

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| MEETING | Full Council |
| DATE | 14 July 2011 |
| TITLE | Schools Reorganisation in Y Gader Catchment Area |
| PURPOSE | Outline proposals for Y Gader primary schools re-organisation, establish the rationale and seek Scrutiny Committee approval to the aim of moving to a statutory phase when applicable |
| RECOMMENDATION | That the Council approve the proposals and recommend statutory consultation periods on the relevant proposals |
| AUTHOR | Iwan T. Jones, Corporate Director |
| PORTFOLIO LEADER | Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts |

NOTE:

The content of this report follows a period of discussion in Y Gader catchment area, Dolgellau. The proposals reflect the needs of Gwynedd Council in accordance with the Council's Schools Reorganisation Strategy. Clear guidelines have been published by the Welsh Government regarding the statutory process that is necessary to follow when changing a school's status. It is confirmed that a period of statutory consultation on these proposals will not start until the Council approves a statutory consultation. This document includes the following:

| INDEX | |
|--------------|---|
| Page | |
| 2 | Full report |
| | Appendices |
| 37 | Appendix 1 – List of Further Background Documentation |
| 38 | Appendix 2 – Y Gader Catchment-area Statistics Package |
| 72 | Appendix 3 – Model Options for Reorganising Y Gader Catchment-area |
| 84 | Appendix 4.1 – Assessment of Options - Cyngor Gwynedd (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) |
| 90 | Appendix 4.2 – Assessment of Options - CRP 6 Audience Additions (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) |
| 95 | Appendix 5.1 – Minutes of Y Gader Catchment-area Review Panel Meeting 1 (29-04-10) |
| 100 | Appendix 5.2 – Minutes of Y Gader Catchment-area Review Panel Meeting 2 (13-05-10) |
| 104 | Appendix 5.3 – Minutes of Y Gader Catchment-area Review Panel Meeting 3 (25-05-10) |
| 109 | Appendix 5.4 – Minutes of Y Gader Catchment-area Review Panel Meeting 4 (06-07-10) |
| 113 | Appendix 5.5 – Minutes of Y Gader Catchment-area Review Panel Meeting 5 (25-05-11) |
| 121 | Appendix 5.6 – Minutes of Y Gader Catchment-area Review Panel Meeting 6 (13-06-11) |
| 127 | Appendix 6 - Y Gader Timetable |

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Gwynedd Schools Reorganisation Improvement Working Group was established in June 2008.
- 1.2 15 meetings were held to discuss a range of evidence, including presentations by:
- Welsh Assembly Government
 - ESTYN/Wales Audit Office
 - Welsh Language Society
 - Federation of Schools and Supporters
 - Heads representing small, medium and large schools in Gwynedd
 - National Association for Small Schools
- 1.3 During Spring 2009, the Improvement Working Group published its strategy *Primary Education of the Best Quality for Gwynedd's Children*.
- 1.4 It was agreed that there was a need to review education throughout the county by catchment area. Clear steps were established to undertake the process.
- 1.5 A list of aims and criteria that should be kept in mind when carrying out the reviews were included:
- Class sizes
 - Population and number of pupils
 - The child's learning environment
 - The community
 - Financial resources
 - The Welsh language
 - Geographical factors
 - Exceptional circumstances
 - Circular 21/2009
- 1.6 A range of criteria were developed around the above factors, When looking at the situation of individual catchment areas against the criteria, Tywyn was identified as the first catchment area to be reviewed, then the Berwyn catchment area, and the Gader catchment area to follow.
- 1.7 ***The strategy was accepted unanimously by the Council on 2 April 2009.***
- 1.8 During October 2009, the first catchment area proposals were published that recommended a new organisation in the Tywyn catchment area. Consultation took place on the proposals and a decision was made to publish statutory notices in the catchment area during January – March 2011.
- 1.9 The discussion took place in the Berwyn catchment area in the same way. The Full Council came to a decision in May 2011.
- 1.10 Below proposals for reorganising education in Y Gader catchment area are outlined.

2. REVIEW OF THE GADER CATCHMENT AREA

2.1 *Means of communication*

2.1.1 A number of opinion forums were established as the Education Portfolio Holder developed her proposals, including:

- Catchment Area Review Panel
- Meetings with staff, governors and parents in every school
- Session for the schools' children and young people
- Wider communication

2.1.2 It was also ensured that written information was available for everyone who had an interest.

2.2 *Y Gader Catchment Area Review Panel*

2.2.1 Y Gader Catchment Area Review Panel was established during April 2010. The first meeting of the Panel was held on 29 April 2010. 5 further meetings were held on 13 May 2010, 25 May 2010, 6 July 2010, 25 May 2011 and 13 June 2011.

2.2.2 Representatives were invited – that is the head, chair of the governors and a parent governor – from every one of the nine primary schools in the catchment area. An invitation was also extended to the head and chair of the governors of Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader, local councillors, a representative of Bangor Diocese and representation from Coleg Meirion Dwyfor.

2.2.3 A range of evidence was received and discussed by the Panel, including a package of statistics of the area agreed by the whole Panel as a full and fair reflection. In preparing the statistical information, the schools' representatives were asked to provide comments, challenge the contents and ask for any further information as necessary.

2.2.4 Also information was presented on:

- the financial context
- information about national developments including the Government's guide on discussing proposals to reorganise schools and new regulations for establishing patterns of collaborative working between schools

2.2.5 A long list of options was prepared for reorganising the area's schools. The long list was refined to 14 main models to be considered further. An analysis was received of the educational, managerial and financial implications of every proposal in the meeting of the Panel on 25 May 2010, and the options were discussed again in detail in the meeting of the a Catchment Area Review Panel on 6 July 2010. 14 models were discussed including:

- Developing a model of collaborative working
- Models of rural area schools

- Lifelong Learning Community or School

2.3 Meetings with individual schools

- 2.3.1 A visit was undertaken to every school in the catchment area by the Education Portfolio Holder and a representative of the County Consultation Panel at the beginning of the process. The purpose of the visit was to meet heads and to see and come to understand the situation of individual schools.
- 2.3.2 One round of meetings was held with individual schools during the process, during the periods 7 June - 23 June 2010. An open invitation was extended to staff, governors and parents to attend separate meetings. There was opportunity to discuss general matters including the specific models being considered.
- 2.3.3 ***30 individual meetings were therefore held across a period of 16 days with representatives of individual schools.***

2.4 Children and Young People

- 2.4.1 During the first meeting of the Catchment Area Review Panel on 4 November 2009, it was suggested that the opinion of children and young people should be sought as the process went ahead. Representatives of every school in the Catchment Area Review Panel agreed to this.
- 2.4.2 Individual schools were informed that the session for children and young people would be held in Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader. Schools were asked to arrange representation from members of the School Council, and it was agreed that it should include 3-4 children from each school. The session was facilitated on 5 July 2010 by the Council's specialist officers.
- 2.4.3 A range of activities were held in order to find the opinions of children and young people on a number of topics, including:
- class sizes
 - age range within the class
 - children's language outside the classroom
 - travelling distances to school
- 2.4.4 Closing the session, the children were asked to suggest the kind of facilities they would wish to see in a school. Generally, the children showed loyalty to their schools and teachers while also identifying a number of resources they would wish to see in their schools.

2.5 Member Input

- 2.5.1 When accepting the strategy *Primary Education of the Best Quality for Gwynedd's Children* unanimously, the Council gave permission to the members of the Improvement

Working Group to continue as a forum to support the Education Portfolio Holder as she led the reviews in each catchment area. This was done under the name of the *County Consultation Panel*.

- 2.5.2 During the process of discussion in the Gader catchment area, as part of the review of the implementation of the Reorganisation Strategy, the County Consultation Panel was replaced by an Improvement Working Group which operates to the work programme and brief of the Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.5.3 Also as part of the review, it was decided that there was a need to ensure that local Members met during the process of the catchment area reorganisation.
- 2.5.4 There were 4 meetings of the County Consultation Panel to discuss developments in the Gader catchment area, on 24 February 2010, 24 March 2010, 8 July 2010 and 21 October 2010. Also, there was a joint meeting between Local Members and Members of the Working Group on 18 May 2011. The situation of the catchment area was discussed and the options for reorganising the area's schools were proposed, side by side with an analysis of the models proposed by the Catchment Area Review Panel.
- 2.5.5 ***The Panel, Working Group and Local Members carefully discussed the models for the catchment area – and Members made comments.***

2.6 Assessment of Community and Language Impacts

- 2.6.1 As part of the process, Dylan Bryn Roberts Consultancy was commissioned to carry out an assessment of the potential community and language impacts of the various reorganisation proposals.
- 2.6.2 Meetings were held with individual schools to gather information and findings. A questionnaire was prepared to gather the opinions of staff, governors, parents and the wider community about the options. Electronic and hard copies of the questionnaire were circulated.
- 2.6.3 The findings of the assessments were presented in a special meeting of the Catchment Area Review Panel on 29 June 2010. The results of the assessments have been a central part of the development of the proposals presented and the findings of the assessments are considered further in this report.
- 2.6.4 The reports can be seen on the Council's website, and copies are available to read as noted in Appendix 1.

2.7 Written communications

- 2.7.1 ***Newsletters were prepared to circulate to every school during the catchment area discussions. Hard copies were sent to the schools to circulate to every parent, the newsletter was emailed to every school and the newsletters were published on the Council's website.***
- 2.7.2 All the papers of the Catchment Area Review Panel were published on the Council's website.

2.7.3 The contact numbers of officers involved in the work were put on the website.

2.8 Process status

2.8.1 Note that the activities undertaken up to now are part of the process of gathering information when formulating initial proposals.

2.8.2 Circular 021/2009 *Organisation of Schools Proposals* was published on 18 September 2009 and these proposals were formed under these guidelines.

2.8.3 ***It is confirmed then that the activities undertaken when formulating these proposals are not part of the statutory process of reviewing the provision in Y Gader catchment area. The discussions up to now are additional to that which is expected by the Welsh Government.***

3. THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING PROPOSALS FOR Y GADER CATCHMENT AREA

3.1. It soon became apparent during the process of discussing the options in this catchment that the answers were not clear and simple. In fact, as already noted, as many as 14 models were discussed in detail. During the fourth meeting of the Catchment Area Review Panel, held on 6 July 2010, the Portfolio Leader decided that it was not possible to come to a conclusion about proposals for the catchment area at that time.

3.2. The reasons for the delay in the discussions

3.2.1 Research work on sites and work on models:

3.2.1.1 It was noted that significant work was further required on the identifying suitable sites to coincide with the possible models, and that further consideration was required on the proposed models. Assessment of sites needed to be completed and consideration between this assessment and the model possible for the Catchment. The Council's Property Section was commissioned to undertake this work on site options and further work was done on the models discussed.

3.2.2 Changes to the availability and funding method of nationally funded capital projects

3.2.2.1 During the past few months, the effect of the recession has become apparent, with a cut of 40% in public capital funding. Therefore funding for capital projects in the public sector has become scarcer. Without a doubt, public services across Wales will face substantial funding cuts and this is likely to have an effect on all the Council's services, including Education.

3.2.2.2 During this period also, the Assembly's funding method for capital projects for school buildings changed. There used to be an annual funding window where Authorities could bid for capital funding for such projects.

3.2.2.3 During the past year, a new method came via the Twenty First Century Schools Programme. Now Authorities are asked to present bids by band over a period of time. It is a requirement that authorities identify expenditure needs by expenditure "bands".

Authorities were required to submit bids for Band A – the period 2012-2015 – in some detail with the application. The details of Band A bids for Gwynedd were presented to a meeting of Council Board on 14 December 2010.

3.2.2.4 This meant that a delay was introduced into the process where there would be an opportunity to submit a bid for funding, but taking into account the effects of cuts in public capital funding as well – there is intense competition for capital funding at the moment, and for the future.

3.2.3 Review of the implementation of Gwynedd Council's Reorganisation Strategy

3.2.3.1 The *Best Quality Education for Gwynedd's Children Strategy* was unanimously supported by Gwynedd Council in April 2009, but after 18 months of implementing the strategy it became apparent that there was a need to look at some aspects of its implementation.

3.2.3.2 After considering these matters that came out of the review, the meeting of the Full Council on 16 December 2010 decided as follows:

- to include the remainder of the county's educational provision in the process of the nursery, primary, secondary, special and lifelong learning communities;
- to re-establish an Education Organisation Improvement Working Group led by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to take an overview of the county's entire educational provision;
- to accept the need to rationalise the number of schools in the county so as to ensure a network of the correct numbers of schools, of the correct type, in the correct locations;
- to fully take into account the national and county context, including financial matters and the need to develop a long-term capital investment programme
- to undertake a broad range of preparatory work during the next few months to provide information for the discussions and expedite the catchment area reviews;
- to conduct a basic assessment of language, community, economic and equality matters throughout the county and hold an initial assessment of the impact of some of the possible reorganisation models on those matters;
- to give much greater priority to critical situations and plan a response programme
- to continue to conduct reviews at a catchment area level and through convening a Catchment Area Review Panel based on the above mentioned preparatory work;
- to ensure that local Members meet during the process of the catchment area review.

3.2.3.3 The *Towards 2025* strategy was approved by Gwynedd Council on 21 October 2010. This strategy established the long term strategic direction for education and training for children and young people 3-19 in Gwynedd, and offers our viewpoint as a Council for national policy developments, such as the 21st Century Schools Programme and the Schools Effectiveness Framework.

3.2.3.4 The strategy notes a vision to:

“offer bilingual education and training of the highest possible quality which will give the experiences, skills and confidence to the County's children and young people and enable them to be bilingual, successful and whole citizens”.

4 PROPOSALS FOR THE GADER CATCHMENT AREA

4.1 When developing options for the catchment area, it became apparent that the catchment area could be distributed into three areas:

- Eastern side – Which includes the schools of Brithdir, Llanfachreth (also known as Ysgol Machreth), Ieuan Gwynedd and Dinas Mawddwy
- Western side – Which includes the schools of Llanelltyd, Clogau, Ganllwyd and Friog
- Dolgellau Town – Which includes Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau and Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader

4.2 Options were discussed based on this distribution for the following reasons:

- Geographical location and travelling times
- Local wishes that note a large school centralised for the whole catchment area will not be supported
- Site development and building reasons
- The aims of the Council's Reorganisation Strategy especially as regards developing schools to be establishments that are a hub for community activities.

4.3 On June 13, 2011 the Education Portfolio Holder outlined her proposals for the Schools Reorganisation in Y Gader Catchment Area to the Catchment Area Review Panel, that is:

- Establish a Multi-site Area School – with one school site in the present location of Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy and the other site either at the present site of Ysgol Brithdir or Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain. This would mean that one or other of the sites would close as a school. As part of this recommendation, Ysgol Llanfachreth will also close and the provision will be offered in the Area School.
- Delay discussions for the present in the western part of the catchment area, (catchment area of the schools of Llanelltyd, Clogau, Ganllwyd and Friog) ensuring that this part of the catchment area is prioritised in the next stage of the schools reorganisation process.
- The recommendation for Dolgellau town is to establish a Multi-Site Lifelong Learning Community (school) for 3 to 16 years of age.

Investment options were noted at the time for implementing the proposal either by;

- Establishing a Lifelong Learning model without capital investment; or
- Asking Gwynedd Council to consider investing approximately £1.95m to make improvements to the current site of the primary school so that it was possible to get the teaching buildings on one site; or
- Asking Gwynedd Council to make a bid for approximately £4.5m for capital funding to the Twenty First Century Schools Programme to develop provision on the site of Ysgol y Gader for Key Stage 2

- 4.4 When developing and discussing options for schools reorganisation in the Gader catchment area, it became apparent that it was not possible to offer an answer for the whole catchment area at present. It was noted as one of the principles of the Reorganisation Strategy;

“That the scale, nature and timetable of change will vary between catchment areas”

- 4.5 A summary is offered here of the rationale behind the proposals that are presented and the reasons for the delay in part of the catchment area. A full analysis of the rationale for the proposals are given in the next part of the report, with additional background information in the appendices:

5 INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSALS FOR THE EASTERN PART OF THE CATCHMENT AREA

5.1 The context:

- 5.1.1 The eastern part of the catchment area comprises the catchment areas of:

- Ysgol Brithdir,
- Ysgol Llanfachreth (also known as Ysgol Machreth),
- Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain and
- Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy

- 5.1.2 It was resolved that the situation as regards the eastern side of the Y Gader catchment-area needed to be prioritised for the following reasons:

- **Uncertainty regarding the leadership situation** at 2 schools due to staff turnover
- The **4 schools** in the area receive **an additional amount to the usual allocation** through the minimum staffing protection policy. The total additional amount is £111,616 between the 4 schools
- **A total of £593,916 is allocated to the 4 schools** in this part of the Y Gader catchment-area in 2011/12. This equates to £5883 per pupil on average. There is a range between schools of £3910 (Brithdir) to £7519 (Ieuan Gwynedd). The average range for the county for this period is £3352.
- Number projections at 3 of the schools is a cause for concern. The projections for 2013 are as follows;
Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd – 15 (**forecast for September 2011 is 15**)
Llanfachreth - 20 and
Dinas Mawddwy – 23.
- **There are several empty places** (94 in total) - 43% within the 4 schools or 58% if the situation at Ysgol Brithdir is not included. This implies, when considering empty places at Ieuan Gwynedd, Llanfachreth and Dinas Mawddwy schools, that **there are more empty places than there are children attending the schools.**

- The **numbers at Ysgol Brithdir exceed capacity** (There are 40 pupils at the school and pupil capacity is 38)
- **Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy is geographically isolated** and provides education for a wide area.
- **There is a clear case in favour of and a need to ensure long-term stability for educational provision in the rural area in this part of the catchment-area.**

5.2 The recommendation for the area:

5.2.1 The recommendation for the eastern part is:

Establish a Multi-site Area School – with one school site in the present location of Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy and the other site either at the present site of Ysgol Brithdir or Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain. This would mean that one or other of the sites would close as a school. As part of this recommendation, Ysgol Llanfachreth will also close and the provision will be offered in the Area School.

5.2.2 A number of other models were considered during the process, which included:

Models of collaboration

Different forms of Area Schools – which included models to close the Dinas Mawddwy site

Forms of Lifelong Learning Community or School – including one central site with satellites and centralising the whole educational provision for the area

5.2.3 The complete considerations associated with these models are included in Appendix 3 of this report, with the advantages and disadvantages of all the models considered in the Catchment Area Review Panels discussions together with financial considerations.

5.3 Additional information about the proposal:

- What is meant by a Multi-site Area School in this case?

5.3.1 A Multi-site Area School means that one present school site will be extended and upgraded as the main site of the Area School, with the other two schools closing. There will be a second site for the Area School in another location. The reasons why there is a need for a second site in Dinas Mawddwy are noted below.

5.3.2 The main characteristics of an Area School are:

- Legally the school will have one legal entity,
- The school will have one Head, with a manager/managers on different sites
- Both sites will have one Estyn Inspection, as one school
- One budget and
- One governing body

5.4 Why recommend an Area School?

5.4.1 There is a recommendation to establish an Area School in this part of the catchment area after considering a number of factors including;

- Class sizes
- Number of pupils
- Leadership
- Financial resources
- The Welsh language
- Learning environment and quality
- Travelling times

These factors and others are considered below.

5.4.2 Class sizes

5.4.2.1 The class sizes of the 4 schools on average today are 13, with class size range between 10 and 20. It is noted that Ysgol Brithdir is over capacity and the other 3 schools have a number of surplus places (58% or 94) – Ysgol Llanfachreth has 52% surplus places and Ieuan Gwynedd 58%.

5.4.2.2 The study of a range of evidence outlines the general opinion – confirmed in the Government’s policy – that classes of over 30 pupils are unacceptable for children aged under 7 but undesirable for children aged 7-11.

5.4.2.3 Furthermore, recent research suggests that classes can be too small. Peter Blatchford noted in his publication “The Class Size Debate: Is Small Better” (2003) “...it may also be worth considering that class sizes can be too small” reporting that teachers had suggested “...the dynamics of the group could become flat and some children could dominate”.

5.4.2.4 The strategy adopted by the Council on 2 April 2009 has noted an ambition to ensure classes of between 12-25 in the number of pupils

5.4.2.5 If the recommendations are realised, class sizes in this area will be on average approximately 20. It is foreseen that average class sizes in the main school site will be 25, while class sizes in the second site will be approximately 12.

5.4.3 Number of pupils

5.4.3.1 The number of primary age pupils in this part of the catchment area has varied greatly since 1975. An increase was seen in two schools (a substantial increase 90% in the numbers in Ysgol Brithdir) and a reduction in 2 of the other schools. According to figures submitted by individual schools and checked and confirmed with schools, it is expected that the numbers will decrease (about 12%) during the next few years. Every school, except Ysgol Brithdir foresee a reduction in the numbers of pupils varying between 8% to 21% with Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd forecasting as few as 15 pupils by 2013.

5.4.3.2 Education standards are crucial to the proposals. Although there is a general assumption that education standards in small schools are higher than larger schools, there is no evidence to support the assumption. In fact, ESTYN's report on Small Primary Schools in Wales (2003) notes that there is not a substantial difference between education standards in large and small schools but "... *the smaller the school, the more challenging it often is for the teacher to match work to all pupils' learning needs.*". The report goes on to note "... *it can be more difficult for teachers to match work to pupils' needs because pupils in each class may be of widely different ages and stages of development. This is particularly the case in the smallest schools (with up to 30 pupils), where there is 28% of unsatisfactory work compared with 8% of unsatisfactory work in schools with over 210 pupils.*"

5.4.3.3 If the proposal is achieved, the Area School would have approximately 96 pupils, with approximately 73 pupils on one site and approximately 23 on the site at Dinas Mawddwy. Although the numbers of Dinas Mawddwy are low, as noted below, there are other factors to explain the proposal of keeping this site as part of the Area School.

5.4.4 Education Quality and the Learning Environment

5.4.4.1 Recent Estyn inspection surveys in the 4 schools note that the schools provide good quality education with no significant weaknesses. No concerns or doubts were expressed about the standard of education in any of the schools.

5.4.4.2 The strategy unanimously approved by the Council in April 2009 notes that teaching and learning circumstances are crucial to the provision of first rate education.

5.4.4.3 ESTYN's report "*An evaluation of performance of schools before and after moving into new buildings or significantly refurbished premises*" (2007) confirms the above opinion. The report notes that schools that have experienced their building being refurbished had seen an improvement in pupils' attainment and achievement. It is noted that Estyn inspections of individual schools shows that the quality of learning has improved, that staff morale is higher, that attendance is maintained and behaviour improved and that buildings offer more choice and better provision as regards education within school and activities before and after school.

5.4.4.4 Recent assessments have estimated that there is a need to spend about £2.1m to repair and adapt the 3 present primary schools if twenty first century buildings standards are to be achieved. In closing two sites – this would reduce the expenditure need by between £1.2m and £1.58m, but this would ensure substantial investment on the site that is developed as the main site of the Area School.

5.4.5 Leadership and Staffing

5.4.5.1 The 4 schools today receive sufficient budgets to fund 8 full time primary teachers, 4 of these heads. But because of staff turnover, 2 of the schools face a situation of having to fill the post of Head.

5.4.5.2 If the new arrangements came into force, when looking at forecast numbers it is likely that the budget would be for 5 primary teachers (full time) for the whole Area School. The exact nature of collaborative working and sharing staff between the two school sites

is a matter for further discussion but a matter that would need the attention of the governing body of the Area School. The new Area School will be a new entity, therefore the new governing body will need to appoint the Head and the staff for the school.

5.4.5.3 Gwynedd Council has developed a detailed staffing policy in conjunction with the Trades Unions and heads. The policy will be the basis for any redundancies that arise from this proposal. Clear and open communication will be core to the successful operation of any proposals. Staffing the Area School will be a matter for its Governing Body. However, the Council suggests that the Area School should try to ring fence jobs that arise from operating the new school for teachers who are working within the 4 schools in the first instance, and then in other schools in the Dolgellau area.

5.4.6 The Community

5.4.6.1 The statistical pack contains a published analysis of the community-based use made of every school, and schools contribution to their communities. Resources are also listed (e.g. community-based centres, playgrounds etc).

5.4.6.2 The Government guidelines (Circular 021/2009 Schools Organization Proposals) on schools re-organization specify factors that require consideration when drawing up school re-organization proposals. Information on those factors that were considered in a statistical analysis of the catchment-area are available on the Council web-site. A study of the potential impact on the community of adopting the various options were commissioned from independent advisers as part of the proposal development process. An economic impact assessment has also been commissioned to accompany the community-based study. The reports are available on the Council web-site, and copies are available for inspection as noted in Appendix 1.

5.4.6.3 When scrutinizing an assessment held of the potential impact of several of the initial models considered, both the community-based and economic assessments specified categories of the impacts of various model types. Briefly, what was noted was that school closures in the rural areas in any model would have a negative impact - this implied that any model of an area school or lifelong model would have a similar impact. The only model that would not have a negative impact – a neutral impact, would be a collaboration model that would in reality, imply no change in school attendance in individual villages.

5.4.6.4 As specific models were developed – the assessment was refined for the Area school models. It was noted that school closures when establishing the Area School would have a negative impact both on the community and economically in those communities where there are school closures. On the other hand, whilst acknowledging that there is a risk involved in transferring children regularly from Dinas Mawddwy, the initial assessment of models and satellites mentions that this model is less detrimental than site closure.

5.4.6.5 For those communities where school closure will occur, the impact recommends some measures for consideration by the Council so as to ameliorate the negative impact, such as:

- Providing support for communities where schools close so as to try and maintain the situation of those communities;

- Providing support for those communities to enable them to consider best use of the school building following closure
- Plan so as to ensure that the Area School includes villages in the school catchment-area in activities and occasionally hold activities in those villages.
- Provide transport so as to facilitate children's transport from communities effectively and safely.
- Strive to limit children's travel time to the Area School to the County Target (30 minutes), assessing parents and children's level of satisfaction with the transport arrangements as regards safety and punctuality.
- Strive to ensure transport provision that complies with extra-curricular activities so as to reduce the need for parents to transport children.

5.4.6.6 These measures will be incorporated in the working programme if the decision is to support the recommendations.

5.4.7 Financial resources

5.4.7.1 A total of £593,916 was allocated (not including SEN units and integration) to the 4 schools in this part of Y Gader catchment area in 2011/12. This equates to £5883 per pupil on average, although it ranges between schools from £3910 (Brithdir) to £7519 (Ieuan Gwynedd). The county average is £3352.

5.4.7.2 The total of the new allocation following the recommended organisation for the area – on the basis of the current allocation would be £413,803. As regards revenue costs, establishing the new organisation would save £180,000 less the additional transport needs estimated at £48,000, that is £132,000 per annum.

5.4.7.3 The 4 schools in the area receive an additional sum to the usual allocation through the protection of staffing minimum policy which guarantees at least a head and teacher in every school and a head and assistant in schools with fewer than 15 pupils. The total of this additional sum is £111,616. In comparison, if the proposal is realised, there will be an additional sum of £69,069 to the usual allocation as a multi-site allowance.

5.4.7.4 If the proposals are accepted, the Council has a policy to keep a percentage of any savings within the catchment area throughout the reorganisation process across the county, in order to meet the county's strategy aims.

5.4.8 The Welsh language

5.4.8.1 An analysis was provided of the language background of every school - based on information gathered when preparing a Language Assessment of every school in the county during spring 2008 – in the statistics pack. Schools had an opportunity to challenge the evidence, and some did so. Following that, the analysis was agreed upon.

5.4.8.2 Drawing similar language schools together was considered when developing the proposals for the catchment-area.

5.4.8.3 A Language Impact Assessment of the various models considered in the catchment-area was commissioned when developing this proposal. This is achieved in compliance with Assembly Government requirements in Circular 021/2009. The entire report is published on the Council web-site. As regards this proposal to establish the Area School, the Language Assessment notes that establishing this model would have a positive impact on the Welsh language.

5.4.8.4 The assessment score for a Rural Area School (Brithdir, Llanfachreth and Ieuan Gwynedd) on one site and pupils from Dinas Mawddwy on another sites > +6 Positive. It is noted that there is healthy social use of Welsh at each one of the schools – especially the three schools that will amalgamate on one site. There are no indications of social nor academic language deterioration. It was noted that there was bilingual proficiency linked to the model. It was also noted that the impact of 3 schools on Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy may serve to reinforce Welsh. **The assessment therefore concludes that such an Area School could strengthen the Welsh language at a larger establishment that could develop into a positive language bastion.**

5.4.9 Religious status

5.4.9.1 It must be noted that Ysgol Llanfachreth has a Church status (Voluntary Controlled School). Closing the school would have implications with regards the Church provision in the area. This will need to be assessed alongside other proposals in the catchment area. The Church owns the main Llanfachreth school site, with other parts of the school grounds having covenants. There is a need to look in more detail on the implications of these covenants with regards after use, if it is decided to implement this proposal.

5.4.10 Geographical factors

5.4.10.1 It was aimed at limiting travelling where possible. This proposal meets the requirements of the strategy as regards travelling, that is to limit travelling to no more than 30 minutes one way.

5.4.10.2 When developing the proposals, it was considered that Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy is already an Area School, and provides education for a wide area where some children already travel some distance to school. Also, consideration was given to the fact that the present site of Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy is some way away from other locations, over 8 miles to the nearest location. The travelling times of some Dinas Mawddwy pupils were considered since some travel up to 25 minutes to the school at present. Therefore it was suggested that there was a need to continue with the education provision on that site.

5.5 CHOOSING SITE LOCATION FOR THE AREA SCHOOL

5.5.1 Background:

5.5.1.1 In developing the proposal for this part of Y Gader catchment area, as previously mentioned, it is recommended that one Area School site should be on the existing Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy site, whilst a decision still needs to be taken on the main Area School site.

5.5.1.2 When the proposal for an Area School was being developed it was estimated that the construction of a brand new school would cost in the region of £3.8m. It was also estimated that one of the existing sites could be developed at a cost of between £1.1m and £1.5m.

5.5.1.3 Initial research work was undertaken to find a new site for the Area School, but the recommendation now put forward is to locate the school on the site of one of the existing schools for the following reasons:

- As stated above, a solution needs to be found as soon as possible for the situation in this part of the area.
- It is estimated that the cost of a new school on a new site would be around £3.8million. On account of the amount of money involved the Council would have to submit a bid for funding from the Assembly's Twenty First Century Schools Programme fund.
- From the information currently held by the Council, it would not be possible to submit an initial bid to the Assembly for money out of the Twenty First Century Schools Programme fund until at least 2016/17. This would mean that – in view of the construction work involved – the school would not be ready until 2018 at the earliest.
- There would not be any guarantee of success with any bid due to the competition for money out of the capital fund by then.
- Also, consideration must be given to the problems that might arise in gaining planning permission for a new site, since the area is within the National Park.
- There are more than one options for developing the site of one of the existing schools. Financially, these options would be within the reach of the Council and could be considered, but apart from this they would also meet the technical requirements for their development.

5.5.1.4 **The Catchment Area Review Panel was strongly of the opinion that action should be taken without delay in this part of the catchment area due to its vulnerable situation.** Therefore, this means that, whilst regretful that there is no way of achieving a new school, it is necessary to move ahead and develop the Area School. **In its meeting on 23 June, the Scrutiny Committee confirmed this opinion, and emphasised the need for a prompt answer to this area.** The matter was discussed further by the Board, 5 of July.

5.5.2 Consideration of sites:

5.5.2.1 On account of their geographical location within the area, road network and development possibilities, the existing sites of Ysgol Brithdir and Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain were looked at and assessed as possibilities for the main location of the Area School. Initial consideration was given to the existing site of Ysgol Llanfachreth, but concern was voiced over the viability of the location due to its geographical position and the nature of the road network to the site.

5.5.2.2 If this proposal is accepted, the site at either Ysgol Brithdir or Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd will be developed and improved. With the support of substantial investment, these recommendations would ensure an improvement in the learning environment. A full assessment of the strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and problems of the

Brithdir and Ieuan Gwynedd sites, along with the Review Panel comments are in Appendix 4.

5.5.2.3 Here are some of the features of Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain site:

- Current site is 0.3 acres short of meeting all Assembly requirements for re-development.
- In technical terms, falls a little short of the standards.
- Suitable land available at the rear of the site.
- To achieve the requirements, additional learning space would be required, extend the hall, staff/preparation space, learning resources storage space, use “Astroturf” to try and meet play space requirements
- Development cost approx £1.1m

5.5.2.4 Here are some of the features of the Brithdir site:

- Unable to extend the site unless neighbouring land is purchased. The surface area is below requirement for current numbers i.e. before adding more pupils.
- Positive discussions have been held with the land owner.
- To meet requirements, additional learning space would be required, extend the hall, staff/preparation space, space for learning resources, play areas.
- Best geographical site as regards pupil movement and distance from Dinas Mawddwy
- Development cost – approx £1.5m

A further assessment of the strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and problems of the Brithdir and Ieuan Gwynedd sites, along with the Review Panel comments are in Appendix 4.

5.5.2.5 The Panel was divided in their opinion as to the location of the Area School. The representatives of Brithdir and Ieuan Gwynedd schools favoured their schools current sites. The merits and some of the problems attached to both sites were noted.

5.5.2.6 The merits of the current site of Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd and the lower cost of developing that site are noted, whilst there were views expressed on the geographical location with regards proximity to Dinas Mawddwy and the viability of the site to attract the children of the area.

5.5.2.7 On the other hand, the merits of the Brithdir site noted are its geographical location with regards the viability of the site in relation to where the children of the area live, and also its closer proximity to Dinas Mawddwy, it’s links with the nursery provision available in Brithdir. Some concerns by some members of the panel were expressed about the nature of the road to the Brithdir site.

5.5.2.8 The process of discussing with land owners and information gathering on the location of the main site of the Area School is ongoing, and further time will be needed for these technical matters. When considering the technical information to hand, it is noted that the Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain site is the less expensive and less complex option. It should be made clear that extending the Brithdir site is entirely dependant on the ability to purchase additional land. Positive discussions have taken place with the land owner.

Initial discussions have taken place with the Planning Authority of the National Park. There is no objection in principle to either site, however seeking planning permission on the Brithdir site will be more difficult than in Rhydymain.

5.5.2.9 A recommendation for the Council with regards to this matter, to delegate the decision on the site to the Council Board (for its meeting on the 20th of September 2011) to allow time for these technical matters, and ensure that it's possible to consult in accordance with the timetable noted in Part 9 of this report, and in accordance with the views of the local review panel and the Scrutiny Committee.

5.6 The implications of the proposal of establishing an Area School

5.6.1 This proposal means that the two schools will close and there will be a prescribed change in the other two schools.

5.6.2 Considerations regarding closure of Ysgol Llanfachreth (also known as Ysgol Machreth)

5.6.2.1 The current site of Ysgol Llanfachreth was considered as an option for the Area School, but due to the following reasons, it was decided not to recommend it as a site for further consideration:

- The Llanfachreth site is the furthest as regards time factor from Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy (25minutes).
- A small number of pupils reside in the school catchment-area - with only 7 pupils residing within their natural catchment-area. The school has the highest number of pupils from outside the catchment-area (59% - 13 pupils). Locating the Area School would lead to the largest movement in pupil numbers.
- 73% of pupils (16) Ysgol Llanfachreth reside closer to another school.
- Geographically, this site is the least favoured as regards where children live.

5.6.2.2 As a consequence of the proposal, Ysgol Llanfachreth would close, and as has already been noted, this would impact the Church education provision in the area. In compliance with Assembly guidelines, the Council will have to further discuss and consider this matter, assessing the impact abolishing religious provision will have in the area. Further work will be done on this element during the next few weeks.

5.6.2.3 The community and economic impact reports voice concerns about the impact of the closure of Ysgol Llanfachreth on the community there, and the other school site that will close. It will need to be ensured that the measures recommended in those assessments are considered, so as to ensure that the impact on those communities is ameliorated.

5.6.3 One School entity, but two sites:

5.6.3.1 Consideration was taken to the best method of establishing the Area School legally and constitutionally. It is proposed that the schools in questions (Llanfachreth, Dinas Mawddwy, Brithdir ac Ieuan Gwynedd) should close, and that the Dinas Mawddwy site

and, either Brithdir or Ieuan Gwynedd will re-open to establish the Multi-Site Area School.

5.6.3.2 The implications of creating a single entity have been noted as regards to:

- Leadership (one Head),
- Governance (a single governing body) and
- Budget (one budget),

5.6.3.3 By creating A Multi-Site Area School, a school governing body and constitution will need to be established along with appointing staff. Staffing the Area School will be a matter for its Governing Body. However, the Council suggests that the Area School should try to ring fence jobs that arise from operating the new school for teachers who are working within the 4 schools in the first instance, and then in other schools in the Dolgellau area.

5.6.3.4 The budget will be based on pupil numbers attending the school in accordance with schools funding formula. Dinas Mawddwy site will be part of the Area School, and there will be a multi-site allowance to maintain the Area School on two sites.

5.6.4 Deciding on a school site: Depending on the choice of location for the school's main site; that is the present site of Ysgol Brithdir or the Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain site, this would mean that one or the other of the schools would close, and the school site chosen will be extended and improved. These options have been assessed as regards these factors; travelling distance, accessibility, the effect on the school management, land availability, cost, planning implications, and the future viability of the school. A full assessment of these options can be found in Appendix 4. As noted, sufficient time will be needed for further work to be done on these technical matters.

5.7 To Conclude

5.7.1 By considering all the factors therefore, it is proposed to establish multi site area school in this part of the Dolgellau catchment. This proposal would mean closing two of the four schools, and ensuring that one school is extended and upgraded to receive children from three of the schools. Ysgol Llanfachreth would close, and this will mean that Church education provision in this area will not be available. Dinas Mawddwy to continue as part of the area school.

5.7.2 As a preventative measure of school closure in an area – the Council would ask its Economic Regeneration Officers to support the community when considering any post school use of any land available as a result of school reorganisation, if there is a local desire for this.

5.7.3 Over the summer, further considerations will be given to technical matters as regards the main site of the school. Recommendations proposed are that the Full Council delegates the decision on the site to the Council Board. It is anticipated that it will be possible to report on this matter early in the Autumn that will allow the statutory consultation to run in accordance with the timetable.

6. THE SITUATION IN THE WEST OF THE CATCHMENT AREA

6.1 The context

6.1.1 The meaning of the western part of the catchment is:

- Ysgol Ganllwyd,
- Ysgol Llanelltyd,
- Ysgol Clogau and
- Ysgol Friog.

6.1.2 The discussions for the western part of the catchment area are deferred for the time being for the following reasons.

- Further work needs to be done regarding the possibilities of developing sites and linking such work with models of schools for the future.
- Because of the fragile aspect of the eastern side there is an urgent need to prioritise response in that area.
- To publish potential options at this time for this area would cause additional concerns and lead to parents moving their children away to other schools.
- Insufficient capacity to achieve all the work involved under the statutory process within the limitations of the democratic cycle. The discussion must fall within this democratic cycle in order to complete the statutory process, in order to feed into the next democratic cycle before purdah restrictions apply as a result of the local authority elections.

6.1.3 It is fair to note that representation on the local Area Review Panel have noted their disappointment that it was not possible to develop a proposal for the area as a whole at the same time and concerns were raised about this. On the other hand some members noted that the situation was fragile in a part of the catchment which required priority. It was noted that the Western part of the Catchment would receive priority in the next part of the review process.

6.2 Next steps in the Western area of the Catchment.

6.2.1 The work on the western side of the catchment area will be prioritised as part of the schools reorganisation process.

6.2.2 In the meantime research will be done for possible sites and other background work will continue.

7. INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSAL FOR THE TOWN OF DOLGELLAU

7.1.1 The recommendation for the town of Dolgellau:

The recommendation for the town of Dolgellau is:

To establish a Multi-Site Lifelong Community (School) for 3 to 16 years of age by either closing the two present schools; or forming a federal establishment.

7.1.2 Methods of investment to realise this recommendation were discussed;

- i. A multi-site Lifelong Learning Community (School) could be established without any capital investment required.
- ii. A request could be made to Gwynedd Council to invest approximately £1.95million for improvements to the present primary school site and ensure that all the teaching buildings are on a single site and build a new provision on part of the site.
- iii. Gwynedd Council could be requested to make a bid for approximately £4.5million capital funding for the Twenty First Century Schools Programme to develop a provision on the Ysgol Y Gader site for Key Stage 2.

7.1.3 The options have been considered and have been discussed by the Local Review Panel and the Scrutiny Committee.

7.2 Further Information about the proposal - Why the recommendation to establish a Lifelong Learning Community (School) in the town of Dolgellau?

7.2.1 During reorganisation discussions in the County the lifelong model became an option in particular situations. In reviewing the implementation of the Reorganisation Strategy it became apparent that the catchment area's secondary school could not be excluded from discussions on proposals for primary education. This is confirmed in the strategic document "Towards 2025", which states clearly that the present system must be changed:

"it is critical that every effort is made to utilize resources as effectively as possible within the education and training system – human, technical, construction or financial resources – for the benefit of children and young people"

7.2.2 During discussions of the Y Gader Catchment Area Review Panel, there was a general desire to consider this model as an option. The model was seen to contain many strengths. The options were considered in many ways including the development of a provision for all the catchment area's 3 – 16 year olds on a single campus and also the model for a multi site campus.

7.2.3 It was acknowledged in the Review Panel Review that the establishment of a Lifelong Model would strengthen the viability of the Secondary sector in the Catchment area, and also offer practical and strategic opportunities to the town's primary sector and to the wider. Concerns were expressed regarding changes in the numbers attending Ysgol Y Gader with projected reductions in the region of 13% in future years.

7.2.4 Concerns were also expressed in the discussions regarding the site of the Dolgellau primary school. The school was split which resulted in the duplication of certain provisions and also this led to managerial problems. In addition, based on the sum included in the Council's Asset Management Plan for 2008/09 it was noted that an expenditure in excess of £110,000 was required on the two sites of the Dolgellau primary school.

7.2.5 Evidence from other parts of Britain suggests that the establishment of lifelong arrangements offers an opportunity to maintain a sustainable focus for a rural community.

It is a way of protecting a rural provision in the face of escalating costs of maintaining small schools, through co-ordinating school management.

- 7.2.6 A lifelong learning community can bring *Curriculum benefits* by the creation of a common ethos and shared expectations for pupils, staff and parents in maintaining flexibility when planning and implementing the curriculum. Evidence shows that the transitional period from primary to secondary school can be challenging for children and during this period there is a reduction in attainment. The creation of a stronger relationship between the primary and secondary sectors would reduce the uncertainty for children.
- 7.2.7 There is an opportunity to *benefit from staff expertise* across the learning ages and also it presents an opportunity for staff to learn from their peers, which is of benefit to pupils' education.
- 7.2.8 *The welfare of pupils* could be promoted by reducing the concern and anxiety in moving from the familiar setting of the primary sector to the secondary sector. A procedure suitable to the age and needs of pupils will be established as support for pupils and a long term relationship will be established between parents and staff.
- 7.2.9 Evidence also shows a *close relationship between the school and parents*, and therefore that a close community is being established. It was noted in research work done in Scotland that "...the strong relationship with parents [is one] which is rooted in the contacts established during the early years of children's education" (Learning Together HMIE (Scotland), 2010). This type of relationship can only be a good thing for the pupil and also for the wider community.
- 7.2.10 Experience from other areas shows that an opportunity arises to *support families* by the provision of integrated services including health services, child care, training for adults and a range of other services.
- 7.2.11 A *comprehensive language policy* could be developed across the primary and secondary sectors including community activities and adult education. This has particular relevance for Dolgellau in view of the results produced by the language assessment undertaken and based on this model.
- 7.2.12 As regards *school management*, there are opportunities to amalgamate governing bodies and budgets. This could be achieved formally or by way of federalisation, and present scope to make management savings.

7.3 The implications of the proposal to establish a Lifelong Learning Community (School)

- 7.3.1 This option entails either closing the Dolgellau primary school and Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader and their re-opening as a Lifelong Learning Community (School). Since the beginning of the democratic cycle, it was noted that there is a different method to realise this option – through Council and governing body collaboration to form a federal establishment. By either method – the model of a Lifelong Learning Community can be realised.

7.3.2 Features of the model:

7.3.2.1 Presented below are some of the main recommendations for the lifelong model. It should be noted that these are recommendations and in the long term, management matters would be invested in the school and its governors.

- The Community Lifelong Community would include a nursery, primary and secondary provision.
- A single governing body for the lifelong learning community, or a shadow body in a federal model
- A single leader with assistant sector heads to be responsible for the primary and secondary sectors and any other facilities provided.
- The second tier of management could include a system of co-ordinators with responsibilities across the establishment for matters such as Pastoral Care, Assessments or Community Activities.
- The establishment would be funded as a single entity.

7.3.3 Education focus in the catchment area

7.3.3.1 The Lifelong Learning Community would encompass the whole catchment area by working closely with all the primary schools in the area and benefit from developments in the town and also the expertise of the staff. Of course there are current options regarding improvements related to the proposal and they have particular features and implications.

7.3.4 The Legal status and establishing procedure of the Lifelong Learning Community (school)

7.3.4.1 According to the law, there are specific categories of schools, and it has to be pointed out that consideration would have to be given to the mechanism of establishing a Lifelong Learning Community.

7.3.4.2 Should the two schools be closed, re-opened and combined, then a legal status would have to be placed on the school as one entity. On the other hand, the two schools could retain their present legal status if they form a federal model.

7.3.4.3 At present the status of Dolgellau Primary School is Church in Wales School (Voluntary Controlled School) and the status of Ysgol Y Gader is Community Secondary School. Regarding the status, there are two options:

- Bestow upon it the status of a Lifelong Community School, OR
- Bestow upon it the status of a Church Lifelong School
 - Status of a Voluntary Controlled School or
 - Voluntary Aided School

Each of these options has different characteristics.

7.3.4.4 Characteristics of Community School Status:

7.3.4.5 Most of the primary schools in Gwynedd have Community School status, and indeed all the secondary schools in the county also have this status. In a word the characteristics of a Community School are as follows, since the Local Education Authority:

- Owns the school land and buildings, but the governing body is responsible for:
- Running the school,
- Funding the school,
- Employing the staff,
- Providing ancillary services, for example – special needs and psychological services etc,
- Implementing the access policy,
- Also, the national curriculum is followed.

7.3.4.6 Characteristics of Church School Status:

There are two types of Church School (or Voluntary School):

- Voluntary Controlled School status or
- Voluntary Aided School status

7.3.4.7 These are some of the characteristics of Church School status:

- The Local Authority controls school entry and staff appointment and provides ancillary services
- The Church is represented on the school's governing body
- As a rule, the land or piece of land is owned by the religious institution or a charity.
- At practical level, the Christian ethos is reflected in the school life and at community level.
- The Council is the Authority which controls entry.

7.3.4.8 Consider each status:

7.3.4.9 If the Lifelong School was given Community School status the Church School status would be deleted. This would mean – in terms of the recommendation to close Ysgol Llanfachreth as well – that there would be no Church provision in Y Gader catchment area. At the moment there is uncertainty regarding the influence that this factor could have on parents' deliberations when choosing a school, but an assessment is currently being held.

7.3.4.10 If Church status was given to the Lifelong School in Dolgellau, this would mean that Y Gader Secondary School would be the only one in Gwynedd with the status. There is a joint Secondary Church School in Wrexham, and the Church in Wales has three secondary schools in South Wales. The Catholic Church has a secondary school in Denbighshire and one in Flintshire.

7.3.4.11 Usually 'Community' status is given to Lifelong learning establishments, but there are examples in England of Church Lifelong Schools; if this status was given to the Dolgellau Lifelong School, it would be the first in Wales to receive this status.

7.3.4.12 Alternative Option:

7.3.4.13 Another option is to establish a federal model between the primary and secondary schools. By implementing this federal model, it would be possible to retain the present legal status. It is noted that the difference is the mechanism of realising the Lifelong Learning Community. With this option, the Council would need to collaborate with both school's governing body, rather than complete the statutory process.

7.3.4.14 Conclusions:

7.3.4.15 To assess this matter, further work will be completed in the next few weeks to gather opinion on establishing the Lifelong Learning Model proposed and further discussions will taken place with representatives from the Church in Wales in the Bangor Diocese.

7.3.4.16 Full Council are asked to recommend the proposal to delegate the decision on the best method to establish the Lifelong Learning Community to the Council Board. It is foreseen that it will be possible to report on this matter early in the Autumn.

7.3.5 Language and Community Impact Assessments

7.3.5.1 In accordance with Assembly Government requirements in Circular 021/2009, language and community impact assessments were commissioned with this model – as well as others.

7.3.5.2 The language impact notes that the model would have a negative impact. The Language Assessment Report outlines the background to these results, explaining that the impact result is due to the current situation, and that in reality the model serves as a means to maintain the status quo.

7.3.5.3 The assessment notes that the percentage of pupils from non-Welsh speaking homes exceeds that whom come from Welsh homes, currently at both the primary and secondary school. It is mentioned that there is social and academic use of English. It is noted that extensive use is made of English socially in the Primary and to a varied degree, in the Secondary. Approximately a third of Secondary School pupils for whom Welsh is their mother tongue, opt to follow GCSE courses through the medium of English. In addition, a percentage of parents of Secondary school pupils apply for their children to follow subjects through the medium of English. Assessment findings indicate that Primary pupils bilingual proficiency is good although pupils language cohorts vary - it is noted that this is due to lack of use of Welsh. As regards the situation of Welsh in the ward/community, through the assessment both schools note that situation regarding Welsh is 'fair' and losing ground.

7.3.5.4 As the impact assessment notes that the recommended model provides a means to maintain a situation that causes concern as regards language, several measures to ameliorate the impact are noted, and may provide opportunities to challenge the existing situation through establishing the Lifelong Learning Community model.

- Lifelong Learning Community has thorough pastoral care and management to maintain and strengthen the current situation.
- Encourage provision to immerse pre-school age children in Welsh.

- Adopt a School policy where teachers and support staff would commence and hold conversations in Welsh with pupils in order to establish and maintain a welsh ethos and nurture daily use of the language amongst pupils.
- School Development Plan and schemes of work to enable Teachers to establish positive language models for pupils in the classroom.
- Play time and lunch time assistants to receive training on methods to encourage social use of Welsh in a fun and positive manner.
- Adopt playground games to be held through the medium of Welsh.
- Provide leisure-time and sporting opportunities through the medium of Welsh.

7.3.5.5 A key dimension is pupils language background ratio. The Language Assessment notes “...that there are other issues such as extent of teachers success, proficiency of pupils and their families towards Welsh and community-based support impact on creating outcomes that promote and reinforce Welsh in Y Gader catchment-area schools”. It is mentioned that re-organization of education at 6 of the Gader catchment-area schools through the Lifelong model and the Area School model could promote the language through increasing the ratio of pupils who converse in Welsh at home.

7.3.5.6 The community-based impact of the lifelong model is less detrimental. This is due to the model maintaining the current situation as regards attendance on both sites separately.

7.4 Options for implementing the recommendation in Dolgellau town

7.4.1 The recommendation in Dolgellau town is to establish a Lifelong Learning Community.

7.4.2 Substantial research has been carried out as regards site options on the form of a variance of the lifelong model. Having assessed a number of sites – 10 in detail, the conclusion was reached that it was not possible to have one site for creating one Lifelong Learning Community. This was for reasons of the size of sites, location as regards the danger of flooding, access problems etc.

7.4.3 As noted option were considered for implementing the proposal either by;

- Establishing a Lifelong Learning model without capital investment
- Asking Gwynedd Council to consider investing approximately £1.95m to make improvements to the current site of the primary school so that it was possible to get the teaching buildings on one site,
or
- Asking Gwynedd Council to make a bid for approximately £4.5m for capital funding to the Twenty First Century Schools Programme to develop provision on the site of Ysgol y Gader for Key Stage 2

There are no major revenue savings expected from the plans in the town of Dolgellau.

7.4.4 i A multi-site Lifelong Learning Community can be established without any capital investment whatsoever.

7.4.4.1 This option means that a Lifelong Learning Community would be developed, but that there would be no capital improvements beyond that already programmed into the Council’s investment programme. It would be possible to proceed with changing the

status of the school and changing its leadership, governance and financial and even educational form with this option.

7.4.4.2 Local opinion expressed a desire for investment in the education provision in Dolgellau to improve the provision for the future. The Reorganisation Strategy notes the need to assure a sustainable provision of an acceptable standard from the reorganisation process, but capital funds limitations are noted.

7.4.5 ii. Develop the present site of Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau so that the learning buildings can be on one site.

7.4.5.1 During the catchment area discussions concerns became apparent about the fact that Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau would operate on two sites – the Foundation Phase site on one side of the road and Key Stage 2 on the other.

- Site split in two
- Traffic and parking problems
- Sub-standard hall and dining area
- Sub-standard toilets
- Lack of space for teaching resource
- Lack of staff resources

7.4.5.2 As part of this option it would be possible to develop one of the sites of the primary school to accept all ages in the school, and to develop the other site as a car park and purpose built playing area. The new part would be built with the following benefits:

- Amalgamate on one site
- Traffic and parking improvements
- More play area
- New hall and dining area
- New toilets
- Space for teaching resource
- Space for staff resource

This option would mean that some rationalisation of resources would be possible. If one of the present sites at Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau were not needed, this would save around £54,000 of backlog maintenance works, fire precaution and adaptation costs.

7.4.5.3 The estimated cost of such a development is approximately £1.95m. It is noted that Gwynedd Council could be asked to consider funding such a sum within its financial strategy and within a timetable set by the Council. There was local support for this option as a method of improving a situation which is difficult at the moment, and a way of improving education provision. This view was confirmed in the Scrutiny Committee. Further discussions and work will be needed as regards land ownership on the site.

7.4.6 iii. Develop the present site of Ysgol y Gader to receive Dolgellau Primary Stage 2 leaving the Foundation Phase at the present site of Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau.

- 7.4.6.1 Another suggestion made during the discussions was looking to see if it would be possible to develop the present site of Ysgol y Gader to receive Key Stage 2 which is at present on the site of the primary school on the other side of town.
- 7.4.6.2 The feature of this scheme would be being able to alleviate the concerns of the transitional phase from primary school to the secondary school which can be challenging for children and attainment generally worsens during this period. Of course it could be argued that this action would create a new transition phase between Key Stages 1 and 2.
- 7.4.6.3 This development would mean developing a building from new for Key Stage 2 at the present site of Ysgol Y Gader. Also parking improvements would be part of the scheme.
- 7.4.6.4 The estimated cost of this development is at least £4.5m. In order to fund this sum, the Council would need to be asked to make a bid to the Assembly for a contribution towards the sum. It cannot be certain when this could be done, or if the bid would be successful. It is noted that the earliest bid could not be submitted until at least 2016/17 and that the building would not be ready until at least 2018 at the earliest.
- 7.4.6.5 As it would not be possible to make a bid for funding for a while, investment and working with the school governors to formulate a scheme for the future would have to be delayed. There is some ambiguity because of the need to delay and circumstances changing in the meantime – not only in Dolgellau town, but on a County level and possibly in the requirements of national capital bids.
- 7.4.6.6 There was no support for this option locally for many reasons. Concerns were raised about the financing timetable, and the suggestions of splitting the primary age sector, and practical problems of developing the Gader site.

7.4.7 Assessing the implementation options

- 7.4.7.1 The two options have been considered and are assessed further in Appendix 4 with the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and problems assessed, along with the views of the Area Review Panel noted.
- 7.4.7.2 The Catchment-area Review Panel was strongly opposed to the option of moving Key Stage 2 to the Gader site. There were concerns about the need to delay before submitting a bid for funding, there were also concerns about the benefits of this option as well as the split in the primary aged years. The Scrutiny Committee confirmed this view expressed locally and supported this opinion. The views expressed at the Board will be presented verbally.
- 7.4.7.3 It is proposed that Gwynedd Council should consider investing to develop the current Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau site to ensure the improvements noted.

7.5 To Conclude

- 7.5.1 Therefore, the recommendation for schools in Dolgellau is to close Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau and Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader, establishing a Multi-Site Lifelong Learning Community for pupils aged 3-16 years. This would mean that the school would have one Headteacher, one governing body and one budget. The merits of this proposal is that an

educational focal –point would be established for 3-16 year olds within the catchment-area and provide opportunities for collaboration and sharing specializations and skills across the entire catchment-area.

- 7.5.2 It is also proposed that Gwynedd Council should consider investing to develop the current Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau site to ensure the improvements noted. Further consideration will be given to the school legal status – to consider whether church or community status would be most appropriate. It is proposed that an assessment of the situation will be undertaken to gather the views on the legal status of the Lifelong Learning Community and to have further discussions with the Church of Wales representatives.
- 7.5.3 It is proposed that Full Council recommend delegating the decision on the best method to establish the Lifelong Learning Community to the Council Board to enable a period for further work on the matter. It is foreseen that it will be possible to report on this matter in the Autumn.

8. SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSALS FOR THE CATCHMENT AREA

- 8.1 When developing and discussing options for schools reorganisation in the Gader catchment area, it is recommended that it is not possible to offer an answer for the whole catchment area at present. The principles of the Council’s Reorganisation Strategy acknowledges *“that the scale, nature and timetable of change will vary between catchment areas”*.
- 8.2 Eastern of the catchment area:
- 8.2.1 The situation of some of the schools in the east of the catchment area is vulnerable, but a recommendation is offered as a long term answer for that particular area. A way of providing education provision in a rural area was looked at in this part of the catchment area, but also a way of ensuring sustainability and support for a site that is geographically isolated and already provides education for a wide area. The proposal will create stability and ensure a future for the rural area school and enable community planning to happen around that school.
- 8.2.2 The new arrangement will ensure equal opportunity for the area’s children to receive an education in groups of reasonable size and to offer opportunities to work with and play with peers more regularly. The proposal gives the best balance between providing effective education in efficient establishments while offering parents a choice. No child will then have to travel more than 30 minutes to the primary school after implementing the proposals.
- 8.2.3 There is more staffing assurance in the area and an opportunity for teachers to share various specialisms and offer that specialism to more pupils. Classes will contain a smaller age range and so facilitate planning and teaching by the teachers.
- 8.2.4 It is estimated that implementing the proposal will mean a saving of £132,000.
- 8.2.5 Alternative options were considered for schools reorganisation in this part of the catchment area but it is deemed that these proposals offer the best balance between

maintaining education standards, ensure viable schools, reduce leadership difficulties, and maintain accessibility at schools.

- 8.2.6 Over the summer, further considerations will be given to technical matters as regards the main site of the Area School. It is foreseen that it will be possible to report on this matter early in the Autumn which would allow the statutory consultation to run in accordance with the timetable. The effect of the proposal in the catmnet-area on the choice of religious provision, following further work, could also be reported at this time.

8.3 Dolgellau town

- 8.3.1 In Dolgellau town the recommendation to develop a Lifelong Learning Community is an opportunity to ensure an educational hub for the whole Gader catchment area. It is essential for every school in the catchment area - in Dolgellau town and the surrounding rural area to have the opportunity to take advantages of the virtues of this model.

- 8.3.2 Options have been considered for implementing the Lifelong model. It was noted that one of these options involves asking the Council to make a bid for funding to the Assembly – this would mean a delay for some years before this could be done; while on the other hand it would be possible to ask the Council to consider a bid to fund the other option and set its own timetable. There was a clear opinion locally, and this was confirmed in the Scrutiny Committee. It is proposed that Gwynedd Council are asked to consider investing to develop the Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau site.

- 8.3.3 It is also noted that further work on the legal status of the lifelong learning establishment will be undertaken to enable the Board to consider and decide on the best method to establish the Lifelong Learning Community which would reflect the results of this further work.

8.4 Western part of the catchment area

- 8.4.1 As already noted, further work needs to be done in the other part of the catchment area in order to try and obtain a robust answer for future sustainable education provision. Discussions in this area will be prioritised in the next part of the reorganisation scheme.

9. **NEXT STEPS**

- 9.1 It is intended to present these proposals to the attention of the Council Board (5 July 2011) and the Full Council (14 July 2011).
- 9.2 If the intention is approved by the Council, it will be necessary to hold a period of statutory consultation on the proposals regarding each individual school that faces closure or a change in status, in accordance with the Assembly Government's guidelines.
- 9.3 The period of statutory consultation will include:
- Constant discussions with schools when preparing the statutory consultation document
 - Publishing the statutory consultation document in September / October

- Formal meetings with staff, governors and parents of the schools to discuss the statutory consultation document in September / October
- Period of not less than 4 weeks for receiving comments and written responses to the statutory consultation document
- At the end of the period of statutory consultation, a report will be presented for the Council's attention before the end of the year summarising the issues raised during the consultation as well as further comments. Then an opportunity will be given for the Council to decide whether to go ahead with the process of closing or changing the status of the schools.
- If there is a decision to go ahead, statutory notices will be published per school noting clearly the intentions for that school. The statutory notice will be circulated to the specific schools and other relevant establishments, copies will be placed in public places in the area and on the Council's website. No less than 1 month will be given for presenting formal written objections to the statutory notice.
- At the end of the period for presenting statutory notices, the matter will come back before the Council Board to confirm the intention. If the Board decides to go ahead with the stated proposal and that no formal objections have been received, the decision can be confirmed. If formal objections are received, the matter will be transferred to the Education Minister in the Welsh Assembly Government.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Subject to the decision on the proposed location of the school, undertake a statutory consultation process in accordance with Section 28 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 requirements during Autumn Term 2011 on the aim to establish a multi-site Community 3-11 Area School, with one school site located on the current Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy and the other either on the current location of Ysgol Brithdir or Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain to open September 1st, 2013.
- 10.2 To establish the proposed Area School, undertake a statutory consultation process in accordance with Section 29 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 requirements during the Autumn 2011 term on the closure of Ysgol Llanfachreth, Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy, Ysgol Brithdir and Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd 31 of August 2013.
- 10.3 Recommend that Full Council delegates, to the Council Board, the decision on the site of the proposed Area School either on the present Ysgol Brithdir site or the present Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd site
- 10.4 Recommend to support consulting on the principle of establishing a multi-site 3-16 years Lifelong Learning Community (School) in Dolgellau town to open 1st of September 2013.
- 10.5 Recommend that Full Council delegates the decision on the legal status of the proposed 3-16 years Lifelong Learning Community (School) to the Council Board, to enable further work which includes an option of creating a Federal School together with establishing the appropriate statutory consultation process to move the process forward.

A Opinion of the Local Member:

B Opinion of the Statutory Officers:

1. Chief Executive

“As obvious from the report, very detailed work has occurred while preparing these proposals, which has by now received non-objection support in the Scrutiny Committee. The report enlarges upon the financial considerations that are attached to the decision and the Head of Finance has brought attention to this in his comments.”

2. Monitoring Officer:

The report has been the subject of legal advice. It should be noted that some key aspects concerning the legal status of the proposed Lifelong School as well as site availability and control need further consideration and resolution before it is possible to move forward to statutory consultation on the proposals.

3. Chief Finance Officer:

“The proposals of the relevant Working Group that have been put forward in parts 5 and 7 of the report is evidence of thorough work that has been completed by elected members, head teachers, teachers, governors, officers, and others, in order to move on with the process of reviewing the re-organisation of primary schools in the Y Gader catchment area. I confirm that appropriate input was given to the report by Finance officers and the presence of the relevant Finance Manager in meetings of the Y Gader Catchment Area Review Board in the period between May 2010 and May 2011, and the figures in the report are either the accurate actual costs or a reasonable estimate (where appropriate).

I note from the report that the ability to bid for Welsh Government finance fund to new school buildings is currently severely limited, but a reduction in the number of sites, by establishing an area school in the east and a lifelong learning school in the town of Dolgellau, will lead to financial savings as noted in the report.

The proposals that have been put forward should not be compromised, in order to ensure the viability of the proposed procedure. I support the recommendations that have been put forward and encourage relevant members to continue with immediate reviewing of school reorganisation.”

C Background Papers:

Please see Appendix 1 for a list of background documents.