

# **APPENDIX 2**

## **Minutes of the Statutory Consultation Meetings**

### **Appendix 2.1**

#### **Minutes of Meetings at Ysgol Brithdir 02-11-11**

**YSGOL BRITHDIR  
STAFF  
STATUTORY MEETING  
4:00pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> NOVEMBER 2011**

6 members of staff present including the headteacher, teaching staff and ancillary staff. It was noted that one member of staff was unable to attend.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Dewi Jones, Head of Education welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Council officers were introduced: Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts – Education Portfolio Holder, Tony Bate – Leading Manager Primary Schools' Re-organisation, Dafydd Gibbard – Corporate Property Manager, Hefin Owen – Development Finance Manager, Sandra Evans – Chief Personnel Officer, Gwenno Williams – Cleaning, Care and Catering Manager, Carys Roberts – Meirionnydd Contracts Manager, Gwenan Jones-Parry – Recording the Meeting.

### **Presenting the Proposal**

A presentation was delivered in three parts. Tony Bate presented information about the proposal with a summary of the statutory consultation document contents. Dafydd Gibbard presented information on property matters with a conceptual plan of the proposal to develop the Brithdir site. Sandra Evans presented information regarding personnel matters, including details of help available for staff during the process.

### **Open Discussions - Comments and Questions**

It was explained that personal details should be put on the response form and the form in turn attached to a letter responding to the consultation. It was noted that receiving comments is very important.

*It was noted that jobs were of key importance and that the audience understood that all staff would be made redundant by implementing the proposal? It was asked to what extent can the County safeguard the existing staff at the schools in question?*

The reply was that the Authority recommended the governors at the new school in the first place to consider applications from the staff of the four schools in question, and if they do not manage to appoint they then have the right to advertise more widely. It was noted that the responsibility of appointing staff lay in the hands of the governors.

*It was noted that there would be too many staff members, and questioned when would staff be appointed. Also would the governing body establish a timetable for staff appointment.*

It was explained that, in the first instance, the “shadow” governing body would appoint a head teacher in accordance with the existing appointment procedure. In order to start on 1st September, the appointment would have to be made by 31st May at the latest. The implementation timetable for the proposal is dependent on Council approval and also on whether or not objections are received to the statutory notice.

*What number of pupils would allow more staff?*

It was explained that school funding was totally dependent on pupil numbers. In the case of this proposal the school will be on two sites and will receive a multi-site allowance. This will go before the formula group since it is a totally new model. Across the County, if the school numbers are below 42, the school receives minimum staff protection in order to retain a head teacher and teacher. The area school will not receive this funding as the numbers will be higher than this threshold, but it is recommended that it would receive the multi-site allowance which is worth twice the staff protection sum allowed to Brithdir and Dinas Mawddwy at present.

*The head teacher stated that the school pupils had completed questionnaires regarding the proposal during that afternoon and that the response was very positive. The foremost desire among the majority of the pupils was to have a grassed playing field and a new outside playground. The head teacher noted that it was a sad situation that the existing school lacked trees and grassed areas.*

*It was noted that the staff wanted assurance that there will be sufficient space for the number of pupils in question. Appropriate storage space would be essential, some schools in other Counties have in the past been built with insufficient space on account of planning with no input from the people involved.*

In the past there were no guidelines /criteria for the planning of new schools. Nowadays there are statutory guidelines in place in order to ensure successful planning. It was explained that Gwynedd has learned much through planning new schools in Caernarfon and in Bro Dysynni. The Government has a specific formula which denotes the size of a school according to a specific number of pupils. The school will be planned according to the projected numbers for 2013 together with an added 10%.

*Concern was expressed regarding the implementation date and a request made as to what would happen to the children if the new school was not ready by 1st September 2013.*

No reason for delay can be foreseen at the moment since there is sufficient time to complete the statutory process and the construction work before the time limit. The legal option for the purchase of the land is in place and a period of 9 – 12 months designated for the construction work. If for any reason the work was not completed, the pupils would remain at their present schools until the work was completed.

*The sustainability of the new building has been mentioned, will it be a green building?*

It was noted that any new building has to reach very specific requirements. The Council has a high standard carbon plan therefore the structure of the new building will be formed to comply with these requirements.

*Bearing in mind the fact that Yuan Gowned has a special area for disabled children within its building, will the new school include this facility?*

Yuan Gowned is the school designated to accommodate the disabled and autistic pupils of the area. The area school will not be the designated school, and the provision will be moved to Lysol Gyred Dolgellau. This means that Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau will accommodate the autistic pupils of the area. Any new school is built to disability access standards, therefore the new area school building will be built to conform with these standards.

Dewi Jones stated that there would now be an opportunity for the school members of staff to speak to the Council's personnel officers.

All were reminded that responses to the consultation would have to be submitted by 13:00 on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

Dewi Jones thanked everyone for their presence and for their observations.

**YSGOL BRITHDIR  
GOVERNORS  
STATUTORY MEETING  
5:00pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> NOVEMBER 2011**

There were 8 governors present including the Local Member, head teacher and school staff members. An apology was received from one governor who was unable to be present but who would attend the meeting for parents later in the evening.

### **Welcome and Presentations**

All present were welcomed to the meeting by Dewi Jones, Head of Education. The Council officers were introduced, namely: Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts – Education Portfolio Holder, Tony Bate – Leading Manager Primary Schools' Re-organisation, Dafydd Gibbard – Corporate Property Manager, Hefin Owen – Development Finance Manager, Gwenno Williams – Cleaning, Care and Catering Manager, Carys Roberts – Meirionnydd Contracts Manager, Gwenan Jones-Parry – Clerk.

### **Presenting the Proposal**

The presentation was delivered in two parts. Tony Bate gave information about the proposal together with a summary of the contents of the statutory consultation document. Then Dafydd Gibbard put forward information on property matters and on a conceptual plan for the proposal to develop the site at Brithdir.

### **Open Discussions - Comments and Questions**

It was noted that observations put forward were of utmost value.

*How many governors will be needed for the governing body of the new school? At the moment there are 11 with three parent governors. The area school will encompass three separate areas and equal representation will be needed.*

This is the first multi-site school so there is no ready answer. Pupil numbers decide the number of governors and this school will not hit the mark which allows more governors. At the moment the Authority has no definite answer, this matter will be researched in order to achieve a full response.

*It has been said that a new school attracts more ex-catchment area pupils – on what basis will the size of the school be decided upon?*

The government has a specific formula which specifies the size of a school according to the number of pupils. The school size will be based on the number of pupils foreseen in 2013 with an additional 10%. The Authority governs access to schools, and it has to be acknowledged that there will be ex-catchment area interest but catchment area children will have priority over ex-catchment area pupils. In Bangor there are waiting lists for children to attend schools and the Authority has processes to follow when such a situation arises. Participants were reminded that this area is unique with much movement from one catchment area to another.

*Concerns over the implementation date, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 is not realistic. Concern over the availability of builders in the area.*

No reason for delay is foreseen at the moment since there is sufficient time for the completion of the statutory process and the construction work before the time limit. The legal option for the purchase of the land is in place and a period of 9 – 12 months allocated for the construction work. At the moment this seems quite reasonable for accomplishing the timetable. It is more difficult to find builders in Meirionnydd but builders' contracts for the Llanegryn school project are now being drawn and considerable interest is being shown. No problem is foreseen in terms of attracting builders to complete a scheme of this size.

*Is there sufficient funding for the scheme, is there any assurance that funding is available?*

It was noted that the funding is in place to complete the proposal if it is approved. There is £1.65 million of Council funding already committed, to make sure that there is no delay in this part of the catchment area. In other areas a bid for funding had to be submitted to Wales Government but there is less funding available now in comparison with the past. It would be possible to present a bid for funding now but there will not be another opportunity for 6 years. A choice had to be made between delaying for a number of years, then submitting a bid for money towards a New School or taking action with council funding and completing an affordable development. It was decided that in the case of this area it was inadvisable to delay on account of the vulnerable situation regarding the pupils.

*Concerns were raised regarding the money which has been earmarked, maybe £1.65 million will not be sufficient?*

It was explained that the costing has been drawn up by a specialist architect. There is no reason to believe that the stated sum will not be sufficient. In comparison, the extension at Lysol Pentreuchaf cost approximately £900,000 but more work is being carried out on the site at Brithdir and that is the reason why more funding has been earmarked.

*In the presentation, two options were shown, a modern building and a traditional building. As regards cost, is there much difference between the two options? And also with regard to maintenance costs?*

There is very little difference, the cost of the modern building is slightly less but there is no financial advantage to either option. Regarding maintenance, both models would be built to the highest possible standard in terms of heating etc but it is difficult to compare maintenance costs without going into more detail. It has to be noted that maintenance costs are paid by the Authority and not by the school.

*Members of the audience were asked what model they would prefer.*

The majority stated that they preferred the traditional.

*One member of the audience stated that the existing school building at Brithdir has been there since 1897 and that it cannot be reproduced. We must move on, and having an opportunity to create something suitable for our modern age from the same materials as were used for the existing school is very exciting. It was also noted that the appearance of the new building would have to blend in with the village although it would be on the outskirts of the village.*

It was pointed out that the plans shown were conceptual and that there would be an opportunity for a group of users, including staff, governors and pupils of the school to give an input into the development of the final design.

It was noted that staff matters had been discussed with the school staff at the previous meeting and that the Council personnel officers had given them a short presentation.

Dewi Jones thanked the governors for attending and for their contribution to the meeting.

**YSGOL BRITHDIR  
PARENTS  
STATUTORY MEETING  
6:00PM, 2<sup>nd</sup> NOVEMBER 2011**

24 parents attended the meeting, apologies were received from five parents who were unable to be present [Heidi Rowden, Gwerfyl Price, Elen Lewis Smith, Elin Thomas, Hannah Hughes].

### **Welcome and Presentations**

All present were welcomed to the meeting by Dewi Jones, Head of Education. The Council officers were introduced, namely: Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts – Education Portfolio Holder, Tony Bate – Leading Manager Primary Schools’ Re-organisation, Dafydd Gibbard – Corporate Property Manager, Hefin Owen – Development Finance Manager, Gwenno Williams, Gwenan Jones-Parry – Clerk.

### **Presenting the Proposal**

The presentation was delivered in two parts. Tony Bate gave information about the proposal together with a summary of the contents of the statutory consultation document. Then Dafydd Gibbard put forward information on property matters and on a conceptual plan for the proposal to develop the site at Brithdir.

### **Open Discussions - Comments and Questions**

*One member of the audience asked if it is important that observations are submitted during the consultation.*

The reply was that it is of core importance that everyone expresses their opinions. The purpose of the consultation period is to receive the views of local people; at the end of the consultation period the County Councillors will have to decide whether to approve the proposal or not, based on the views and the evidence presented to them. Every letter/e-mail will be put before every Councillor. It is just as important to receive the views of those who support as the opinions of those who object, so that a complete picture is reflected. It was suggested that the school parents would wish to compose a joint letter expressing their opinion.

*Concerns were expressed regarding the numbers in Dinas Mawddwy. What would happen if there was a decline in numbers at that site?*

Since it will receive the multi-site allowance, Dinas Mawddwy will be receiving more financial protection than it does at the moment by obtaining the minimum staff protection. The multi-site area school will be under no disadvantage through operating on two sites. This allowance will give the Dinas Mawddwy site more protection than it receives at present.

*Will the pupils have to move between the two sites?*

It is not foreseen that the children would move on a daily basis from one site to the other. Perhaps this would happen on some special occasions but not on a regular basis. It offers an unique opportunity for sharing and for taking advantage of staff expertise on both sites. This proposal recommends the development of a concept of one area school which happens to be on two sites.

*A number of concerns were raised regarding the timetable. Is September 2013 too ambitious? What will happen to the timetable if one of the schools refuses to close? Some could not understand how the planning process could be in place before building began under the given timetable.*

It was noted that the completion of the timetable is quite reasonable and that at the moment no reason can be seen for any delay. The legal option is in place for the purchase of the land and a period of 9 – 12 months has been earmarked for the construction work. This means that work on the site needs to start in September 2012 at the earliest. If the proposal is approved by the Full Council on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2011, the Statutory Notices (signs erected on the school gates stating that the schools will close) will appear in January 2012. There will be a period of one month for any objections to be made. If any objection is received the proposal must be transferred within two weeks to the Wales Government for a final decision. All the observations received during this consultation, as well as background documentation, will be transferred to WAG as part of the decision making. At the most the Government will take seven months to reach a decision, which means a decision in September 2012. No planning work has been undertaken so far, only discussions on land use. At present there is no objection to changing the use of the field to include a building on it. The Council will have to take a chance and start the design process, which involves working with the user group, during the decision making period allocated for the Education Minister at Wales Government. This will be done in order to avoid delay and if the proposal is approved the work can go ahead immediately. We have to remember that the Education Minister has three options, namely to approve, adapt or refuse the proposal.

*It was pointed out by some that the road near the school is dangerous. Some vehicles drive very fast and the school entrance is not up to the required standard.*

This point was raised during the ARC discussions and as a result a traffic assessment was commissioned. The assessment concluded that the road network can cope with the increase in traffic that this proposal will bring. It has to be pointed out that the area school entrance will move to the other side of the buildings where there will appropriate parking places to improve the situation when children are brought to the school. The officers looked at the present situation earlier in the day and it is not an ideal situation. The road in front of the school will be opened up to allow improved visibility for the new entrance. Traffic calming measures could also be installed to further improve the situation.

*What will happen to cost per head as a result of the proposal?*

At the moment Brithdir has the lowest cost per pupil in Y Gader catchment area and Ieuan Gwynedd has the highest (almost double). It was noted that the cost per pupil would be close to the area average if the proposal were implemented. It was also noted that all the cost per pupil figures are available in the statutory consultation document.

*Concern was expressed regarding pupil numbers in the area school. Do the projected numbers include present pupils who are ex-catchment area, and what would happen if the school attracted many ex-catchment area pupils?*

At the moment we assume that there would be 98 pupils in the area school in 2013 (78 Brithdir and 20 Dinas Mawddwy). This includes all the pupils attending the schools at present and the numbers forecast by the schools themselves. The Government has a specific formula which specifies the size of a school calculated via the number of pupils. The site at Brithdir will be designed for 78 with 10% extra. It is the Authority that manages school entry and we have to admit that there will be ex-catchment area interest but pupils from the school catchment area will have priority over ex-catchment area pupils. In Bangor there are waiting lists for pupils to attend schools and the Authority has processes to follow in such a situation – these processes are implemented across the whole County. It was pointed out that this area is unique with much movement from one catchment area to another. There is a tendency in this area for pupils to come from Dolgellau to the rural schools but the Council has a proposal for developing Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau as well.

*Another concern was raised regarding numbers at the school. If the school numbers decline, will the school be looking for pupils from outside the County? The Welsh language is very strong and many English parents bring their children here so that they obtain the best opportunity of learning Welsh. They learn the language in the primary and then move on to Ysgol Y Gader and then lose the language because the secondary school has been looking for pupils to swell their numbers and as a result has created an Anglicised environment there. Locally there is strong objection to losing the strong Welsh environment that exists within the primary school at present.*

It is impossible to forecast future numbers but in implementing the proposal we hope to stabilise the numbers at the school and to make it viable for the future. The new school will be a Welsh school and there is a clear policy in place which the staff must follow. We have to remember that it will be the school staff who will implement the proposal and that the responsibility of running the school from day to day will rest on their shoulders. This proposal gives the whole area the opportunity to take hold of the matter and ensure that the education in this rural school is provided through the medium of Welsh. It was pointed out that there is a need to take swift action in the area because the numbers situation is vulnerable. If the Council had looked at the situation from a financial point of view only, the best solution would be to move the primary pupils from the whole catchment area into town and establish one large Lifelong School, but the Council wants to protect rural education in the area. In doing this, it also protects the Welsh experiences.

*It was noted that there would be surplus staff if the proposal were implemented. Will the staff at Dinas Mawddwy remain the same since Dinas Mawddwy remains as it is?*

It was confirmed that there will be a staff surplus if the proposal is implemented. At the moment there are 8 teachers at the schools, but it is foreseen that the area school will have 5 full time teachers (including the head teacher). The budget will be set on the basis of pupil numbers. The governors will decide how to spend the money and decide exactly how many jobs will be available but the budget will allow 5 full time teachers. The existing staff at the four schools (including Dinas Mawddwy) will be made redundant. The four schools will statutorily close, Dinas Mawddwy will not exist as it does today, it will be one site of the new area school. The authority will recommend that the new governing body offers the posts firstly to the existing staff of the four schools but if they fail to appoint they can then advertise more widely. It was pointed out that the responsibility of appointing staff lay in the hands of the governors.

*Concern was expressed that all that has been presented as part of the concept will not be implemented and that the Council will say in time that there is not enough funding for everything that is promised at present. Is there any guarantee that there will be a school field and hall on the Brithdir site? Is the funding dependent on the sale of other school buildings? What would happen to the rest of the County?*

There is no guarantee that the school will look like the conceptual picture because the consultation with the user group has not been completed and neither has the planning process. The cost of the development has been worked out and includes everything in the design (including hall and playing field) and the funding is in place by the Council, it is not dependent on any sale. This proposal is not dependent on the submission of any capital funding bid to Wales Government. Funding applications are accepted by the Government every 5/6 years – there is an opportunity now but there will not be another for 6 years.

*If the proposal is refused, what is the Council's second proposal (plan B)?*

As was stated in the presentation earlier, 14 models were considered during discussions in the catchment areas, therefore there are other options. This proposal is the one favoured and none of the other models are more attractive than another. The purpose of this consultation is to learn about the views and wishes of local people to see if they favour the proposal or not. As regards identifying a site for the area school, Brithdir is the favoured site but again the purpose of the



consultation is to find out if the people of the area agree – it might become evident that local people would favour another site. The audience were reminded that they are welcome to respond to the consultation.

*It was noted by one member of the audience – with general consensus among the members - that he welcomed the proposal put before them, especially as it is the Brithdir site which is favoured. It was noted that it is vital that everyone is agreed on this and that they write in. He asked if members of the community can respond.*

It was explained that the consultation was open for everyone to respond and to give their views.

*One parent mentioned that the area school would have classes with a higher number of pupils and that some parents brought their children to the school because of the small class sizes. There is a danger that an increase in class sizes will lead to a fall in pupil numbers.*

It was explained that it is impossible to foresee what parents will do but it is the fall in numbers throughout the area that drives the need for action. The numbers at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd and at Ysgol Machreth have fallen during the last few years e.g. Machreth September 2010, 22 pupils and September 2012, 16 pupils. The school will have an admission number on the basis of which the Authority manages the numbers. The Area School will not be larger than Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau (which has approximately 150 pupils).

*One parent pointed out that she chooses to take her children to Ysgol Brithdir (although she lives in Dolgellau) on account of the ethos of the school. She was concerned that the area school would have a different ethos.*

It would be up to the staff and governors of the school to retain the close/family ethos which exists at Ysgol Brithdir today. It was agreed that this is important and that maybe it would be a good point to be borne in mind by the governors when they appoint the head teacher and other staff members.

*The head teacher noted, for information, that the older pupils at the school had that afternoon completed a questionnaire (prepared by the Council) in response to the proposal. It was a very positive response with matters such as playing field and the ethos of the school being raised. One question in the questionnaire was “What makes a school a good school?” and the response from the pupils (with no prompting from the staff) was ‘good education, friends and community’. Matters such as ethos are very important to them also. Years 5 and 6 were disappointed that they would be leaving before the area school opens.*

It was noted that the best model would be the most sustainable of the traditional and modern. Concern was expressed that the National Park (the planning authority) would not accept the modern model.

*In reply it was stated that the traditional model had been shown to the Park and that they were concerned that the new building (which is considerably larger than the existing building) will overshadow the existing building. The modern model was created at the request of the National Park. The exact design of the school will lead to some exciting discussions, if the proposal is accepted.*

Dewi Jones thanked the parents for attending and for expressing their views.

## **Appendix 2.2**

### **Minutes of Meetings at Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy 03-11-11**

**YSGOL DINAS MAWDDWY  
STAFF  
STATUTORY MEETING  
4:00pm, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2011**

There were 6 members of staff present including the head teacher, teaching staff and ancillary staff. It was noted that one member of staff was unable to attend.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

All present were welcomed to the meeting by Dewi Jones, Head of Education. The Council officers were introduced, namely: Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts – Education Portfolio Holder, Tony Bate – Leading Manager Primary Schools' Re-organisation, Richard Farmer – Corporate Property Manager, Hefin Owen – Development Finance Manager, Sandra Evans – Senior Personnel Officer, Gwenno Williams – Cleaning, Care and Catering Manager, Judith Jones – Clerk.

### **Presenting the Proposal**

The presentation was delivered in three parts. Tony Bate presented information about the proposal together with a summary of the contents of the statutory consultation document. Then Richard Farmer put forward information on property matters and on the conceptual plan for the proposal to develop the site at Brithdir and to undertake improvement measures at Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy. Sandra Evans presented information on personnel matters, including details of help available for staff during the course of the process.

### **Open Discussions - Comments and Questions**

It was explained that personal details should be put on the response form and the form in turn appended to a letter of response to the consultation. It was also noted that - as part of the process - observations were of great value.

*A request was made for an explanation as to why the proposal recommended the provision of a playing field on the site at Brithdir whilst there was sufficient play area provision on the Dinas Mawddwy site*

It was noted that every school needed play area provision.

*The Head Teacher stated that a review had been undertaken by a member of the Council staff (Lynette Baston) of the condition and safety of the car park and school yard and it had been noted that the present state of the car park was not up to standard.*

Richard Farmer said that he would look into this.

*It was asked whether teachers who have temporary contracts will have the same opportunities as permanent teachers when the time comes for staff to be appointed for the new area school.*

It was noted that all existing staff would have first choice to apply for posts, no matter what the present status of their contracts may be. It was emphasised that the responsibility for appointing staff for the new area school lay in the hands of the new Governing Body which would be formed.

*It was questioned how much collaboration would there be between the two sites.*

In reply it was stated that the collaboration structure would become clearer once the staff and the governors have been appointed. This is a good opportunity to share staff expertise.

*One member asked for how long is Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy likely to remain viable, and would the new development on the Brithdir site not be more attractive to parents.*

Once in receipt of the multi-site allowance, Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy will be receiving more financial protection than it does at present with the minimum staff protection. The multi-site school will be at no disadvantage from being located on two sites. This allowance will give the Dinas Mawddwy site more protection than it receives at present.

*The Head Teacher was keen to note that the reorganisation of the eastern and western parts of Y Gader Catchment Area separately had been a very unfair decision and had created uncertainty for pupils, parents and staff alike. It was also noted that some parents were considering moving their children to schools in the western side of the catchment area since they believe that the situation there is more stable.*

It was pointed out that discussions in the Area Reorganisation Panels had made reference to the fact that reorganisation in the western part of the catchment area would be carried out as soon as the process had been completed in the eastern part and that the Council had not intended to create any uncertainty.

*How will the area school funding be allocated?*

It was noted that the funding formula for a multi-site school is new territory and that input from the Head Teacher and Governors will be of key importance. It was also stated that there would be sufficient allocation to maintain a Site Manager and teacher at Dinas Mawddwy.

*How many members will there be on the Governing Body of the new area school? The area school will serve the four areas and equal representation will have to be ensured.*

This is the first multi-site area school in Gwynedd and there is no ready answer. It is the number of pupils at a school that determines the number of governors and this school will not reach the required level to allow more governors. Even so, it was confirmed that the Authority has no definite answer at the moment, and that the point would be researched further in order to find a full answer.

Those present were reminded that the plans presented were conceptual only and that there would be an opportunity for a user group, including staff, governors and pupils of the school to give an input into developing the final design.

Dewi Jones stated that there would now be an opportunity for the school staff members to speak to the personnel officers from the Council.

All were reminded that responses to the consultation had to be submitted by 13.00 on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

Dewi Jones thanked everyone for attending and for their observations.

**YSGOL DINAS MAWDDWY  
GOVERNORS  
STATUTORY MEETING  
5:00pm, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2011**

10 governors were present including the Local Member, head teacher and members of the school staff.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

All present were welcomed to the meeting by Dewi Jones, Head of Education. The Council officers were introduced, namely: Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts – Education Portfolio Holder, Tony Bate – Leading Manager Primary Schools' Re-organisation, Richard Farmer – Corporate Property Manager, Hefin Owen – Development Finance Manager, Judith Jones – Clerk.

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### **Open Discussions - Comments and Questions**

It was noted that observations were of utmost value.

*How will the funding for the area school be allocated?*

It was noted that the funding formula for a multi-site school is new territory and that input from the Head Teacher and Governors will be of key importance. It was also stated that there would be sufficient allocation to maintain a Site Manager and teacher at Dinas Mawddwy. It was also noted that the percentage of the allocation would have to be worked out very carefully.

Reference was made to the fact that any member of staff who faced a reduction in their pay would receive pay protection for 3 years.

*How many members will there be on the Governing Body of the new area school? The area school will serve the four areas and equal representation will have to be ensured.*

This is the first multi-site area school in Gwynedd and there is no ready answer. It is the number of pupils at a school that determines the number of governors and this school will not reach the required level to allow more governors. Even so, it was confirmed that the Authority has no definite answer at the moment, and that further consideration would be given to the percentage and representation on the new governing body and that the point would be researched further in order to find a full answer.

*What would happen if pupil numbers fell?*

If pupil numbers fell to fewer than 15 there is a possible risk that the school could only employ a Site Manager and an assistant.

*Would the Authority consider green methods of heating for the school? Heating costs at the school are high. (Support was expressed for solar panels since part of the roof faces south)*

Richard Farmer stated that he would look into this suggestion.

*What will happen if there is any delay in the process?*

It was stated that the plans for the site at Brithdir would not interfere with the life or the education of the pupils. A discussion took place on whether – if the improvements proposed for the site at Dinas Mawddwy were not completed on schedule – the site at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd or Machreth could be used as a temporary measure. It was stated that no delay in the timetable can be foreseen at the present time.

*Is there sufficient funding for the plan, is there any guarantee that the funding is forthcoming?*

It was noted that the funding is in place for the completion of this proposal if it is approved. There is £1.65million of Council money already earmarked in order to make sure that there is no delay in this part of the area. In other areas a bid for funding had to be submitted to Wales Government but less money is available now as compared to the past. A bid for funding can be submitted now but there will not be another opportunity for 6 years. A choice had to be made between delaying and submitting a bid for funding to build an entirely new school, or taking action now with funding available from the council and constructing an affordable development. It was decided that delay was not a possibility in this area because of the vulnerable situation of pupil numbers.

*How will the school operate on a practical level?*

It was stated with certainty that there would be no plans to transport children back and forth between the two sites on a regular basis, only on some specific occasions. It would be the responsibility of the Head Teacher and Governing Body to arrange a timetable and create a practical work schedule for the two sites.

*How does the Council intend to keep pupil numbers at a sustainable level in the area (i.e. by creating job opportunities and economic developments)?*

It was noted that the Council was aware of the need to create job opportunities in the area and to try and promote economic developments.

*It was noted that perhaps a smaller development could be built at Brithdir and more use made of the resources that already exist at Dinas Mawddwy?*

It was noted that both sites should have the required resources.

*It was pointed out that the staff at the 4 schools are not facing change but facing losing their jobs.*

It was noted that the first opportunities for jobs would be given to the existing staff, but it was acknowledged that some staff would inevitably lose their jobs and that it was an uncomfortable situation.

*Where will the Head of the area school be located?*

Brithdir will be the main work centre but obviously there will be regular travel between the two sites.

*How many members will there be on the Governing Body of the new area school? The area school will serve the four areas and equal representation will have to be ensured.*

This is the first multi-site area school in Gwynedd and there is no ready answer. It is the number of pupils at a school that determines the number of governors and this school will not reach the required level to allow more governors. Even so, it was confirmed that the Authority has no definite answer at the moment, and it was noted that further consideration would have to be given to the percentage and representation on the new governing body. The point would be researched further in order to achieve a full response.

The audience was reminded that the plans presented were conceptual plans and that a group of users, including staff, governors and pupils at the school would give an input into the development of the final design.

It was stated that staff matters had been discussed with the school staff at the previous meeting and that the Council personnel staff had given them a short presentation.

Dewi Jones thanked the school governors for attending the meeting and for presenting their views.

**YSGOL DINAS MAWDDWY  
PARENTS  
STATUTORY MEETING  
6:00pm, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2011**

There were 8 parents present.

**Welcome and Introductions**

All present were welcomed to the meeting by Dewi Jones, Head of Education. The Council officers were introduced, namely: Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts – Education Portfolio Holder, Tony Bate - Leading Manager Primary Schools' Re-organisation, Richard Farmer – Corporate Property Manager, Hefin Owen – Development Finance Manager, Judith Jones – Clerk.

**Presenting the Proposal**

The presentation was delivered in two parts. Tony Bate presented information about the proposal together with a summary of the contents of the statutory consultation document. Then Richard Farmer put forward information on property matters and on a conceptual plan for the proposal to develop the site at Brithdir and to undertake improvement measures at Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy.

**Open Discussions - Comments and Questions**

*It was asked whether parents living in the Dinas Mawddwy area have the right to send their children to the school on the Brithdir site, especially if the numbers for the year are low, so that pupils can be taught in a class of reasonable size.*

In answer it was stated that this would have to be given consideration and that clear guidelines would have to be established in order to respond to such requests and further steps taken. It was explained that it would be a decision that the Head Teacher and Governors would reach together.

*Concerns were raised regarding representation on the new Governing Body.*

It was noted that there would have to be fair representation for all relevant areas.

*Concerns were voiced regarding the turning into Brithdir from the main road, namely the A470.*

It was noted that Wales Government has proposed plans for improvements to the road between Maes yr Helmau and Cross Foxes. These proposed plans by Wales Government were shown to the audience.

*What will be the capacity of the new school? How will the school control admission? How will the Council ensure that the school will not expand beyond its capacity?*

The Admission Policy will have to be implemented much more strictly.

*What will happen to the Brithdir children while the school is being developed?*

The new development will not affect the existing school.

*Will the children be transported from one school to another on a regular basis?*



No, this would neither be practical nor desirable, but we will have to take advantage of the opportunities offered by collaboration.

*What will happen to the schools in the town of Dolgellau?*

It was stated that there is a proposed plan to create a Lifelong Learning Community on two sites which will involve adapting and upgrading the primary school so that children in the Foundation Phase, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 will be on the same site.

*What will happen to staff numbers at Dinas Mawddwy if pupil numbers continue to fall?*

Staff numbers can fall to Site Manager and Assistant only, if the pupil numbers fall to fewer than 15.

*What are the practical implications of collaboration and sharing staff expertise?*

It was stated that arranging a timetable and creating a practical action plan involving collaboration and sharing staff expertise between the two sites will be the vision of the Head Teacher and Governing Body. It was also noted that arrangements for joint working were already in place between Corris and Pennal schools and that the arrangements were working well.

*Will the majority of joint activities be held on the Brithdir site?*

The Head Teacher will need to keep a balance in respect of activities involving both schools.

*What is the threshold for safeguarding the Dinas Mawddwy site if a large number of children make an application for attending the Brithdir site – especially in view of the fact that an investment of £100,000 is to be made on the Dinas Mawddwy site?*

After receiving the multi-site allowance, Dinas Mawddwy will be receiving more financial protection than it does at present with the minimum staffing allowance. The area multi-site school will not be at any disadvantage from being located on two sites. This allowance gives the Dinas Mawddwy site more protection than it gets at present, but if the pupil numbers fall below 15, it could lead to a change in the staffing structure, namely a reduction to site manager and assistant.

*Will membership of the Governing Body be decided on the basis of proportional representation?*

Fair representation will have to be applied and there are strict legal rules to follow when a new Governing Body is appointed. Even so, it was confirmed that there is no definite answer at the moment, and it was noted that further consideration would have to be given to the percentage and representation on the new governing body. It was confirmed that this would be further researched in order to provide a full response.

*Concern was expressed that Dinas Mawddwy might get less representation on the Governing Body, which could lead to unfairness.*

It was noted that inspections (e.g. by Estyn) would work towards ensuring that Dinas Mawddwy does not suffer any unfairness.

*On which site will activities such as Christmas Shows be held?*

It was noted that decisions on matters such as these would have to be discussed by the Head Teacher and the Governing Body.

*If parents submit an application to send their child/children to the Brithdir site, but they live closer to the Dinas Mawddwy site, will their application be approved? A number of parents could favour sending their children to the Brithdir site and this would further undermine the situation at Dinas Mawddwy. What would the transport arrangements be if this were the case?*

The Head Teacher and the Governing Body would decide on whether to approve the application or not – but the situation needs to be looked at in more depth.

*Will the job descriptions state the place of work?*

The place of work will need to be included in the job description.

It was reminded that a conceptual design only has been presented and there will be a change for the user group, which will include staff, governors and pupils of the school to give input when developing the final design.

Dewi Jones thanked everyone for attending and for their observations.

## **Appendix 2.3**

# **Minutes of Meetings at Ysgol Machreth 07-11-11**

# **YSGOL MACHRETH STAFF STATUTORY MEETING 4:00pm, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

Four members of staff attended, including the head teacher, teaching staff and ancillary staff. A representative from the diocese of Bangor was also present.

## **Welcome and Introductions**

All present were welcomed to the meeting by Dewi Jones, Head of Education. The Council officers were introduced, namely: Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts – Education Portfolio Holder, Tony Bate – Leading Manager Primary Schools' Re-organisation, Dafydd Gibbard – Corporate Property Manager, Hefin Owen – Development Finance Manager, Sandra Evans – Senior Personnel Officer, Gwenno Williams – Cleaning, Care and Catering Manager, Guto Rhys Huws – Member of the Schools Reorganisation Team, Judith Jones – Clerk.

## **Presenting the Proposal**

The presentation was delivered in three parts. Tony Bate presented information about the proposal together with a summary of the contents of the statutory consultation document. Then Dafydd Gibbard put forward information on property matters and on the conceptual plan for the proposal to develop the site at Brithdir and to undertake improvement measures at Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy. Sandra Evans presented information on personnel matters, including details of help available for staff during the course of the process.

## **Open Discussion - Comments and Questions**

*It was questioned whether the jobs at the area school would be reserved for the existing staff.*

In reply it was stated that the school staff in question (teaching and ancillary) would have first choice but that the governing body would have the right to advertise more widely if the need arose.

*It was asked what the exact number of staff would be at the new area school – would it be one head teacher at Brithdir and a site manager at Dinas Mawddwy?*

It is foreseen that there will be 3 teaching staff members at Brithdir (including the head teacher) and 2 at Dinas Mawddwy (including the site manager) but the exact number will be decided upon by the governing body.

*Concern was expressed over dropping the children off at the new site and the question was where exactly will the bus/taxi drop the children off.*

The children will be dropped off away from the main road. One image in the presentation showed an example of a possible parking area and dropping off area, but it will definitely be away from the main road.

*Has the Estyn inspection been considered as a part of the process? The education offered at Machreth is excellent, this is evident from the grades achieved in the last inspection..*

The Authority is not concerned about the quality of the education at the schools in question. The four schools have achieved good levels in the last Estyn inspections. Ysgol Machreth gained five level 1 grades which is excellent. This means that the area school's governing body will have staff of the highest quality to choose from when they appoint, and this will lead to education of highest quality in the area school.

*It was noted that it is the quality of the education that is important for children, not the condition of the buildings.*

It was agreed that it is the children's education that is important and that the aim of the proposal is to establish a sustainable and strong educational establishment for the future.

*It was asked what would happen to the proposal if the pupil numbers declined. The parents might decide not to send their children to the area school.*

The Authority has to build and plan for the forecast number of pupils at the four schools in 2013 plus an additional 10%. There are strict guidelines which must be adhered to. As a rule, with a new building the numbers tend to increase rather than fall. It is impossible to forecast what the parents will decide to do and it must be remembered that there is much movement in this catchment area compared to other catchment areas. If the Council wanted to create a proposal which would merely be financially safe it would move all the rural children into the town and build one large urban school. This is not the matter at hand, the aim is to try and maintain a rural education option and centralising it at Brithdir. There are great concerns regarding the numbers in this part of the catchment area and one family of children moving away from a small rural school can cause much damage to the sustainability of the school. We cannot afford to delay, we must act now before there is a further decline in the numbers.

*One member of the audience replied that the situation at Ysgol Machreth was now secure with a permanent head teacher and that one family moving into the village could have a positive effect in the same way as one family leaving could have a negative effect.*

The Council has to act on the present numbers and the truth is that of the 16 pupils, only 7 live within the catchment area of Ysgol Machreth. It was stated again that the Council is trying to safeguard the rural education by investing in the area.

*Members of the audience noted that one new pupil had recently moved into the village, which means that 8 of the 16 pupils live within the area.*

*One member of the audience asked about transport for the children – would there be any provision?*

Free transport will be offered in accordance with the transport policy. Pupils who live within the Ysgol Machreth catchment area and over 2 miles from the Brithdir site will receive free transport. Regarding the present arrangement, the Council understands that secondary school pupils travel by bus to school in Dolgellau and that a public service bus travels along the road to Bontnewydd (under the arched bridge). These two roads offer an option for transporting the children to Brithdir if the proposal is accepted. It is possible that – based on the present numbers – a taxi or a mini bus will be used. The system regarding transport is to invite tenders and allow local companies to recommend what transport route to follow, according to their experience and expertise. It is not possible to confirm the route at present but transport will certainly be offered in accordance with the transport policy.

*It was asked how much bigger would the area school have to be in order to employ four teachers at the Brithdir site. The school would have to be big enough to allow for this.*

In reply it was stated that a definite number was not available but there would have to be around 100 pupils to qualify for four teachers. The school funding is wholly dependent on pupil numbers and it will be the governors who decide exactly how this is to be spent. It is possible that the school could attract foundation phase grant to create one part time (half) teacher, allowing for four classes in the morning and three in the afternoon. It is all dependent on the governors and the pupil numbers.

All were reminded to submit their views and it was noted that the staff might wish to send a joint letter to express their opinions.

Dewi Jones thanked everyone for attending and for their observations.

**YSGOL MACHRETH  
GOVERNORS  
STATUTORY MEETING  
5:00pm, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

There were 11 governors present, including Local Member, head teacher, school staff members and a representative from Bangor Diocese.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

All present were welcomed to the meeting by Dewi Jones, Head of Education. The Council officers were introduced, namely: Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts – Education Portfolio Holder, Tony Bate – Leading Manager Primary Schools' Re-organisation, Dafydd Gibbard – Corporate Property Manager, Hefin Owen – Development Finance Manager, Iwan Evans, Head of Legal Service, Guto Rhys Hughes, Member of the Schools Reorganisation Team, Gwenan Jones-Parry – Clerk.

### **Presenting the Proposal**

The presentation was delivered in two parts. Tony Bate presented information about the proposal together with a summary of the contents of the statutory consultation document. Then Dafydd Gibbard put forward information on property matters and on the conceptual plan for the proposal to develop the site at Brithdir.

### **Presenting the Proposal**

Some questions were put forward during the presentation:

*Based on the community aspect, for what length of time will community activities be ensured?*

Part of the independent assessment of the effect of the changes on the community involved listing measures which the Council can implement in order to alleviate the negative effect that closing the school can have on the community. If the proposal is implemented the Council will then have to consider carefully and decide which of those measures will need to be implemented.

*How can the proposal create a positive effect? The language is strong in this area already.*

As part of the assessment a questionnaire was distributed in order to assess the use of the Welsh language and the result of the question on establishing a multi-site area school was +6 positive. If the Council had chosen to establish a Lifelong School in Dolgellau and close the rural schools, the effect would not have been seen as positive. The positive conclusion was chosen because the area school would create one site which would bring together many children from a Welsh background.

*It was mentioned that a Church provision is being provided at Dolgellau Primary School but discussions are being held with the aim of creating a Lifelong School. What about the future? Will there be a guarantee that the Church provision will continue? The consultation document notes that the provision is there at present but makes no mention of the future.*

Discussions are ongoing on the arrangements for the town of Dolgellau and we cannot forecast the result of those discussions. The representative for the Bangor Diocese noted that discussions were

ongoing and that he was involved in them. He added that he was confident that there will be Church provision at Dolgellau at the end of the process.

## **Open Discussion – Observations and Questions**

*It was asked how the discussion on models in ARC 4 led to a discussion in ARC 5 on a model which would close Ysgol Machreth. Postponing the discussion in the West of the catchment area has caused great problems and is unfair on all the schools. Parents have become uneasy and the situation at the school has become vulnerable, having lost its head teacher and then landing on our feet with the new head teacher, therefore the head teacher situation is not a reason for reorganising the school any more. The timing of the discussions on school closure in May 2011 have been very destructive. The governing body and the parents of Ysgol Machreth have been consistent and very definite that there is no wish to see the school being closed. They do not want the Machreth pupils to be separated and sent to different schools and the feeling is that the 6 rural schools (not including Dinas Mawddwy and Friog) have not been given fair consideration. All the rural schools should have been considered.*

It was explained that the problem of identifying a site in the Western part of the catchment area had caused a delay in discussions throughout the whole catchment area. A decision was made to continue with discussions in the Eastern part of the area due to the vulnerable situation regarding pupil numbers in the area. It would be very difficult to deal with the entire catchment area at the same time. The Authority accepted the observation and requested that this view be expressed in any communication during the consultation period.

*It was noted that the governing body had met between the ARC 5 and ARC 6 meetings where concerns were voiced regarding discussions on half the catchment area only. The minutes of this meeting had been submitted to the Authority.*

*On page 18 of the consultation document it notes that £1.6million of capital funding has been put aside to complete the adaptations at Brithdir. What about the collaboration model, and maintenance costs, why cannot the Council ensure an investment for individual schools? Why not give Machreth a quarter of the £1.6million to safeguard it for the future?*

The document notes (page 6 point 5.5.3) that adaptation and repair costs for the three schools in question totals £2.3million. There are no figures for individual schools but it is believed that Ysgol Machreth is by a small margin the least expensive to run. The capital funding has been earmarked for developing a strong educational establishment for the future, not for retaining the existing establishments as they are. It is not merely funding for maintenance that is under discussion, but funding for adapting the buildings to reach the requirements of twenty first century schools. If the school is to be retained by the Council for the next 50 to 100 years it will have to conform with the Council strategy and include a hall and suitable play area for the relevant key stages.

After reorganisation in the area the hope is that every school will be left in a strong and sustainable situation. The Council's aim is to make a difference in every catchment area.

*It was noted that according to the Estyn inspection table, Ysgol Machreth is the best.*

There are no concerns over the standard of education in the schools in question, excellent education is being upheld. If the proposal is implemented the governing body will have many good teachers to choose from when appointments are made as staff from the existing schools will have first choice for the jobs. Many small schools are dependent on individuals who run the schools but losing those individual can have a very damaging effect. In a larger establishment there is less long term risk since there will be a number of teachers to run the school.



*Will the model be reconsidered if the situation at Dinas Mawddwy becomes more vulnerable? Maybe the numbers will decline, what will happen then?*

The school will receive a multi-site allowance and this will strengthen the situation. Today, if numbers fall under 15 pupils it will receive staffing protection to pay for a head teacher and assistant. This proposal aims to guarantee education on the Dinas Mawddwy site, which is a risk for the Council. It is not possible to foresee school numbers in the distant future, especially in the case of this catchment area where there is much movement within the area. It will be a challenge for the new governing body to manage the two sites with the welfare of pupils central to its aims.

The governing body will run the school and the governors will be responsible for many important decisions. The governing body will not be able to make substantial changes (e.g. closing one site) without detailed discussions with the Authority. The governing body will be responsible for the two sites.

*It was noted that the demography varies from one community to another and that numbers rise and fall. There is a problem with inward movement in the area. Some people living in Dolgellau send their children to Machreth and take part in community activities. The ex-catchment area figures do not reflect this. There is no indication that numbers could rise and losing the school would be a huge blow for the community.*

It was stated that this proposal creates a strong educational establishment for the future but this cannot be achieved in every village. If the proposal is accepted, further discussions will have to be held on measures to alleviate the effect on the community. In Tywyn and Berwyn the Council has used an area regeneration officer to help communities, for example with after use for school buildings.

*A member of the audience stated that there are two important issues which the Council must address if the proposal is implemented, namely: 1) How will young families be attracted into the community; and 2) retaining the strength of the Welsh language.*

In response it was stated that the proposal will have a positive effect on the Welsh language. The situation today gives the impression that a pattern has been established over a number of years of a low number of young families, which is reflected in the fact that only 8 pupils in the school live within the Ysgol Machreth catchment area. It has to be borne in mind that the easy solution would be to centralise primary education in Dolgellau but the proposal in question is trying to retain the rural option. We have to work according to the reality of the situation today. There are many examples throughout the County of strong communities with no school in the area. It is true that closing a school would affect the community and we respect that point of view. But without changing the present situation it is possible that within a few years there will be a slippage of pupils from the school and the school will close itself. This has happened in other schools and it is a situation which the Council hopes to avoid.

*The audience noted that the reality of this proposal is that the communities of Dinas Mawddwy and Brithdir will support and that the communities of Llanfachreth and Rhydymain will object.*

The audience was asked whether it is the location of the rural school rather than the establishment of an area school that is being opposed.

*The best option, if changes and closure are inevitable, would be to build a new area school on a new site in the Bontnewydd area which is a central location, this would give all communities fair and equal treatment.*

It was explained that it is the financial background which prevents this. The bid has not been submitted to Wales Government for funding to complete the development and the Council has earmarked the money and prioritised. The new school would cost approximately £3.5million and the

Council could not afford this sum. The options were either to delay and submit a bid for funding to the Government with the risk that pupil numbers would deteriorate, or implement a less costly option. The option chosen was to act immediately and thus establish rural education in the area. *It was pointed out that the Brithdir location is not natural for the existing pupils, not many live in that area. Concerns arising over the narrow bridge close to the Brithdir site.*

In response it was stated that 84% of the children in question live closer to Brithdir than to other sites (page 27 of the consultation document). Measures are being taken on the Brithdir site to improve the road at that location and the road between Dinas Mawddwy and Brithdir is due to be improved by Wales Government in the next few years. It was also noted that the turning from the A470 to Brithdir will be improved as part of Government plans but no changes will be made to the bridge. New access and parking area will be constructed for the school.

*One member of the audience noted that there is no difference between the roads to Brithdir and the roads to Llanfachreth. The pupil numbers change from year to year. One member stated that his four children had been educated at Ysgol Machreth and when the eldest started there were 9 pupils at the school, when the youngest left there were 37 at the school. It was noted that statistics could convey different views.*

In reply it was stated that page 21 of the statutory document shows the number of pupils since 1975, an increase in numbers at Brithdir and a decline at the other three schools.

It was noted that staff matters had been discussed with school staff at the previous meeting and that personnel officers from the Council had given them a short presentation.

The audience was reminded of the opportunity to voice their responses during the consultation period. It was noted that observations had been made by the governors in ARC meetings 5 and 6, but this is the statutory period and responses at this point are of prime importance.

It was noted that the minutes would be sent to the head teacher so that observations can be made on them before they are included in the reports to the Council democratic circle.

*It was suggested that they should be received before 15-11-11 – this request was accepted.*

Dewi Jones thanked the governors for attending and for their observations.

**YSGOL MACHRETH  
PARENTS  
STATUTORY MEETING  
6:00pm, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

The meeting was attended by 17 parents, head teacher, member of staff and a representative from the Bangor Diocese.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

All present were welcomed to the meeting by Dewi Jones, Head of Education. The Council officers were introduced, namely: Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts – Education Portfolio Holder, Tony Bate – Leading Manager Primary Schools' Re-organisation, Dafydd Gibbard – Corporate Property Manager, Hefin Owen – Development Finance Manager, Iwan Evans, Head of Legal Service, Guto Rhys Hughes, Member of the Schools Reorganisation Team, Gwenan Jones-Parry – Clerk.

### **Presenting the Proposal**

The presentation was delivered in two parts. Tony Bate presented information about the proposal together with a summary of the contents of the statutory consultation document. Then Dafydd Gibbard put forward information on property matters and on the conceptual plan for the proposal to develop the site at Brithdir.

### **Open Discussion – Presenting the Proposal**

It was noted that the minutes of the meeting would be included in the pack given to the County Councillors.

*It was asked if a choice had to be made as to whether pupils would attend Dinas Mawddwy or Brithdir?*

It was explained that pupils from the Brithdir catchment area would attend that school. The area school's second site will be at Dinas Mawddwy and pupils living closer to that site will be expected to attend that school.

*One member asked whether the proposal is definitely going to be implemented.*

In reply it was stated that it is a proposal only at the moment and that it is not definite. At present we are in the middle of a statutory consultation period, and following this period of consultation reports will be submitted to the Council's democratic circle. If the Council decides (on 15th December 2011) to approve the proposal a statutory notice will be issued in January. There will be a period of one month for receiving objections and if any objections are received the proposal will be transferred to Wales Government for the final decision. Wales Government could take up to 7 months to reach its decision. It was noted that a bid for funding had been submitted to the Government for other catchment areas (Tywyn and Y Berwyn) but the financial side of this proposal is secure. The Council has made the commitment to finance the proposal.

*Does the funding include improvements to the road at Brithdir? Concerns were raised regarding the narrow bridge.*

In reply it was noted that Wales Government is funding changes to the A470 at Cross Foxes and that the work should start in 2012. As part of the proposal the access to the Brithdir site will be improved, the road outside the school will be straightened and traffic calming measures such as a speed limit of 30 or 20 mph implemented. If the proposal is implemented it is possible that further consideration will have to be given to the bridge.

*Concerns were expressed over the choice of sites. Why not choose Llanfachreth as the main site? The road is more suitable for buses and there is a field for sale close to the school.*

Initially, Machreth was considered but the decision went against it because of the road network and its geographical location. The Authority understands that secondary school pupils travel by bus along the road to Dolgellau and that a bus runs along the road to Bontnewydd. According to the present proposal it will be necessary for 8 children to travel along the road to the Brithdir site. If the site was at Llanfachreth it would be necessary for 78 children to travel along the roads. There is quite a difference in the number of vehicles that would be involved. The road network is not altogether suitable for the increased traffic which this would involve.

*Will a bus be provided for the pupils? Talking of traffic, at the weekend Llanfachreth is full of people who walk the countryside and the roads are no obstacle to their coming here. Also it was noted that if a road is closed the diversion to Llanfachreth would take three minutes, if the road to Dinas Mawddwy is closed the diversion is huge.*

Based on today's numbers (head teacher has confirmed that 8 pupils live within the catchment area) it is likely that a taxi will be offered. The children will not travel daily to Dinas Mawddwy, they will only travel to Dinas Mawddwy on specific occasions.

*What are the views of the people of Brithdir?*

They welcome the proposal. They agree that the road is challenging and that matters will improve when the Council has discussed ways of alleviating the problems, also Wales Government has plans to improve the turning from the A470. It is a known fact that this is a cause for concern.

*Why is it that only these four schools are being reorganised? Why not the Western part of the area as well?*

In answer it was stated that the aim was to reorganise the whole catchment area but there were problems with finding a site in the western part. The absence of a site led to the postponement of discussions throughout the catchment area. It was decided to carry on with this area because of concern over pupil numbers. There are a number of reasons why pupils move from one area to another - if we had delayed the children would have moved to the town and the schools would have closed themselves. This proposal takes the opportunity to plan strong Welsh rural education for the future. There is a risk for the proposal because of numbers in the area but the Council wants to safeguard rural education.

*The timetable shows the school being open in September 2013, will everything be ready?*

We foresee a construction period of 9-12 months which means that builders would have to be on the site at the earliest in September 2012. The planning and consultation process will take place before that, and there is no reason to believe that it will not be possible.

*If the proposal is refused, what is 'plan B'? If the Assembly refuses the proposal, will the Council enforce it?*

The Council has no 'plan B'. A number of models were discussed during the ARC meetings, we would have to revisit them. None of the models stand out any more than the others. If the proposal is refused by Wales Government, the Council has no right to enforce it.

*Why not share the money that has been earmarked between the schools?*

That would only be a short term answer. The Council's education strategy aims at achieving strong education for the future across the County. This proposal is a strong and long term solution.

*Everyone would be happy if the whole catchment area was being reorganised.*

In reorganising the catchment area the aim is to establish a strong and sustainable education system for the future. There is a promise to return immediately after the election to reorganise the Western part of the catchment area. The reasons for reorganising half the catchment area has already been explained. The proposal is within possible boundaries. It will be Council money that funds the proposal, no funding bid has been submitted to Wales Government. The Council has prioritised and earmarked £3.4 million for reorganising the eastern area and Dolgellau town.

*Who can oppose the proposal?*

Anyone can oppose and only one objection is needed for the proposal to be transferred to Wales Government to be decided upon.

*This school has been chosen by some because the class numbers are high in other schools. More one to one education in Ysgol Machreth since class sizes are smaller.*

It is true that class sizes can affect schools in different ways. It is the Council's strategy to have classes of between 12-25 pupils. It has to be remembered that small classes are not desirable for all children – children of 7 years could be placed among much older pupils. This is not always the best situation for some children. For example, in one year at Ysgol Croesor there were 12 pupils, all of them boys.

*One member of the audience noted that Ysgol Machreth, since September 2011, has worked in collaboration with Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd and all children benefit from this. Very positive effect in a short period of time.*

This was acknowledged and it was noted that this system works well in some schools but is dependent on collaboration between the governing body and members of staff.

*It was stated that – according to Estyn – the education at Ysgol Machreth is very good..*

The Authority has no concerns regarding the standard of education at the schools in question.

*Ysgol Brithdir site will be extended and people will not want to take their children there because they prefer a small school like Ysgol Machreth. The small schools, which are the parents' choice, will all be closed. It was also noted that there is a need for a Welsh school.*

It was stated again that the optimum class size is between 12-25. Estyn agrees with this. A language assessment shows that the proposal will have a positive effect by bringing together a group of first language Welsh speaking children.

*This is not true of the language at Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau.*

It has to be acknowledged that urban schools are different from rural schools but the number of rural pupils is causing a risk. The school in question will have fewer than 100 pupils, fewer than the numbers at Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau.

*It was noted that 40% of the Dinas Mawddwy pupils are Welsh and that the population of Rhydymain and Llanfachreth are more akin.*

The aim is to strengthen the numbers and the situation at Dinas Mawddwy by implementing the proposal.

*If there is no room at Brithdir, will the child go to Dolgellau?*

No – there will be plenty of room. The school is planned for the 2013 forecast number (at the moment 78) plus an extra 10%. A number of the Brithdir pupils are ex-catchment area but we must plan for them also. The County admission policy would be implemented.

*The quality of education and the ethos at Machreth is good. What will the ethos of the area school be?*

An opportunity for the whole area to strengthen the schools, it will be the governing body and the staff who will create the ethos. This is important to bear in mind when the head teacher is being appointed. Establish a strong ethos from the very start.

*The audience noted that the roots will be in an area and not in a village.*

*The area school will not be a Church in Wales school, that provision will be lost..*

Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau will provide Church education in the area. The Council's language policy is operational at Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau as in all schools throughout the County.

*Has the possibility of Llanfachreth pupils going to Ganllwyd and Ieuan Gwynedd pupils going to Llanuwchllyn been considered?*

It is impossible to foresee what the parents will do and there are a number of matters to consider when choosing a school. Perhaps the image of a rural school will attract pupils from the town but the admission policy will be implemented, as in every other school throughout the County.

*It was noted that the forecast figures are incorrect. The new school is based on these figures.*

In reply it was stated that the forecast figures are submitted by the schools themselves. The number of pupils at the area school is based on the 2013 forecast with an extra 10% (in accordance with Welsh Government rules).

*The audience noted that reorganisation has had a negative effect on the school's figures. Parents get worried and do not bring their children. Numbers at the school change from year to year and people from outside can come in and make a huge difference, but with reorganisation on the horizon this will not happen. The school has existed since 1847. The people of Llanfachreth should have something for the taxes they pay, And what better than paying the wages of two teachers? A school is the best thing to spend money on.*

In answer it was noted that the community is important but the priority is children's education. We must plan to support education for the future.

*What will happen to the building? Who owns it?*

The Council has a school buildings after-use policy. The first choice for the use of the building is given to the community. The Area Regeneration Officer will help the community to develop ideas for the use of the building. The representative from Bangor Diocese added that the Church owns one part of the building and the Council the other part. According to the legal document of 1945 if the school is not used for educational purposes it transfers to the trustees of a local committee. These would

act on behalf of the Bangor Diocese and the belief is that the Authority and the community would work together to implement the after-use policy.

*What will happen if the trustees decide to sell the site?*

The first offer of purchase will be given to the community. The process will be undertaken through collaboration with the community.

*Where will the funding for adaptations at Brithdir come from?*

The Council has committed to pay for the adaptations.

*What will happen to the staff? Will there be redundancies? Will there be any protection for the head teachers? There will only be one head teacher post for the four existing heads to apply for, will they have financial protection?*

The staff have been given a presentation earlier and have had an opportunity to speak to the Council's personnel staff. The four schools will close and all the staff in question will be made redundant but the staff in question will be given first offer of posts at the area school. If the present head teacher, for example, is appointed as a teacher his/her head teacher pay level will be protected for three years.

*It was asked what the representation on the governing body will be and who will elect the members. It was noted that having the best possible governing body is of key importance. Does the Authority have any control over the body? It was strongly stated that pupil numbers should not mean that Brithdir would have more representatives.*

Information regarding the size of a governing body was shown, it is possible to have between 9-17 members with varying numbers of parent/community/staff representatives. It was suggested that it would be better to choose the option which gives fair representation to each of the four communities. It will be a governing body for the four communities. The Authority cannot forecast the structure but it would be possible to co-opt representatives from the four communities. A shadow governing body will be formed long before the area school opens in response to the need to appoint staff; the Authority will initiate this move. There is a specific legal process to follow when forming a governing body, the Authority will only have limited influence over the body. It was noted that if members of the audience had any observations on the structure of the governing body they should express them in their response to the consultation, the Council would welcome communities' views on this. The observation regarding numbers and representation from Brithdir was accepted and it was reiterated that if this point is a cause for concern, it should be included in the written response.

*Very negative effect on activities within the village.*

Village activities do not have to come to an end. The Christmas show can move from village to village from year to year. The Authority cannot guarantee this but it will be part of the ethos and resolutions of the governing body.

*The audience pointed out that after 10 years it will be easy to forget the communities/villages with no school*

*One member of the audience asked if the two conceptual models (traditional and modern) have been priced. The modern model would be much more expensive than the traditional model. The impression given was that the traditional model was a compromise. Will pupils take part in the design process? What about land purchase, have any arrangements been made?*

Both developments will meet high standards and they have both been costed, the modern model is the least expensive by fifty thousand pounds. There is no discussion tonight as to which is the best model, there is much consultation to be held before the final design is reached and pupils will be of key importance in the discussions. Some suggestions received from pupils during the consultation on a new school in Caernarfon have been used for the design of the building. The plans shown are conceptual only - 'artist's impression'. Regarding the land purchase, there is a legal agreement in place which will allow the Council to purchase the land at any time within the next 5 years if it is needed.

Regarding transport, it was stated that for the first term, should a bus be used, there would be a person in charge and the buses would be fitted with safety belts.

*The audience hope that a bus will not be used. Will there be a person in charge of transporting pupils at the Brithdir site? It cannot be expected for children to go straight from the vehicles to the school entrance without a person in charge.*

There will be path from the drop off point to the school entrance and the health and safety of the children will be the topmost consideration after the development is completed. It was added that the exact arrangements for transport are not available at the moment because the procedure used by the County is to invite tenders from companies and to let them decide on the exact route to follow, depending on the location of pupils' homes and their expertise in this field.

*It was asked whether the parents would be able to give their opinions on the route used for travel to school.*

This will be part of the consultation but there is no answer at present since it would depend on the exact location of pupils' homes and the route followed.

*What financial savings will this plan bring?*

It was stated that page 24 of the consultation document explains the financial side in full - £180,000 of savings by closing two sites and transport costing approximately £48,000 – therefore savings of £132,000. It was noted that money is not the most important part of the plan.

*Why not federalise the schools and spend the £132,000 on the existing sites to reduce the running costs of the school buildings?.*

There are no savings in federalisation and there will be no difference in the educational provision. It was noted for information that it is the Council that maintains the buildings and not the school budget.

*Expenditure on the new area school will go beyond the budget and in the end there will be no saving.*

The audience was reminded that the plan will save £132,000 revenue money (i.e. every year). It was noted again that money is one factor only. The revenue savings will be reserved for education.

*How many jobs will be available at the new area school?*

There will be funding to employ the equivalent of 5 full time posts (including a head teacher), it is foreseen that there will be 2 at Dinas Mawddwy and 3 at Brithdir. With a nursery class, it might be possible to have an extra half post, depending on the governing body's staffing structure .

*It was noted that there is obvious objection to the proposal, therefore how much time will the Assembly take to decide?*



Wales Government can take up to seven months.

*A request was made to be told immediately what the result of the consultation is and whether the statutory notice will be issued in January.*

It was agreed that the head teacher would be informed after the meeting of the Full Council on 15th December.

It was suggested that parents might wish to write a joint letter in response to the consultation as well as responding individually. It was added that a discussion such as this one is not easy but it is the children's welfare that everyone is concerned about.

Dewi Jones thanked the parents for attending and for their observations.

## **Appendix 2.4**

### **Minutes of Meetings at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd 09-11-11**

# **YSGOL IEUAN GWYNEDD STAFF STATUTORY MEETING 4:00pm, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

7 members of staff attended, including the head teacher, teaching staff and ancillary staff.

## **Welcome and Introductions**

All present were welcomed to the meeting by Dewi Jones, Head of Education. The Council officers were introduced, namely: Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts – Education Portfolio Holder, Tony Bate – Leading Manager Primary Schools' Re-organisation, Dafydd Gibbard – Corporate Property Manager, Hefin Owen – Development Finance Manager, Sandra Evans – Senior Personnel Officer, Gwenno Williams – Cleaning, Care and Catering Manager, Gwenan Jones-Parry – Clerk.

## **Presenting the Proposal**

The presentation was delivered in three parts. Tony Bate presented information about the proposal together with a summary of the contents of the statutory consultation document. Then Dafydd Gibbard put forward information on property matters and on the conceptual plan for the proposal to develop the site at Brithdir. Sandra Evans presented information on personnel matters, including details of help available for staff during the course of the process.

## **Open Discussion - Comments and Questions**

*During the presentation it was pointed out that the number of ex-catchment area pupils was 5 and not 6 .*

*A member of the audience stated that no-one wished to continue with the present situation and that there was a need to bring the children of the area together. It was noted that the problem lies with the site of the area school. It was asked what is the estimated cost of the development.*

In reply it was stated that the Council Board report was looking in more detail at the cost of the development. Adaptation costs for Brithdir were estimated at £1.65 million and adaptation costs for Ieuan Gwynedd estimated as £1.05 million. It was recognised that there was a substantial difference but that other factors had also been taken into consideration when the choice of site had to be made.

*The features needed for the Brithdir site were listed and it was noted that the majority of these were already in place at the Ieuan Gwynedd site. No need for the same level of expense at Ieuan Gwynedd. Brithdir has a small playground, it is not possible to play football on it and part of the location is in the shade (Ieuan Gwynedd faces the sun). The use of the playing field is restricted to the summertime. Ieuan Gwynedd already operates a nature corner scheme, has a soft play area and a grassed football pitch. Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd had received a grant to enable them to adapt the foundation phase area. The main concern is the bend in the road close to the Brithdir site. It is strange and unacceptable that extra money should be spent in Brithdir on things that already exist in Ieuan Gwynedd. It was noted that there is a general feeling against sacrificing existing schools for a brand new school and that the Brithdir option is totally inconvenient and a waste of money. This is the general feeling among the staff.*

It was noted that the staff had made their feelings very clear and that it was understood that it is the choice of site that is opposed and not the proposal of establishing an area school.

*One member of the audience stated that the Council is wasting money and that the aim is to save money.*

Saving money is one factor only in this proposal. If saving money had been the priority, one large school would have been developed in the town of Dolgellau. This plan involved a substantial investment in order to maintain rural education in the area. Other factors have to be borne in mind when choosing a site, one of these factors being that one school is too full and also the distance from the Dinas Mawddwy site.

*The audience noted that the future of the pupils could be secured at Rhydymain. The Council states that the distance from Brithdir to Dinas Mawddwy is 8 miles and from Dinas Mawddwy to Glantwymyn is 7.5 miles. Some children from Dinas Mawddwy (Llanymawddwy area) could go to Ysgol Llanuwchllyn. Would pupils or staff have to travel to Dinas Mawddwy?*

It was stated that the governing body will have to make a decision on this but it is not foreseen that pupils will move from one site to another on a regular basis, only for occasional events and activities.

*Maybe the proposal does not hold a secure future for Dinas Mawddwy, are we being misled by this?*

It was noted that retaining Dinas Mawddwy is a risk and that the Council acknowledges this. The Council is investing its own money in order to safeguard rural education in the area.

*It was agreed that rural education is vital in this area. They failed to understand that argument for locating the main site at Brithdir. There is a Welsh school atmosphere in Ieuan Gwynedd - 100% of the children speak Welsh in the playground, this is not true of Brithdir. Brithdir is oversubscribed because Brithdir and Llanelltyd are the nearest rural education options for the town of Dolgellau.*

In reply it was stated that the area school will offer an opportunity for the head teacher and staff to establish a strong Welsh ethos from the very start. In a primary school, if a language pattern exists that needs to be changed, reorganisation throughout the area is an opportunity to break the pattern and establish a new system.

*There is no argument against the development, the development has been accepted but it is very difficult to accept Brithdir as the site when all the facilities are available at Ieuan Gwynedd and at a substantially lower cost. The strength of factors such as planning and features such as parking and health and safety, a location away from the main road and within a village are all in support of Ieuan Gwynedd. When staff are working in the evenings there is street lighting at Ieuan Gwynedd but the site at Brithdir is in a wooded area, in darkness and with no houses in sight. The site is not as suitable. The site at Ieuan Gwynedd belongs to a village and the school can hold activities in the community by walking along a footpath to the village hall. In Brithdir there is no footpath to the village hall or to the church and the road is being widely used.*

It was noted that this is the third catchment area to be reorganised and that experience at Tywyn has shown that there is a real need to choose a site before consultations start. In this instance the site has been recognised so that everyone can voice their opinions regarding the site. A final decision will be taken at the conclusion of the process. It was also noted that the bend in the road is being improved.

*Concerns were raised that the road will be more widely used after the bend is improved.*

*Apart from the choice of site the staff have concerns regarding their jobs.*

It was noted that this is understandable and that there would be an opportunity to discuss this matter with personnel officers at the end of the meeting.

*In the press a vote of thanks has been paid to the local councillor but it should be noted that the local councillor has not visited Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd at all – no discussion has been held on this area.*

*There is a special education unit at Ieuan Gwynedd, will this provision transfer to Brithdir?*

The new building at Brithdir will meet building standards and conform with the 'DDA' requirements. The provision for educating autistic pupils will be located at Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau. Adaptations are being made to the primary school and it will be developed so that the provision will be on one site; the autistic unit will be located on that site.

*Moving the special education provision to Dolgellau will add to the children's travelling time.*

Before the provision was developed at Ieuan Gwynedd the pupils had to travel out of the county for their education. Tŷ Aran in Dolgellau is being developed so that use can be made of the expertise at one location and possibly people will welcome this. Ysgol Pendalar has been built from scratch for the Arfon area and a financial bid has been submitted to Wales Government so that a similar school can be built for Meirionnydd and Dwyfor. This scheme and the Dolgellau Primary Scheme show that special education is being considered.

*It was asked whether the cost of £1.65 million includes the playing field and everything shown in the conceptual plan during the presentation.*

In reply it was stated that that figure included everything – playing field, improvements to the road, new building, parking area and new entrance.

*It was noted that it is hard to believe that it would take £1.05 million to adapt Ieuan Gwynedd.*

Improvements would have to be carried out at Ieuan Gwynedd in order to accommodate twice the number of pupils the school can take at present. Wales Government requires that 160m<sup>2</sup> of space is needed to accommodate 80/90 pupils. Ieuan Gwynedd would need an extension of 270m<sup>2</sup> (Brithdir 345m<sup>2</sup>). Both sites would need a substantial extension.

Everyone was reminded to submit their observations and it was suggested that staff might wish to send a joint letter to express their views.

*One member of the audience noted that the staff did not oppose change but they did oppose the choice of site.*

Dewi Jones thanked everyone for attending and for expressing their views.

# **YSGOL IEUAN GWYNEDD GOVERNORS STATUTORY MEETING 5:00pm, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

11 governors attended including the head teacher and school staff members.

## **Welcome and Introductions**

All present were welcomed to the meeting by Dewi Jones, Head of Education. The Council officers were introduced, namely: Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts – Education Portfolio Holder, Tony Bate – Leading Manager Primary Schools' Re-organisation, Dafydd Gibbard – Corporate Property Manager, Hefin Owen – Development Finance Manager, Iwan Evans – Legal Services Manager, Gwenan Jones-Parry – Clerk.

## **Presenting the Proposal**

The presentation was delivered in two parts. Tony Bate presented information about the proposal together with a summary of the contents of the statutory consultation document. Then Dafydd Gibbard put forward information on property matters and on the conceptual plan for the proposal to develop the site at Brithdir.

## **Open Discussion - Comments and Questions**

*It was noted that all the governors had been disappointed with the choice made to select Brithdir as the main site for the area school. It seems that in making the choice all the strengths of Ieuan Gwynedd have been ignored. The Council Board report praises Ieuan Gwynedd and notes that it would be less costly and also easier to adapt Ieuan Gwynedd, yet the Brithdir site was chosen. This was a great disappointment. Point 2.2.4 was read out "Some of the features of the existing site at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd were noted, primarily its size and that the cost of developing the site would be lower" and point 2.2.1 was read out "It is obvious that developing on the Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd site would be less costly and easier".*

It was noted that this was a clear point; from the development point of view the site at Ieuan Gwynedd would be less costly and also easier to develop but there were other factors which had to be considered and balanced against the property factors. It was further noted that the consultation in Bro Dysynni had been criticised because the choice of site had not been made prior to the consultation. It had been decided to select a site in this area before any consultation meetings were held, even though there would be objection no matter which site were recommended. Other considerations apart from the technical factors had been in Brithdir's favour. A very important factor is that 84% of the pupils of the area in question live closer to the Brithdir site than to Ieuan Gwynedd. The road network is another consideration as well as the distance to the Dinas Mawddwy site. It is difficult to plan for the next 50+ years but Brithdir seemed central and a site which would remain viable for the future. The final decision will be confirmed at the end of the consultation period, and regarding response to the statutory consultation, the importance of submitting observations and views on the choice of site was emphasised.

*It was noted that the residents of Dolgellau, Penllyn, and Bala were very surprised that Ieuan Gwynedd had been ignored. The point on travelling time for Dinas Mawddwy pupils is misleading because it takes them 25 minutes to travel on a bus that does not follow the direct route.*

It was noted that the travelling time question had been raised at the meeting for parents at Dinas Mawddwy and that confirmation had been received that this fact was correct.

*Will staff have to travel to DM? Will the Dinas Mawddwy site be retained or will the site be closed and the children transported over the mountain to Brithdir?*

We accept that retaining Dinas Mawddwy is a risk but we are very keen to retain it because it serves such a wide area. It is a risk to establish an area school, the non-risk solution would be to develop one large school in the town of Dolgellau. On the basis of numbers, it would be dangerous to delay as one family moving out of an area could lead to numbers becoming so vulnerable the school would close. If no changes are made now, the area will lose the opportunity now being offered.

*Children who should be starting school will not start at a school which is under threat of closure, this affects numbers.*

This is a fair point and a point to be considered in the reorganisation discussion regarding any school. Figures in rural schools undulate, since 1935 the school has seen a maximum number of 34 and a minimum of 14.

*leuan Gwynedd does not lose pupils to other schools, every child who lives within the catchment area attends this school. Some pupils living in Brithdir go ex-catchment for their education. It was noted that the views of the local Councillor were usually sought over the choice of site but the councillor has not consulted with us in this area. Some young people want to return to leuan Gwynedd because they were brought up here.*

It was noted that the point regarding all the pupils within the catchment area attending the school was perfectly correct.

*It was noted that a new school at Brithdir could affect Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau. Parents always favour rural education, will the Brithdir site be large enough?*

Upgrading of Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau is included in the discussions. The forecast numbers for 2013 show that there will be 78 on the Brithdir site and that the site can accommodate 85/90 pupils. It is important to remember that there is more movement between primary catchment areas within Y Gader area than in the remainder of Gwynedd. The area school will be large enough.

*The three schools at the far end of the valley are full. If Brithdir closed, parents would bring their children to leuan Gwynedd for rural education.*

It was noted that leuan Gwynedd has enough capacity now to accommodate pupils but this is not happening. For some reason or another the increase has been in Brithdir only.

It is understood that there is objection to the site chosen but are there any views on any other aspects?

*Point 2.2.5 mentions the connection between Brithdir and nursery provision, but Seren Fach is a private nursery, not a nursery school. This should not be a consideration.*

It was noted that the location of the Brithdir site is close to the nursery and that this is regarded as a strength. The 'SWOTs' were discussed (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) with regard to the sites at Brithdir and leuan Gwynedd at the catchment area review panel meeting and the location of the Seren Fach nursery was noted as a strength. The full list of points is not included in the consultation document because that document only contains a summary of the main points on each aspect. The Board Report in October considers all the points on both sites and this report is available in the background packs or on request from the reorganisation team.

*In the consultation paper, at point 3.3.3 where the numbers of ex-catchment area pupils are compared, the figure for Ieuan Gwynedd is quoted differently from the others, it should note that 100% of the pupils who live within the catchment area attend the school rather than “ 37% of the pupils came from the school’s natural catchment area”. It was not consistent with the ex-catchment area details for the other schools.*

This point was noted but this alone does not affect the decision regarding the site. The truth is that one school is over full and the other school greatly under its capacity, and the majority of children live closer to one site. This was noted but this point alone has not affected the decision regarding the site. The authority does not disagree with the points raised regarding the buildings.

*It was noted that two councillors had received thanks in the press for their input but neither of the two have visited Rhydymain. No visit is expected but it is disappointing that no contact has been made.*

*In the presentation a picture was shown of the parking area. It appears that there is not enough parking places for parents who are dropping off/picking up children.*

The audience was reminded that the plan presented was conceptual and that there would be an opportunity for the user group – including staff, governors and pupils of the school – to give an input as the final design is developed.

Wherever the site will be, the school will serve the area and there will be representation from Rhydymain on the governing body. There will be an opportunity to influence the discussion and to take part in it.

*Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd is part of the community and makes use of the chapel and the village hall. The school capacity is 45 and it is located within the village. What will be the size of the hall in the area school in comparison with the one at Rhydymain? The village hall at Brithdir will need to be used – will it be big enough?*

It was agreed that the school hall at Rhydymain was ideal. The school hall in the new school will meet the requirements of Wales Government. The hall will be big enough to accommodate 80-100 children but not big enough to take 2/3 family members as well. School halls are not designed on the basis of activities which are held once or twice a year. One or two performances will need to be arranged so that all the parents will be given the opportunity to attend, as is the case in schools across Gwynedd.

*The hall will be used more and more, with the need to hold Ti a Fi sessions, coffee mornings etc. – a large hall will be needed.*

There is no reason why some events cannot be held in the different communities.

*It was noted that transport is difficult to Llanfachreth and that an area school has been developed in Glantwymyn to serve a wide area but events are only held in Glantwymyn itself.*

In answer it was stated that this has been their choice and that there is an opportunity here from the very start for the communities to insist that the ethos of the school ensures activities in the four communities. The school governing body and staff should be central in promoting this.

*One member of the audience noted that he/she was not happy for the four areas to be in competition with each other when events and coffee mornings etc are arranged.*

This will be a matter for the governing body to discuss as part of the school’s vision. It was explained that the authority will establish a shadow governing body in order to make it possible to appoint the



head teacher and staff. When the school opens the governing body will have to be established and members elected in accordance with the usual policy. The body will have a wide representation. It was noted that any views on the shape of the governing body would be welcome and that it will be possible to have between 9-17 members on it. The County can design the site and secure the resources but the governing body and the head teacher will be responsible for the spirit/ethos of the school.

*The community aspect will not be obvious at the area school.*

There is a challenge when you have four communities stating their wishes and what they are striving to achieve, and the Authority is aware of this. The number of parents on the governing body will mean that there is good representation from each one of the communities.

*It was noted that the governing body members at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd are uneasy over the fact that reorganisation within the catchment area is being carried out in three phases. We are aware that there are financial problems and problems over the site for the Western area and concerns over vulnerable numbers but taking action in this manner ignores options such as the pupils from Llanfachreth moving to Ganllwyd school.*

It was noted that there was a proposal for establishing a lifelong establishment in the town and that a commitment had been made to return to the Western part of the catchment area following the election in 2012. It was noted that sites in the town and in the Western part of the catchment area had been difficult. It was agreed that it would have been better to reorganise the whole catchment area at the same time, but circumstances prevented this.

Members of the audience were reminded that the minutes would be included as part of the consultation but observations should also be submitted. Perhaps the body would wish to respond as a group as well as individually.

*The governors noted that they wanted the best opportunity for the children on the best site. The governors do not oppose the principle of an area school. With regard to the site, do the plans include ex-catchment area pupils?*

In planning, we have to provide for the children who attend the schools at present. This would be true whether the site was at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd or at Ysgol Brithdir.

*There is a possibility that the number of pupils in the catchment area will have declined in 20-50 years?*

The pupils of the catchment area will be given priority, entrance will be controlled in accordance with the entrance policy which is implemented throughout the County.

There is a need to clear the point which involves transporting between Dinas Mawddwy and Brithdir. It was noted that children might be transported from Brithdir to Dinas Mawddwy but not on a regular basis. It is foreseen that this will take place on special occasions only.

Dewi Jones thanked the governors for attending and for expressing their opinions.

**YSGOL IEUAN GWYNEDD  
PARENTS  
STATUTORY MEETING  
6:00pm, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

28 parents and members of the community, including the head teacher, attended the meeting. Apologies were received from four prospective parents [Elgan and Nicola Pugh, Dyfan and Gwenan Roberts].

### **Welcome and Introductions**

All present were welcomed to the meeting by Dewi Jones, Head of Education. Council officers present were introduced as follows: Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts – Education Portfolio Holder, Tony Bate – Leading Manager Primary Schools’ Re-organisation, Dafydd Gibbard – Corporate Property Manager, Hefin Owen – Development Finance Manager, Iwan Evans – Legal Services Manager, Gwenan Jones-Parry – Clerk.

### **Presenting the Proposal**

The presentation was delivered in two parts. Tony Bate presented information about the proposal together with a summary of the contents of the statutory consultation document. Then Dafydd Gibbard put forward information on property matters and on the conceptual plan for the proposal to develop the site at Brithdir.

### **Open Discussion – Presenting the Proposal**

It was noted that the parents might like to write a joint letter in response to the consultation as well as responding as individuals.

*Reference was made to the proposal of joining Brithdir and Dinas Mawddwy, how much travelling between sites would this involve? This was an important part of locating the area school at Brithdir.*

It was explained that the misinterpretation that children would travel daily to Dinas Mawddwy needed to be cleared. It is foreseen that the children will travel to Dinas Mawddwy on some special occasions. This will be a matter for the head teacher and the governing body but it is an opportunity to share staff expertise and the pupils on both sites will benefit from being taught by all the school staff.

*Is the decision on the Brithdir site final and definite?*

Brithdir is the site chosen to consult upon. The final decision will be made after the consultation comes to an end. The advantages and disadvantages of both Brithdir and Ieuan Gwynedd sites were considered and the Board decided to choose Brithdir to consult upon. 84% of the pupils in question in this proposal live closer to Brithdir than to Ieuan Gwynedd.

*Are the children of Dinas Mawddwy included in the 84% because they are not relevant. The pupils of Dinas Mawddwy should be ignored. Does this figure include children who live in Dolgellau?*

The figure is based on pupils who attend the four schools at present, including those who live in Dolgellau. We have to plan for those pupils who attend the schools at present. The majority of pupils

who attend live in Brithdir itself. It was understood that figures change but the Council had to act on present figures. Based on the pupil numbers in September 2011 the truth is that one school is over subscribed and one school is very close to being unable to employ a head teacher and teacher.

*The number of pupils attending the area school would remain the same, no matter what the present situation might be.*

It was noted that by choosing leuan Gwynedd many more pupils would have to move. In comparing the two schools alone, 45 pupils would move to Ysgol leuan Gwynedd but only 16 would move to Brithdir, it would affect fewer pupils. It was noted that we have to bear in mind that there is more movement between primary school catchment areas in Y Gader catchment area than in any other within Gwynedd. For whatever reason there is a pattern of an increase in numbers at Brithdir and it is true that 17 come from the town of Dolgellau. It is obvious that some want rural education, the same is true of the ex-catchment area numbers in Machreth. It has to be said that the pupils of leuan Gwynedd catchment area are true to their school - 100% of the catchment area pupils attend the school.

*It was noted that Brithdir receives pupils from the town of Dolgellau because it is closer to Dolgellau.*

*It was noted that emphasis had been placed on local Councillors but the local Councillor for Rhydymain has not attended meetings of the Community Council or school governor meetings for over a year. No discussion has taken place with the community.*

In reply it was stated that the officers present could not speak on behalf of the local member but it was noted that discussions with members are essential prior to consultation, this procedure had been adopted as part of the Council's reorganisation process.

*The facts and the opinions of Rhydymain residents have not been heard, nobody has spoken with the community.*

It was stated that it was becoming clear that it is the location of the area school site that is being opposed, not the establishment of the area school.

*The audience pointed out that common sense showed that leuan Gwynedd is a better choice since it is a less expensive and safer site. There is room at Rhydymain to add another 29 pupils without having to make any change at all.*

In reply it was noted that the area school in question is a school for 98 pupils (78 Brithdir and 20 Dinas Mawddwy). In reorganising the catchment area the aim is to establish a building of high standard which can survive for fifty years or more. Adapting leuan Gwynedd to accommodate all the pupils would involve the addition of 270m<sup>2</sup> at a cost of £1.05 million and to adapt Brithdir the addition of 345m<sup>2</sup> at a cost of £1.65 million. The Council does not deny that there is a difference in cost. Looking at the building and expenditure aspects there is no doubt that leuan Gwynedd would be the best but other factors had to be considered and the Council Board decided to choose the Brithdir site to consult upon.

*Has any consultation with parents taken place to see where they would choose to send their children? It is impossible to guess. Some might go to Ganllwyd, there is no certainty that all children will go to the new area school.*

No consultation has taken place, this is the consultation period. It is impossible to know exactly because parents do have a choice. The Council admits that the proposal does involve some risk but we have to take action now and there is no need to wait for funding from Wales Government. A commitment has been made to maintain rural education - the most cost effective solution would be

to develop a large school in Dolgellau. If you have any evidence why Rhydymain should be selected as the main site, communicate your observations in response to the consultation. The main aim is to do the utmost possible for children's education in the area.

*The Cross Foxes road is being improved which means that more people will be using it and this could mean that the road will be more dangerous. According to the image in the presentation there is a shortage of parking places.*

In reply it was noted that the image was an 'artist's impression' and that a more detailed image would have to be obtained for discussions with the user group.

*It was asked whether the costs are based on an 'artist's impression'?*

The plan was based on the expertise of an architect and on past experience.

*It was stated that there was no 'artist's impression' of the area school on the leuan Gwynedd site to enable a fair comparison. Factors such as pupil numbers are the only ones which have been put forward. It was noted that other factors need to be considered, factors such as health and safety on the sites and problems with snow and ice, level roads - there is only a 'B' road to Brithdir. There is pressure on schools to remain open during hard weather. Last year Ysgol leuan Gwynedd had to close for one day only whilst Ysgol Brithdir remained closed for a whole week.*

The Brithdir site is not within the village and there is heavy traffic on the road; there is also a narrow bend in front of the location of the proposed entrance. It was stated that this is evident in the 'artist's impression'.

In reply it was stated that there is no corner in the proposed entrance according to the 'Ordnance Survey' map. Part of the road in front of the field between the proposed entrance and the existing building will be straightened as part of the adaptations.

*Are building costs such as building foundations included? There will be more work involved with the Brithdir site than there would be at leuan Gwynedd due to the unlevel nature of the land.*

It was stated in reply that the adaptation costs for both sites included everything shown in the presentation. The work of building foundations will not be any greater in Brithdir but there will be a need to level more land. This is part of the £0.5 million difference in cost.

*Is Ysgol Brithdir on a system or will there be a septic tank?*

Septic tank but the number on the site will only double.

*Pupil numbers have been used as a strong argument for Brithdir but 17 of them are ex-catchment area. If the Brithdir choice did not exist, then leuan Gwynedd would be chosen. It is misleading to base an argument on pupil numbers, it is an artificial situation which can change in no time at all. The distance from Dinas Mawddwy is also an argument but reaching Ysgol leuan Gwynedd does not involve much extra travel and it was noted earlier that pupils will not be transported often. The arguments for the Brithdir site are not very strong.*

The pattern of movement between Dinas Mawddwy and Brithdir will be resolved by the governing body. The truth is that more children live in the Brithdir catchment area, namely 23 as compared with 10 living in the leuan Gwynedd catchment area.

*Planning permission has been granted for the construction of houses in Rhydymain and this could affect the numbers in the near future. It was added that the location is better and safer.*

The Council Board has weighed and measured these points when it considered the comments on the 'SWOTs' (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) discussed in the catchment area review panel, the opinions of local Councillors and educational and technical points.

*It was strongly pointed out that it should be made known to all Council members that the local member had not held any discussions at all with the community so it was unfair to use this point.*

*One member of the audience stated that the site had been chosen according to the information supplied. Everything that is required is already available at leuan Gwynedd yet Brithdir was chosen – why?*

It was stated that a site had been chosen to be consulted upon therefore this is the proposal put forward. The facilities and the existing buildings at Brithdir and at leuan Gwynedd have been considered but there are more factors to be taken into consideration. Brithdir is over subscribed and leuan Gwynedd is very close to being able to employ a head teacher and assistant only. It is not wise to ignore the problem posed by the precarious numbers at the school.

*It will not be possible to increase the numbers whilst reorganisation brings the threat of closure.*

This is a problem with reorganisation in any area and it is a reason for taking swift action.

*Concerns were raised that no discussion had been held on finding a solution for the Western part of the catchment area.*

It was admitted that a solution for the Western part of the catchment area was causing a problem and the commitment to return in 2012 still stands.

*If the proposal is implemented, will it be ready by September 2013?*

At the moment, there is no reason to believe that it will not be completed. The construction work will take 9-12 months, this means that the work on the site needs to start at the earliest in September 2012. Preparations regarding the planning process will go ahead whilst the proposal is being considered by the Government (if objections are received) so that work on the site can proceed in September 2012. Health and safety and the quality of the children's education at Brithdir (especially year 6) will be given priority when the work is planned. It was noted that the Council has much past experience of doing this – lately there was a similar development at Pentreuchaf which was much more difficult than the proposed development at Brithdir. The construction workers had to cross the school playground, but with strict control the work was completed without any problems. The head teacher at Pentreuchaf stated that the process had been a positive one. The Brithdir development will be easier since a completely new entrance is being built. It will not be easy and advance preparation is vital.

*One member of the audience had heard that the area school playing field will be on the Dinas Mawddwy site rather than at Brithdir.*

This is not true, there will be a playing field on the Brithdir site.

*Reference was made to the special education unit at leuan Gwynedd.*

Regarding this provision, as part of the development at Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau (the Council has already committed funding), Tŷ Aran will be developed. It has to be noted that a financial bid is being submitted to Wales Government for a similar development to Ysgol Pendalar in the Dwyfor/Meirionnydd area (a new Ysgol Hafod Lon). Best staff expertise and facilities will be available there, the developments are ongoing.

*Concerns over the Welsh language, it was noted that the proposal will strengthen the language but the Brithdir site is very close to Dolgellau. A new school will attract children from the town and non-Welsh children.*

The school will have an entrance number and it will not accept any more than this number, in accordance with the entrance policy. In establishing a new area school there is a unique opportunity to establish a strong ethos and to develop the Welsh language.

*Rural area school, what about Christmastime activities?*

Before the school opens a shadow governing body will be established and representation from the four areas will have to be arranged. The governing body will be an important way of representing the communities.

*Why maintain such an old building at Brithdir, the hall will be in a building older than Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd. Will the hall be big enough to hold events such as the Christmas show? If not, will the village hall at Brithdir be used? There is no footpath from the school to the village hall in Brithdir. The hall at Rhydymain holds over 300 people for free.*

It is true that the building is old but work will be carried out on it. It will be of sufficient capacity to accommodate the pupils and staff of the school for day to day use. A school hall is not planned for events which are held once a year only. Other schools across the County have to hold events on more than one evening so that all the parents are given the opportunity to attend. Perhaps it will be necessary to make use of the village hall at Brithdir, but the governing body will decide on this. The Christmas show might move between the four communities each year. It has to be remembered that this will be an area school and not merely Ysgol Brithdir. Members of the community and the parents of existing pupils will be able to influence this.

The Authority will establish the shadow governing body so that the head teacher and the remaining school staff can be appointed. When the school is open the governing body will be formed in accordance with the present system in every school. There are different options regarding the size of the governing body – it can include between 9-17 members, depending on the structure chosen. Under the present system, membership comprises co-opted members from the community, parents, staff and head teacher of the school.

It was stated that it had become evident from the discussion that there was objection to the choice of Brithdir as the area school site but when responses are made to the consultation, the Council would welcome input/observations on matters such as the structure of the governing body.

In summary it was noted that the discussion was very similar to that held with the staff and governors of the school, objection to the site of the area school rather than to the concept itself.

*The audience remarked that they were 100% against the location of the site. Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd is safer than the Brithdir site. There is a private dwelling at the rear of the school and the present residents are agreeable but what certainty is there regarding future residents? Anyone could move there. The Brithdir site does not get any sun and snow and ice does not thaw during the day which means that the road is dangerous throughout the day. If another building is constructed and trees planted, the site will receive even less sun.*

Members of the audience were reminded that they should convey points which cause concern such as this one in their responses to the statutory consultation.

*What will happen to the building at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd if the proposal goes ahead?*

It was explained that the Council has an after-use policy for educational buildings. The first offer will be given to the community and an Area Regeneration Officer will help the community to form a business plan. The building can be retained and other use made of the land. For example, in Abergynolwyn there was a suggestion for demolishing the school and developing affordable housing on the land.

*What happens to the money if a school is sold - e.g. proceeds from the sale of Ysgol Llawr Y Betws?*

The money from Council assets goes back to the Council but revenue savings (annual savings from the running of schools) returns to the education department.

*It was enquired whether the Council owns all the land and buildings at Ysgol Brithdir. Ysgol Brithdir is a listed building and if education is not maintained on the site the first choice goes to the Cae Ddermwig Estate. It is important to be clear on this because it is possible to spend money on the site and in future years the value of the adaptations will go to the estate.*

It seems that there are restrictions with the building at Brithdir, that the first offer would have to be given to the estate but in order to obtain a full answer we need to look at the matter in more detail. It was noted that there is a risk with the plan but the belief is that this proposal is sustainable for the future. It was noted that the Council and the Church are co-owners of Ysgol Machreth and that after-use had been discussed during the statutory meetings there.

*For how long will the Dinas Mawddwy site remain open? Is there sufficient room to move the Dinas Mawddwy pupils to Brithdir?*

The Council has no wish to close the Dinas Mawddwy site.

*The head of education was asked to choose, as a parent, between Brithdir and Ieuan Gwynedd as the school where he would choose his children to be educated.*

It was clearly stated that under the present situation he would choose Ieuan Gwynedd but this is irreverent because considerable expenditure will be made at Brithdir.

*Will the landowner sell the land to the Council?*

There is a legal option on the land at Brithdir and at Ieuan Gwynedd to enable the Council to purchase the land when the time is right.

*Seren Fach Nursery in Brithdir should not be taken into consideration when choosing the site because it is a private business. The nursery fetches children from Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd anyway so both sites have their advantages. There is no nursery group in the nursery.*

It was noted that the nursery is closer to Brithdir but in considering sites, this is factually correct. Educational provision throughout the area has to be considered before a full picture can be obtained.

*Members of the audience again pointed out that the local councillor had not visited the community to hold discussions and that the site at Brithdir is unsuitable. What about cycling to school, it is possible to cycle to school at Ieuan Gwynedd and have cycling training, there is no room at Brithdir for this to take place.*

Members of the audience were reminded that these points needed to be conveyed as part of the response to the consultation. It was noted that, wherever the final site might be, everyone wanted that best educational provision for the children of the area.

Dewi Jones thanked the parents and members of the community for attending and for expressing their views.