantages through responding to the consultation.

It was asked whether a consultation would be held regarding use of money saved as a consequence of closing the 4 schools.

In response to the above, the Head of Education noted that a consultation document was being sent to the governors of the four schools, asking for their views regarding how the money should be spent.

Impact of the proposal

It was asked what would happen to the school building following closure?

The Head of Education explained that the community would have an opportunity to draw up a business plan to gain possession of the building. If the community did not wish to do so, it would be put on the open market.

Concern was expressed about the building's future. It was explained that there was already a community centre in the village and that it was unlikely that the community would wish to take possession of the building. .

The importance of giving serious consideration to whom the site was sold was emphasised, as it will have an impact on the community. It was noted that the community would wish to see the building being used to provide local employment. It was suggested that the Council could use the building to promote employment in the area.

The local member noted that Meirionnydd councillors had convened to discuss employment in the south of the county and that they had asked the relevant officers to specifically focus on the Tywyn area.

It was asked whether the children would receive free school transport.

It was noted that everybody residing within 2 miles of Ysgol Abergynolwyn would have free transport to the proposed school. He added that the possibility of providing free transport to other pupils at Ysgol Abergynolwyn could also be explored in order to facilitate the process of transferral to the new school.

Also noted were:

- The opportunities that may arise when providing nursery provision at a new school, and the possibilities of providing child care at a broader level.
- That a bid for capital funding had been presented to the Assembly for the construction of the new school, and also carry out improvements to other schools within the Tywyn catchment-area and that a response to the bid was expected during the summer.

It was asked how confident the officers are that the bid would be approved, considering the current financial climate?

It was reported that it was expected that notification would be received whether or not the bid had been approved, by the end of July. If the bid was not approved, the Council would use the reserve that has been specifically allocated for School Organisation to fund the proposed catchment-area school. However, it was noted that if the reserves was used for this purpose, there would be no more reserves and that the rest of the schools organisation plan would have to be re-considered.

Next Steps

Explained and noted:

- The next steps in the process, and that any objection during the statutory notice phase would imply that the Assembly may not decide for up to 7 months.

- That there is support available for staff during this period, acknowledging that there is uncertainty, but that they were welcome to contact the Education Department with questions or for support.

Location options:

It was explained that the meeting provided an opportunity for staff, governors and parents to give their opinion on location options, and further discussions would then be held with Snowdonia National Park Authority – and a decision then made. It was noted that obtaining local guidance on the available options would be useful.

School staff and governors looked at 5 possible location options for the new Area School. The options were looked at and an opinion was expressed by placing different colour dots to express priority on the plans (those attending could place 4 different coloured dots should they wish to do so):

Site 1 = 1 dot priority 3

Site 8 = 7 dot Priority 1 and 1 dot priority 2

Site 9 = 1 dot Priority 1 and 6 dots priority 2

Everybody was thanked for attending and contributing to the meeting.

A3: Brynchrug Consultation Meetings

BRYNCRUG STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

14 June 2010 17:30

STAFF MEETING

The meeting was attended by 6 members of staff

Welcome and introductions

The Head of Education welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced the officers.

It was mentioned that all the meetings thus far had been non-statutory and that the consultation phase had begun on 7 June 2010 and would continue until 30 July 2010.

The Head of Education presented the statutory consultation paper and it was noted that there would be opportunities to pause after each sub-section to receive comments and questions.

Background and why the proposal is presented

Attention was specifically drawn to that the Catchment-area Panel had noted that they would specifically focus on the Dysynni area/locality, except for the town of Tywyn.

It was explained that the Council was eager to obtain the opinions of pupils attending the school and that what form this would take would be discussed with the school.

It was noted that a deadline of 30/7 had been set to gather responses to the consultation.

It was explained why the proposal was being presented:

- Financial reasons; and it was explained that Ysgol Brynchrug received £21,747 due to safety-net protection.
- Reasons for number of unfilled places – 65% unfilled places at Ysgol Brynchrug – a reduction of 79 to 20 in 2009/10.

It was noted that the statutory document contained some errors. The errors were discussed and an undertaking was given that the authority would write to all consultees outlining and correcting the errors.

It was asked whether possible numbers of children from outside the catchment-area had been considered in estimating the size of the proposed new school.

It was explained that a new school capacity provided some flexibility, but that the Council's admissions policy prioritized children within the catchment-area. The capacity of the proposed school had therefore been estimated based on pupil numbers, school projections, and information on the number of pupils living within the four catchment areas not attending any of the 4 schools.

Savings

It was noted that the Council was consulting on a proposal to keep 20% of any savings created by school reorganisation in a catchment area within that specific catchment area for the duration of the review process across the county. If the proposal for Tywyn was realised in full, annual savings of around £220,000 were envisaged, with around £40,000 of this staying within the Tywyn catchment area.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the proposal

The advantages and disadvantages of school closure listed in the paper were noted, and it was explained that the main points had been noted and that the advantages and disadvantages could be added to when responding to the consultation.

It was asked how staffing numbers would be set?

It was explained that staffing numbers at a new school would be subject to pupil numbers. As the proposed new area school had been costed on the basis that 95 pupils would attend the school, information shared during the catchment area reviews suggested that there would be 4 teachers.

It was noted that the statutory paper contained no mention of establishing a non-contact Headteacher's post?

It was explained that this formed part of the previous re-organisation plan which had been rejected by the Council in 2008. This was not mentioned in the current plan.

Individual staff members were offered support, noting that further measures would be taken to discuss the situations of individual staff and that support for those staff was available in the Education Department.

It was asked what procedure would be followed with regard to having a governing body and staff for the new school?

It was explained that a new governing body would be established and that there would be guidelines and support on how this would be done.

As regards making staff appointments, it was explained that there would be Headteacher appointment procedure at the outset followed by the remainder of the team. This would occur before the school opened.

Impact of the proposal

It was asked what would happen to the community hall at Brynchrug if the new school were to be located there?

It was noted that the Portfolio Holder had noted that the Council would support the current community provision on the present site should the new school be built outside the village of Brynchrug.

It was also mentioned:

- That the Council intended to support any travel requirements during a transition period i.e. children who currently receive their education at the school.
- The opportunities that could arise through providing nursery provision at a new school, and the possibilities of providing child care more widely.
- That a bid for capital funding had been submitted to the Assembly towards building the new school, as well as carry out improvements to other schools within the Tywyn catchment-area, and that a response to the bid was expected during the summer.

Next steps

Explained and noted:

- The next steps in the process, and that the possibility of an objection during the statutory notice period implied that there could be a delay of up to 7 months before a decision was taken by the Assembly.

It was asked whether an appeal could be lodged against the Assembly Minister's decision.

It was explained that an appeal could be lodged if there was a sufficiently valid basis.

- That there was support available for staff during this period whilst acknowledging that there was uncertainty, but that they were welcome to contact the Education Department with questions or to ask for Assistance.

Location Options:

It was mentioned that there was frustration at a local level, as a decision on a location had not been made, and it was noted that an early decision on this was required.

School staff and governors looked at 5 options of a possible location for the new Area School. The options were looked at and an opinion was expressed through placing various coloured dots to express a priority on the plans:

Site 5 – 14 priority dot 1

Site 9 – 3 priority dot 2

Site 8 – 2 priority dot 3

Everybody was thanked for attending and for their contribution to the meeting. The meeting finished at 18.30.

BRYNCRUG STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

14 June 2010 18:30

GOVERNORS MEETING

7 members of the governing body and the Local Member and Headteacher present

Welcome and introductions

The Head of Education welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced the officers.

It was mentioned that all the meetings thus far had been non-statutory and that the consultation phase had begun on 7 June 2010 and would continue until 30 July 2010.

The Head of Education presented the statutory consultation paper and it was noted that there would be opportunities to pause after each sub-section to receive comments and questions.

Background and why the proposal was being presented

An explanation was provided:

- On the discussion that has led to the statutory meeting, explaining that thus far, non-statutory discussions had been held.
- That the deadline for the consultation period was 30/7/2010, and that comments from the consultation would then be presented in full to the Scrutiny Committee, Board and Full Council.

It was noted that the statutory document contained some errors. The errors were discussed and an undertaking was given that the authority would write to all consultees outlining and correcting the errors.

It was asked what action was being taken as regards holding consultations with the community as Ysgol Brynchrug was a community school?

It was explained that the statutory paper had been disseminated to local establishments and organisations and that anybody who had not received a copy, was welcome to contact the Project Manager.

It was explained that the Council was eager to obtain the opinions of the school's pupils and that the form of this part of the consultation would be discussed with the school.

An explanation was provided why the proposal was being presented:

- Financial reasons; and it was explained that Ysgol Brynchrug received £21,747 due to the minimum staffing level safety-net.
- Reasons for numbers of unfilled places – 65% of unfilled places at Ysgol Brynchrug – a reduction from 79 to 20 in 2009/10.

The intention was explained to re-cycle savings within the education system, and also, as a consequence of the discussions held at the Tywyn Catchment-area Panel, that it was intended to retain 20% of savings within the catchment-area for the duration of the transition period. This proposal was subject to consultation at present. Use of such money would be decided through discussion at a local level.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Closure

The advantages and disadvantages of school closures that are listed in the paper were discussed, and it was explained that the main points were noted. Any body is welcome to add to the list of advantages and disadvantages through responding to the consultation.

It was asked what arrangements would be followed in establishing a governing body for the new school?

It was explained that a new governing body would be established and that there would be guidelines and support on how to do so. As regards making staff appointments, it was explained that there would initially be a system of appointing a Headteacher followed by the rest of the staff before the school opened. It was explained that the current staff would receive first offer of appointments, but that the governing body would reserve the right to advertise externally.

Impact of the proposal

It was asked what would happen to the community hall at Brynchrug if the new school was not located at Brynchrug?

It was mentioned that the Portfolio Holder had noted that in such a situation, the Council would support the current community provision on the current school site if the new school was built outside the village.

It was stated that ownership of the land of the school grounds and buildings needed to be looked at further. Sections have been transferred following the transfer of the hall to the community.

Governors were thanked for their comments and an undertaking was given that officers would look into the matter.

It was further noted:

- That the Council intended to support any travel requirements during a period of change i.e. children who currently receive their education at the school.
- The opportunities that may arise when providing nursery provision at a new school, and the possibilities of providing child care at a wider level.
- That a bid for capital funding had been presented to the Assembly for the construction of the new school, and also make improvements to other schools within the Tywyn catchment-area and that a response to the bid application was expected during the summer.

What would happen if the bid was not approved?

It was explained that the Council held a capital funding pot that could be adequate for the requirements of an Area School at Tywyn, but that this could then possibly lead to problems as regards further plans in other areas.

Next steps

Explained and noted:

- Next steps in the process, and that any objection during the statutory notice period could mean a 7 month delay before the Assembly Government decided.
- That the Council would share minutes of the statutory meetings with the school with a request that the school corrects them as appropriate.
- That support was available for staff during this period, recognising that there was uncertainty, but that staff were welcome to contact the Education Department with questions or for support.

Location Options:

It was noted that frustration was being aired locally, due to no decision about a location, and it was noted that a decision was required soon.

It was explained that the meeting provided an opportunity for staff, governors and parents to voice their opinion on options regarding locations, and that afterwards further discussions would be held with Snowdonia National Park Authority – and a decision would then be made. It was noted that local guidance on the available options was useful.

It was stated that the Council needed to decide on the location.

School staff and governors looked at 5 options of a possible location for the new Area School. The options were explored and an opinion was expressed through placing different coloured dots to express priority on the plans (those attending could place 4 different coloured dots should they wish to do so):

Site 5 – 14 priority 1 dots
 Site 9 – 3 priority 2 dots
 Site 8 – 2 priority 3 dots

It was stated that Ysgol Brynchrug had supported the idea of change, and that there was firm support for a location at Brynchrug.

Everybody was thanked for attending and contributing to the meeting. The meeting closed at 20.30.

BRYNCRUG STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

14 June 2010 19:30

PARENTS MEETING

7 parents and the Local Member attended the meeting

Welcome and introductions

The Head of Education welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced the officers.

It was mentioned that all the meetings thus far had been non-statutory and that the consultation phase had begun on 7 June 2010 and would continue until 30 July 2010.

The Head of Education presented the statutory consultation paper and it was noted that there would be opportunities to pause after each sub-section to receive comments and questions.

Background and why was the proposal being presented

An explanation was provided:

- On the discussion that has led to the statutory meeting, explaining that discussions to this point had not been part of the statutory process.

- That anybody wishing to send comments should do so by the deadline set for the consultation phase - 30/7/2010. It was explained that comments from the consultation would then be presented to the Scrutiny Committee, Board and the Full Council.

It was explained why the proposal was being presented:

- Financial reasons; and it was explained that Ysgol Brynchrug received £21,747 due to safety-net protection.
- numbers of unfilled places – 65% unfilled places at Ysgol Brynchrug – reduction of 79 to 20 in 2009/10.
- The intention to re-cycle savings within the education system was noted, and in addition, as a consequence of discussions at the Tywyn Catchment-area Panel, that it was intended to retain 20% of savings within the catchment-area for the duration of the transition phase (subject to further consultation). Use of this money would be decided upon through discussions at a local level.
- It was noted that the authority would provide free transport to the new school for the pupils at Brynchrug at the time of the change of schools.

It was noted that a new school could attract children from outside the catchment-area. It was explained that there would be flexibility to admit some pupils from outside the catchment area, but that the first priority would be in accordance with admissions policy for children within the catchment-area.

It was noted that the statutory document contained some errors. The errors were discussed and an undertaking was given that the authority would write to all consultees outlining and correcting the errors.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the proposal

The advantages and disadvantages of school closure, listed in the paper, were mentioned, and it was explained that the main points were mentioned. Any additions to the list of advantages and disadvantages, through responding to the consultation, are welcome.

It was mentioned that the most important resource at any school are the staff - but that appropriate provisions, are, of course, of assistance.

It was asked what the arrangements would be as regards establishing a governing body for the new school?

National guidelines exist and the Council would assist communities in establishing a new governing body.

Impact of the proposal

It was asked what would happen to the community hall at Brynchrug if the new school was not located at Brynchrug? It was explained that the hall had close ties with the community, and that this provision needed to be protected.

It was mentioned that the Portfolio Holder had noted that in such a situation, the Council would support the community provision.

It was further mentioned:

- That the Council intended to support any travel requirements during the transition phase i.e. those children who are currently educated at the school.
- The opportunities that may arise when offering nursery provision at a new school, and the possibilities to provide child care on a wider level,
- That a bid for capital funding had been presented to the Assembly to build the new school, as well as carry out improvements to other schools within the Tywyn catchment-area.

It was asked what would happen should the bid not be approved?

It was explained that the Council had a capital fund set aside in order to build new schools arising from school reorganisation discussions which could be adequate to meet the needs of an Area School in Bro Dysynni, but that this would then possibly create problems as regards further plans in other areas.

Reassurance was sought on the number and size of classes within the proposed area school

In response, it was noted that the proposed new school's draft budget had been set on the assumption that 95 pupils would attend the new school based on the number of primary age pupils living within the four catchment areas. A budget of around £298,000 had been identified which would allow for the appointment of 4 full-time teachers including the headteacher. It was therefore projected that classes at the new area school would be around 23 pupils in size.

Next Steps

The next steps in the process were explained and noted and that parents could send in comments by 30/7/2010.

It was noted that any objections made during the statutory notice period could mean a delay of up to 7 months in a decision being made by the Assembly.

It was stated that it would be frustrating to have to wait such a long period for a decision.

Location options:

It was explained that the meeting provided an opportunity for staff, governors and parents to voice their opinion on location options, and further discussions would then be held with the Snowdonia National Park Authority – and a decision would then be made. It was explained that the national Park would decide on an associated planning application. It was mentioned that local guidance on options was useful.

The intention was outlined that all schools directly affected by the area school proposal would remain open until the new school was ready.

The parents looked at 5 possible location options for the new Area School. The options were gone through and an opinion was expressed through placing different coloured dots to express a priority on the plans (those present could place 4 dots of different colours if they chose to do so):

Site 5 – 7 priority 1 dots

Site 9 – 6 priority 2 dots

Site 1 – 1 priority 3 dots

Representatives were thanked for attending. The meeting came to a close at 20.50.

A4: Llanegryn Consultation Meetings

YSGOL LLANEGRYN STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

9 June 2010 17:00

STAFF MEETING

The meeting was attended by 5 staff members

Welcome and introductions

The Head of Education welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced Councillor Liz Saville Roberts, Gwynedd Council Education Portfolio Leader and officers.

It was mentioned that all the meetings thus far had been non-statutory and that the consultation phase had begun on 7 June 2010 and would continue until 30 July 2010.

The Head of Education presented the statutory consultation paper and it was noted that there would be opportunities to pause after each sub-section to receive comments and questions.

Background and why the proposal is being presented

It was noted that the Council's aim was to ensure that everybody understood the consultation paper and that responses should be sent by 30/7/2010.

It was noted that the statutory document contained some errors. The errors were discussed and an undertaking was given that the authority would write to all consultees outlining and correcting the errors.

It was noted that the principal concerns of staff were the site of the proposed new area school and the implementation time-table.

The school's class sizes were noted.

The minimum staffing protection safety-net was explained and that there was additional expenditure of £64,051 in the catchment-area. It was noted that there were over 49% unfilled places at Llanegryn and that 42-45 was a comfortable figure for the school. It was noted that there were revenue savings of £164,302 through developing an Area School. It was explained that the Council's attention – currently subject to consultation – to keep 20% of any savings realised through reorganisation in a particular catchment area within that catchment area for the duration of the reorganisation process across the county. It was further noted that all savings would remain within the education system.

Ysgol Llanegryn's headteacher was congratulated on having recently gained the NPQH qualification.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the proposal

The advantages and disadvantages of school closure were noted, and it was explained that the main points had been noted and that the advantages and disadvantages could be added to when responding to the consultation.

It is estimated that there would be a minimum of 4 teachers at the School based on 95 pupils attending the school.

Individual school pupil projections were referred to which suggested that around 70 pupils would attend the 4 schools by 2013. It was asked whether such staffing levels would be sustainable. In response, it was noted that a large number of pupils currently resident within the four catchment areas do not attend any of the four schools.

It was suggested that the School needed to be a focal-point for the community and there are opportunities to expand the developmental opportunities e.g. child care. This was welcomed.

A concern was expressed that there would be considerably fewer posts than there are staff at present. The Council will have a responsibility to hold discussions with the staff.

It was noted that moving to a new school could bring positive experiences and a visit to Pembrokeshire was mentioned.

Explained and noted:

- That the disadvantages were general ones and that 4.2 required correction. It was confirmed that there will be officers available to discuss what the future holds.
- That a teacher felt that she was developing her career better at Llanegryn than at a larger school and that there was a better opportunity to witness managerial aspects from the Headteacher than at a larger school. This may vary from school to school.
- That they were unhappy that the document contained an error (2.7 + 4.2).
- The procedure for strategy development was explained, and was unanimously accepted by the Council.
- That the numbers from outside the area were unclear due to the old Rhoslefain catchment-area. It appears incorrect as children of Rhoslefain are regarded as being outside the catchment-area.

It was noted that there was a need to explore school ownership details.

It was asked what would then happen to the School House charity and it was confirmed that they would like it to be retained for the children of Llanegryn within the community/parish. It was noted that the charity trustees are Governors and that it was their wish that it remained in the parish of Llanegryn. It was decided that the Council needed to look into this as well as land ownership.

Impact of the proposal

It was explained that a bid had already been presented to the Assembly Government for funding to build an Area School and also to develop Penybryn, Pennal and Corris.

What would happen if the bid was rejected?

It was confirmed that the Council had reserves but that further funding for development would have to be requested. It was confirmed that the Assembly Government's decision would be made over the summer.

Will the Area School be a certainty?

Yes, if it is supported by the Council and ratified by the Minister in the event of an objection. The Council has reserves which could be used to realise the area school

Next Steps

It was noted that staff had an opportunity to present individual comments before 30/07/2010 and it was proposed that they would perhaps like to present comments jointly and the process was explained.

Any staff member could present comments as regards the statutory notice. It was explained that if there was an objection, then it would have to be passed to the Assembly for a decision. It was explained that this could take up to 7 months. An explanation was provided on the appendices and how to respond.

It was noted that if an Area School is established, there will be an expectation that there will be representatives from every school on the new Governing body Assembly Government guidance clearly state how the Governing Body should be drawn up.

It was asked whether there will be protection for staffing and loss of posts. It was noted that there will be a natural loss through retirements and so on and that the Council will endeavour to protect and offer a corresponding post within a suitable distance. Current staff, including the Headteacher, would first be offered posts. It was noted that it would be the area school Governors who will a right to make appointments.

Everybody was thanked for attending and for their contributions to the meeting.

YSGOL LLANEGRYN STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

9 June 2010 18:00

GOVERNORS MEETING

Attended by 10 Governors.

Welcome and introductions

The Head of Education welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced Councillor Liz Saville Roberts, Gwynedd Council Education Portfolio Leader and the officers.

It was mentioned that all the meetings thus far had been non-statutory and that the consultation phase had begun on 7 June 2010 and would continue until 30 July 2010.

The Head of Education presented the statutory consultation paper and it was noted that there would be opportunities to pause after each sub-section to receive comments and questions.

A request was made that the meeting be conducted in English. It was explained that the Council's policy would be followed, but that questions asked in English would be answered in English.

It was noted that the statutory consultation document contained some errors which were outlined and corrected.

Background and why the proposal is being presented

Explanation:

- The purpose of the meeting is to explain and discuss the document, and explain the statutory process from now on.
- Consultation on the proposal to close Ysgol Llanegryn and the intention to build a New Area School.
- It was noted that the period commenced on Monday evening 07/06/10 and ran until 30/07/10. There will be an opportunity to present any comments for inclusion in the Scrutiny Committee report, Board and Full Council.

What if a site had not been obtained by then?

It was reported that the Council would have to decide.

How much influence will the National Park have?

It was confirmed that the Park are the Planning Authority and that some discussions had already been held.

It was expressed that one community had an opportunity to have a school within the vicinity so as to be able to walk there should the school be located within the boundaries of one of the villages. If it was located outside villages, then it could be seen as the property of the 4 areas. It was mentioned by governors that this was an absolute condition (i.e. that the school should be built on “neutral” land).

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Proposal

It was noted that this a general outline and the Governors are urged to send more in as part of their comments. It was also noted that there were shared experiences and opportunities at Llanegryn.

It was noted that children were currently leaving the catchment-area but if a new School were to be built, the numbers may change.

A visit to Pembrokeshire was mentioned which highlighted the way in which the views of teachers, parents and the community’s view which had been opposed to a new school, had altered following the move to the new area schools and after pupils had started to attend the school.

It was emphasised that the savings remained in the education system and that the Council was working on a proposal to keep 20% of any savings realised by reorganisation within a catchment area remained within that catchment-area for the remainder of the re-organisation project across the county.

Did the new school in Pembrokeshire lie within the National Park?

Yes, but that it was in a village and nearby to a Secondary School. There is scope to conduct further research into this.

It was noted that there would be staffing implications from closure.

Is there an assurance that transport will continue?

The Council’s transport policy was confirmed noting that the scale of transport required would depend on the location of the school. It was noted that careful consideration will need to be given to those who reside less than 2 miles away. The provision of free transport could be considered for children who currently live within the new school’s catchment area while they remain within the primary sector. This would apply to the children currently at the school and no further. It was confirmed that this would facilitate change for everybody who go through the new arrangements.

Why wasn’t a Lifelong School model considered?

It did not feature in the discussion in Tywyn but it did arise naturally at y Berwyn. It was noted that there is no 6th Form at Tywyn but that they wished to ensure the future of the secondary. It was confirmed that the Area School represents this major change.

Impact of the proposal

It was also noted:

- That the implications of any charity status and the future of any such rights should the school close had to be looked at. The situation regarding the building was explained but it is noted that a further investigation is required at Llanegryn.
- The fact that Ysgol Brynrcrug/Community Centre should not be a reason for locating the new school at Brynrcrug. If there are plans, school buildings could be transferred to the community.
- That a bid had already been presented to the Assembly, with the intention of developing/adapting the other schools part of it. It was noted that Ysgol Bro Dysynni is the first to be prioritised.

How much capital funding has the Council kept in reserve?

It’s an adequate sum for the Area School but not for the extra developments.

Next steps

Explained and noted:

- That the Governors should ensure that comments were sent by 30/07/2010 and the Council would consider the findings of the consultation phase.
- The process and statutory notice and that if an objection was received, the proposal would be transferred to the Minister for Education for decision.

Why can't the Local Member vote on the future of this school? Enquiries should be made before the Council vote.

It was noted that this is a legal matter that has arisen in general.

It was explained that the Assembly Government often required a number of months to reach a decision on school closure proposals which had been subject to objections. The implementation of the plan could therefore be delayed beyond August 2013.

What would happen to Abergynolwyn if there was a delay in developing the new area school?

It was noted that there was collaboration between Abergynolwyn and Bryncreug and that the authority would need to support education in the area in the interim.

It was confirmed that Llanegryn would ideally like to see the status quo but that they accepted that development was required and move on. If the school had to be closed, it was their wish that a new area school be built on a neutral site.

The process of presenting comments was outlined.

The audience was thanked for attending and for its contribution to the meeting.

LLANEGRYN STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

09 June 2010 19:30

PARENTS MEETING

Attended by 10 parents

Welcome and introductions

The Head of Education welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced Councillor Liz Saville Roberts, Gwynedd Council Education Portfolio Leader and the officers.

It was mentioned that all the meetings thus far had been non-statutory and that the consultation phase had begun on 7 June 2010 and would continue until 30 July 2010. It was noted that the Council was keen to seek the views of school pupils and that the format of the exercise would be discussed with schools.

The Head of Education presented the statutory consultation paper and it was noted that there would be opportunities to pause after each sub-section to receive comments and questions.

There was a request that the meeting be held in English - the Council's Policy had to be followed but questions would be answered in English.

Background and why the proposal was being presented

It was noted that the statutory document contained some errors. The errors were discussed and an undertaking was given that the authority would write to all consultees outlining and correcting the errors.

The background to the proposal was explained and it was also noted that:

- The Council continues to work to identify a site for the Area School.
- The Consultation Phase began on Monday evening 07/06/10 and will run until 30/07/10.
- The minutes and any matters or comments received will be included in the report to enable the Council to decide.

It was explained that the school is within the minimum staffing level safety-net and the implications of this.

It was mentioned that the school's capacity was 64 children and, if there was a need to further develop the site to allow more pupils into the schools, the house next door could be bought and the school be developed further. It was suggested that these were comments which should be made in formal responses.

It was explained that the money saved could be re-cycled into the education system.

An apology was given for the error (2.6) and correction 2.7 was mentioned.

It was announced that the Headteacher had gained a NPQH qualification that makes her eligible to apply for a Permanent Headteacher's post.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the proposal

It was noted that a selection of the principal points are provided here and it is likely that there will be many more than this. It was mentioned that some were general but further information should be sent to the Council by all means.

It was also mentioned:

- That a larger school provided an opportunity for children to benefit from staff's specialisation
- That the second staff member collaborated well with the Headteacher and that she was developing from sharing the expertise.

How many teachers will attend the new school? Will they have responsibility for full range of subjects?

There will be 4 classes – how the school was constituted would be a matter for the headteachers The Headteacher would be required to teach part of the time.

It was felt that the children received better education at a small school. If parents wished their children to attend a larger school, they would have sent them to Tywyn.

Is Llanegryn drawn into the Area School due to the situation at the other schools?

Statistics and projections indicate falling numbers.

It was mentioned that if the school closed parents could choose to send them to Ysgol Tywyn but that they appreciated rural education. They do not want the schools to deteriorate so much that they themselves will be forced to close. It was confirmed that they were aware that this involved costs but it was felt that there were 34 children at the school and that there was therefore no need to build another school down the road when there was already a good school available that could be extended.

It was noted that local residents and Councillors should state the priority and that the neutral site of the new school was of benefit.

A parent said:

"I can walk with the children to school and as I do not have a car, I have to walk. By 2013, I will have a 3 year old who will attend a Nursery School. It will not be possible for me to walk with the child to that school."

It was mentioned that they were disappointed that no member of the National Park Authority was present at the meeting. It was felt that the planning officers showed a lack of concern as to how parents send children to the school.

It was asked what the National Park is saying:

From early discussions it is suggested that the National Park are likely to reject an application that is far away from the development boundary.

It was noted that there was a need for community-based evidence in order to seek planning consent from the National Park outside development boundaries. It was mentioned that it is important that this be voiced so as to formally strengthen the application.

The parents felt that the planning authority should come out to face the local residents and that all the parents should send a letter so as to obtain support.

It was asked whether things such as a walking/cycle path to a new school could be obtained for the convenience of parents and enable them to integrate.

School safety was mentioned. It was emphasised that this would be prioritised if there was a proposal for this.

The following questions were asked:

- How far is site 8 from Llanegryn and Brynchrug? Would it be possible to walk to school?
- What if the child does not settle down at school or is ill – it would be difficult for the parents to go there.
- What if parents from Tywyn and Aberdyfi brought the children to Bro Dysynni – would classes then grow?

It was mentioned that some parents opted to take their children here from other schools due to smaller classes and a better education.

It was added that provision with plenty of places was required so as to ensure future planning.

The parents urged that comments be forwarded to the Council.

It was explained that the Council was consulting on a proposal to keep 20% savings realised through school reorganisation within the catchment-area within that catchment area for the duration of the reorganisation project across the county.

Impact of the proposal

It was mentioned that the Headteacher would have to take responsibility for a child if he/she was ill.

It was mentioned that there was a problem when a school closes as teachers and parents may be unable to reach the school in severe weather. It was noted that children could currently walk in. It was asked whether a bus would come from every catchment-area/village.

It was announced that a central location was preferred for several reasons and that the parents are unwilling for their children to travel too far on a bus.

It was also noted that there aren't always extended families in the area to support children in the area.

It was explained why the proposal was developed as well as the background to the strategy and the group explored the impact of the proposal.

6.4 was looked at and the ownership of the land and building. The procedure for disposing of lands owned by the Council was explained.

The parents felt that it was unfair to close the school and demanded that the community take responsibility. Neither did they want the new school to be called 'Ysgol Ardal Bro Dysynni' as it suggested the school's name had already been decided.

There would be consideration to providing travel for the children currently attending the school – namely that such pupils would be provided with transport for the remainder of their time within the primary sector - was explained and this is not the current policy.

It was announced that there will be Nursery Provision at the new school and that this will promote future child care service that may support parents and that the Nursery classes could be developed as child care facilities. It was noted that it would be a permanent child care service and would be convenient for parents through providing a breakfast club, an after school club and child care throughout the day. It was announced that 10 hours were being provided. It was noted that the problem needed to be looked at as to how parents are to take a 3 year old to school in a rural area if they do not have a car.

It was explained that the bid had been presented to the Assembly to develop the area school.

Next Steps

It was explained that the correspondence would be contained in a report to the Committees.

It was noted that if there was a statutory objection, it would be transferred to the Assembly. It was explained that there could be a delay of up to 7 months that could impact the time-table and delay it further.

It was noted that any correspondence received would be acknowledged.

It was stated that if the school were to close, it would tear the community apart and that the day of the school's closure would be a very sad day.

Everybody was thanked for attending and for their contributions to the meeting.

A5: Llwyngwriol Consultation Meetings

LLWYNGWRIL STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

11 June 2010 17:00

STAFF MEETING

5 members of staff attended the meeting, including headteacher, teaching staff, assistants and support staff.

Welcome and introductions:

The Head of Education welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced the officers and Cllr Liz Saville Roberts, the Education Portfolio Holder, to the audience.

It was noted that thus far, all the meetings held had been non-statutory and that a statutory consultation phase had started on 7 June 2010 and would continue until 30 July 2010.

The Head of Education presented the statutory consultation paper and it was noted that there would be an opportunity to pause after each sub-section to receive comments and questions. It was noted that the statutory document contained errors. The errors were discussed and a commitment was given to write formally to everybody who had received the statutory consultation paper, pointing out and correcting the errors

Background and why the proposal is being presented:

Reasons for presenting the proposal were given.

School staff noted several comments on this section:

- There were 27, not 32 children at the school during 2009/10
- It was accepted that a large number of children within the catchment-area attended other schools, but it was emphasized that there were various reasons for this, including uncertainty about the school's future
- Learning communities (developed through the Schools Effectiveness Framework) may exacerbate several of the alleged disadvantages posed by small schools
- It should be ensured that any savings remain within the catchment-area (it was noted in response that the Council was consulting on a proposal to retain 20% of any savings achieved during re-organisation of catchment-area schools within that catchment-area for the duration of the re-organisation project, across the county)
- Savings should be used to try and generate employment opportunities so as to attract people to the area. There was concern that a school's closure would imply that young families would not move to or remain in the area
- The discussion should include the future of the secondary sector

Site of the proposed area school

An exhibition in the room was mentioned, which identified the 5 sites being considered for the proposed area school. Staff were invited to comment on the sites at the end of the meeting.

Advantages and disadvantages

Language

The negative impact of school closure on language spoken in communities in a non-Welsh speaking area, was mentioned.

Transport

It was noted that school transport would be a very contentious issue. The Council's school transport policy was outlined. In response it was noted that the community was unhappy about the proposal to

- transport young children by bus to school
- supervision of children without supervisors
- transport children along a road that was in the opinion of several in the community, a dangerous road to Llanegryn/Bryncrug

How was the proposal developed?

There was general dissatisfaction in the catchment-area that the area review process had taken such a long time and created uncertainty. That comment was accepted, noting that several statutory measures still remained to be taken in the process.

Impact of the proposal

Staffing Matters

Staff enquired whether they were expected to stay at the schools to be closed or should they be applying for posts at other schools. There was concern that the LEA's wish to protect posts during re-organisation for staff within the catchment-area would be inadequate, as there would be fewer posts and that neighbouring catchment-areas also faced schools organisation review. The impact of the discussions and uncertainty on staff morale was noted.

The response was to confirm the LEA's wish that the new proposed area school would protect posts for staff from the 4 schools, but it was emphasized that local management of schools implied that appointing staff was at a school governing body's discretion.

The LEA's policy was mentioned whereby efforts would be made to try and find equivalent and similar posts wherever possible, in instances of dismissal.

Staff who wished to discuss staffing issues, their rights, pensions etc were asked to contact the Education Department to discuss this confidentially with a relevant officer.

Site ownership

The assertion that the school building and surrounding land were Council property was questioned. The response was that was the information that officers had received, but that they would give a commitment that this would be checked.

Next Steps

The process and procedure from now on were explained and that minutes of this meeting and all the other meetings in the catchment-area as well as any comments received during the statutory consultation phase would be included in a report to the Council's committees.

The meeting ended at 17:55.

LLWYNGWRIL STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

11 June 2010 19:00

GOVERNORS, PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEETING

Attended by 7 Governors and 27 parents and members of the community

Welcome and introductions:

The Head of Education welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced the officers and Cllr Liz Saville Roberts, the Education Portfolio Holder, to the audience.

It was noted that thus far, all the meetings had been non-statutory and that the statutory consultation phase had started on 7 June 2010 and would continue until 30 July 2010.

At the school's request, the meetings held were combined except for those for governors and parents. The school governors had also invited members of the community to attend the school.

The Head of Education presented the statutory consultation paper and it was noted that there would be an opportunity to pause after each sub-section for comments and questions. It was noted that the statutory document contained errors. The errors were discussed and a pledge was given to write formally to everybody who had received the statutory advisory paper, pointing out and correcting the errors.

It was noted at the outset that the statutory consultation document contained an error – the paper refers to the consultation paper as a draft paper. It was confirmed that the statutory meeting and the statutory consultation document were under consideration.

Background and why the proposal is presented:

Reasons for presenting the proposal were provided.

Parents' right to select a school

It was asked whether expenditure, through the minimum staffing safety net, of an additional £11,495, was unreasonable expenditure. Receiving a response that was not unreasonable, it was stated that the school's closure would therefore be contrary to the 1996 Education Act that stipulates that LEA's are expected to provide education in accordance with parents wishes.

Capital Bids

The decision to present a bid for a capital grant from the Government to build the new proposed area school at Bro Dysynni before completing reviews throughout the county was questioned. It was suggested that areas requiring capital expenditure were at risk of failing to gain access to finance due to their position in the review arrangements. The response was to refer to the Education strategy *Education of the Best Quality for the Children of Gwynedd* that had been unanimously approved by the Council and which forms the basis for all the reviews held throughout the county per catchment-area.

There was an enquiry as to what would happen to the proposals should the bid for capital funding from the Government fail? The response was that the Council had agreed to secure a capital fund to support capital developments that would stem from schools re-organisation and that the Portfolio Holder would decide how it would be used.

Rationale for the proposals

The proposals were criticized for several reasons:

- that it had been proposed that Corris and Pennal schools remained open and collaborate due to their proximity to the boundary of the county of Powys
- that the considerations were driven by funding and making savings

Savings

- i) Evidence was sought of the savings outlined in the consultation document that would be around £164,000 if Bro Dysynni proposed area school was established. In response, information disseminated to Catchment-area Review Panel meetings was mentioned, which outlined the likely proposed school budget.
- ii) Evidence of transport costs was sought. The response was that officers had used information on existing contracts to estimate the cost of providing a 50 seat bus to transport children from the

Llwyngwriil catchment-area to the proposed school. An estimate of £22,000-24,000 was given, and between £14-18,000 for a 20 seat mini-bus, per bus, and therefore the entire estimated costs of additional transport to the area school would be around £64,000.

- iii) Pupil numbers in the proposed new school were mentioned. It was confirmed that the financial modelling work had been done based on 95 pupils attending the school. Individual school projections were mentioned that approximately 70 children would attend the 4 schools by 2013 and that therefore the criticism was that savings of £164,000 would not be made as the area school budget would be considerably lower than the £298,000 quoted by the LEA.
- iv) There was an accusation that the consultation document was misleading as there would be fewer pupils, therefore less funding, therefore fewer teachers. In response, the significant number of pupils were mentioned (over 30) who resided within the catchment-areas of the 4 schools but who did not attend any of the 4 schools. It was noted that the size of the proposed area school had been estimated on the assumption that the new school would attract these children.
- v) If the above-mentioned projections were to be realized, namely that around 70 children would attend the new area school, there would be more unfilled places at the new school than in the current ones. It was mentioned in response that there were currently over 40% unfilled places at each of the 4 schools.

Maintenance

Information was sought on the future of the site as regards safety if the school were to close. The response was to mention that which had occurred at schools that had recently closed in the county, namely that the Council employed a caretaker to look after the site for a suitable period.

Children from outside the catchment-area

The assertion in the paper that 41% of children in the Llwyngwriil catchment-area attended schools outside the catchment-area, was questioned, and there was dissatisfaction regarding children who resided in the discretionary catchment-area of Rhoslefain (since the closure of Ysgol Rhoslefain in the 1960s, the children who resided in the village were entitled to attend either Llwyngwriil or Llanegryn as their catchment-area school). The response was that the figures used were those agreed with the Catchment-area Review Panel and that children within the Rhoslefain catchment-area had not been included as children outside the Llwyngwriil catchment-area. There were doubts about this and it was agreed that officers would do additional work on the figures in relation to outside the catchment-area.

Alternative re-organisation options

It was asked why the school representatives' proposal made at the Catchment-area Review Panel's meetings to consider a model of collaboration between Llwyngwriil and Friog schools had not been considered? The response was that the proposal had been considered and that information and analysis of the proposal had been presented to the Catchment-area Review Panel.

A discussion was mentioned that was about to commence on schools re-organisation in the neighbouring catchment-area of Y Gader, and the list of possible models in question there included the option of closing Ysgol y Friog and offering a place to the school's pupils at the proposed area school at Bro Dysynni.

Site of the proposed Area School

It was mentioned that the audience would have an opportunity to consider 5 possible sites in question for the proposed area school at the end of the meeting. When the meeting ended, the school's representatives refused to comment on the potential sites.

Advantages and disadvantages

Transport

Representatives opinions were noted that LEA's had a legal obligation to provide supervisors on a bus for primary children, and that a failure to do so meant that the LEA neglected their legal obligation. It was also noted that the latest Assembly Government school transport policy contained additional

requirements. The response was that the policy in Gwynedd was based on the guidance provided by the Assembly Government and that the Council met every legal requirement.

There was dissatisfaction that primary school children were expected to travel on a bus along a dangerous road without wearing seat belts and without supervisors. The response was that other counties had occasionally offered to fund supervisors on a bus for a specific period when moving to a new arrangement. The audience did not support this policy.

The LEA suggested that the school should ask their locally elected member to raise the issue of supervision on the school bus in the Council. This was agreed.

Nursery Provision

There was dissatisfaction that three year olds would not have the statutory right to receive transport to the new area school. It was suggested that this deprived the children in the village of their entitlement to nursery education.

Pre and after school clubs, breakfast clubs

It was asked whether transport to a breakfast club would be provided at the local school.

It was noted that organizing the school's starting time, starting time of any pre and after school clubs, and any transport arrangements, would be at the school's discretion.

The statutory consultation paper was criticized as so few disadvantages were listed. The audience also listed several other disadvantages:

- The Scottish Government have overturned every school closure decision
- Birmingham council have had to spend £50m on schemes to address behavioural problems and small rural schools already provide this kind of support at a low cost
- That children receive less support in larger classes
- That HYB report notes that any savings as a consequence of closure of small schools would be very small

How was the proposal developed?

Project Costs

Information was sought on information on the Council's expenditure on school organisation reviews during a 5 year period, including the cycle that was rejected by the Council in 2008. The reply was that since 2005, there had been cumulative additional expenditure on the project by the Council, of approximately £190,000.

Legality of the process

There was an accusation that the process was illegal and that there were several weaknesses as regards the response to the requirements of the Government's latest Circular. It was noted that the community would mount a legal challenge to the process.

Impact of the proposal

Staffing

It was noted that long-term uncertainty concerning the school's future had created staff appointment difficulties that would not have otherwise arisen.

Language and community related matters

The language and community impact assessments were criticised as they referred to a review of the school in 2003, and that another review had been held in 2009. A pledge was given that the adviser would be contacted to ask him whether the contents of the latest review held at the end of 2009 had altered his findings.

It was noted that the school maintained the Welshness of the area.

Next steps

An explanation was given of the process and procedure from now on and that the minutes of this meeting and all the other meetings in the catchment-area as well as any comments received during the statutory consultation phase would be included in a report to the Council's committees.

It was noted that the children who attended the school would be consulted. The informal consultation held with children during 2009 was criticized due to the perception that the nature of the session led children to give responses that favoured the closure of schools and that teachers had been barred from attending the session. The two options that schools could select were outlined, namely that the LEA send a specialist participation officer to hold sessions with children, or that the LEA send documentation to the school, leaving the headteacher to run the sessions. Selection of the preferred format would be at the school's discretion.

The LEA was asked to check the minutes of the meeting with the school. This was agreed to.

The LEA was requested to extend the statutory consultation phase to a period of 6-12 months.

The LEA was asked to ensure that the papers that would be submitted to the Council during the Autumn would be available to the public. In response, it was noted that the papers of all the Council's committees were available on the Council web-site at least a week prior to every meeting. There was also a commitment to create packs for the attention of councillors, which would include all written correspondence.

The meeting ended at 22:00.

A6: Penybryn Consultation Meetings

*** Penybryn Parents Meeting was repeated due to an oversight in the arrangements ***

PENYBRYN, TYWYN STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

7 June 2010 17:00

STAFF MEETING

14 staff members attended.

Welcome and introductions

Everybody were welcomed to the meeting and officers were presented and it was noted that the nature of the meeting differed somewhat to the statutory meetings of the remaining schools in the catchment-area as the consultation was being held over changing children admission age from 4-11 years to 3-11.

The statutory consultation paper was presented, pausing after every sub-section to provide an opportunity for staff to ask questions.

Background and why the proposal is being presented

It was explained that a bid had now been submitted to the Assembly for capital funding to build the new area school at Bro Dysynni and as part of the bid, there is a bid of around £1.5m to develop buildings and resources at Penybryn, Pennal and Corris schools.

It was asked whether there was a guarantee that the bid would be approved.

There is no guarantee but every LEA in Wales were invited to submit 3 bids and the nature of the 3 bids were explained. It was noted that the Bro Dysynni bid is at the top of the Council's list of priorities and that hopefully, the Assembly would agree. It was also noted that other LEA's had already attracted tens of thousands of pounds in recent years and that due to a lack of strategy, Gwynedd was unable to apply for this funding.

If Ysgol Aberdyfi was to close, the nursery children there could then receive the same type of provision at Penybryn. This would then increase the workforce. Nursery class children are admitted into schools in the September following their 3rd birthday, discussions were held in the Council during the year to amend the admissions policy so as to provide an opportunity for them to start in January or April as well. This has not yet been approved.

It was noted that private cylchoedd meithrin would not be comfortable with this.

3 year olds are entitled to receive 10 hours nursery care weekly but more than 10 hours can be provided should the school so wish. It would be at the parents' discretion whether to take their children to a nursery provision at the school or to a private provision.

It was noted that Ysgol Penybryn recently received a very good inspection.

Impact of the proposal

It was explained that the formal consultation commenced that evening until 30 July 2010 and the process following that was noted. If an objection was received following the issuing of the statutory notice, they would then be directed to the Assembly who would then take the final decision - this could take months, in certain instances, as long as around 7 months.

The discussion was opened out to answer questions and hear opinions.

Are the staff comfortable with the change in status?

There is no objection as the changes would strengthen the school.

It was asked whether the legal loop-holes had been surmounted.

An application had been made in 1997 to amend the status of the 82 schools in the county to admit 3-11 year olds; the Legal Unit has not discovered anything about Ysgol Penybryn.

It was noted that it was important to obtain this provision from the outset as the new school at Bro Dysynni will offer the same provision.

What if the bid for funding made to the Assembly is not approved?

Further consultations will have to be held in the catchment-area.

What if there are objections from Aberdyfi, will that impact this proposal?

No, this consultation is separate from the Aberdyfi consultation - if Aberdyfi does not close, it would not impact this proposal.

Will funding come with children of Aberdyfi?

Any child brings an amount of funding whatever school he/she attends. It is assumed that most of the children will attend Penybryn.

If the number of children attending increases in mid term, will the funding come with them at that time?

This could put a strain on the budget.

The Council would provide support in such a scenario.

Would the £57,000 come from Aberdyfi if the children did not attend Penybryn?

The school faced staffing cuts last year but had decided not to due to the possibility of admitting the children from Aberdyfi keeping the situation as it was. They would have the same number of staff and the funding would be used to maintain the same situation.

Future movement of children will require close monitoring.

Next steps

Everybody was thanked for attending and the staff were urged to send their comments in by 30 July 2010.

PENYBRYN, TYWYN STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

7 June 2010 18:00

GOVERNORS MEETING

Welcome and introductions

Everybody was welcomed to the meeting, and it was noted that consultations are being held to amend children's admissions age-group from 4-11 to 3-11 and that this happened to coincide with the discussion being held in the catchment-area. 9 Governors attended the meeting.

The statutory consultation paper was presented, pausing after every sub-section to provide an opportunity for staff to ask questions.

Background

There are now three schools in the County where children are not admitted at 3 years of age. Discussions are currently being held on the admissions policy as children can only start in the County's schools in September. Cylchoedd Meithrin have an advantage in that they can admit children at any time of the year.

It was explained that a bid has already been sent to the Assembly for funding to build the new school at Bro Dysynni and that part of it is towards developing resources at Penybryn, Pennal and Corris schools. The Headteacher explained that the Governors have already received the list of recommendations drawn up for school development.

What if the bid is rejected?

Further discussions would have to be held in the area. It was explained that 3 bids had been sent to the Assembly and that the Dysynni Plan is at the top of the Council's list of priorities, another question is whether or not the Assembly regard the development of a rural school as a priority. Several other counties have utilized this funding for several years, but the Council was unable to do so due to the lack of a strategy. The Council has given a commitment to ensure that Bro Dysynni receives the funding but this would not imply that the other schools would be developed.

It was mentioned that Penybryn had recently received a very positive report from Estyn.

Impact of the proposal

Providing nursery education ensures that the children from the cylch meithrin receive a different opportunity. It was noted that nursery class children had been refused a place at the school years ago due to lack of space but that the situation had now changed and there is also an opportunity for further development here. It was noted that the governors had already agreed to admit children at 3 years of age.

The next steps and the process following the meeting held that evening were explained. Following the Full Council's decision on 21 October 2010, a statutory notice will be issued.

The discussion was opened out to the audience so as to ask questions and receive an opinion. It was noted that the government supported admitting nursery children into the school.

A budget for the year must be provided – what will be available to assist the school?

This situation is complicated by the discussion regarding re-organisation; it is not assumed that the children will all be admitted in a single intake. Penybryn will experience an unstable period and the Council will need to discuss so as to assist the situation.

Reduced numbers means a budget reduction at several other schools in the county. 20% of any savings made within the catchment-area will have to be retained within the catchment-area which will be there to assist in dealing with catchment-area requirements during the re-organisation phase. The root causes of the problem are large classes and lack of staff.

There was a concern that private cylchoedd meithrin in the catchment-area could admit children below 3 years of age.

Would the Council provide transport for 3 year olds?

It is unlikely that parents will agree to such young children travelling on school buses.

How much notice will the school receive of how many children to expect?

Parents apply in December.

There is a need to ensure that there is enough funding available to pay for educating these children.

It would take quite a long time for this to become established in the town. It was mentioned that providing additional child care could attract more children.

It would be statutorily possible to admit children in 2011 but it would perhaps be more practical to plan to admit them later than that date.

All schools face cuts - the advantage at Penybryn is that they can attract more children.

Next steps

Everybody was thanked for attending and the staff were urged to send their comments by 30 July 2010.

PENYBRYN, TYWYN STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

7 June 2010 19:00

PARENTS MEETING

Welcome and introductions

The parent was welcomed to the meeting and it was explained that we are holding a consultation to change age of admissions of 4-11 to 3-11 and that it happens to coincide with the discussion held in the catchment-area. 9 Governors attended.

Background and why is the proposal being presented

It was noted that Ysgol Penybryn is one of three schools in the county that does not currently admit nursery class children.

It was explained that the council had presented a bid worth £7m to the Assembly that includes £1.5m to develop the buildings and resources of Penybryn, Pennal and Corris schools.

Admitting nursery children can provide every school with an opportunity to develop a child care service that would attract more children. There would be the potential to offer a broader service than that and maybe admit children at 2 ½ in future.

It was mentioned that it would not be to the school's disadvantage but that it could possibly be so to the town's cylchoedd meithrin.

It was asked whether consultations were held with cylchoedd in the town.

It was explained that copies had been sent to the cylchoedd and that they were welcome to respond.

The response procedure was explained and it was explained that any comments would be welcomed.

The parent noted that it benefitted children to be in the same nursery environment as they would be in at school.

Next steps

It was explained that if any objections were received during the statutory notice period, they would be transferred to the Assembly for a decision. This could take some time.

The parent was thanked for attending and was urged to send comments in by 30 July 2010.

PENYBRYN, TYWYN STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

14th July 2010 at 19.00

PARENTS MEETING

10 parents attended

Welcome and introductions

Everybody were welcomed and officers were introduced.

Background and reason for the proposal

Consultations were held on the proposal whether to alter the school admissions age from 4-11 to 3-11.

It was explained that 100 out of 103 schools in Gwynedd were 3-11 age group schools. Only 3 schools have a 4-11 age range.

It was explained that parents had an opportunity to respond to the consultation and that the response to the consultation would then be submitted to Gwynedd Council Members – at a Scrutiny Committee, Board and the Full Council.

It was noted that if Ysgol Aberdyfi closed, it would become part of Penbryn catchment-area but it would be at the discretion of parents at Aberdyfi.

Impact of the proposal

The relevant policy on admitting children at 3 years of age was noted.

It was explained that a bid had been submitted to the Assembly as regards building an area school in Bro Dysynni and carrying out improvements to other schools – including Penybryn. It was mentioned that this bid had been approved and if there were re-organisation, Ysgol Penybryn would benefit from that.

What was included in the bid?

It was explained that the bid contained an element for building the area school and developing Ysgol Penybryn, Corris and Pennal.

It was explained that the exact expenditure would be at the Headteacher and Governors discretion to discuss with the Council, and that a discussion was required.

It was asked whether the work on Ysgol Penybryn had been costed.

It was explained that the exact work would be discussed with the Headteacher and Governors and that the exact costs would be calculated.

It was asked whether work would be done on parking facilities.

It was explained that the consultation provided an opportunity to raise this matter, but the use of the capital funding may be at the Headteacher and Governors discretion.

There was an enquiry about moving children from outside the catchment-area from Penybryn to the area school.

It was explained that the area school's catchment-area would be that of the 4 schools recommended for closure, but subject to admissions policies that it was a choice for parents in the area. It was explained that the area school included an age-range of 3-11 years.

It was stated that the choice would threaten the cylchoedd meithrin and pupil-led funding was a possibility.

It was asked how the school could provide more broadly –based facilities.
It was explained that the children could utilize other facilities at the school.

The arrangements were explained

It was stated that Gwynedd Council Members would be notified of the results of the consultation.

If Gwynedd Council agreed, a statutory notice will need to be issued and a deadline of 2 months will be set to respond. It was explained that an objection meant that the matter would be referred to the Assembly and this could take up to 7 months.

It was explained that there was an opportunity to submit comments to Gwynedd Council by 30/07/10 and was conditional on whether the Council supported a 2 month period to respond to the statutory notice.

It was explained that it was important to receive comments for and against.

Everybody was thanked for attending and for their contributions during the meeting.

STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF CYLCH MEITHRIN TYWYN, MARGARET BARNARD PLAYGROUP AND TOWN COUNCILLORS

Meeting held at the Margaret Barnard Playgroup 11 August 2010 18:30

This meeting had been called by Tywyn town councillors in addition to statutory meetings held with representatives of the school and the nursery groups.

In attendance were the leaders and staff of both playgroups and two town councillors. Gwynedd Council was represented by the Portfolio Holder for Education and the Schools Organisation Project Manager.

Welcome and introductions.

Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts thanked attendees for the invitation to meet and outlined her responsibilities as Portfolio Holder for Education.

She explained that the reason for considering allowing Ysgol Penybryn to open a nursery class was that it was one of only three primary schools in the County (of a total of 103) which could not currently legally offer education to children from the September following a child's third birthday, and that negotiations were currently ongoing in the other two schools which faced the same situation.

She noted her purpose in attending tonight's meeting was to listen to concerns and to answer any questions raised by representatives of the nursery groups.

The main points raised during the discussion are outlined below.

1. Notice given of previous consultation meetings
Some concern was expressed that some relevant stakeholders had not received sufficient notice of formal meetings held during June and July in the area, and that this was the reason for the request for this additional meeting.
2. Support for the school and the nursery groups
Councillors noted their support for all three providers and stressed that their concern for the future of the playgroups did not in any way mean that they wished to undermine the position of Ysgol Penybryn.

3. Response to the formal statutory consultation on the proposal
Councillors noted that Tywyn Town Council had agreed without objection (two councillors had declared an interest and abstained) that they wished to see the continuance of the service provided by both playgroups. A formal letter would be submitted by the Town Council clerk although it was admitted that the letter had not yet been sent. Gwynedd Council officials agreed to note their understanding that their letter was on its way and requested that Town Council representatives ensured that the letter arrived as soon as possible. *(Note: an email was subsequently received on 12 August 2010 from the clerk of the Town Council).*
4. The statutory process
Some confusion persisted on the status of the statutory process. It was explained that the current consultation period closed on 13 August 2010. Until that point, schools, nursery groups, their representatives and any others with an interest in the issue were able to present their written comments to the Council. The matter would then be considered by Gwynedd Council's relevant committees during the autumn of 2010, culminating with a meeting of the full Council on 21 October 2010. Any proposals which secured the support of the Council would then be subject to the publication of statutory notices which allowed a period of two months for the submission of objections. Should any objections be received to a particular proposal, the matter would then be transferred to the Welsh Assembly Government for a final decision.
5. Service provided by the playgroups
The Margaret Barnard playgroup provided part-funded education for 3+ year old pupils for a three hour period each morning. Two hours were funded by Gwynedd Council grant while parents paid for the remaining hour. Provision was also made for a further 2 hours education for children aged 2½ years each afternoon. The Cylch Meithrin opens for a three hour period from 9am-12pm each morning and provides for children between the ages of 2½-4 years.
6. Foundation Phase
The Margaret Barnard playgroup had piloted the Foundation Phase and had received favourable inspections.
7. Quality of provision
Both playgroups, along with Ysgol Penybryn, had received good recent ESTYN and CSSIW inspections.
8. Safety of playgroup sites
Both playgroups had ample safe parking and secure entrances.
9. Future plans
The Margaret Barnard Playgroup outlined their intention to buy the building housing the playgroup and to invest in the facility, including a new roof. The uncertainty surrounding the future funding of the group had necessarily halted such discussions.
10. Potential impact of any cut in funding
Both playgroups depended on the full year funding received from the September following a child's third birthday to maintain their services. Should places be made available at Ysgol Penybryn, playgroup representatives feared that they would not be able to survive. Children currently receive funding for 10 hours provision from the beginning of the term following their third birthday – if this policy applied to Tywyn from September 2010, the Margaret Barnard Playgroup would be funded for 3 children and the Cylch Meithrin for 2 in September 2010 for the first term, although numbers would obviously increase throughout the school year. It was accepted that financial support existed for parents to support paying for childcare provision, and playgroup staff confirmed that they currently supported eligible families in applying for support.

11. **Impact on employment of playgroup staff**
The Margaret Barnard Playgroup currently employs four staff. The Cylch Meithrin employs three staff. While it was accepted that jobs would be created at the school nursery class if the proposal was approved, there remained concerns that there would be some redundancies.
12. **Lack of alternative childcare provision and impact on parents ability to work**
It was noted that only one registered childminder currently worked in Tywyn, and one in Aberdyfi. The concern was expressed that removing statutory funding from the playgroups would limit the ability of parents to work.
13. **Cuts in services**
A feeling was expressed that cuts in public services tended to impact on south Meirionnydd sooner than other areas.
14. **Impact on Ysgol Penybryn of accepting a significant number of additional pupils**
It was noted that there were two separate proposals which could potentially impact on pupil numbers at Ysgol Penybryn. The proposed closure of Ysgol Aberdyfi could result in the addition of around 20 pupils at Ysgol Penybryn, while the opening of nursery provision at the school could result in the addition of around 30 additional part-time nursery pupils. Reassurance was given that space currently existed at Ysgol Penybryn to accommodate such an increase in pupil numbers, and that the Council had recently received capital funding from the Welsh Assembly Government in order to make further improvements to Ysgol Penybryn among others in the area.
15. **Policies at Ysgol Penybryn for dealing with very young children**
Some concern was expressed that a policy existed at Ysgol Penybryn which forbade staff from changing pupils who had soiled themselves during the school day. Such instances were likely to increase in frequency with a significant additional number of younger children present.
16. **The meeting concluded with Cllr. Roberts thanking the playgroups for the invitation to meet and the representatives of the playgroups thanking Cllr. Roberts for attending. Cllr Roberts was given the opportunity to visit the facilities at both the Margaret Barnard Playgroup site and the Cylch Meithrin site.**
17. **The meeting closed at approximately 20.15**

Appendix B: Analysis of Statutory Consultation Comments

B1: Response to Statutory Consultation on the Proposal to Close Ysgol Aberdyfi

35 Written responses received:

- 1 Bilingual document
- 33 English Letters
- 1 English E-mail

Comments included from:

Governors and Action Committee of Ysgol Aberdyfi, Chair of Governors, Local Reverend, Aberdovey English Presbyterian Church of Wales, Chairman of Action Committee of Ysgol Aberdyfi and 30 letters

Comment Code	Comments	Number of written responses that contained the comment	Gwynedd Council Response
1	Community		
1.1	School is the heart of the community/ Closing school would have negative effect on local community / School closure should not be treated purely as an educational matter – it has community implications / The village would become less attractive to young families / School attracts young families / Important that children are educated in their own community / Children should have opportunity to attend their local school	26	<p>Ysgol Aberdyfi pupils would transfer to an enhanced and improved school at Tywyn. Ysgol Penybryn will be encouraged to further develop as a community-focused school and will act as a focal point for the wider Tywyn/Aberdyfi community.</p> <p>Over 35% of Aberdyfi resident primary-age children already attend schools other than Aberdyfi, the majority of these choosing to attend Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn.</p> <p>Nearly half of primary age pupils resident in Aberdyfi already receive their education in Tywyn. The vast majority of children in Aberdyfi attend Ysgol</p>

			<p>Uwchradd Tywyn from the age of 11.</p> <p>It is accepted that concerns exist that the closure of a school can negatively impact on the local community, particularly in rural areas. Ysgol Penybryn will need to focus on building links with the communities it will serve if this proposal is accepted.</p> <p>Little use is made of the school by the wider community as Aberdyfi is well-served by a variety of public buildings.</p> <p>While a school can make a significant contribution to community life, its main purpose must be to provide the best possible education for its pupils. Even so, the Council has conducted a community impact assessment in line with the Government's expectations. The report has been shared with stakeholders. The report outlines a number of actions which could be taken to mitigate the perceived negative effects of school closures.</p>
1.2	School is a vibrant part of the community; pupils contribute to community events and every pupil contributes / Children would be less likely to take part in community and after school activities; school breakfast club, they will lose interest in the community	12	There are numerous examples of good practice in areas which faced school reorganisation during the 1960s and have maintained strong links with all constituent communities.
1.3	Rural communities have access to fewer facilities and public services than towns / Task of council to provide electorate areas with essential services and local schools is a critical service / School buildings useful resource to the village with use by clubs and groups	2	While this can be true, Aberdyfi is well served by a range of public buildings including a community centre, a theatre, a post office and a number of shops, restaurants and pubs, banks with ATMs, playing and sporting facilities, a tourist information centre and a train station.
1.4	Address housing problems as many are currently holiday homes, this would encourage young families to area / School closure would make Aberdyfi a holidaymakers destination only/ Increase percentage of holiday homes / House price inflation	9	There is evidence that this is already happening. Aberdyfi is a substantial village with a number of businesses yet around 40 primary age pupils, a large proportion of whom are educated outside the village.
1.5	What will happen to the site if the school closes? / National Park guidance likely to restrict use of site post-closure	5	The Council has a policy on the post-closure use of school sites which was accepted by the Council Board in September 2009. In essence, the community will be provided with a period of around 6 months after the school's closure to put together a business case for the use of the school. The Council retains the discretion to release the building and preferential rates to the community should its business case prove to be robust. The local regeneration officer will be

			available to advise the community.
2	Welfare and Behaviour of Children		
2.1	Child with medical condition receives exceptional care and attention currently; teachers give treatment. Are there procedures in place to ensure that the same individual attention and care for the condition in Penybryn?	2	Teachers need to be able to respond to the needs of pupils in their care. Teachers in Penybryn would be expected to be provided with the relevant information and training to be able to support any medical needs their pupils may have.
2.2	Close proximity to school if child falls ill which wouldn't exist should school close / When a child is ill at school would a taxi be provided for a parent to collect them?	3	Tywyn is 3 miles from Aberdyfi. The two communities are linked by a good quality A road, a train service and regular bus service.
2.3	Children distressed at losing their school and teachers, lose stability from lives, does not make for a happy childhood / Children's day would be longer with travelling time / Children will lose all identity	6	It is accepted that change can be unsettling. Schools will be encouraged to establish joint working practices, visits, sharing of staff and a variety of other collaborative measures in the run-up to the closure of the school. Children who transfer from Aberdyfi to Tywyn would need to travel an additional 3 miles.
2.4	Good behaviour of pupils / Issue of bullying greatly increased in larger school	2	All schools are expected to ensure that children are permitted to learn and to develop free from bullying.
3	Education		
3.1	Excellent standard of education at Aberdyfi, school is flourishing / Last Estyn report not critical so school cannot be closed on poor educational standards / "If it isn't broken don't fix it!"	18	Ysgol Aberdyfi was placed in special measures following two ESTYN inspections in 2005. The school was taken out of special measures in 2008 and now provides satisfactory education. Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, has recently been inspected and was found to provide education of a very high standard.
3.2	Benefits of smaller class sizes, disbenefits of larger classes at Penybryn / What is a substantial group? Aberdyfi children already participate in group activities / Class sizes in Penybryn already overcrowded/ Will there be sufficient space in Penybryn/ Questions over eventual class sizes – will it exceed the recommended 25?	14	The Council's strategy <i>Excellent Education for Children in Gwynedd</i> aims to ensure classes of between 12-25 pupils. Classes in Aberdyfi are currently below the 12 pupil threshold, while some classes in Penybryn are above the 25 pupil threshold. This proposal would release significant additional revenue funding to Ysgol Penybryn which would allow the school to employ additional teachers should it wish to do so. This proposal would release additional funding to Ysgol Penybryn which would allow it to employ more teachers – and therefore reduce class sizes – should it wish to do so.
3.3	No evidence to support the theory that Aberdyfi children will receive a better standard of education in Penybryn, what is so special about education in Penybryn?	6	ESTYN inspections suggest that Ysgol Penybryn provides an excellent educational experience. Ysgol Aberdyfi was taken out of special measures in 2008.
3.4	Local toddler group provides a good link into the school / 2	5	The local toddler group should not be affected by this proposal as it provides non-

	nursery schools would have to close and the cost of bringing them into Penybryn would be more than keeping the existing nurseries open / Could some elements of the nursery class at Penybryn be accommodated in Aberdyfi?		statutory provision. Children do not currently receive access to a place at school until the September following their third birthday.
3.5	Aberdyfi school has a foundation phase, Ysgol Penybryn does not have a nursery class	10	As part of this reorganisation, it is proposed that Ysgol Penybryn should open a nursery class to allow admission to 3 year olds.
3.6	Small school also benefits by teaching social and mentoring skills / Children of ‘poor ability’ are much more likely to succeed in a ‘local school’ environment / Parents not having a personal relationship with teachers – Penybryn teachers do not stand at the school gate and talk to parents	4	The teaching and mentoring at Ysgol Penybryn is generally excellent as evidenced in a recent ESTYN inspection report.
3.7	Mixed age group classes benefit children / Numerous mixed age group class studies quoted	2	While this can be true, the Council feels that classes which are too small limit children’s opportunities to interact with their peers.
3.8	Decline in pupils over recent years is to some extent due to the change in headmaster / Poor recruitment choice of head teacher / Having acting head is no problem, past experience shows acting head fared better than some previous permanent / Some parents have decided to place children in other schools, easily explained due to the uncertainty Council has created regarding the survival of Aberdyfi school / Gwynedd council has let Aberdyfi down in recent years by not replacing the head, which resulted in Aberdyfi parents moving their children to Penal and Tywyn	5	Many schools in the Tywyn area have found it difficult to appoint headteachers. When the review began in 2009, four of the eight schools in the catchment area were in the care of temporary headteachers, while a further two were led by teachers who were eligible to retire. The Council asked schools to consider not appointing permanent headteachers during a previous review of school organisation in 2005-7 but that request was withdrawn following the rejection of that county-wide proposal for school reorganisation.
3.9	GC stated 75% empty space which is true with formula but in essence, school has 3 classrooms with max 20 in each (max 60) which gives 67% spare capacity / True that some children in Aberdyfi catchment go to Tywyn but only 33% and not “at least 40%” as quoted by GC	1	School capacities, and therefore surplus places, are calculated using a recognised Welsh Assembly Government formula. A significant percentage of Aberdyfi resident primary age pupils attend schools and nurseries other than Ysgol Aberdyfi – in recent years this has ranged from 33% to over 40%.
4	Quality/Suitability of School Buildings		
4.1	School building is in excellent condition and has appropriate facilities, including playing fields, foundation stage areas, low maintenance costs / Penybryn school building is in a poorer condition than Aberdyfi / Aberdyfi school building is modern / There is some unused space within the buildings but this is capacity for growth / Asset Management Plan suggests that Ysgol Aberdyfi requires over £100,000 spent	14	The school is relatively new and in generally good condition. As part of a successful bid for capital funding approved by the Welsh Assembly Government in Summer 2010, Ysgol Penybryn will be refurbished in order to meet the needs of the 21 st Century.

	on the school building – why as it is in excellent condition?		
4.2	Safe parking in Aberdyfi, Tywyn is dangerous	6	Part of the package to upgrade Ysgol Penybryn will include improving access to the building.
4.3	What will happen to the site if the school closes? / National Park guidance likely to restrict use of site post-closure	5	The Council has a policy on the post-closure use of school sites which was accepted by the Council Board in September 2009. In essence, the community will be provided with a period of around 6 months after the school's closure to put together a business case for the use of the school. The Council retains the discretion to release the building and preferential rates to the community should its business case prove to be robust. The local regeneration officer will be available to advise the community.
5	Information/Statistics		
5.1	Local information that birth rates/pupil projections are rising / If the demographic profile does change, how can Aberdyfi get its local school back? / Road and transport links improvement would have influence on families living in area and commuting to work, resulting in more children in the school / Availability of jobs affect local housing occupancy which would improve numbers at the school	8	This may be true although there is no clear evidence to support this claim. However, it remains the case that fewer than 40 primary age pupils live in the Aberdyfi catchment area and of those over a third chooses to attend schools other than Aberdyfi.
5.2	The Dyfi Valley is special and Aberdyfi is part of the 'UNESCO Biosphere Reserve' – how does closing the school help to develop a more self-reliant local economy, a more sustainable area and fulfil the Unesco biosphere designation and make the area a place to live, work and bring up children?	1	The proposal is focused on delivering primary education of the best quality. Awareness of locality is a key component of any curricular provision. Aberdyfi village is currently a thriving village despite the low number of children attending the primary school.
6	Finance		
6.1	Proposal is driven solely by the need to save money; too much emphasis on saving money / Money saved due to closure - dubious of the figures / Financial rationale within statutory consultation paper not transparent / Why close the school if it is not for political reasons and for money from the sale of the site	4	This is not the case as the various documents published during the process of engaging with local communities and consulting formally with the school community have demonstrated. It is however true that the current economic situation obliges local authorities to ensure the most cost-effective use of public money. It is also true that Aberdyfi's per pupil spend is double that of Penybryn, and issues of basic fairness apply. The information provided on anticipated savings are based on the same sound financial modelling process which identifies current budget allocations.
6.2	It would be cheaper to accommodate Pen y Bryn nursery	5	The option of locating a nursery class up to and including all foundation phase

	class at Aberdyfi than to build a new one in Tywyn / If more resources and teachers required in Tywyn to cope with the extra children, wouldn't it be better spent keeping open a decent, well-kept local school? / Large sum of money spent carrying out the background work for school closure project could have been spent on local primary schools / Why is a new area school needed? For a more modest sum surely Ysgol Brynchrug could be developed to meet needs of surrounding area		provision for the two communities was considered during the catchment review process at the instigation of an Aberdyfi governor. The proposal would be costly and was therefore rejected.
6.3	Will Gwynedd Council pay for costs such as new school uniforms?	1	There is no intention of providing new school uniforms other than through the usual grant process for qualifying families.
6.4	Only work remaining will be seasonal / Aberdyfi has a large proportion of second homes that pay full rates and as they do not use Gwynedd Council services throughout the year the local costs are more than covered by the surplus local revenue.	2	This is a pattern which is true of Aberdyfi and other areas within the catchment area today.
7	Language Skills		
7.1	Aberdyfi children have strong Welsh language skills, closing Aberdyfi school would have negative effect on the Welsh language in the area / Smaller school provides better immersion and development of Welsh education	7	A language impact assessment was conducted as part of the review process. It found that pupils from the two communities come from very similar linguistic backgrounds and that no negative impact was anticipated on the use of Welsh should the proposal be accepted. It can be the case with small schools but is not necessarily so. The language impact assessment suggests both schools succeed to developing their pupils' skills in Welsh.
8	Transport		
8.1	Children should not be sent to school on a bus / Safety concerns: guardians should be provided on buses transporting very young children to school / Gwynedd Council policy does not provide guardians, poor behaviour on some buses	12	It is accepted that parents may have reservations about placing young children on a bus without a guardian. However Gwynedd's policy is that guardians are not provided, although drivers are of course trained and CRB checked.
8.2	Route to Tywyn is dangerous	3	The road from Aberdyfi to Tywyn is of a good quality, is wide and is generally straight.
8.3	Rising cost of fuel will reduce savings / Additional costs of transporting children / Will Gwynedd Council pay for transport to any school other than Penybryn?	3	If fuel costs rise continue to rise, the cost of heating and lighting the present Ysgol Aberdyfi will also rise. Transport will be provided in line with the Council's home to school transport

			policy.
8.4	Children walking to school contribute towards a safer environment and it gives them benefit of exercise / Carbon footprint	5	It is accepted that more primary age pupils will travel daily from Aberdyfi should this proposal be implemented. However, over 30% of Aberdyfi resident primary age pupils currently attend schools outside Aberdyfi, the majority attending Penybryn Tywyn. If implemented, this proposal would lead to the provision of transport from Aberdyfi to Tywyn for primary age pupils which should reduce current school traffic. Should Ysgol Aberdyfi close, there would be savings on the maintenance, heating and lighting of the building which would in itself reduce the carbon footprint.
9	Statutory Process		
9.1	Statutory document contains errors, omissions / Statutory paper does not address Aberdyfi and is concerned solely with Penybryn, process should be scrapped to avoid judicial review / No meeting or document had detailed, creditable information on financial savings / Consultation paper shows that improvements to Tywyn will be financed by Aberdyfi closure, this should be part of Tywyn consultation / Aberdyfi has not had a relevant consultation paper	3	<p>The statutory consultation paper was released to all schools subject to statutory consultation on 24 May 2010. The Aberdyfi paper contained some errors, including the erroneous description of the Government's definition of surplus places which noted that significant surplus places existed in schools which had 25% or 30 in number, rather than the correct definition which is 25% and 30 in number. These errors were corrected and an amendment sheet was prepared and circulated in hard copy to all consultees on 13 July 2010, and electronically where email addresses were available. The amendment sheet was also placed on the Council's website alongside the original consultation document. Spare copies were left with the school, and further copies were subsequently sent on the request of the schools. The consultation period was extended by a further fortnight from 30 July 2010 to 13 August 2010 to allow for the circulation of the amendment paper and an additional paper containing information on locations which were under consideration as sites for the proposed new area school.</p> <p>The statutory consultation paper for Aberdyfi addresses Ysgol Aberdyfi. Clearly, it also needs to outline the alternative provision which would be made for the education of Aberdyfi-resident primary age pupils should the school close.</p>
9.2	Statutory process is flawed - votes were based on purely political grounds, each school should be different issue not one vote on all 3 issues at once / Policy behind decision is misguided / Arguments for closing the school are flawed	5	<p>The proposals to close Ysgol Aberdyfi, along with other proposals for the Tywyn area, were made following extensive engagement with the local community. The proposals were then accepted as a basis for statutory consultation by the full Council in December 2009.</p> <p>The <i>Excellent Education for all Gwynedd's Children</i> policy was approved without objection by the full Council in April 2009.</p>
9.3	New school should be in place before any closures are made	3	Parents are entitled to send their children to any school. The Council is obliged to

	/ Assumption that Aberdyfi children will travel to Penybryn - where has parental choice gone? / A new school would provide parental choice / Timing issue – no time for any decisions to be planned either by school or parents as Assembly Government’s Minister for Education could give decision as late as Summer 2011; bring closure of Aberdyfi in line with planned closure of other 4 schools; Why are other small schools being allowed to stay open until the new area school is built but Aberdyfi has to close? Aberdyfi should have a chance to stay open and parents given a choice to send children to the new area school and staff given a fair chance for jobs		provide free transport to the local catchment area school where the individual child’s needs meet the Council’s transport policy (i.e. that the pupil lives more than 2 miles from the school and attends its catchment or nearest school). This policy will continue. The proposal to close schools at Abergynolwyn, Brynchrug, Llanegryn and Llwyngwriol are dependent on building a new area school. The proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi and provide places for Aberdyfi pupils at Ysgol Penybryn is not dependent on significant building work. There is therefore no reason why the proposal relevant to Aberdyfi could not be implemented earlier than the proposal to create an area school in Dysynni.
9.4	It was stated that other schools did not want to work with Aberdyfi when there is written confirmation from Pennal school governor this isn’t true, inaccurate minutes taken during at least one school meeting / Letter from Pennal School Governors included / Letter from parent regarding collaboration between Aberdyfi and Pennal included	3	During informal meetings at Pennal school it was stated that school representatives favoured establishing a model of formal collaboration with Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas, Corris, and did not favour establishing a collaborative model with Aberdyfi. However, this is but one of many factors which have led to the proposal that Ysgol Aberdyfi should close, including the small size of school and teaching groups, pupil experiences, the large number of pupils who attend other schools, per pupil spending.
9.5	During consultation period no mention was made that all 3 year olds would be brought into Penybryn	1	The proposal to open a nursery class at Ysgol Penybryn formed part of the consultation papers, and copies of the statutory consultation papers for Ysgol Penybryn were provided to Ysgol Aberdyfi.
9.6	Aberdyfi school closure is a done deal, whatever has been said	1	The Council has not yet voted on the proposal to close the school. Until it does, no decision has been made.
9.7	Previous letters of concern sent is anyone reading them or is Gwynedd council ignoring many reasons to keep our school open? Feeling that nobody in Gwynedd education had actually listened	1	All letters have been acknowledged and published in a pack for the attention of Councillors. Replies to points raised in the correspondence are contained here.
9.8	Council needs to give more emphasis to demonstrate effect of closure on general wellbeing and future economic prosperity of village / Survey of ‘ Independent Community Impact Assessment’ conducted after the initial assessment was made / No assessments of economic and social impact have been carried out / List of disadvantages suggested by GC is woefully inadequate, it omits relationship of school with community and impact closing school will have on the	4	The development of proposals for the Tywyn area followed a lengthy period of discussions locally. When the announcements on the proposals for the Tywyn area were made in September 2009, the relevant circular remained Circular 23/02. During that same month, the Welsh Assembly Government published revised guidance in Circular 021/2009 which required local authorities to conduct language and community impact assessments on proposals brought forward from January 2010. Gwynedd Council carried out these assessments and have taken full account of this work during the statutory consultation period. The

	community / Session held for children and young people of the catchment's area was biased in the way it was set up and assessed / School, parents and children have not had a choice in what their future may be		assessments have been published on the Council's website and shared with elected members, schools and others.
9.9	During process no mention was made that Penybryn school would need additional funding to make it fit for purpose, what happens if the funds aren't available? Will the school be deemed unfit?	2	Ysgol Penybryn is not unfit for purpose. However, a bid was submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government in Summer 2010 for funding which included a proposal to upgrade Ysgol Penybryn. The bid was successful.
10	Other Schools		
10.1	Has it ever been considered that Aberdyfi school could be used in conjunction with Tywyn primary? / Give Aberdyfi school the chance to collaborate with other schools like Pennal / Not too late to establish a federal system – not enough consideration for this option	6	<p>A number of alternative proposals were considered during the review process, including the establishment of a federal school between Aberdyfi and Penybryn, and the establishment of a foundation phase site at Aberdyfi and a Key Stage 2 site at Penybryn. Ultimately, the full Council decided that it wishes to consult on this current proposal.</p> <p>Establishing a federal system to include Ysgol Aberdyfi was considered during the review process. For reasons set out in Council papers the proposal was not pursued.</p>
10.2	If Aberdyfi school closes some parents will send their children to Pennal, not Tywyn as they feel that standard of education in Tywyn would not be good enough / Most parents will not send their children to Penybryn so any budget for Aberdyfi children should not be included in Penybryn budget / Not true Penybryn budget will increase / Ysgol Penybryn Budget Allocation Projection included	3	<p>Penybryn Tywyn provides excellent educational experiences as evidenced in a recent ESTYN inspection. Parents are entitled to choose whichever school they feel is most suitable for their child.</p> <p>The costings are based on current Aberdyfi pupils transferring to Penybryn as that would be the catchment school for Aberdyfi should this proposal be implemented. The basis for creation of the estimated budget was explained at both the Catchment Area Review Panel meetings and meetings at the school. If the school provides education for fewer pupils, its budget will reduce. If it provides for more, its budget will be increased. Additional transport costs have been included in the costings provided to the Catchment Area Review Panel, the school and elected members.</p>
10.3	Tywyn is being supported at cost of Aberdyfi / Since Penybryn is not fit for purpose perhaps it should be closed and move children from Penybryn to all the small village schools you are closing / The expense of moving one set of children one way is surely the same for Aberdyfi and Tywyn	3	<p>The proposal is focused on providing the best possible educational experiences for children while using public money effectively and efficiently. Aberdyfi currently receives twice the per pupil funding of Ysgol Penybryn.</p> <p>There are around 20 pupils at Aberdyfi, and over 200 in Tywyn. Moving</p>

	children?		Aberdyfi children to Tywyn would require the provision of one bus and no significant extension of Ysgol Penybryn. Moving 200 pupils from Tywyn to Aberdyfi would require the provision of at least 4 buses and the building of an entirely new school in Aberdyfi four times its present size.
11	Economic		
11.1	Economic savings resulting from proposal would be very small, many people would lose their jobs as a result of closing Aberdyfi school / Closure would decrease viability of local businesses and affect potential for new businesses / Less businesses and permanent residences means less council business rates, council tax and more people out of work claiming benefit / No benefits financially or educationally / Closure makes no economical sense as school is currently thriving	8	After taking account of increased travel costs, the closure of Ysgol Aberdyfi would release around £57,000 in additional funding to Ysgol Penybryn and a further £57,000 to the central education budget.
11.2	Perceived land value of the site and what it would make on the open market is prime motivator for closure / What is main factor that Gwynedd Council will gain from closing the school? If answer is build houses then who will buy them with no school?	4	The reasons for the proposal have been clearly set out in Council papers and in the statutory consultation document. No decision has been made on the use of the school sit should the school close. The process of disposing of the sites of schools which have closed is clearly set out in a policy agreed by the Council Board in September 2009.
11.3	Staff of school would have to find employment elsewhere / Stating there would be more staff required in Penybryn dubious with reduction in money and not all children from Aberdyfi going to Penybryn, meaning less money going too	2	Funding follows pupils, therefore any increase in funding for Ysgol Penybryn or any other school will depend on the number of pupils attending. The proposal makes provision for Aberdyfi resident children at Ysgol Penybryn, and therefore the estimated budget post-implementation assumes that Aberdyfi resident primary pupils will attend their new catchment area school at Tywyn
11.5	Land registration/ Ownership questioned / Registration of site is flawed / Letter from Seimon Williams to chair of governors dated 06/07/10 containing information on ownership of site included / Why was land registered in May 2010? / When this occurred the Council failed to register a conveyance between Richard Price Morgan and John Edward Jones, applicable to the land which is a legal requirement	3	The Council are in the process of registering all of the land in their possession voluntarily and have been doing so for a number of years. It is coincidence that this school has only recently been registered. The Council registers its land according to the areas that were purchased and what is convenient to register together by way of neighbouring lands. The Council does not register all of its land with individual Titles. The Land Registry has made one error with the car park by only including half of it. This will be rectified by them in due course.
12	Documents Included or Quoted		
12.1	'National Association for Small Schools' booklet included – has this whole body of research been ignored?	1	The National Association for Small Schools gave evidence to a Gwynedd Council working group in January 2009 prior to the drafting of the <i>Excellent Education for Gwynedd's Children</i> strategy. The Association's evidence therefore has been

			considered in the formulation of the original strategy and in subsequent considerations.
12.2	<p>A composite response incorporating reference to and sections drawn from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mid Wales Spatial Plan' included – plan to close Ysgol Aberdyfi goes counter to this plan - Gwynedd Together 2008-12 - Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-13 - Gwynedd Regeneration Strategy 2007-13 - Snowdonia National Park policies <p>Comments largely focused on concerns that closing Ysgol Aberdyfi did not fit with the aspirations outlined in these documents.</p>	1	It has been accepted that the closure of schools can have a negative impact on local communities as evidence in the Community Impact Assessments carried out by Gwynedd Council in various parts of Meirionnydd. In Aberdyfi's case, the assessment found that closing the school would not have a significant negative impact on the village. The village is currently well-served by a range of businesses and cultural centres despite the small size of its school. It should also be noted that School Organisation is focused firstly on ensuring the best possible outcomes for learners, and it is therefore education both locally and across the County which is the primary driver for the proposal.
12.7	Gwynedd Council language and community impact study quoted and mentioned / was not included in any discussions between June 2009 and October 2009	4	Local authorities were not expected to carry out language and community impact assessments under the previous Welsh Assembly Government circular 23/02. A new, revised circular – 021/2009 – published in September 2009 placed a duty on local authorities to conduct language and community impact assessments of proposals to reorganise schools. This work was carried out by an independent consultant during February-April 2010.

B2: Response to Statutory Consultation on the Proposal to Close Ysgol Brynchrug

9 written responses received;
7 Letters (3 Welsh, 4 English)
2 E-mail (2 English)

Comments included from:

Chair of Brynchrug Community Council, Chair of Dysynni Ladies, Brynchrug School Governor, Brynchrug Headteacher, Chair of Brynchrug Governors, Brynchrug Youth Club, Merched Y Wawr, 'Brynchrug Community Centre Committee', and letters from the public.

Comment Code	Comments	Number of written responses that contained the comment	Gwynedd Council Response
1	Community		
1.1	School is heart of community / Closing school will have negative effect on community	2	It is accepted that there is concern that moving a school from a community could impact the community. However, the area school is expected to serve the entire catchment-area and act as a catalyst to regenerate the area.
1.2	School facilities used by community organisations / Only available community hall facilities for all members of community / Object to closure If area school is not in the village to provide alternate venue / Statement from 'Education Portfolio Leader' that community provision will be maintained in Brynchrug – but exactly what “provision” will that be? / Community hall could be used by all 4 communities	8	Ysgol Brynchrug is a community designated school and therefore the community hall forms part of the school building. A commitment was given during the statutory consultation held at Brynchrug that the Council intended to secure a community centre in the village of Brynchrug irrespective of the decision on the proposed area school. Ysgol Brynchrug is the community school amongst the 4 that is the subject for this proposal. The proposed area school is expected to provide a school of community activities to serve Bro Dysynni.

1.3	Village people saddened by closure of Bryncreug school but accepting as long as the new school is in the village / Parents, governors, staff have been very cooperative and accommodating to the idea of change but on the guarantee that the new school is in the village of Bryncreug / Would not be willing for Bryncreug to close and be transferred to Penybryn as we have a right to a rural village school for our children / If school in Bryncreug only cost of transporting 3 communities rather than 4 to a neutral site / It was promised that the area school would be in Bryncreug	3	<p>The Council's overall aim would be to develop community schools within communities. However, in this particular instance, there was a strong view in the area in favour of establishing the proposed area school on a site outside the 4 communities. Consequently, an effort was made to secure a site near Talybont as the preferred site. A report was presented for the Council Board's attention on 27 July 2010, outlining this aim. During Summer 2010, it became apparent that this aim could not be realized due to a combination of purchase and planning issues. The Council Board's report mentioned that there was a right to keep two other sites under consideration. A recommendation was presented to the Council Board on 2 November 2010 in favour of Site 9 on the outskirts of Llanegryn.</p> <p>No pledge was given that the school would be located at Bryncreug. A proposal to establish an area school on the outskirts of Bryncreug was discussed during 2007, but the strategy plan on which the proposal was based, was rejected. During the review held between 2009-10 in the Tywyn catchment-area, who presented the proposal for an area school in Bro Dysynni, it was clearly noted that the Council would look at sites at Bryncreug and Llanegryn and between the villages.</p>
2	Quality / Suitability of School Buildings		
2.1	Bryncreug should be site of new area school, either site for new building or through existing buildings adapted / Community school more acceptable, "would area school be a community school half way between two villages?" / Grant money will be more readily given to a new area school which in a "community school" / Proposed site in Talybont very isolated – any research done on "effects on pupils of a Primary School being built in complete isolation away from other buildings?", how can they interact with the community?, / As Talybont isolated most children would travel by car increasing fuel consumption / Llanegryn site would increase travel time on a road with a difficult junction and with a narrow proposed site entrance	2	Various viewpoints were presented during the consultation, and an option was presented to the Council Board (2 November 2010) to either select a site on the outskirts of Bryncreug or a site on the outskirts of Llanegryn.
2.2	Parents from the other four villages are willing to travel to bring their children to Ysgol Feithrin in Bryncreug / Children already used to the buildings	1	It is the Council's understanding that this is true

2.3	“Gwynedd Council have certain obligations regarding covenants held within the lease dated 24/05/1978 to this committee as regards the long term future of parts of the school buildings”	1	Ysgol Brynchrug is one of eight schools in the County which is designated as a Community-focused school. A lease was signed in 1978 which guarantees that the Council will support community provision at the site. This obligation remains in force.
3	Finance		
3.1	Financial sense to adapt and upgrade Brynchrug / September 2010 onwards Abergynolwyn children will already be in Brynchrug, this means it will be housing two of the schools already / How much more will it cost to build a new school in Talybont with regard to parking spaces and fencing etc. / Expense of transporting all the children to Talybont, since none could walk	2	The Council Board took the decision in November 2010 that it favoured locating the site on the outskirts of Llanegryn village. The transfer of Abergynolwyn pupils to Ysgol Brynchrug, while providing more robust teaching groups, does not materially affect the original proposal. The remaining three schools all educate 30 or fewer pupils aged 4-11 and it is felt that the original proposal to create a new area school offers the best solution.
4	Statutory Process		
4.1	Misinformed in consultation meetings / Outside organisations not notified or consulted of possible closure / Request a public meeting to discuss continued community hall facilities / Disappointment that meetings were not held that included organisations that make use of the school	6	The consultation was carried out in accordance with the statutory requirements and Assembly Government guidance. Copies of the statutory consultation document were widely distributed to consultees, published on the Council’s website and made available in public libraries.

B3: Response to Statutory Consultation on the Proposal to Close Ysgol Llanegryn

12 written responses received:
 10 Letters (6 Welsh, 4 English)
 2 E-mails (1 Welsh, 1 English)

Comments included from:

2 Ysgol Llanegryn Governors, Ysgol Llanegryn Governing Body, Headteacher-in-care Ysgol Llanegryn, Community Council Llanegryn, 4 letters from parents and 3 from the public

Comment Code	Comments	Number of written responses that contained the comment	Gwynedd Council Response
1.	Educational		
1.1	Ysgol Llanegryn is a brilliant school / Provides education of the highest standard / Teachers a credit to the school – they make it a success / Many children go on to get a University education – important to get a good start / Children, teachers and all the staff are like a big family / Pupils are happy to attend the school	4	Ysgol Llanegryn does indeed provide good quality education. The proposal to close Ysgol Llanegryn and establish an area school to serve Bro Dysynni is driven by the need to ensure that standards are maintained in the face of falling pupil numbers and to provide educational facilities appropriate for the delivery of 21 st Century education.
1.2	Small schools contribute to improved pupil behaviour / lack of anti-social behaviour	1	Both large and small schools are capable of supporting pupil development including appropriate behaviour.
1.4	The proposed area school must be for pupils of the four schools only – access should not be provided to pupils from Aberdyfi / Penybryn etc.	1	The proposed area school will be designed to cater for pupils resident in the four catchment areas of Abergynolwyn, Bryn-crug, Llanegryn and Llwyngwriol. Pupils from these catchment areas will be given first refusal on

			places at the new school. Parental choice means that parents may choose to send their children to any school but only if there is space at the chosen school.
1.5	Concern that class sizes would be significantly larger in the proposed area school	1	Classes at Ysgol Llanegryn are currently around 16 in size. Forecasts included in the statutory consultation predict that around 95 pupils will attend the school across at least four classes. Class sizes could therefore be around 23 in number.
1.6	Closing the school would remove local nursery provision for 3 year olds without the provision of transport to the proposed area school some would go without as they cannot get to the new school	1	Nursery provision is not statutory and therefore no transport has to be provided. However, if there are spaces on buses to the area school nursery age children will be able to use the bus.
1.7	Children currently participate in Eisteddfod, every child participates in school plays and they plant and collect own vegetables in the garden – participating in a yearly gardening show / This would be lost in a larger school / Also participate in church services in Welsh and English	3	There is no reason to assume that children will be deprived of opportunities to take part in such activities in moving from a school or around 30 pupils to one of around 90 pupils.
2.	Child Welfare		
2.1	Children already upset and confused about why their school is closing	1	The closure of a school is a difficult decision and one which is not taken lightly. It is incumbent on all those with an interest in the welfare of children to support them during this time. The Council has an obligation to support pupils, staff and others in the transition to the new school if the Council decides to proceed.
3.	School History		
3.1	Ysgol Llanegryn is one of the oldest in Gwynedd at 350 years old.	5	The school is amongst the oldest in the County.
4.	Language		
4.1	Ysgol Llanegryn / small rural schools in general are essential to the future of the Welsh language / children in Llanegryn fluent in Welsh	4	All Gwynedd's schools are expected to adhere to the Council's Welsh Language Plan. Schools both large and small succeed in this respect. It should be noted that the proposed area school has been supported because it would provide parents with the option of a rural education for their children. The new school would have around 95 pupils, which is the average size of the county's schools.
5.	Community Issues		
5.1	Closing the school would negatively impact on the character of the village / School important part of village and	6	Ysgol Llanegryn pupils would transfer to a new, purpose-built school in the Llanegryn area.

	<p>community / Children are active members of the community / Communities are more important than money; children are entitled to be educated within their own community / School is heart of the village / Closing school will have negative effect on community / Village would become holiday home village for rich incomers / Character of village would change</p>		<p>Llanegryn children will continue to be educated within the Dysynni catchment area, and no than a few hundred yards from the current school. The new area school will be the result of significant public expenditure and will provide a modern community resource which will act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the area.</p> <p>While a school can make a significant contribution to community life, its main purpose must be to provide the best possible education for it pupils. Even so, the Council has conducted a community impact assessment in line with the Government’s expectations. The report has been shared with stakeholders. The report outlines a number of actions which could be taken to mitigate the perceived negative effects of school closures.</p> <p>It is accepted that concerns exist that the closure of a school can negatively impact on the local community, particularly in rural areas. The proposed new area school will need to focus on building links with the communities it serves. There are numerous examples of good practice in areas which faced school reorganisation during the 1960s and have maintained strong links with all constituent communities.</p> <p>A full impact assessment has been conducted on the various options considered in the Tywyn area. The report has been shared with stakeholders. The report outlines a number of actions which could be taken to mitigate the perceived negative effects of school closures.</p> <p>Very little use is made of the school by the wider community.</p> <p>There are numerous examples of good practice in areas which faced school reorganisation during the 1960s and have maintained strong links with all constituent communities.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>New Area School Location</p>		
<p>6.1</p>	<p>Support noted for a neutral site including specific consideration the Talybont site (site 8) / Site should be outside all villages / New area school will only succeed if it is independent / Not willing for Llanegryn to close if area school</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>The proposal outlines the Council’s intention to develop a new school to serve the four communities. The Council’s overall aim would be to develop community schools within communities. However, in this particular instance, there was a strong view in the area in favour of establishing the</p>

	located elsewhere / Needs to be in reasonable access to village / Opposition to closing the school and moving children to an existing school /suspicion that this is the Council's intention / Anger that Bryncreg current school being considered – should be a new build / Support for the concept of a new area school provided it was entirely new and provided the best possible facilities		<p>proposed area school on a site outside the 4 communities. Consequently, an effort was made to secure a site near Talybont as the preferred site. A report was presented for the Council Board's attention on 27 July 2010, outlining this aim. During Summer 2010, it became apparent that this aim could not be realized due to a combination of purchase and planning issues. The Council Board's report mentioned that there was a right to keep two other sites under consideration. A recommendation was presented to the Council Board on 2 November 2010 in favour of Site 9 on the outskirts of Llanegryn.</p> <p>The local authority successfully bid for Welsh Assembly Government capital grant funding worth £5.5m during summer 2010. The grant will finance the building of a new area school along with improvement works to Ysgolion Penybryn, Dyffryn Dulas and Corris, subject to the outcome of statutory consultation.</p> <p>The proposal is for a new area school to serve the four communities and to be located in the Bryncreg/Llanegryn area. It has never been the Council's intention to move children to an existing school.</p>
6.2	The proposed site for the new area school at Bryncreg is prone to flooding / Unable to support the proposed new area school given the absence of a definite site / no planning permission / lack of discussion with landowner / should not have been proposed to governors and parents without proposed site in place / Council needs to make decision and get planning permission and a design draft / Proposal of alternative sites in Llanegryn / There is room for expansion on the current school site – has this been considered? / The school house attached to the school is for sale and could be bought and this would make the site big enough for all 4 schools / A number of the proposed sites are unsuitable	7	The process of identifying a site for the proposed area school has involved significant technical work, discussions with relevant agencies (including the National Park Authority and the Environment Agency), landowners and school and community representatives. The original long list of 20 possible sites had been cut to 9 by Spring 2010 and these sites were discussed with school governors. By the time of the statutory consultation period over Summer 2010 three sites remained under consideration. The Council is confident that the chosen site fulfils the technical requirements.
6.3	A residential facility for people with learning difficulties/on medication which could prove dangerous to pupils	1	There is no evidence or reason to expect this to be an issue for the school.
7.	Transport		
7.1	Concern that no supervision other than that of the driver would be provided on buses.	2	Many primary age pupils in Gwynedd currently travel to school by bus. The authority agrees transport contracts with individual providers. It currently

			does not stipulate that seat belts are required on coaches nor that supervision should be provided.
7.2	Putting children on buses would remove the opportunity for parent interaction at the school gate	1	The proposed site of the new school is on the outskirts of Llanegryn village.
7.3	Request that Llanegryn children should be guaranteed free transport to the new area school	1	Pupils will be provided with transport to the proposed area school in accordance with the Council's School Transport Policy.
7.4	Proposal that cycle/walking paths should be built from Llanegryn to the site of the new school	2	The proposed site of the new school is on the outskirts of Llanegryn village.
7.5	Traffic calming measures should be put in place around the site of the area school	1	Safety issues will be paramount in designing the entrances to the school.
8.	Consultation Process and Information		
8.1	The consultation process has negatively impacted on relationships between the four villages / Concerned about the method of re-organisation in the Tywyn catchment area / Way in which Gwynedd Council pushed and area school has been detrimental / Uncertainty regarding the location and decisions is having a negative effect on the school	3	It is accepted that the process has created uncertainty and some tensions. Should the Council decide to proceed with the proposal to close the schools, the Education Department will undertake a package of activities designed to establish the new area school and to promote cooperation between the schools and communities in the run-up to the opening of the new school.
8.2	No reason to close a school with over 30 pupils attending / Number of children in the school quite high for it's size; Llanegryn being earmarked purely because other schools (Bryncrug & Abergynolwyn) have low numbers	2	All four schools subject to this proposal have fewer than 35 pupils and all therefore need additional funding to ensure a minimum staffing level in accordance with the Council's policy.
8.3	Population projections are not an exact science / pupil numbers fluctuate	2	Pupil projections are based on information provided directly by the school. Pupil numbers in Llanegryn have not exceeded 35 in the past 35 years.
8.4	Concern raised at the transfer of Ysgol Abergynolwyn pupils to Ysgol Bryncrug from September 2010 / Suggestion that Abergynolwyn parents had been forced by the Council to send their children to Bryncrug as only transport there provided	1	Parents of Ysgol Abergynolwyn pupils decided, following discussions with governors and the headteacher, to transfer their children to Ysgol Bryncrug by September 2010. No pressure was put on parents by the Council to transfer pupils.
8.5	Several mistakes in documents that persist even after the changes document was issued / Not much time was allowed for responses. Minutes from meeting on 09/06/10 received on 13/07/10 and responses due 30/07/10 / Location information was received 13/07/10 which resulted in a Governors meeting having to be arranged at short notice / Letter received stating 4 locations but only 3 maps in the meeting; where is the	1	Steps were taken to rectify errors in the original consultation documentation, including the extension of the date for the submission of responses. Notice of the commencement of the consultation period was given in mid May and a preparatory meeting was held in May. The consultation period ran from 7 June to 13 August. The time allowed was sufficient according to Welsh Assembly Government guidelines.

	fourth option?		
9.	Comparison with Other Countries		
9.1	Suggested that England, Scotland and Ireland support small village schools while Wales does not	1	Gwynedd has not undertaken a significant review of primary school provision in 40 years. Most other local authorities across the UK have undertaken such reviews and have closed a number of schools in that time.
10.	Finance		
10.1	No justification for building a new school given the current financial climate / Closing the school would not save money / Cost of building new school more than the cost of running the existing schools	2	<p>The revenue savings anticipated from the implementation of the proposal were identified in the consultation document. It is envisaged that the proposal will save in the region of £164,000 annually after taking account of increased travel costs.</p> <p>The building of a new school would be a significant public investment in a rural area of Gwynedd and should act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the area.</p>

B4: Response to Statutory Consultation on the Proposal to Close Ysgol Llwyngwriol

113 Written responses were received:

- 64 Letters (60 English, 4 Welsh)
- 13 E-mail (12 English, 1 Welsh)
- 34 Questionnaire (34 English)
- 1 Official Act of the Gentleman of Cainnech House
- 1 Art work

Comments included from:

Llangelynnin Community Council and Ysgol Llwyngwriol Governors

Comment Code	Comments	Number of written responses that contained the comment	Gwynedd Council Response
	Questionnaire- Community member questionnaire	34	
	Official Act of the Gentleman of Cainnech House 7 th Standard: “An Act to request an Official Revisitation of the consultation for the closure of Ysgol Llwyngwriol (and others) in light of possible miscalculation under the schools organisation proposal guidelines”.	1	These were designed and circulated by members of Llwyngwriol community. The questionnaires have been reproduced in the package of background papers available to elected members.
	Art work	1	
1	Community		
1.1	School is heart of local community/creates a strong sense of	62	Ysgol Llwyngwriol pupils would transfer to a new, purpose-built school

	community spirit / loss of school would be damaging to the local community and generations of residents/ School brings community together at various events/ school keeps young people in the village		<p>in the Llanegryn/Bryncrug area. The new school will be a community-focused school and will act as a focal point for the wider Bro Dysynni community.</p> <p>Over 35% of Llwyngwril resident primary-age children already attend schools other than Llwyngwril.</p> <p>It is accepted that concerns exist that the closure of a school can negatively impact on the local community, particularly in rural areas. The proposed new area school will need to focus on building links with the communities it serves. There are numerous examples of good practice in areas which faced school reorganisation during the 1960s and have maintained strong links with all constituent communities.</p> <p>A full impact assessment has been conducted on the various options considered in the Tywyn area. The report has been shared with stakeholders. The report outlines a number of actions which could be taken to mitigate the perceived negative effects of school closures.</p> <p>Very little use is made of the school by the wider community.</p>
1.2	If school closes village will become haven for second home buyers and people who have retired / the village would become less attractive to young families	20	This is a trend which is already happening in Llwyngwril and other parts of Bro Dysynni. Low pupil numbers are in part a result of this trend.
1.3	New affordable housing in Llwyngwril would attract more young families and boost the numbers in the school- Gwynedd Council should be spending money on affordable housing	3	There is a need for new affordable housing in the area and Council officers are working on identifying need and responding to perceived need.
1.4	The closure of the school is likely to have a negative impact on local businesses, which could have an affect on elderly in community	10	It is difficult to quantify the impact the closure of a school of 24 pupils would have on the economy of the village. There are currently no substantial employers in the village but there are some smaller businesses which cater for residents and visitors. A large proportion of Llwyngwril resident pupils attending other schools already.
1.5	The new area school is likely to see a significant drop in fundraising activities from the local communities	2	Evidence in other counties suggests that parents and the wider community remain supportive of the school at which their children are educated. The proposed new area school would need to establish a

			strong relationship with its constituent communities.
2	Education		
2.1	Llwyngwrl staff are friendly and care about the children and their education, more sensitive children are at a greater risk of being bullied at a large school	6	The proposed new area school is forecast to have around 95 pupils in 2013/4, taking into account pupils attending the four schools and those eligible to attend the four schools who attend other schools. This is not a large school. There is no reason to suspect that staff will care less about children, or that children are more likely to be bullied, at a school of 95 pupils.
2.2	Excellent quality of education- ESTYN reports	23	Ysgol Llwyngwrl received a good inspection report from ESTYN during the autumn 2009. The proposed new area school would provide the latest equipment, larger peer groups, and a wider range of teacher expertise. There is no reason that education at the new school should not be at least equal to that currently provided at Ysgol Llwyngwrl.
2.3	Environmental awareness in school develops environmentally aware students	1	The new school building will be built to the latest specifications and will have a BREEAM Excellent rating. New school building will aim to achieve a DEC A energy rating and will substantially reduce the associated carbon emissions. The BREEAM requirements will dictate the need for habitat areas and numerous other environmental benefits.
2.4	Smaller classes means more interaction with teachers and better quality of education, children happier in small schools	8	The school's estimated budget – based on 95 pupils – would provide for a minimum of four classes, although the use of resources would be a matter for the governing body. Classes would therefore contain no more than 24 pupils. Classes in Llwyngwrl currently provide for around 12 full time pupils. 12 is the minimum class size the Gwynedd <i>Excellent Education for Gwynedd's Children</i> strategy expects.
2.5	Children attending “Ti a Fi”= bright future for school	1	The Council will promote the establishment of Ti a Fi” and nursery provision within the area.
2.6	Children attending Ysgol Llwyngwrl at present will not receive a better standard of care and education anywhere in the UK, than the level they receive at the present time in Ysgol Llwyngwrl. The latest ESTYN report dated September 2009 confirms this	1	Ysgol Llwyngwrl received an ESTYN inspection in 2009 which saw some evidence of improvement from its last inspection in 2003. On the seven key inspection areas, the school was awarded five grades 2 and two grades 3. This compares favourably with one and unfavourably with one of the two other schools subject to this proposal.
3	Quality/Suitability of School Buildings		

3.1	School is in good repair and has appropriate facilities e.g. playing fields	10	<p>The school building is in a good condition. However, it cannot provide the facilities expected of a 21st Century school. It requires investment in upgrading facilities to include an appropriate hall, foundation phase and ICT area, headteacher/staff rooms and office at an estimated cost of over £200,000. Across the 4 schools, it is envisaged that there is a maintenance post accumulation of £170,000, that £40,000 needs to be spent on fire precautions, £61,000 to ensure that two schools meet DDA requirements, and £530,000 to make the buildings fit for purpose. The Council's Asset Management Plan therefore envisages that over £800,000 needs to be spent on renovating and upgrading the 4 school buildings.</p>
3.2	<p>Feed in tariff scheme makes it possible to eliminate electricity bills and provides direct income over school holidays/Heating system could be redesigned to conform to Renewable Heat Incentive which is due to start next year and will work on same basis as Feed in tariff scheme. School also includes Bioclimatic design features to enhance natural lighting and provide passive solar heating for the building (the above was proposed after the closure of the statutory consultation period but is included here for completeness)</p>	2	<p>The new area school will be built to the highest environmental standard. Efficient use of energy and possibilities for its generation will be part of the design process and benefiting from FIT and RHI will naturally be given consideration. Initial analysis of a proposal received after the closure of the statutory consultation period suggests adapting the school building in line with the proposal would cost in the region of £120,000 in addition to outstanding adaptation works. It should be noted that while this proposal could reduce the costs of heating and lighting the school, the bulk of revenue costs are generated by staffing costs and these would not be reduced. Any savings identified from such a scheme could be implemented at the new area school while also realising significant revenue savings.</p> <p>The proposal does not address some of the key issues which formed the basis for the review of the Tywyn catchment area, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and class size • Suitability and condition of school building. The proposal would not obviate the need for additional investment of approximately £210,000 to adapt and upgrade the existing building. • School have experienced difficulties in recruiting headteachers for many years, and by maintaining the number of schools this would remain an issue • Per pupil budget would remain at around £5174 which is significantly above the County average of £3391

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surplus places <p>For the above reasons the report does not in its self provide sufficient basis to re-consider the proposal.</p>
3.3	How will maintenance costs of school site after closure be funded?	1	<p>Schools receive a maintenance budget annually, as would the proposed new area school. It would be brand new and therefore would not have the significant maintenance and upgrading costs which Ysgol Llwyngwriil and the three other schools subject to this proposal currently face.</p> <p>Should the proposal to close Ysgol Llwyngwriil be implemented, the post-closure use of the site will be identified in line with the Council's policy (as agreed by the Council Board on 15 September 2009).</p>
3.4	The building itself makes little difference to the children's education	3	<p>This is evidently not the case. Estyn's 2007 report "An evaluation of schools performance prior to and after moving into substantially renovated new buildings or property" notes that schools which have moved to new buildings or where substantial renovations have been made to their buildings have seen an improvement in pupils' achievement and attainment, that Estyn inspections of individual schools show that the quality of teaching has improved, that staff morale is raised, that attendance has been maintained and behaviour has improved and that new buildings provide greater choice and better provision in terms of education at the school and in before and after school activities.</p>
4	Information/ Statistics		
4.1	Potential of increase in numbers judging by number of young couples in the village	2	<p>Ysgol Llwyngwriil has provided its own pupil projections for the period 2008-2013. Those projections forecast a decline in pupil numbers at the school, a trend reflected at the other three schools subject to this proposal.</p>
5	Finance		
5.1	School has recently been upgraded-this is a waste of money if school is going to close	4	<p>The local authority is obliged to ensure that all school buildings are sound and fit for purpose. Most schools have been in receipt of some maintenance and capital funding in recent years. The Welsh Assembly Government's new 21st Century Schools programme expects school buildings to be significantly upgraded and adapted to meet new</p>

			requirements.
5.2	Where will the money come from to build new school, more savings will be made keeping things as they are	5	The local authority successfully bid for Welsh Assembly Government capital grant funding worth £5.5m during summer 2010. The grant will finance the building of a new area school along with improvement works to Ysgolion Penybryn and Dyffryn Dulas, Corris subject to the outcome of statutory consultation. The proposal would save £164,000 annually from the schools' revenue budgets and would remove the need to spend in excess of £800,000 on renovating and upgrading the four present buildings.
5.3	The costings provided for the proposed new area school are flawed	2	<p>The costings are based on the school educating 95 pupils. The basis for creation of the estimated budget was explained at both the Catchment Area Review Panel meetings and meetings at the school. If the school provides education for more than 95 pupils, its budget will increase. If it provides for fewer, its budget will be reduced. Additional transport costs have been included in the costings provided to the Catchment Area Review Panel, the school and elected members.</p> <p>There are currently (September 2010) 107 primary age pupils resident in the proposed new area school's catchment area, including 42 pupils in the Llwyngwriil catchment area (excluding the optional Rhoslefain area). Over 10% of these attend schools outside the four schools. It is anticipated that a brand new school building along with larger peer groups and a greater number of teachers would be attractive to parents and would lead to an increase in pupil numbers.</p>
6	Transport		
6.1	Unsupervised school bus, no seat belt, health and safety / Unhappy about transporting very young children on buses	32	Many primary age pupils in Gwynedd currently travel to school by bus. The authority agrees transport contracts with individual providers. It currently does not stipulate that seat belts are required on coaches nor that supervision should be provided.
6.2	Not sustainable or affordable and bad for environment, bus unnecessary expense, rising petrol costs	9	It is accepted that there would be an increase in traffic should this proposal be implemented. However, four schools of varying ages and designs which currently need to be maintained, lit and heated would be replaced by one new environmentally sound and energy efficient building.
6.3	Nursery school and after school activities will cause more	5	There is currently no pre-school nursery provision in Llwyngwriil,

	transport issues, children reliant on transport provided will be excluded from activities such as breakfast club		therefore parents seeking nursery provisions for their children already need to travel. There will be provision at the proposed new area school for children from 2½ years of age and the ability to provide a wider range of pre and post-school activities.
6.4	Dangerous road	11	The route from Llwyngwriol to the proposed sites in the Llanegryn/Bryncrug area is a main 'A' road. It is used extensively by people of all ages currently, including very young children.
6.5	What happens if child falls ill at school or on the bus?	9	School staff is responsible for the care of children while they are at school. Staff would be expected to respond appropriately.
6.6	What happens if child is dropped off the bus and parent has been delayed and is late-will child be left alone?	1	It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that they meet the school bus or arrange suitable cover if they are not available. The bus driver is not responsible for the children whose parents have not arrived to meet the bus. In some instances depending on the age of the child, the child is able to walk from the bus stop to their home safely as long as they follow the guidelines set out in the Highway Code.
6.7	Bussing children to and from new school will have detrimental effect on their day to day lives due to the loss of leisure/ family time	5	The local authority's policy is that children should not need to travel more than 30 minutes in one direction to or from school. This proposal meets this policy aim.
6.8	Will parents be able to use the bus?	1	The bus would be provided for school children only.
6.9	School in Llwyngwriol is well positioned-people are able to walk or cycle there	7	It is accepted that the proposed new area school would not be within walking distance of Llwyngwriol. The sites under consideration for the new school have been chosen due to their centrality and convenience for the communities of all four schools subject to this proposal.
6.10	Nursery age children who have parents that work will miss out if their parents do not drive and there is no bus service provided at lunch time; no bus means only families who can afford to take children could attend leaving children of families that cannot take them disadvantaged	7	Nursery provision would be provided at the area school. The route from Llwyngwriol to the proposed sites is a main A road and a primary public transport route served by public busses.
6.11	Travel costs for parents who are not willing to put their children on the bus	2	The Council will provide free transport for all children which meet its school transport criteria. Any pupils living further than 2 miles from the site of the proposed new school would therefore be eligible for free transport. This includes all current Llwyngwriol pupils. Parents are entitled to choose whether or not to use the transport provided.
7	Statutory Process		
7.1	Statutory document contains errors, omissions, standard of the consultation paper not satisfactory, lack of	11	The statutory consultation paper was released to all schools subject to statutory consultation on 24 May 2010. The Llwyngwriol paper

	professionalism		<p>contained some errors, including the erroneous inclusion of the term “draft consultation paper” at the head of the paper and a description of the Government’s definition of surplus places which noted that significant surplus places existed in schools which had 25% or 30 in number, rather than the correct definition which is 25% and 30 in number. These errors were corrected and an amendment sheet was prepared and circulated in hard copy to all consultees on 13 July 2010, and electronically where email addresses were available. The amendment sheet was also placed on the Council’s website alongside the original consultation document. Spare copies were left with the school, and further copies were subsequently sent on the request of the schools. The consultation period was extended by a further fortnight from 30 July 2010 to 13 August 2010 to allow for the circulation of the amendment paper and an additional paper containing information on locations which were under consideration as sites for the proposed new area school.</p> <p>The authority accepts that errors were made in the original documentation but has sought to mitigate these errors.</p>
7.2	Unfair and misleading, not enough information about the proposal	7	The authority has sought to provide a balanced account of the possible advantages and disadvantages of the proposal
8	Welsh Language		
8.1	Closing school would have negative effect on the welsh language in the area	8	It is accepted that closing the school would remove a Welsh-medium institution from Llwyngwriil. However, pupils would continue to be educated in adherence to the authority’s Welsh language policy and would continue to follow the same path to secondary education. There is no reason to suspect that the use of Welsh would necessarily decline among pupils. The proposed new area school will need to focus on building links with the communities it serves. There are numerous examples of good practice in areas which faced school reorganisation during the 1960s and have maintained strong links with all constituent communities.
8.2	“Welsh language would not be taught in centralised school”	1	This is untrue. All schools in Gwynedd are expected to adhere to the county’s language policy. The proposed new area school would therefore be expected to support the development of fully bilingual children.

8.3	School promotes Welsh language and local culture	15	Ysgol Llwyngwrl is a Welsh-medium institution in a community in which a large proportion of residents are non-Welsh speaking. The authority commissioned external consultants to carry out a language impact study on the proposal. They found – as evidence in a report published on the Authority’s website and widely circulated – that the proposal to close Ysgol Llwyngwrl and three others and create a new area school was likely to have a very positive impact on the use and ability of Welsh by pupils.
8.4	Helps incoming non-Welsh children learn the language	8	The proposed new area school would implement the authority’s Welsh language policy and would support non-Welsh speaking children to become fully bilingual.
9	General		
9.2	Unhappy that children as young as 4 would be mixing with 11 year olds	1	This already happens at Ysgol Llwyngwrl and every other primary school in the county.
9.3	Federalisation should have been considered as an alternative to closure	1	Possibilities for the establishment of federal or other collaborative arrangements between Ysgol Llwyngwrl and others were considered during the Catchment Area Review process. Specific models included the federalisation of Ysgol Llwyngwrl with Abergynolwyn, Brynchrug and Llanegryn, and in another model with Ysgol y Friog only. Costings were prepared and circulated to the schools’ representatives during the process and can be viewed on the Council’s website. These were ultimately not taken forward as a basis for the catchment area proposal for reasons set out in the report presented to Gwynedd Council on 10 December 2010.
9.4	Closure shows disregard toward feelings and opinions of local people , Gwynedd Council not listening, during public meetings vote against closing school unanimous	5	It is accepted that a significant level of opposition exists within Llwyngwrl to the proposal to close the school and transfer pupils to a new school at a new site outside Llwyngwrl. No decision to close schools is easy, but it is felt that this proposal provides the best option for the provision of high-quality, sustainable rural education in the Bro Dysynni area in the medium to long term.
9.5	Moving children from Ysgol Llwyngwrl to another school would be disruptive	1	Any change can be disruptive. It would be incumbent on the local authority to support the schools while the proposed new area school is built including the fostering of collaborative arrangements between the relevant schools.
9.6	Every parent has the right to educate their child where they wish- people of Llwyngwrl wish their children to be	1	Many parents in Llwyngwrl choose to send their children to schools other than Llwyngwrl. In September 2010, 20 Llwyngwrl-resident

	educated in Llwyngwriil	<p>primary-age pupils (of a total of 42) attended a primary school other than Llwyngwriil.</p> <p>Parents have a statutory right to express a preference as to the school their children should attend. However, this does not extend to determining the Council's school organisation arrangements which addresses parental and other views through the formal consultation process.</p>
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B5: Responses to Statutory Consultation on the Proposal to Extend the Age Range of Ysgol Pen Y Bryn, Tywyn o 4-11 to 3-11 age Active from 31 August 2011

5 Written responses received:

1 Letter (1 English)

2 E-mails with letter attached (2 English)

1 E-mail (1 Welsh)

1 Explanatory letter with a petition containing 825 names (English)

Comments included from:

Tywyn Community Council, past supervisor of Margaret Barnard Playgroup, leader of the Margaret Barnard Playgroup and parents

Cod Sylwad	Sylwadau	Nifer o ymatebion ysgrifenedig oedd yn cynnwys y sylwad	Ymateb Cyngor Gwynedd
1.	Effect of the proposal on the Cylch Meithrin Tywyn and the Margaret Barnard Playgroup		
1.1	A petition against the perceived "threat of closure" which the proposal to open a nursery class at Ysgol Penybryn posed to the two nurseries was presented jointly by both nurseries and signed by 825 individuals (27 July 2010)	1	The petition has been recorded and a copy made available to elected members.
1.2	Support for the current system to remain unchanged	1	This point is understood. For reasons outlined throughout discussions in the area, the status quo for schools is not an option. Should this proposal be implemented, discussions will be held with local playgroups.
2.	Education		
2.1	Both nurseries and Ysgol Penybryn have received very positive ESTYN inspections during the past year / High standard of care	3	The quality of provision at the nurseries and the school is very good. This proposal is not driven by concern that any of the providers delivers a poor service.

2.2	Penybryn school is already under pressure to maintain its high educational standards. Concern was expressed that increasing the number of pupils and classes would place additional pressure on the school. / How would additional staffing and resource needs be met, if at all? Concern at reduction in staffing numbers. Concern that less experienced staff would be recruited at the school to save money.	3	Any increase in pupil numbers also leads to an increase in funding to ensure appropriate staffing provision.
2.3	The nursery class at Penybryn would be too large. How would appropriate adult: child ratio be maintained?	1	Foundation Stage guidance outlines clearly the adult: child ratio expected of at least one adult for every 8 children. This ratio would be maintained.
3.	Finance		
3.1	The proposal to open a nursery class at Penybryn is driven solely by the school's financial considerations. / "At what cost does the LEA want to save money –at the cost of the welfare of all the children in the Tywyn area by all accounts"	3	Ysgol Penybryn is one of only three schools (of 103) in Gwynedd – and the only school in the Tywyn catchment area - which currently cannot provide nursery education. The proposal is intended to ensure consistency of provision.
3.2	Worry that funding would be swallowed up by the school and not spent on the children it was meant for	1	The use of school budgets is a matter for the headteacher and governing body of the school. However, schools have duties under the Foundation stage to ensure full delivery of the Assembly Government's programme.
4.	Staffing and Resources		
4.1	Suggestion that consideration is being given to opening a nursery class in Penybryn solely because a nursery class currently exists at Aberdyfi. It was stated that the majority of Aberdyfi's three and four year olds attended the Tywyn nursery groups already. It was suggested that 3 and 4 year olds who attended Ysgol Aberdyfi did so to "boost" pupil numbers at Aberdyfi. / A choice of nursery providers already exists within the town and there is no need for the school to provide nursery education / Playgroups have extensive range of appropriate equipment which has been built up over the years – how is the school going to match this?	2	Ysgol Penybryn is currently one of only three primary schools statutorily unable to provide nursery education. This proposal would ensure consistency of provision across the catchment area; including maintaining the provision for nursery age pupils from Aberdyfi should Ysgol Aberdyfi close. Many other communities in Gwynedd successfully support both a school (with a nursery class) alongside out of school nursery provision.
4.2	Playgroup facilities have been in the town for 65 years	2	Should this proposal be implemented, the need for provision for nursery age children would continue.
5	Readiness of Children to Attend School		
5.1	Children aren't ready to commence schooling – issues including separation from parents, toilet training, speech and language development / Staff at local nursery deal with accidents that young children have quickly and without fuss whereas it is understood that parents would have to go and	2	The vast majority of children in Gwynedd attend nursery classes at a primary school from the September following their third birthday.

	clean and change the child at the school, which is worrying as a child could be left in a mess for a long time		
5.2	Concern that placing 3 year old children in a school of around 250 children would be detrimental to the development of the child / Local nursery schools provide warm, friendly and supportive environment	3	Children of three years of age currently attend nursery classes at schools larger than Ysgol Penybryn. The new Foundation Phase ensures a seamless progression in provision for children from 3-7 years of age and this proposal would support that provision.
6	Statutory Consultation Process		
6.1	Lack of information and notice given to parents and staff about the statutory consultation meeting, the playgroup was not informed and some parents found out about the meeting at 3:20pm on the day of the meeting	1	Due to a misunderstanding, few parents attended the statutory meeting at Ysgol Penybryn. In light of this, another meeting was arranged at the school, and a further meeting was held with the Portfolio Holder with both playgroups during Summer 2010.

Appendix C ANALYSIS OF THE PUPIL'S QUESTIONNAIRE

The pupil of the school's affected by the recommendations, were asked for their opinions about the changes, the schools were given the choice of either completing a questionnaire, which was created by a children and young people's facilitator or through a session with a children and young people's facilitator

Abergynolwyn, Bryncreug, Llwyngwriil a Penybryn schools completed questionnaires. On the request of the school a session was held in Ysgol Aberdyfi by a children and young people's facilitator, and a report was written by the facilitator. On the request of the school, the opinions of Llanegryn pupil's were not presented.

The following questions were asked. It was explained to the pupil that a change could be happening, and it was asked what their opinion of this was.

- How do you feel about this?
- Does anything concern you?
- What are you looking forward to most?
- What are the most important things for you in a school?

Ysgol Penybryn - Tywyn		
	Comments	Number of comments
How do you feel about this?	☺	35
	☹	20
	☹	6
Does anything concern you?	No – nothing worries me about this	33
	Bullies	8
	Children having to travel	1
	Teachers loosing their jobs	1
	Not knowing whether I'll make friends	1
What are you looking forward to most?	More friends	36
	New teachers	2
	New toys	1
	No need to waste money on small schools	1
	Not looking forward	1
What are the most important things for you in a school?	Learning	11
	Good Teachers	13
	Good friends	9
	Rules	10
	Learn to respect	4
	Listen	3
	Being courteous	3

	Being safe	2
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Ysgol Abergynolwyn		
	Comments	Number of comments
How do you feel about this?	☺ ☹ ☹	This information wasn't presented
Does anything concern you?	No – nothing worries me about this Loosing teachers This is sad Loosing friends	4 3 2 2
What are you looking forward to most?	New friends New teachers New toys Science Lab New Cook New building	6 1 2 2 1 2
What are the most important things for you in a school?	Good Teachers Friends Play Good Cook Books Good building	7 11 6 4 2 3

Ysgol Bryncrug		
	Comments	Number of comments
How do you feel about this?	☺ ☹ ☹	12 7 3
Does anything concern you?	Bullies Teachers loosing jobs Not as much playing space The school too big Concerns where the school will be Children in large classrooms Children going to other schools – the school being closed	6 4 3 4 1 1 2
What are you looking forward to most?	New friends New things / rooms Everything New toys More space to play Bigger classrooms Everything new	13 3 3 2 2 2 2
What are the most important things for you in a school?	Teachers Rules	14 12

	Friends	8
	Fruit shop	4
	Good education	3
	Play room	2
	Play space and toys	1

Ysgol Llwyngwrl		
	Comments	Number of comments
How do you feel about this?	☺ ☹ ☹	1 5 13
Does anything concern you?	Concern about bullies Difficult to make friends Going on the bus Not being able to walk or cycle to schools is bad for the environment Our safety on the school bus	No numbers were presented
What are you looking forward to most?	New friends and bigger classroom Different place to play New teachers New cook New adventure	No numbers were presented
What are the most important things for you in a school?	Friends Good education Good food Nice teachers Learning ho to read and write	No numbers were presented

Ysgol Aberdyfi		
	Comments	Number of comments
How do you feel about this?	☺ ☹ ☹	0 1 16
Does anything concern you?	We won't be speaking Welsh as much It won't be possible for us to walk to school Mr's Jones' lunch is very nice, she won't be cooking for us Our school is very successful in competitions – we'll this change? No one will want to live in Aberdyfi if there won't be school there	No numbers were presented

What are you looking forward to most?	The majority of children not looking forward for the change, they fell that their school is 'special'	No numbers were presented
What are the most important things for you in a school?	Nice and fair teachers Meeting friends Speaking Welsh Everyone being able to take part in activities After school activities	No numbers were presented

**Appendix D: Ysgol Abergynolwyn Statutory Consultation – November 2010
Abergynolwyn Consultation Meeting to Close 31 March 2011**

MINUTES OF YSGOL ABERGYNOLWYN STATUTORY ADVISORY MEETING

15 November 2010, 18:00

STAFF, GOVERNORS AND PARENTS

10 attended including chair of governors, clerk to the governors, school teacher, school caretaker, local councillor, governors and parents. The chair of governors welcomed everybody to the meeting.

Welcome and Matters Already Mentioned

The Head of Education thanked the clerk to the governors for the minutes of the last meeting which mentioned certain matters that were raised during the last meeting.

Regarding use following closure, it was reiterated that there will be a 6 month period for the community to prepare a business plan. The aim is for the local Community Council to hold an open meeting. Guidance is required as to the type of support and developments that are possible, and receive such guidance from sources other than the education department. Hannah Joyce, Area Regeneration Officer for Meirionydd Coast will need to be contacted.

The Council could confirm the ownership of the school garden.

One way transport had been organized to Ysgol Brynrcrug for the girl in the nursery class.

It was explained that with regard to the photocopier, a 5 year agreement had been secured and it would cost almost as much to cancel the contract as it would to retain it. It appears that another school in the area wishes to take over the contract. This will provide a saving for everybody, it was agreed that this was acceptable as well as for the Council officers to organise it.

Tony Bate is to receive e-mails and the headteacher's mail.

It was said that attendance on Ysgol Brynrcrug governing bodies was a matter for the governors.

The head of education presented the statutory consultation document and started to guide the governors through the document.

Location of the Proposed Area School

The decision about deciding upon the location of the new area school was raised, the head of education offered members an opportunity to voice their opinion on the decision but they were reminded that closure of Ysgol Abergynolwyn was a separate matter. Some meeting members wished to give their opinion on the recent announcement on the location of the area school at Llanegryn. This part of the meeting was hosted by the chair of governors.

On 02/11/10, the area school's location was decided, the Council Board supported a site on the outskirts of Llanegryn. Those present voiced the following views:

- Disappointment that the school would be in a location that is further away.
- The aim was to have a neutral site, the centre of Llanegryn would not be a neutral location. 10 miles is a long way for children to travel. The community have accepted the need for a change locally for the children's well-being and do so without making a fuss. Now feel that we have been let down. Have been judged locally for not making a fuss.
- Some do not understand why a neutral site is not possible. Impossible to obtain a compulsory purchase order on the site and unable to delay due to the Assembly available funding time-table.
- Once the school has been established, it will have to be run as an area school. Distance is a psychological matter: the school gets further and further from the village. Community has been flexible and followed the order of things and a major change has now caused an upset. The lead guidance or misguidance given has created an element of disappointment. Brynrcrug is a social

village. Dissatisfaction is evident; it is felt at this meeting. 6 children from the area are picked up by a bus at 8:15 a.m. to go to Ysgol Brynchrug and Llanegryn is even further away. It is not merely a matter of going straight down the Valley as the road is dangerous.

- On the former headteacher's retirement, she said that hopefully the children from Aber would remain together as they were special. This will not be the case due to other available options namely Ysgol Pennal or Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas, Corris.
- This has led to disappointment.
- Everybody has worked hard to make the move work but inspiration has been lost. Feel that there is a need to start from scratch.

The head of education said that it should be made clear that the local councillor had spoken on their behalf in the Council, that their views had been heard. He also understood that the community had prioritised the children's well-being when school closure was being considered.

The head of education then led the discussion and continued to through the statutory consultation paper.

The Background to the proposal

Regarding point 1.6, specific circumstances of Ysgol Abergynolwyn arose resulting in a second consultation. Is there any purpose to hold another consultation with the children of Abergynolwyn? The Council offer this but a decision by parents and governors is required regarding what would be suitable, as a consultation has already been held with the children. What different comments would the children make? Would they wish to give a view? The issue was discussed and it was decided that it was important that they be given an opportunity to give their views, it is their future that is at stake and it is important that the Assembly receives the children's opinion. It was agreed that it was important that the children were not exploited. The Council's officers would be responsible for making arrangements to obtain the children's response.

A record of comments would be verbally presented to the scrutiny committee at the end of the month.

Reasons for Presenting a New Proposal

No written response was received during the statutory consultation held during Summer 2010 (point 2.1). The meeting held was the one when the situation was discussed and it was unanimously decided to transfer the children in September 2010 to Ysgol Brynchrug.

The meeting in question in point 2.6 is the one where it was discussed that it would be suitable to start the statutory process. The proposal is directly linked to the current situation at Ysgol Abergynolwyn.

Reasons for Closing Ysgol Abergynolwyn

Points 3.1 and 3.2 were mentioned regarding the financial safety-net.

3.3 – the budget will go to the education department if the school closes in March 2011. The first term's expenditure has already been spent. Only the caretaker's expenditure will need to be considered from now on.

Point 3.6 and class sizes were mentioned.

Advantages of Closing Ysgol Abergynolwyn

4.1 has already been discussed regarding providing better opportunities for the children through bringing them together.

Figures 4.2 are based on numbers currently attending schools.

Figures in point 4.5 are based on the current figures.

Savings from school closures go to the education department. A proportion of the money will go to the area but this will not be implemented until the entire catchment-area re-organization is complete. This is a plan but governors are to be consulted.

Disadvantages of Closing Ysgol Abergynolwyn

Point 5.1 could mean that a resource is lost unless the business plan is approved.

Impact of the proposal

It was explained that unless objections were received during the consultation period, the council would consider school closure by 31/03/11.

Free transport to Ysgol Brynchrug has currently been organised for every pupil and this will also apply to the area school. The policy is that every child receives transport to the catchment-area school or the nearest school if they reside over 2 miles from the school.

It was mentioned that some children do not receive free transport but these children already attend Ysgol Brynchrug and it was explained that it was the parents' choice to take their children to Brynchrug at an earlier stage. These children would receive transport in the event of the formal closure of Ysgol Abergynolwyn.

Staffing

There is a policy on any dismissals.

A pledge has been given to employ the teacher until the area school has been established. This pledge does not represent a commitment to a specific school, the teacher is currently at Penybryn and Brynchrug, but it does not follow that this will be the arrangement until the area school has been established.

A caretaker is now employed for 5 hours a week to look after the building. It is likely that this arrangement will last beyond March 2011 as the building has to be maintained. Once the area school has been established, a headteacher and teachers will have to be appointed. Staff who work at Bro Dysynni schools (Abergynolwyn, Brynchrug, Llanegryn and Llwyngwriil) will have first refusal. The teacher at Abergynolwyn will then be on an equal footing with the area's teachers.

Next Steps

Anybody is welcome to express an opinion but views will have to be obtained by the end of the consultation period on 26 November 2010. The audience were offered the opportunity to write a letter to express a view tonight, while everyone is present. The proposal will be verbally presented to the children and young people scrutiny committee on 30 November 2010.

The statutory notice closure process and the right to present objections was explained, and if there are objections, the proposal will be submitted to the education minister (from past experience, this could take a prolonged period). If objections are not received, it will be submitted to the Council board. The figures and flow-diagrams were shown in the appendices. It was mentioned that those attending supported the process.

Any Questions or Comments

Officers were asked to commence research work to discover school admission entitlements. It was agreed that the work would be sent to the property department's officers.

It was agreed to report back with the area regeneration officer's details and that the chair of governors would be the contact point.

Everybody was thanked for attending.

PUPIL'S COMMENTS

Ysgol Abergynolwyn		
	Sylwadau	Nifer sylwadau
How do you feel about this?	☺ ☹ ☹	4 6 0
Is there something worrying you about this?	Some activities not as good Far from home – need to get up earlier in the morning (others stating that this isn't a problem because they have to travel in a taxi already) Sad to leave Abergynolwyn We were like a family in Abergynolwyn We miss Mrs Evans Not sure where things are	This information wasn't presented
What do you enjoy about this?	New friends We like the children in the meithrin class A lot of children here More toys to play with Fruit shop Not the only child who will be going to secondary school Play various games Going to the garden any time There is a ysgol feithrin and after school club at Brynchrug We are glad Miss Wyn is here with us. Plenty of space	This information wasn't presented
What's the most important thing for you in a school?	Everyone friends Rules Everybody kind Teachers Thinking of others Being Learning in interesting ways Health and Safety Helping others	This information wasn't presented