

MEETING	COUNCIL
DATE	1 March 2011
TITLE	Proposed closure of Ysgol Aberdyfi by 31 August 2013
PURPOSE	This is a report on the statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi by 31 August 2013. This follows the Council's decision in December 2010 that it wished to amend the original implementation date of 31 August 2011. The change in the implementation date necessitated a new period of consultation
RECOMMENDATION	To approve the recommendation to close Ysgol Aberdyfi by 31 August 2013
AUTHOR	Iwan Trefor Jones, Strategic Director
PORTFOLIO LEADER	Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts

At its meeting on 16 December 2010, Gwynedd Council considered a report on a period of statutory consultation period held in the Tywyn catchment area. The proposal consulted on relevant to Ysgol Aberdyfi was that the school should close by 31 August 2011. The Council decided that Ysgol Aberdyfi should close, but that the implementation date should be changed to 31 August 2013 so that improvement works on Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn could be completed first..

The change to the proposal required a new period of consultation. The content of this report follows the Council's decision to amend the implementation date for the closure of Ysgol Aberdyfi to 31 August 2013, and the subsequent statutory consultation carried out on the new proposal during January-February 2011.

Analysis of comments presented during the statutory consultation period are produced in the appendices of this report. It was agreed during Statutory Consultation 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, all councillors will also receive copies.

This report was discussed by the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 24 February 2011.

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 size
- 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 Brynchrug, Abergynolwyn, Llwyngwriil and Llanegryn schools
 - a new area school to serve the communities of Brynchrug, Abergynolwyn, Llwyngwriil and Llanegryn
 - co-operation between Llwyngwriil and Friog schools
 - establish 3 federal schools in the catchment-area with the others remaining as foundation phase schools
 - close Llwyngwriil, Llanegryn and Abergynolwyn schools and adapt the site at Brynchrug 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 Bryncreg or Llanegryn catchment-area*** to open during the school year 2013-14. This involves the ***closure of Abergynolwyn, Bryncreg, Llwyngwrl 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 – Summer 2010

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, Bryncreg, Llanegryn, Llwyngwrl 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 at the school's request a joint meeting for parents and community members at Ysgol Aberdyfi in June 2010. Minutes of these meetings were taken by Council officers and circulated to the relevant schools. They are attached at Appendix 2.
- 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. 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 4.
- 4.6 By 13 August 2010, 35 responses had been received in total on the Aberdyfi proposal.

5. Comments received during the initial 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 3.

6. The Council's decision on 16 December 2010

- 6.1 The Council considered responses on the proposal to close Aberdyfi by 31 August 2011 and decided:
 - to approve the undertaking of a statutory consultation period on the amended recommendation to close ysgol Aberdyfi during 2013-14 academic year, 31 August 2013 with the aim of closing the school once the improvements to Ysgol Penybryn are completed.
- 6.2 The Council's decision meant that a new period of consultation had to be held on the proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi by 31 August 2013.

7. The Statutory Consultation – January-February 2011

- 7.1. In line with the statutory requirements and Welsh Assembly Government guidance, Gwynedd Council undertook a period of statutory consultation on the proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi by 31 August 2013 with relevant stakeholders from 17 January to 14 February 2011.
- 7.2. A Statutory Consultation paper was prepared and disseminated to relevant consultees in Aberdyfi during the week of 10 January 2011.
- 7.3. At the school's request, a single statutory consultation meeting was held for staff, governors, parents and community members at Ysgol Aberdyfi on the evening of 1 February 2011. Minutes of these meetings were taken by Council

officers and sent to Ysgol Aberdyfi for comment. They are attached at Appendix 2.

- 7.4. It was agreed during the meeting that minutes of the meetings and copies of written responses would be provided to all Elected Members.
- 7.5. By the end of the statutory consultation period on 14 February 2011, 16 responses had been received in total on the Aberdyfi proposal.
- 7.6. Copies of all responses – both to the initial consultation during Summer 2010 and the new consultation in January and February 2011 have been 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. Comments have also been published on the Council's website, and individual copies have been presented to all Councillors.
- 7.7. As noted above, the Statutory Consultation paper issued in January 2011 stated that all correspondence received during the initial Statutory Consultation during Summer 2010 would be included as responses to this consultation. The following section therefore outlines comments received during both consultation periods and the Council's response.

8. Ysgol Aberdyfi

- 8.1 Ysgol Aberdyfi provides education for 23 pupils aged 3-11. The proposal under consideration is to close Ysgol Aberdyfi by 31 August 2013.
- 8.2 The written responses and comments received during statutory meeting at Ysgol Aberdyfi 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
- 8.3 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.

8.4 Educational standards

- 8.4.1 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. Ysgol Aberdyfi will be inspected within the next year.

- 8.4.2 The proposal envisages adapting and upgrading the buildings of Ysgol Penybryn to make them fit for the 21st Century. A proportion of the capital funding secured for the Tywyn project - £1.2m – will be spent on Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn. There is every reason to expect that the upgrading of the building with modern facilities can only improve on the education delivered at Ysgol Penybryn.
- 8.4.3 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.
- 8.4.4 Class sizes at Aberdyfi are currently 11.5. 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.
- 8.4.5 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.
- 8.4.6 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.

8.5 Travel

- 8.5.1 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 23 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.
- 8.5.2 Aberdyfi is served by good public transport links, including public buses and trains. The road from Aberdyfi is of good quality.
- 8.5.3 Gwynedd Council does not currently provide adult supervision, other than the driver, on school buses. However, the Council proposed to provide adult supervision on buses which transport pupils from Aberdyfi to Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, and to review the arrangement after the first term.
- 8.5.4 Some concerns were expressed about the appropriateness of the pick-up and drop-off points outside Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn. A proportion of the capital spending earmarked for Ysgol Penybryn will be used to deal with this issue.

8.5.5 The proposal to allow Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, to open a nursery class is currently the subject of statutory notices. If the proposal is implemented, Ysgol Penybryn will be able to provide nursery education. Places will be made available to children from the Aberdyfi catchment area in line with the current policy. While free transport will not be provided for nursery age pupils, parents will be able to purchase places on Council-provided transport should they wish to do so.

8.6 Buildings

8.6.1 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.

8.6.2 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, subject to the completion of the statutory process.

8.6.3 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.

8.6.4 The availability of capital funding to improve Ysgol Penybryn is dependent on the full implementation of the proposals for the whole Tywyn catchment area.

8.7 Capacity

8.7.1 Pupil numbers at both schools jointly have reduced by 27% between 1975 and 2010. The population of Ysgol Aberdyfi has reduced from 66 to 23 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.

8.7.2 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.

8.7.3 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%.

8.8 Finance

- 8.8.1 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.
- 8.8.2 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.
- 8.8.3 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.

8.9 Community Impact

- 8.9.1 Around 40% of Aberdyfi's primary-age population is currently educated elsewhere, mainly in Tywyn.
- 8.9.2 A summary of the community based facilities and community use of the schools' facilities is provided in the statistical analysis agreed by every school. 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 school building by the community, although pupils do contribute to community events.
- 8.9.3 The 021/2009 Welsh Assembly Government School Organisation Proposals Circular notes that bodies bringing forward proposals for school reorganisation must consider community issues in formulating proposals.
- 8.9.4 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.

8.10 Language impact

8.10.1 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.

8.10.2 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.

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

8.11 Equalities impact

8.11.1 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.

8.12 Consideration of alternatives

8.12.1 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.

8.12.2 Ysgol Aberdyfi governors have discussed the possibility of federalising with Ysgol Pennal with Ysgol Pennal governors. While they have been reassured that Ysgol Pennal has no objection to working with Ysgol Aberdyfi, governors noted that they had embarked on developing a collaborative model with Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas, Corris. This model is developing well with the support of Gwynedd Council officers and WLGA consultants.

8.12.3 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.

8.12.4 The full proposals for the Tywyn area have been supported by the allocation of capital grant funding by the Welsh Assembly Government subject to the completion of the statutory period.

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

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

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

8.13.3 No discrete economic impact assessment was undertaken in the Tywyn catchment area. Economic impact assessments are not required by the Welsh Assembly Government.

9. Summary of the proposals

9.1 The rationale for the proposals is summarised below. The recommendations are made having

considered the consultation responses and having regard to the Councils strategy document *Primary Education of the Best Quality for the children of Gwynedd* and the requirements of Circular 21/2009 School Reorganisation Proposals.

9.2 The proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi is part of a wider proposal to restructure education in the Tywyn catchment area. The effectiveness of the proposals are dependent on their full implementation. Noted below, therefore, are a list of facts and indicators that outline the rationale for the proposals for the whole of the Tywyn catchment area.

9.3 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.

9.4 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.

9.5 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

9.6 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.

- 9.7 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.
- 9.8 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.
- 9.9 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.
- 9.10 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.
- 9.11 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. Next steps

- 10.1. If the Council approves these proposals, statutory notices will be published immediately to close Ysgol Aberdyfi by 31 August 2013.
- 10.2. If it is decided to proceed, statutory notices will clearly state the aims for the school. The statutory notice will be circulated to the school and other relevant establishments, copies will be placed in public places in the area and on the Council's web-site. Not less than a 2 month period will be allocated for presentation of formal written objections to the statutory notice.
- 10.3. 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.

11. Journey through the Council's Committees

- 11.1 A report on this proposal was presented to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on 24 February 2011. A verbal report on the Committee's deliberations and recommendations will be given during the full Council meeting.

12. Recommendations

- 12.1 To approve the proposal to discontinue **Ysgol Aberdyfi** by 31 August 2013 providing places for children in the catchment-area at Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, and to publish statutory notices pursuant to Section 29 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to that effect .

Background Documents:

Assembly Newsletter Guidelines 21/2009

Gwynedd Council – Excellent Primary Education for Children in Gwynedd

Agenda's and papers of Catchment Area Review Panel Meetings

Statistical Information

Models considered

Language, Community and Equality Impact Assessment

Full Council Report – 15/7/10

Full copies of correspondence received in response to consultation

Copies are available for all to view on the Council Website, in Education Department Area Offices (Caernarfon, Dolgellau, Pwllheli) and Tywyn Library and for Council Members – copies for Political Groups and in Members Lounge.

**APPENDIX 1
STATUTORY CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

**PROPOSAL TO CLOSE YSGOL ABERDYFI
TO BE IMPLEMENTED FROM 31 AUGUST 2013**

STATUTORY CONSULTATION PAPER

Note:

A consultation on a proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi by 31 August 2011 was held during Summer 2010. Gwynedd Council decided at its meeting on 16 December 2010 to amend the proposal so as to extend the date of implementation of the closure until 31 August 2013. As a result, a new consultation period must be held on the new proposal. This consultation therefore is held on a proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi by 31 August 2013.

1. Background to the proposal

- 1.1 This consultation is held on a proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi.
- 1.2 If the proposal is agreed, the school will close on 31 August 2013.
- 1.3 It is intended to extend the current catchment-area of Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, to take in the current catchment-area of Ysgol Aberdyfi as from 1 September 2013.
- 1.4 This consultation is held with pupils, parents, governors and staff of Ysgol Aberdyfi as well as neighbouring schools, the local community and other stakeholders.
- 1.5 The statutory consultation will be held until 14 February 2011. Details for presenting responses to the consultation are provided at the end of this document.
- 1.6 A report on the consultation results will be presented to Gwynedd Council Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 24 February 2011 and Full Council on 1 March 2011.

2. How was this proposal developed?

- 2.1 The Council established an Improvement Working Group in June 2008 to develop a strategy to address primary schools organisation within the county.
- 2.2 The Improvement Working Group presented a report to Gwynedd Council on 2 April 2009, namely *Primary Education of the Best Quality for Children in Gwynedd*. The strategy noted an intention to conduct a review of all primary

schools on a secondary catchment-area basis, and criteria were set for prioritising catchment-areas for review. The Council approved the Strategy without objection.

- 2.3 This proposal is presented following substantial discussions in the Tywyn catchment-area between June 2009 and October 2009, including:
- 5 Tywyn Catchment-area Review Panel meetings
 - Two series of meetings with governors, staff and parents of all primary schools in the catchment-area
 - A session for the children and young people of the catchment-area
 - Language and community impact assessment of the proposals
- 2.4 This proposal was accepted as a basis for statutory consultation by the Council on 10 December 2009.
- 2.5 A statutory consultation on the proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi by 31 August 2011 was held between 7 June and 13 August 2010.
- 2.6 Gwynedd Council decided on 16 December 2010 that it proposed closing Ysgol Aberdyfi but wished to amend the implementation date to 31 August 2013.
- 2.7 The Council's reason for amending the implementation date was to ensure that adaptations to the buildings at Ysgol Penybryn had been completed before the closure of Ysgol Aberdyfi.
- 2.8 As a result of the change to the implementation date, the Council is obliged to consult this new proposal, namely that Ysgol Aberdyfi should close on 31 August 2013 once improvements to Ysgol Penybryn have been completed.

3. Why present this proposal?

- 3.1 The proposal is driven by several factors. Principal factors for consideration are outlined in the Assembly Government Circular 021/2009 Newsletter and Gwynedd Council Strategy *Education of the Best Quality for Children in Gwynedd*.
- 3.2 Local authorities are expected to ensure effective use of resources. Ysgol Aberdyfi lies within Gwynedd Council minimum staffing protection net that guarantees at least a headteacher and teacher for every school which has more than 15 full-time pupils. This meant an additional £22,212 for Ysgol Aberdyfi during the 2009/10 financial year in addition to their allocation.
- 3.3 There is a substantial number of surplus places at Ysgol Aberdyfi. Assembly Government guidelines define a substantial number as in excess of 25% when there are more than 30 surplus places in number. 75% of places at the school are surplus.

- 3.4 If the proposal was implemented, and having considered the additional costs of transporting primary age children in the Aberdyfi catchment-area to Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, up to an additional £57,000 is transferred to the Ysgol Penybryn budget. This will allow that school to maintain a minimum of an additional teacher and assistant. There will be a further saving of £57,000 that will principally transfer to Gwynedd schools budget, mainly to reduce class sizes.
- 3.5 The strategy specifies ideal class sizes of between 12-25 pupils. Class sizes at Ysgol Aberdyfi at the time the proposal was made stood at 10 (and currently stand at 11.5). If this proposal is implemented, classes of approximately 24 are envisaged at Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn
- 3.6 Pupil numbers at Ysgol Aberdyfi have reduced from 66 in 1975 to 23 today, a 67% reduction. There is adequate space at Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, to admit all primary school age children within the Aberdyfi catchment-area.
- 3.7 At least 40% of children in the Ysgol Aberdyfi catchment-area have attended Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, for several years.
- 3.8 The school has been led by an acting headteacher at the school for several years. The strategy identifies leadership as a key factor when developing education of a high standard.
- 3.9 Presenting this proposal – alongside other proposals in the Tywyn catchment-area – provides an opportunity for the Council to develop schools that are appropriate for education in the 21st Century. It is intended to develop Ysgol Penybryn to meet the requirements of the new century.

4. What are the advantages of closing Ysgol Aberdyfi?

- 4.1 Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, can provide a broader range of suitable facilities. Following the successful bid for Welsh Assembly Government capital funding, it will possess the facilities to provide education of the highest standard.
- 4.2 There will be more teachers at Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, providing a range of expertise in various curriculum areas. A broader range of staff also provides more opportunities for teachers to nurture diverse experiences and develop their career.
- 4.3 Pupils will have an opportunity to learn alongside their peers in more substantial groups, and participate in group activities.
- 4.4 Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, provides education of a very high standard. A full ESTYN inspection during the Summer Term 2010 confirmed the very good standard of provision at the school.
- 4.5 The budget for a larger school provides more flexibility. In addition, the Ysgol Penybryn budget will increase significantly if this proposal is realised. As

regards additional savings, there is a commitment that the savings will be recycled within the Gwynedd education system and that the system will consequently benefit.

- 4.6 The Council is working on a proposal that 20% of the savings will remain within Tywyn catchment-area until the Council has completed the process of reviewing all schools within the county. Based on the current budget, this will equate to retaining approximately an additional £40,000 within the catchment-area for at least another 3 years. A consultation with professional groups and teacher unions continues before the matter is presented to the Council's democratic cycle.

5. What are the disadvantages of closing Ysgol Aberdyfi?

- 5.1 The school provides a community resource in a rural community, and the school's closure would lead to the loss of that resource.
- 5.2 There would be staffing implications which could lead to uncertainty and possible redundancies. There is currently a full-time headteacher, a full-time teacher and support staff. Specific consultations will be held with the staff and their union representatives as part of the current consultation.
- 5.3 The proposal would mean that pupils would need to travel to Ysgol Penybryn daily

6. What would be the impact of this proposal ?

- 6.1 Ysgol Aberdyfi would close by 31 August 2013.
- 6.2 From 1 September 2013, children in the Aberdyfi catchment-area would be offered places at Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn. Ysgol Penybryn catchment-area would be extended to encompass the current catchment-area of Ysgol Aberdyfi.
- 6.3 Children in the Aberdyfi catchment-area would have 3 options when selecting a school, namely to:
- attend Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn
 - attend another school if that school is closer than Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn to the home
 - apply as a pupil from outside the catchment-area, to another school if there is a place at the alternative school
- 6.4 The Ysgol Aberdyfi building and the surrounding land is Council property. The future of the Ysgol Aberdyfi site would be considered as part of Gwynedd Council Assets Management Plan and in line with the policy agreed by Gwynedd Council Board on 15 September 2009 on the disposal of school sites.

- 6.5 The Council's School Transport Scheme guarantees transport to the catchment- area school for every pupil residing within the school catchment- area, or to an alternative school if that school is closer to the pupil's home, in line with the policy. In October 2009, 29 children of primary statutory age lived within the Aberdyfi catchment-area. Children resident within the Aberdyfi catchment area will be entitled to free transport to school subject to the Council's transport policy.
- 6.6 Any 3 year old has a statutory entitlement to 10 hours nursery provision at a nursery or school. There are already 2 nurseries in Tywyn. Currently, there is no nursery class at Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn. A statutory consultation was held during Summer 2010 on a proposal to allow Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn to admit children of nursery age. The Council ratified this proposal at its meeting on 16 December 2010. From 1 September 2011, Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn – subject to the completion of the current statutory notice process – will be statutorily able to open a nursery class for pupils of 3+ years of age.
- 6.7 Gwynedd Council submitted a bid to the Welsh Assembly Government for capital funding to develop an appropriate area for the Foundation Phase at Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn and to carry out improvements to modernise the school. The bid was successful subject to the completion of statutory notices in the Tywyn catchment area. Discussions will be held with the headteacher and governors of Ysgol Penybryn on the school's requirements.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 A statutory consultation meeting will be held with school staff, parents and governors on **1 February 2011** and a formal consultation will begin with those included in the Assembly guidelines. Anybody who wishes to submit comments should do so by no later than 14 February 2011. The aim is to present comments on the outcome of the consultation period for the attention of:
- Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee (24 February 2011)
 - Full Council (1 March 2011).
- 7.2 Following the consultation process, the Council will give further consideration to the proposal in the light of the consultation's findings. If the Council decides to confirm the proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi, a statutory notice of closure will be issued. The notice will be displayed in the school, within the community and published in the local press in accordance with statutory requirements. The notice will outline the entitlement to present written objections within two months of the notice being issued. If objections are made to the proposal following the issue of the Statutory Notice then the final decision will be in the hands of the Assembly Government
- 7.3 The Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills will consider any objections, the LEA's response to those objections, and any evidence in support of the application before deciding whether to approve, reject or adapt the proposal.

7.4 The time-table for the process will be as follows:

- 17 January 2011 Commencement of the statutory consultation including meetings with school staff, parents and governors. Hard copies of this document will be sent to other relevant establishments in the area. A representative group of children from the Tywyn catchment area have had an opportunity to have their say during the process so far, and they will have further opportunity to have their say during the statutory stage in due course.
- 1 February 2011 Statutory meeting at Ysgol Aberdyfi
- 14 February 2011 End of the statutory consultation period.
- 1 March 2011 The full Council decision on the proposal
If it is decided to close the school, statutory notices will immediately be issued, allowing a two month period to present objections
- 12 May 2011 Deadline for presenting formal objections to the Statutory Notice.
- If there are no objections to the proposal, the Council will consider confirming the proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi. If there are objections, the proposal will have to be referred for the attention of the Assembly Government's Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. The Government usually requests a period of approximately 7 months from the closing date for presenting objections so as to decide. This suggests that the Assembly Government would have finally decided by December 2011.
- If there are no objections, the Council could decide to proceed with the closure of Ysgol Aberdyfi. If there are objections, the earliest date at which the school could be closed would be 31 August, 2013.

8. Staffing

- 8.1 Gwynedd Council has developed a detailed staffing policy in collaboration with Trade Unions and headteachers. This policy will cover any dismissals stemming from this proposal. Clear and open communication will have a core role in the successful implementation of any proposals.
- 8.2 As has already been mentioned, it is intended to hold detailed discussions with the staff who currently work at Ysgol Aberdyfi on their options.

- 8.3 The Council suggests that Ysgol Penybryn should try and earmark additional posts, that are established as a consequence of the implementation of the new arrangements for teachers from the Tywyn area.

9. Building Requirements

- 9.1 This proposal can proceed without substantial construction work. However, Gwynedd Council has agreed that it wishes to see the completion of upgrading works on Ysgol Penybryn before this proposal is implemented.

10. Purpose of the consultation

- 10.1 This consultation is held to obtain your opinions on the proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi.

11. How can you respond?

- 11.1 Pages and general information on the process of considering the re-organisation of the County's schools thus far, are posted on the Council website www.gwynedd.gov.uk
- 11.2 Background information, including statistical papers, models for reorganisation which were considered, papers discussed by Gwynedd councillors including the report on the Summer 2010 Statutory Consultation and a range of other relevant papers can be accessed at your school, at your local library or by contacting the Council – please see contact details at the bottom of this page.
- 11.3 Responses submitted to the original Statutory Consultation will be considered as part of the responses to this consultation unless formally withdrawn in writing by the author.
- 11.4 Consultation meetings will be held for staff, governors and parents of Ysgol Aberdyfi.

Location:	Ysgol Aberdyfi
Date:	1 February 2011
Meeting for all consultees at	7:00pm

Minutes will be taken from each meeting and included as part of the response to the consultation

- 11.4 Please send written responses using the response form attached to this document to the consultation to:

Seimon Williams
Schools Organisation Project Manager
Gwynedd Council
County Offices

Caernarfon

Gwynedd

LL55 1SH

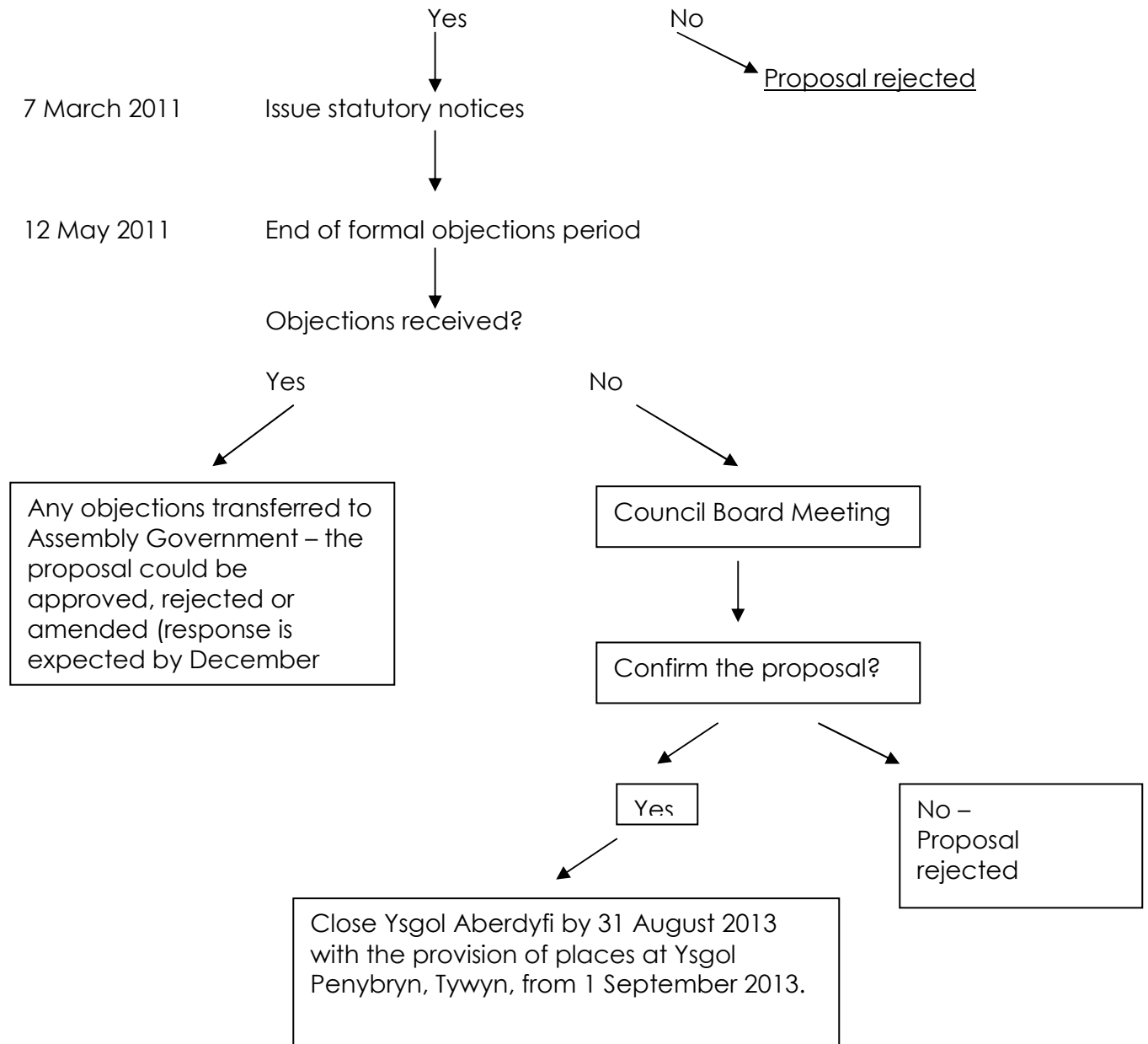
Or respond via e-mail to: school.organisation@gwynedd.gov.uk

- 11.5 Any comments must reach the Council in written form or via email by no later than Monday 14 February 2011

Should you require this document in another format, please contact Seimon Williams on 01286 679247.

Timetable

17 January 2011	Distribute consultation documents
1 February 2011	Consultation meetings for staff, governors and parents
14 February 2011	Closing date for receiving comments on the proposal
1 March 2011	The Council decides whether or not to issue statutory notices



GWYNEDD COUNCIL

PROPOSAL TO CLOSE YSGOL ABERDYF I

TO BE IMPLEMENTED FROM 31 AUGUST 2013

STATUTORY CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

Please provide the following details:

1. Name: _____

2. Address: _____

3. I am replying as (please indicate below):

Parent <input type="checkbox"/>

Governor <input type="checkbox"/>

Staff <input type="checkbox"/>

Pupil <input type="checkbox"/>

Other (note below) <input type="checkbox"/>
--

Other: _____

Please note below whether you agree for your response to be published. Please attach this document to the front of your response to the statutory consultation. With your permission, responses will be reproduced – with personal data such as names and addresses removed – in reports to the Council on the statutory consultation period.

Under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998 we must inform you of the following. Gwynedd Council is seeking your views while it considers this proposal. Your personal information will be used only for this purpose, and may be shared with other agencies who are involved in the consultation, however only to address any issues you raise. If you do not wish to provide personal details your views will still be considered, but we will not be able to acknowledge your response personally.

Yes, the Council may publish my response after removing personal information <input type="checkbox"/>
--

No, the Council may not publish my response <input type="checkbox"/>

**APPENDIX 2
MINUTES OF STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETINGS**

2.1: Aberdyfi Consultation Meeting February 2011

STATUTORY CONSULTATION MEETING

1 February 2011 at 7:00pm

MEETING FOR CONSULTEES (Ysgol Aberdyfi Staff, Governors and Parents)

There were 32 present consisting of parents, governors, staff, local Councillors and representatives of the wider community.

The Head of Education extended a warm welcome to everybody present and introduced the Portfolio Leader - Councillor Liz Saville Roberts.

The first part of the statutory paper was submitted explaining the purpose of the meeting:

A consultation was undertaken, during Summer 2010, on a proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi by 31 August 2011. Gwynedd Council at its meeting on 16 December 2010 resolved to amend the proposal with a view to extending the implementation date to 31 August 2013.

Consequently there is a need to undertake a new consultation on the new proposal. This consultation is convened on the proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi by 31 August 2013. It is intended to extend the current catchment area of Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, to include the present catchment area of Ysgol Aberdyfi as from 1 September 2013.

It was explained that the Council had resolved to amend the proposal's implementation date to ensure that the change to the catchment area coincided and also to provide sufficient time for the introduction of the changes to Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn.

It was further noted that the Council is giving consideration to all the comments received during the consultation undertaken during the summer, but everybody was free to submit new comments following the additional consultation.

In addition it was explained that this consultation included a number of aspects which were part of the summer consultation, but the meeting provided an opportunity to provide further information regarding certain further aspects.

One aspect was the work considered necessary in Ysgol Penybryn. Information was submitted regarding proposed improvements at Ysgol Penybryn.

The proposed expenditure in the catchment area was outlined:

Total Project Cost for the catchment area	= £7.9m
Penybryn/Corris/Pennal Improvements	= £2.5m
Penybryn (approximately)	= £1.25m

The potential improvements for the school were noted but the detailed Works and requirements would need to be discussed locally.

- Traffic requirements
- Eating area
- ITC infrastructure

The recommended action for planning the work was noted:

- Meeting with users including teachers and governors
- Developing a Schedule of works
- Architect's input
- Second meeting with users
- Detailed design process

The Schedule for the building work was noted as between April 2012 and September 2013.

A note was made of the disappointment felt that there was very little encouragement in the presentation for Aberdyfi parents to move their children to Penybryn. Despite all the investment it was ironic that the provision here in Aberdyfi is already satisfactory.

It was explained that everybody would be given the opportunity to have an input into improvements at Penybryn to ensure that the work done at the school is appropriate and suitable. A sum in excess of £1.2m would be available to upgrade Ysgol Penybryn.

The consultative paper was submitted section by section.

A question was asked as to when the language and community assessments were made?

It was explained that assessments on the principle of closing Ysgol Aberdyfi had been undertaken before the statutory consultation in the Summer.

Has an economic impact assessment been undertaken?

An economic assessment has not been undertaken in the Tywyn catchment area but the required assessments under the Assembly Government guidelines have been completed and they exceed the Government requirements.

Would this work have been proposed for Penybryn, if Ysgol Aberdyfi was not being closed?

Certain aspects would be addressed under the Council's expenditure programme; however the situation here provides an opportunity to ensure that Ysgol Penybryn is suitable to provide education for the twenty first century.

Considering the total expenditure required at Ysgol Penybryn, was consideration given to the valuation of Ysgol Aberdyfi site, and so allow costs to be offset against that valuation?

It was noted categorically that this matter was not considered. In fact it was explained that under Council policy regarding the disposal of assets, an opportunity was available for the local community to present a business case to retain ownership of the property locally if it wished to do so, thereafter sites are offered for sale on the open market.

There are concerns about the traffic situation in Penybryn.

Perhaps this aspect would need to be prioritised regarding the improvements proposed for the school; again it is a matter which would require local discussion.

Very little is said about spending capital funding on educational aspects.

It is emphasised that the actual improvements undertaken should be discussed locally.

Is this funding still available from the Assembly?

It was explained that the successful bid to the Assembly was subject to the completion of the statutory process. In addition it was noted that the Assembly allows slippage in their funding, but there are ongoing discussions to ensure that progress is maintained with the proposed programme and re-profiling of expenditure. A report was given on the confirmation provided by Government officers that the funding allocated for the Tywyn catchment project is still available to the Council.

What will happen should the Assembly funding not be available?

If the funding is not forthcoming, the present scheme could not proceed. However the need to amend the education provision will continue, changes will still be required because the current education provision is not sustainable for the future.

Reference was made to a proposal made by Aberdyfi representatives during the area debate to designate the Aberdyfi site for children under five years of age from the village and from Tywyn. Could this be considered further?

This option was discussed at a meeting of the Catchment Panel but the proposal was not developed any further. There was discussion regarding the number of children resident in the Aberdyfi catchment receiving education in other schools, many of them attending Penybryn. The costs of such an arrangement were also considered – there would be no savings involved.

It was noted that the numbers had now changed and 3.7 is no longer correct. A breakfast club had been established at the school since September and it has been a huge success and attracted more pupils to the school.

The figure was correct according to the latest information available in the Education Department. It was noted that 30 children of primary age resided in Aberdyfi, and 18 of them attended the school. The school representatives were asked to present the latest information if there was any difference.

The formula used to identify surplus places was questioned, and the fact that the proposed area school, because of its nature, would create open places, and thereby create vacant places.

The formula, it was explained, is based on a national formula. It was said that the design for the area school conforms to the educational needs of the twenty first century.

How could Ysgol Penybryn maintain a provision for nursery age in the absence of any current provision?

A statutory change and a statutory notice have been issued to address this matter. Regarding the required improvements, no doubt this would be discussed as a desired requirement based on the investment in the school. The detailed structure for the nursery provision – and which organisation (school, nursery group etc) would provide the service – is a matter for local discussion.

Has the Foundation Period been established in Ysgol Penybryn?

Every school in the County is required to implement this measure and this applies to Ysgol Penybryn. The foundation phase is already operational in Ysgol Penybryn for children aged 4-7 yrs.

What are the advantages for our children to go to Ysgol Penybryn?

There is a wealth of evidence that shows that there are advantages for pupils to be able to network in learning groups, and that there are wider opportunities

under those circumstances. More teachers will be able to provide a wider range. Also there is more flexibility within a larger budget.

From our experience, children get a good education in this small school.

Comparing the performance of a small school and a large school is very difficult, groups of children can be performing differently in different years, The range of performance can vary more substantially in small schools because of the small number of children in the learning group.

There are concerns about taking the children out of their community in Aberdyfi, and so losing this contribution locally.

There is evidence of strong and robust communities where there is no school.

There was disagreement with that.

We know of the split between other communities in Bro Dysynni in the wake of developing the Area Ysgol, but we in Aberdyfi will continue to fight; rather than spending on the restructuring process, jobs should be funded, the area's infrastructure improved, roads etc.

An explanation was sought on point 4.6 that refers to keeping 20% of savings in the catchment area.

It was explained that this discussion had derived from the discussion of the Tywyn Catchment Area Review Panel. It was noted that the Council is working on a scheme to ensure that 20% of the savings stay in the Tywyn catchment area until the Council has completed the process of reviewing all the county's schools. It was explained that the savings from the restructuring process would remain in the education system.

Where are the savings from Abergynolwyn going at present?

It was explained that statutorily the budget of Ysgol Abergynolwyn continues, but that the statutory notice to close has been published. If Ysgol Abergynolwyn is closed, an element of the savings would follow Abergynolwyn children to their new school (with most attending Ysgol Brynchrug), an element to employ the teacher from Abergynolwyn who by now works part of her time in Brynchrug and partly in Penybryn, and an element goes back to the central primary education budget to be distributed to schools throughout the county.

Will the Council pay for transport for 3 year old children?

There is no statutory responsibility to provide transport for 3 year old children. Of course the rest of the children from Aberdyfi would get transport in accordance

with the Council's transport policy. The parents of nursery age children could make an application for transport on a bus at a cost if there is room on the bus.

Reference was made to the working together that has been happening between Ysgol Pennal and Aberdyfi in the past, but that although there had been some problems, that the collaboration had been very beneficial. Concern was noted that this discussion had not been recorded during the catchment area discussions, especially the offer to create a three way collaboration between Pennal, Corris and Aberdyfi.

During the period of local discussions Corris and Pennal showed a real desire to work together.

Concern was noted that the issue had not been conveyed properly from the local discussions.

A number of options had been considered during the local discussions, but when making a decision there was a need to look more widely at the catchment area especially bearing in mind that we had to consider the need to attract investment to support the scheme and that the bid to the Assembly had to be realistic.

The Assembly is supposed to exist to protect us, not to close us down. It seems that there is a strategy here to create an urban education strategy.

A real effort has been made in the Tywyn catchment area to protect rural education by establishing the Area School. Perhaps some would criticise us for not going further and centralising education in Tywyn.

An explanation was requested about the transport policy.

The Council's Transport to School plan guarantees transport in the school catchment area for every pupil who lives within the school catchment area, or to an alternative school if that school is nearer to the pupil's home, in accordance with the policy requirements. Children who live within the Aberdyfi catchment area will have the right to free transport to school subject to the Council's transport policy.

I have seen other schools in other counties and I must say that they are very attractive. Would it be possible to send children from Aberdyfi to the new Area School?

This would depend on the numbers from the school catchment area and ultimately on the parents' choice.

The adaptations that will need to be made in Penybryn as regards nursery provision make a large demand on the budget available. Also, it appears that there are more nursery children in Tywyn and Aberdyfi than there are places.

It will be a local issue as to how nursery education is provided, and again a local discussion can be had on the use of the investment in that school. There will be a need to make adaptations to provide nursery education in Penybryn, but that is why there is a change to the operational time in order to ensure that the work and improvements have been made.

It seems that there is a lot of work that needs doing in Ysgol Penybryn to make it suitable, while we have what we need here in Aberdyfi. It would make more sense to use the Aberdyfi site as a school site to receive children from Aberdyfi and Tywyn.

It was noted that the capital bid had been successful in order to make improvements in Penybryn and there was a need to ensure that the voice of Aberdyfi was heard in the discussion on those improvements.

If members decide to keep Aberdyfi open, will this endanger the Area School?

It is likely that the agreement with the Assembly would have to be renegotiated if we were in that position. Therefore it is not possible to give any guarantee.

It was explained that Gwynedd Council had a detailed staffing policy developed by Gwynedd Council together with the Trades Unions and heads. The policy will be the base for any redundancies deriving from this proposal and the Council's Personnel Service is supporting it. The Council suggests that Ysgol Penybryn tries to earmark additional posts that derive from operating the new system from situations like Aberdyfi's.

A call was made for the comments to be sent to individual Members.

This was agreed.

In respect of the catchment areas discussion that are coming, a call was made for the Portfolio Leader to attend the schools when there are children present, in order to get the appropriate feel of the school.

What will happen if we don't send our children to Penybryn?

That will be the parents' choice.

What do we have to do to keep Aberdyfi open?

It is suggested that the argument has to be conveyed to the Members of Gwynedd Council, and ultimately, probably, to the Education Minister in the Assembly.

Everyone was thanked for their contributions. It was noted that everyone in the meeting shared the same aim – which is the best education for children, but that the way of achieving this was different. Everyone was reminded that the consultation period is open until 14/02/11.

2.2: Aberdyfi Consultation Meetings June 2010

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 papery 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.

The meeting closed at approximately 20.15

**APPENDIX 3
ANALYSIS OF STATUTORY CONSULTATION COMMENTS**

3.1: Response to Statutory Consultation on the Proposal to Close Ysgol Aberdyfi August 2013

16 written responses received;

- 1 Welsh Letter
- 9 English Letters
- 6 English E-mails

Comments Code	Comments	Number of written responses containing the comment	Gwynedd Council's response
1.	School		
2.	School numbers are increasing with children enrolling from outside the catchment area	3	This may be true although there is no clear evidence to support this claim. The school's latest projections were that it could have up to 25 pupils within the next 3 years. However, it remains the case that around 30 primary age pupils live in the Aberdyfi catchment area and of those 40% choose to attend schools other than Aberdyfi.
3.	No breakfast club and After School club in Penybryn / Unprogressive of Penybryn not to offer these services / Discussions left belief it was unlikely to occur in near future; Ysgol Aberdyfi is the only school in the catchment area to offer childcare from 8am to 5.30pm everyday	3	Extra-curricular services delivered at Ysgol Penybryn are a matter for the school.
4.	Safe access at Aberdyfi	1	Part of the package to upgrade Ysgol Penybryn will include improving access to the building.

5.	Aberdyfi has best Foundation Phase area in the catchment area , Tywyn have no foundation phase	3	Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, currently provides education for children of 4-11 years of age. As part of this reorganisation, it is proposed that Ysgol Penybryn should open a nursery class to allow admission to 3 year olds. That proposal is currently subject to statutory notices.
6.	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 faired 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 Pennal and Tywyn	2	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. The School's Governing Body has the power to appoint a permanent headteacher.
7.	Excellent standard of education / Benefits of small class sizes / Penybryn classes already overcrowded / No evidence to support that the children will receive a better education in Penybryn / Small schools benefit by teaching social and mentoring skills / Children of 'poor ability' are much more likely to succeed in a 'local school' environment / Class sizes in Penybryn likely to go well above 25 / Classes at Penybryn are 28-30 currently	4	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
8.	It would be a gross inequity to close Aberdyfi before the	1	The proposal under consideration is to close Ysgol

	new area school was built /The reorganisation process should be postponed until the new area school plans are finalised.		Aberdyfi and to provide places for Aberdyfi primary age pupils at Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn. The Council recognised on 16 December 2010 that it wished to see improvement and upgrading works at Ysgol Penybryn completed before closing Ysgol Aberdyfi. The change to the implementation date is the reason for this new consultation. The proposal is not dependent on completing the proposed new area school for Bro Dysynni.
9.	Community		
10.	Community and Language Impact Assessments have not been taken into account / No economic assessment has been carried out./What is the Socio-Economic impact of losing this community school?	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 initially 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 to be published from January 2010. Gwynedd Council carried out these assessments and have taken full account of this work during the statutory consultation period. The assessments have been published on the Council's website and shared with elected members, schools and others. There is no requirement of the Council to prepare Economic Impact Assessments.
11.	Tight bond within local community / School is heart of community / Closing school would have negative effect on local community / Children take part in community events and this is less likely to occur should school close / How does closing the school contribute to sustaining the community? / Closure would cause spiritual and emotional loss./ Keep Aberdyfi open and retain the heart of the community.	5	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. Around 40% of Aberdyfi resident primary-age children already attend schools other than Aberdyfi, the

	<p>Aberdyfi is a deprived village – lost library, 2 banks, bus service, nearest hospital is 25 miles away and doctor’s surgery is often closed</p>		<p>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 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>
12.	<p>Emphasis is placed on supposed “value for money” but the sums quoted are all estimations</p>	2	<p>The information provided on anticipated savings are based on the same sound financial modelling process which identifies current budget allocations.</p>
13.	<p>The result of closing the school would be a lack of families moving in, and a surfeit of retired residents, entailing extra resources demanded of the council and a decrease in rates and revenue / Address housing problems as many are currently holiday homes – this in turn would</p>	3	<p>There is evidence that this is already happening. Aberdyfi is a substantial village with a number of businesses yet around 30 primary age pupils, a large proportion of whom are educated outside the village.</p>

	encourage young families / 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. Should the demographic profile change, how can Aberdyfi get the local school back? / Numbers affected by availability of housing stock, availability of local jobs, quality of local facilities and services and the local transport infrastructure / WAG new building in Aberystwyth already having affect with people commuting		
14.	How does closing the school contribute to capacity building, skills acquisition and organisation for local strategy development; and also help ensure that a rural areas remain attractive for future generations?	2	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.
15.	Consultation		
16.	Incorrect figures in Consultation paper / paper has omitted a number of relevant details to create an inaccurate picture.	4	The statutory consultation paper was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 and Welsh Assembly Government Circular 021/2009. All information published in the document has been checked and confirmed as correct.
17.	Council Officials and Portfolio Leader had not bothered to read the document produced by the school governors in their response to the school closure proposals.	1	All correspondence sent to the Schools Reorganisation Project team during the initial statutory consultation in Summer 2010 was reproduced in full and presented to Councillors. This information will be republished during this statutory consultation.
18.	Inaccurate minutes in relation to discussions with Pennal Governors / Option of collaboration between Aberdyfi	3	During informal meetings at Pennal school it was stated that school representatives favoured establishing a

	and Pennal has not been fully explored and council should revisit this proposal / minutes of statutory meeting on 1 February 2011 omit this		model of formal collaboration with Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas, Corris, and did not favour establishing a collaborative model with Aberdyfi. In any case, options including establishing a model of collaboration with Ysgol Penybryn, with Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas and with Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas and Ysgol Pennal were considered during Catchment Area Review Panel meetings. Meetings with Ysgol Pennal representatives formed 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.
19.	Council has been intransigent in putting forward the case for closure and ignoring valid reasons for keeping the school open / You did not consult at all merely stated as fact your opinion of a mind already made up on this subject / no consultation was held with the community.	3	A range of alternative options were included in the Catchment Area Review process which included keeping Ysgol Aberdyfi open as a standalone school and as part of a collaboration with other schools. The statutory consultation paper was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 and Welsh Assembly Government Circular 021/2009. A consultation meeting was held at the school which, at the request of governors, was widened to include members of the wider community. The statutory consultation paper sets out the reasons for the proposal and also notes the proposal's disadvantages. This report contains an analysis of all correspondence received, and full copies of all correspondence received during both this consultation period and the Summer 2010 consultation period will be published – after redacting personal information.
20.	Building		
21.	The school building and its grounds are a viable asset to Department of Education / There is some unused space	3	There are significant surplus places at the school with no likelihood that the places can be filled by children

	within the buildings – there is capacity for growth		living in the village.
22.	Why spend money on Victorian building in Penybryn, when Aberdyfi is modern building with low maintenance costs? What will £1.25 million be spent on at Penybryn?	5	While all the buildings in the Tywyn area can deliver a good standard of education, there are emerging considerations through the Welsh Assembly Government's <i>21st Century Schools</i> programme to upgrade all school buildings in Wales to an agreed new standard. This is an opportunity to equip children in the Tywyn area with the very best educational facilities. A user group will be established with representatives of Ysgol Penybryn and Ysgol Aberdyfi to establish which facilities are required at the school beyond works the Council's Property department has identified.
23.	In the current climate the availability of funding seems highly uncertain and therefore puts the viability of the whole project into question	1	A bid for funding was submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government in May 2010. In July 2010, the Government confirmed that it had conditionally allocated £5.5m of the £7.9m costs of the overall Tywyn project subject to the completion of the relevant statutory processes. Gwynedd Council has committed to providing the remainder of the required funding of £2.4m.
24.	Aberdyfi is a deprived village – lost library, 2 banks, bus service, nearest hospital is 25 miles away and doctor's surgery is often closed; closure will have a detrimental effect on the local economy	3	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. The Council commissioned a Community Impact Assessment which has been considered and will be considered as part of this decision making process,
25.	What will be done with the building when the school has been closed? Is it in the National Park, and therefore subject to planning restrictions? What will be done with Aberdyfi school – you propose to sell the asset, I presume	2	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

	to build more houses		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.
26.	Land registration questioned / There are many outstanding issues with land registration, some which have been answered others are unanswered	2	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. 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.
27.	Alternative proposals		
28.	Retain Ysgol Aberdyfi to be used as Foundation Phase school or dedicated Ysgol Feithrin and save development costs at Ysgol Penybryn.	1	The option of locating a nursery class up to and including all foundation phase 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.
29.	It must be demonstrated that all possibilities for cooperation with neighbouring schools have been fully explored. This appears clearly not to be the case here and so calls into question the consultation process to date and hence also the basis for proceeding with formal consultation now / Alternative options put forward have been ignored	2	A range of alternative models were considered during the Catchment Area Review Panel discussions in 2009. These included no change, establishing collaborative arrangements between Ysgol Aberdyfi and either Ysgol Penybryn, Ysgol Pennal or' Ysgol Pennal and Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas, along with the proposals which is the subject of this consultation.
30.	General		
31.	We request that the proposals are unbundled so that councillors can vote separately on the individual issues:	1	The proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi is the subject of a discrete report. Councillors will be asked to vote only

	are school, closure of Aberdyfi and federalisation between Pennal and Dyffryn Dulas		on this proposal. The proposal to establish a collaborative arrangement between Ysgolion Dyffryn Dulas and Pennal are not subject to statutory consultation.
32.	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.
33.	Transport		
34.	Has transport to Ysgol Penybryn been properly costed? Will buses have an escort? Do you really expect parents to feel comfortable with putting their 4 year olds on a bus to travel to school even if accompanied and particularly if not? / Cost in carbon footprint due to additional journeys	3	<p>The estimated cost of transport to the new area school is based on Transport Officers' experience of contracts awarded throughout the County and takes account of anticipated increases to fuel costs. It should also be remembered that increasing fuel costs impact on the costs of maintaining the current schools.</p> <p>The Council is aware of concerns expressed on the appropriateness and safety of schools buses by parents in the area. Consequently, an undertaking has been made that seatbelts will be an essential requirement of contracts with travel providers bidding to provide transport on these routes. The Council has also undertaken to provide supervision on the buses for at least the first term of the new arrangement. Provision will be reviewed at the end of that that term.</p> <p>The route has been assessed by Council officers and is safe.</p>
35.	Finance		
36.	It seems highly misleading to suggest that Ysgol Penybryn	1	The estimated budget following the implementation of

	is going to have means to pay for additional costs. If anything it is likely to be facing budget cuts with the possibility of losing at least one member of staff.		the proposal is based on 2009 budgets. The estimate outlined an estimated saving of £57,000. Ysgol Penybryn, like every school in Gwynedd which is not subject to the Council's minimum staffing protection policy (i.e. any school which currently contains more than 38 pupils) is subject to cuts in funding. School funding follows pupils, therefore any increase in pupil numbers at Ysgol Penybryn would lead to an increase in allocated budget.
37.	The total cost of getting your proposals to the current stage must be ludicrously high	1	The steps taken in developing this proposal are in line with legal requirements, Welsh Assembly Government guidance and a process outlined by Gwynedd Council for the conduct of catchment area reviews when it accepted, without objection, the <i>Excellent Education for Children in Gwynedd</i> in April 2009.
38.	"One is tempted to think the closure of Aberdovey school is being used as a factor to justify expenditure on Tywyn school to make it fit for its current use" / It is clear from your document that you intend to finance improvements at Tywyn from the proceeds of closure of Aberdyfi	2	<p>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.</p> <p>The proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi was made before Welsh Assembly Government grant funding had been conditionally secured. Subject to the completion of statutory processes, a total of £7.9m will be spent on delivering a brand new area school and upgrading three existing schools.</p>
39.	Dubious of figures of money saved due to closure / Financial rationale not transparent and figures need explaining in more detail	3	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. These figures

			were presented in detail to the Catchment Area Review Panel and are available on the Council's website.
40.	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? Request for further information on the property audit	1	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.
41.	Documents Included or Quoted		
42.	'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.
43.	A composite response incorporating reference to and sections drawn from <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 Comments largely focused on concerns that closing Ysgol Aberdyfi did not fit with the aspirations outlined in these documents.	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.
44.	Staffing		
45.	Staff at Ysgol Aberdyfi should be given a realistic	1	Staffing is a matter for school governing bodies. The

	opportunity to offer themselves for posts at the new area school		Council has recommended that the governing body of the proposed new area school for Bro Dysynni should ringfence jobs at the new school for staff at the four schools which it is proposed will merge, and that the next option should be to widen the pool to staff working in the Tywyn area.
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3.2: Response to Statutory Consultation on the Proposal to Close Ysgol Aberdyfi August 2011

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	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 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. 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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
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 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?	5	The local toddler group should not be affected by this proposal as it provides non-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 faired 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 on the school building – why as it is in excellent condition?	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.
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

			<p>fairness apply.</p> <p>The information provided on anticipated savings are based on the same sound financial modelling process which identifies current budget allocations.</p>
6.2	<p>It would be cheaper to accommodate Pen y Bryn nursery 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 Bryn-crug could be developed to meet needs of surrounding area</p>	5	<p>The option of locating a nursery class up to and including all foundation phase 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.</p>
6.3	<p>Will Gwynedd Council pay for costs such as new school uniforms?</p>	1	<p>There is no intention of providing new school uniforms other than through the usual grant process for qualifying families.</p>
6.4	<p>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.</p>	2	<p>This is a pattern which is true of Aberdyfi and other areas within the catchment area today.</p>
7	Language Skills		
7.1	<p>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</p>	7	<p>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.</p> <p>It can be the case with small schools but is not necessarily so. The language impact assessment suggests both schools</p>

			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	3	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

	of Tywyn consultation / Aberdyfi has not had a relevant consultation paper		<p>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 / 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	3	<p>Parents are entitled to send their children to any school. The Council is obliged to 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.</p> <p>The proposal to close schools at Abergynolwyn, Brynchrug, Llanegryn and Llwyngwrl are dependent on building a new area school. The proposal to close Ysgol Aberdyfi and provide</p>

	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		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	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

	woefully inadequate, it omits relationship of school with community and impact closing school will have on 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		from January 2010. Gwynedd Council carried out these assessments and have taken full account of this work during the statutory consultation period. The 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</p>

			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.
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 children?	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 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.</p>
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	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

	buy them with no school?		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	A composite response incorporating reference to and sections drawn from <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 	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

	Comments largely focused on concerns that closing Ysgol Aberdyfi did not fit with the aspirations outlined in these documents.		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.

APPENDIX 4 ANALYSIS OF THE PUPIL'S QUESTIONNAIRE

The children's opinion was sought during the consultation. The school was 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. The school chose to use the response submitted during the consultation conducted in Summer 2010.

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 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