

CABINET REPORT

Date of meeting: 13 October 2020

Cabinet Member: Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams

Contact Officer: Gwern ap Rhisiart - Dwyfor Meirionnydd Area Education Officer

Title of Item: New school in Cricieth

DECISION SOUGHT:

The Council Cabinet's permission is sought to conduct a statutory consultation, in accordance with the requirements of section 48 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, on the proposal to increase the capacity of Ysgol Trefferthyr to 150 and to relocate the school to an alternative site, referred to as the A497 site, on 1 September 2023, reporting back to the Cabinet following the completion of the consultation.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting on 2 April 2019, the Cabinet supported a recommendation to commence local discussions in order to identify options for the construction of a new primary school in Cricieth, due to the poor condition of Ysgol Trefferthyr's existing buildings, and to include Ysgol Llanystumdwy in the initial discussions.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to report back on the outcome of those discussions, and seek permission to carry out a statutory consultation on a proposal to increase the school's capacity to 150 and relocate the school to an alternative site, referred to as the A497 site, on 1 September 2023.
- 1.3 In April 2009, the '**Excellent Primary Education for Children in Gwynedd**' strategy was adopted by the Council, with the aim of setting out a clear vision, objectives and principles for the relevant considerations in relation to the organisation of the County's schools. It was noted in the Strategy that there was a need to ensure a way of addressing the situation of some vulnerable schools:

"Relevant professional information should also be considered so as to draw attention to urgent situations within the County that directly impact quality of pupils' education and experiences (e.g. very low pupil numbers within a school, very poor condition of a school building, and difficulty in recruiting headteachers)".
- 1.4 In 2011, approximately £500,000 was spent in an attempt to extend the lifespan of the buildings for around five years. Surveys now indicate that the effect of this temporary work is drawing to a close.
- 1.5 The Welsh Government has embarked on the second phase of the **21st Century Schools Programme** (Band B) to run between April 2019 and March 2026. Gwynedd Council submitted a '*Strategic Outline Plan*' which contained five projects for this phase of the programme. The need to improve primary provision in Cricieth was identified as part of this application, on the basis that the condition of Ysgol Trefferthyr's buildings (category C -) meaning that there were numerous defects in the overall condition of the buildings and that it is uneconomical to continue to try to maintain the buildings in future.

2. THE CURRENT SITUATION AT YSGOL TREFERTHYR

- 2.1 Ysgol Trefferthyr is located in the centre of the town of Cricieth. The school's capacity is 119, with 114 pupils between 3 and 11 years of age on the register in September 2019 and there are five mixed-age classes at the school. The majority of the pupils (105) are from Ysgol Trefferthyr's catchment area, with 9 additional pupils from other neighbouring catchment areas.
- 2.2 It received an Estyn inspection in 2018, and the five core inspection areas were assessed as "Good".
- 2.3 Ysgol Trefferthyr has received a budget allocation of £442,762 for the 2020-21 financial year, which means that the average cost per pupil is £4,215. The average cost per head for all Gwynedd primary schools for the same period is £4,198.

2.4 Condition

Following condition surveys, the Council's Property Service is of the opinion that the school is now beyond repair and maintenance. The condition surveys relating to the buildings at Ysgol Treforthyr have identified several issues which mean that there are a number of significant structural defects. Parts of the structure are made from timber and are of poor quality. A substantial part of the school was built in the 1970s using a Vic Hallam type structure, which had a lifespan of approximately 25 years, and is now in a poor condition. Unless plans are made now for a long-term solution, there is a high risk of having to deal with an urgent situation during the next few years.

2.5 Suitability

A recent suitability survey has identified that the current school is very poor and that the buildings significantly impair the staff's ability to deliver the curriculum. Neither the original building nor the two-storey extension / cabin help school staff to offer an education to the expected standard.

The survey noted a significant number of suitability defects including:

- Noise creating problems in some rooms
- Problems with temperature control
- There are difficulties with teaching as a result of the design of the rooms
- There are limitations to carrying out some activities
- The location disrupts teaching and learning, e.g. dinner trolleys have to go through classrooms
- There are no access to outside space from classrooms
- Considerable work is needed on several aspects to improve the school's external environment
- Parking and traffic problems

3. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Changing the capacity

- 3.1.1 The 2013 Act notes particular types of changes to schools in '*regulated alterations*'. As a result one has to follow a statutory process that has been set out in the Act in relation to these and also adhere to the requirements of the School Organisation Code 011/2018. This particular change comes under one of the categories in '*regulated alterations*' which is '*an enlargement of the premises of a school which would increase the capacity of the school by at least 25%.*'
- 3.1.2 In recognising the lessons learnt from previous projects the Council is of the view that school construction projects must be based on the total number of children residing in the catchment area of the current school rather than on the number currently attending the school.
- 3.1.3 As can be seen in **Table 1** below, based on September 2019 figures, Ysgol Treforthyr numbers could potentially be 137, i.e. 114 in the school and 23 attending other schools. For this reason, the intention is to build the new school to include five classes for children aged from reception to year 6 and a nursery class. This means that the school's capacity will increase to 150.

Table 1 – Pupil numbers at Ysgol Trefferthyr and the three other neighbouring schools and home catchment (September 2019)

**3. Niferoedd yn Ysgolion Cynradd yn Ôl Dalgylch Ysgolion /
Primary School Pupil Numbers by School Catchment Area**

2019		Dalgylch Cartref Home Catchment				Ysgolion eraill Other schools	Cyfanswm (M-BI6) Total (N – Yr6)
Ysgol School	Trefferthyr	Llanystumdwy	Garndolben- maen	Y Gorlan			
Trefferthyr	105	4	2	0	3	114	
Llanystumdwy	6	11	0	0	4	21	
Garndolbenmaen	3	0	35	0	7	45	
Y Gorlan	8	2	3	64	43	120	
Ysgolion eraill / Other schools	6	3	3	25			
Cyfanswm (M-BI6) Total (N – Yr6)	128	20	43	89			

Ffynhonnell: Cyfrifiad Ysgolion Medi 2019
Source: September 2019 School Census

*Efallai na fydd data a gywerir o SIMS ysgol ar ddiwedd y cyfrifiad yn cyfateb yn union â'r ffigurau cyfrifiad ysgolion
*Data taken from school SIMS on census day may not exactly match the schools census return

3.1.4 As the school's current capacity is 119, it means an increase of 26% in the capacity and therefore the need to follow a statutory procedure.

3.2 Local discussions

Following the Cabinet meeting on 2 April 2019 discussions with Ysgol Trefferthyr a Llanystumdwy commenced. Following the first meeting of the panel, and following a further meeting with representatives of Ysgol Llanystumdwy and the Church in Wales, the school held a special meeting of the School Governors on 16 September 2019, to discuss the matter of the meetings where it was confirmed through the Clerk of Governors that they no longer wanted to continue to be part of future meetings.

3.3 Option discussions

Following Ysgol Llanystumdwy's decision the remainder of the meetings were held with representatives of Ysgol Trefferthyr alone where the focus of the meetings was on the location of the new school. All locations considered and the order of the meetings can be seen in **Appendix A**.

3.3.1 When considering the longlist of site options, the following requirements were considered:

- The size of the site
- Planning considerations
- Access and traffic considerations
- Technical considerations
- Impact on development costs

3.3.2 Following discussing all the sites over numerous meetings it was agreed in the PAL meeting on 24 June 2020 to recommend the A497 site as the preferred site for locating the new school in Cricieth. Details of the meetings can be seen in **Appendix A**.

4 THE PREFERRED OPTION

The A497 site is located to the west of the town, in the direction of Pwllheli. The school will be built for 150 children aged from reception to year 6 with a nursery class. The school will also provide space for early years provision. The site will also be a new home to an ABC and language disorder Unit which will move from its present location in the site of Ysgol Cymerau in Pwllheli.

4.1 Financial Resources

4.1.1 Capital

The original application to the Welsh Government requested a contribution towards a capital sum of £4.97m from the 21st Century Schools fund for this project, with £3.23m funded by the Welsh Government and a contribution of £1.74m from Gwynedd Council. Because the cost of purchasing the necessary land will be slightly higher than the original budget and the cost of construction higher due to the need for extra space for the ABC and language impairment Unit, the project budget will need to be increased. It is anticipated that the new budget will be approximately £5.4m with the Welsh Government contribution to the project increasing to £3.51m and the Council's contribution to £1.89m. Consideration will be given to the need to adjust the budget and allocation of projects in Band B in order to facilitate the change. Gwynedd Council's contribution will be funded under Gwynedd Council's Asset Plan 2019-2029.

4.1.2 Revenue

Ysgol Trefferthyr has received a budget allocation of £442,762 in the 2020-21 financial year, which means that the average cost per pupil is £4,215. The average cost per head for all Gwynedd primary schools for the same period is £4,198.

The new building will result in changes to the 'buildings' aspect of the funding formula.

4.2 Leadership and Staffing

As the intention is to relocate Ysgol Trefferthyr to a new site, there will be no change to leadership or staffing.

4.3 Learning environment

The new school in Cricieth will replace a school which is in a very poor condition with suitability problems. This means that the children of the Trefferthyr catchment area will enjoy being taught in a modern learning environment once the new school is completed.

4.4 Geographical factors and transport

As the intention is to relocate Ysgol Trefferthyr to a new site, there will be no change to the way children currently reach the school, unless any additional child requires transport under the Gwynedd Schools Transport Policy.

Children who live within walking or cycling distance of the school will be encouraged to do this.

5 CHANGE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

5.1 Welsh Language Impact Assessment

Welsh Government guidance (School Organisation Code 011/2018) notes that a Welsh language impact assessment should be held as part of any proposal for school reorganisation. An assessment of the impact that relocating the school to a new site would have on the Welsh language was completed. See the full report in **Appendix B**.

The assessment notes that relocating Ysgol Trefferthyr to a new site in Cricieth would not have a negative impact on the Welsh language. On the contrary, it is anticipated that there would be more opportunities for Cricieth children to use the Welsh language extracurricularly and socially with their peers, as the new school would mean better resources to conduct more activities outside school hours.

5.2 Equality Assessment

An equality assessment on relocating the school to a new site was completed. See the full report in **Appendix B**.

The conclusion reached is that relocating Ysgol Trefferthyr to another site would not affect equality, whether characteristics or the general duty.

It is anticipated that building a new school will strengthen aspects of equality because it will be better suited to educating every child, especially those with disabilities, by following the guidelines on the construction of modern schools.

Ysgol Trefferthyr implements robust equality and anti-bullying policies that will continue to be implemented at the new school.

5.3 Well-being Assessment

The Education Department has a role in promoting well-being objectives amongst pupils in the county through its activities and projects. The Act places a duty on public bodies in Wales to improve economic, social, environmental

and cultural well-being. As part of the duty, the Council has published well-being objectives that outline the way it will improve well-being in the '2018-23 Gwynedd Plan'.

A well-being assessment on relocating the school to a new site was completed. See the full report in **Appendix B**.

Following consideration and an assessment in line with the requirements of the Well-being Act, the conclusion was reached that the proposal did satisfy the 7 well-being goals within the Act, and the Council's well-being objectives. This proposal will allow us to respond to and address the children's needs today, and strengthen their future well-being.

5.4 Community impact assessment

An assessment of the impact that relocating the school to a new site would have on the community was completed. See the full report in **Appendix B**.

No negative impact on the community is anticipated by relocating Ysgol Trefferthyr to the new site. The new school would remain within the town community and be able to offer facilities that would benefit learners and the wider community.

The modern rooms of the new school will offer themselves to hold community activities. In establishing the new school, in order to make full use of the new provision and modern resources, it is intended to promote community use on a wider level for the community.

Building the new school on the A497 site would ensure more space for learners, offering more options for extracurricular clubs and activities.

6. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

Subject to the Cabinet's decision, a statutory consultation will take place, in line with the School Organisation Code (011/2018), on proposal to increase the capacity of Ysgol Trefferthyr to 150 and to relocate the school to an alternative site, referred to as the A497 site, on 1 September 2023.

Following the consultation period of 42 days, we will prepare a report noting any comments received and responses to them, reporting back to the Cabinet. The Cabinet will then decide if we should publish a Statutory Notice or not. If the Statutory Notice is published, a period of 28 days will be allowed for anyone to object to the proposal. Following this a further report will be presented to the Cabinet noting any objections and responding to them. The Cabinet will then make a final decision on the proposal.

A business case will also be prepared, in accordance with the Treasury's Five Step guidance to be presented to the Welsh Government's 21st Century School's capital assessment panel in order that we can ensure their financial contribution to develop the new school.

VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

The Monitoring Officer:

As the proposal is a regulated alteration under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, the process that is proposed will be statutory one and will follow the requirements of the Act and the School Organisation Code.

Head of Finance Department:

The purpose of the report is to ensure the Cabinet's decision to conduct a statutory consultation period in order to increase the capacity and relocate Ysgol Trefferthyr, Cricieth by September 2023, and I support the decision sought.

I confirm the accuracy of the financial information which appears in section 2.3, 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 of the report including the 65% contribution from the Welsh Government towards the estimated capital cost of the project, dependant on presenting a successful business case.

Local Members' Views:

Cricieth really needs a new primary school and following being part of the discussions, I agree that the favoured site is a very good choice as a location.

Appendices

Appendix A	Presentations and minutes of the Local Review Panel meetings
Appendix B	Language, Community, Equality and Well-being Impact Assessments