

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March, 2018

- PRESENT:** Councillor Dylan Rees (Vice-Chair) (In the Chair)
- Councillors Lewis Davies, Richard Griffiths, Shaun Redmond, Alun Roberts, J. Arwel Roberts (*Vice-Chair for this meeting*), Nicola Roberts
- Co-opted Member: Mr Keith Roberts (The Catholic Church)
- Portfolio Member**
- R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Youth & Culture)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive
Head of Learning
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Aled Morris Jones (Chair), Trefor Lloyd Hughes, Richard O. Jones, Anest Frazer (The Church in Wales)
- ALSO PRESENT:** **Portfolio Members:** Councillors Llinos Medi Huws (Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services), John Griffith (Portfolio Member for Finance), Alun Mummery (Portfolio Member for Housing and Supporting Communities), Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Corporate Services) Richard Dew (Portfolio Member for Planning and Public Protection)
- Officers:** Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community and Service Improvement), Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process Transformation) Head of Function (Resources) and Section 151 Officer, Head of Democratic Services
- Others:** Councillor Jason Zalot (Mayor of Beaumaris Town Council), Rhian Jones (Chair of Ysgol Beaumaris Consultation Response Committee), Emma Taylor (Chair of Ysgol Beaumaris Governing Body) Mr Islwyn Humphreys (Ysgol Talwrn Governing Body) Bethan Wyn Jones (Parents and Residents of Talwrn)
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Due to the absence of the Chair, Councillor Dylan Rees, the Vice-Chair took the Chair for the meeting. Councillor J. Arwel Roberts was elected Vice-Chair for this meeting of the Committee only.

The Chair welcomed all those present to this meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee including Members, Officers and representatives of both Ysgol and community of Beaumaris and Ysgol and community of Talwrn.

With the consent of the Committee, the Chair said that he would vary the order in which the items on the agenda would be considered taking items 4 and 5 ahead of item 3. The Committee agreed to the change.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Alun Roberts declared a personal but not prejudicial interest with regard to item 4 on the agenda as a member of the Governing Body of Ysgol Beaumaris.

Councillor Nicola Roberts declared a personal but not prejudicial interest with regard to item 5 on the agenda as a member of the Governing Body of Ysgol y Graig and as the parent of a child who is a pupil at the school.

Councillor Lewis Davies declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in item 4 on the agenda as the Chair of Ysgol Llangoed Governing Body.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the previous meetings of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on the following dates were submitted and confirmed as correct subject to the amendment noted:

- 31 January, 2018 (extraordinary)
- 5 February, 2018, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Shaun Redmond's name in the list of attendees.

3 PERFORMANCE MONITORING: CORPORATE SCORECARD QUARTER 3 2017/18

It was resolved to defer consideration of this item due to lack of time. The item had been put back in the order of business to allow items 4 and 5 to be taken first.

4 SCHOOLS' MODERNISATION PROGRAMME – SEIRIOL AREA

The report of the Head of Learning incorporating the report on the outcome of the Statutory Consultation on the reconfiguration of primary education provision in the Seiriol area along with recommendations for moving forwards therewith were presented for the Committee's consideration.

The Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries Youth & Culture reported on the consultation process held which ran from 20 November, 2017 to 6 February, 2018 and included meetings with staff, governors and parents at Ysgol Llangoed, Ysgol Beaumaris and Ysgol Llandegfan. The responses to the consultation were numerous; the report sets out the messages from the comments made by stakeholders in the three schools as well as the responses to the on-line survey. The Portfolio Member referred to the recommendations following on from the consultation process which involve closing Ysgol Beaumaris; the Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider these and to recommend their adoption by the Executive which will come to a decision on the matter at its meeting to be held on 26 March, 2018. The Portfolio Member explained that the Authority is committed to modernising its schools as part of, and in line with the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Capital Programme which the Authority and the Administration support on the basis of the change drivers described in the consultation report. As part of this commitment, the Council acknowledges that modernising education and ensuring that its school buildings create a pleasant learning environment that motivates children and young people to become effective learners and develop life skills, is a high priority.

The Portfolio Member said that although the process may appear relatively straightforward, significant issues have been raised during the course of it, and it is evident from the implementation of the modernisation programme on the Island thus far that some schools have had to close so that others may develop and, in some cases, so that brand new schools can take their place. The Portfolio Member acknowledged that

closing a school is not an easy decision to contemplate or to take but occasionally, such decisions have to be made and this is such an occasion. If the Authority is to be consistent with the modernising principles it has applied hitherto it has to carry on and take difficult decisions. Notwithstanding, the Authority has considered the comments made during the consultation and recognises that this is a matter that evokes strong feelings and emotions in parents because it involves their children's education. However, the recommendations made based on the conclusions reached, although they include the closure of Ysgol Beaumaris, go beyond the one school and take account of the education needs of the Seiriol area in totality.

The Head of Learning said that the consultation report seeks to provide a synopsis of the responses to the statutory consultation process that has taken place – Part 4 of the report summarises the main substance of the observations from the consultation meetings at the three schools. Section 5 of the report sets out the views expressed by the respondents from Ysgol Beaumaris which collectively reflect a strong feeling that Ysgol Beaumaris should remain open. In addition to the 58 responses received during the consultation period, an electronic petition signed by 543 and a paper petition signed by 363 which was presented to the Full Council on 28 February, 2018 were also received. Both petitions convey an emphatic opposition to the proposed closure of Ysgol Beaumaris. A range of correspondence was also received as listed including a letter from the Governing Body of Ysgol Beaumaris containing 7 appendices one of which is a Community Impact Assessment and another a set of four alternative options which are listed as A to D in the analysis in section 5.18 of the report. The Officer said that using the same scoring criteria as for the original options, Option A scores 71 whilst Options, B, C and D all score in the region of 77 which brings them close to the favoured options which scored 79. The Authority has also considered the Community Impact Assessment produced by the Ysgol Beaumaris Consultation Response Committee; in Appendix 10 to the report, the comparable responses from this and the survey conducted by the Authority are set out, and these show how the different target groups of the two surveys has led to different results. The community impact assessment by the local group which focused mainly on the response of Beaumaris stakeholders shows that 95% of the respondents disagree with closing Ysgol Beaumaris whilst the Authority's community impact assessment focusing on stakeholders from the three schools under consideration in the Seiriol area indicates that those disagreeing with the closure of Ysgol Beaumaris is closer to 47%. The Officer said that Section 6 of the report outlines the responses from Ysgol Llandegfan whilst section 7 refers to the responses from Ysgol Llangoed.

Emma Taylor, Chair of Ysgol Beaumaris Governing Body, Rhian Jones, Chair of the Ysgol Beaumaris Consultation Response Committee and Councillor Jason Zalot, Mayor of Beaumaris Town all addressed the Committee with their and the community of Beaumaris's views on the proposals to modernise the primary education provision in the Seiriol area. They emphasised the very real opposition within the community to the proposed closure of Ysgol Beaumaris and in light of this, and the very serious adverse impact which closing the school would have on the town of Beaumaris, they urged the Committee to recommend that the proposal be either rejected or deferred pending further consideration. In making their representations, they also brought the following matters to the Committee's attention –

- That the Governing Body of Ysgol Beaumaris has worked hard with the local Consultation Response Committee, local councillors, parents and staff of the school to develop and produce 4 alternative and credible options to that proposed by the Authority. This was done having received assurance at the informal consultation stage that the Authority would consider alternative options. The alternative options being put forward could salvage Ysgol Beaumaris's future and three of them would see all three schools in the area remaining open. Moreover, under the scoring system used by the

Authority, all the alternative options offered score between 70 and 80 points placing them on a par with the top scoring options produced by the Authority.

- That it is not clear that these options have been given serious consideration which is disappointing given the amount of work they have involved and the support for them. They should be examined closely and factored fully into the consultation process. It is remiss of the Council to only glance over them and it does nothing to allay suspicions that the closure of Ysgol Beaumaris has been a done deal from the outset.
- That the Authority has conducted the bare minimum consultation and is not listening to the concerns of the community or answering the questions raised in the consultation. The Community Impact Survey clearly shows the important part the school plays in community life, the concerns people have about losing their school and the negative impact this would have on the town as a whole. The school is an integral part of the community; the proposal is to close it and to try to integrate an Extra Care facility on the site which the town does not want. This has made people angry.
- That Beaumaris faces the prospect of being the only town on the Island without a school with the implications that carries for its future growth and prosperity. The town has received little assistance to create employment to inspire the younger generation to remain. Instead the town has experienced the loss of services, the stifling of opportunities for social housing and faces the creation of a facility that will bring more retirees to the town.
- The School Organisation Code sets out specific requirements in respect of school re-organisation proposals. It states that within 13 weeks of the end of the consultation period, the proposer must issue a consultation report which summarises each of the issues raised by consultees, which responds to these by means of clarification, amendments to the proposal or rejection of the concerns with supporting reasons and which also sets out the views of Estyn. The views of Estyn are not included in the consultation report presented to Scrutiny even though the Code requires it and even though it has been made clear previously that the views of Estyn is a significant factor in the case for change.
- That the Consultation report does not meet the very specific criteria set out in the Code. The Authority should therefore take time to produce a more comprehensive document that does satisfy the requirements of the Code.
- That although a risk register has been created for the change proposals, the document does not make clear how those will be addressed including the risk that parents will choose to send their children to schools other than Ysgol Llangoed or Ysgol Llandegfan.
- That the document does not set out the detailed financial costings of the reorganisation proposal including the revenue savings that will ensue from the proposals.
- That in other areas where a school has closed, a super school has been offered to soften the blow; this is not the case for the Seiriol area even though Beaumaris is an obvious choice for a new school.
- That it must be borne in mind that the decision taken will ultimately have consequences that extend so much further than the purely educational and will affect the town and community for years to come.

The Head of Learning clarified that the response of Estyn to the proposals has not yet been received and will be followed up. She said that the Service recognises that there are strong feelings within the community regarding the proposals, and whilst the Authority has endeavoured to summarise the responses received as fairly as possible within the consultation report, it is acknowledged that due to the volume of responses it is not possible to reflect each and every comment individually.

Councillors Lewis Davies and Alun Roberts both spoke as Local Members. Councillor Lewis Davies tabled 12 questions seeking clarification of some of the issues the community, school governors and town council had raised including those referred to above and others in relation to use of the school building post closure; potential developments on site in addition to the Extra Care Housing facility; the requirements of the JLDP in relation to Beaumaris as an identified local service centre; consideration of Beaumaris's status as royal town and borough; the robustness of the consultation process and participation by stakeholders; the plans for providing services other than education which are currently delivered from the school; the carbon footprint effect produced by increased home to school traffic (children having to travel elsewhere) if the school was to close.

Councillor Alun Roberts said that although the proposals appear reasonable based on bald statistics, he found the proposals unacceptable on the grounds of the Well-being of Future Generations Act which requires that authorities work with other bodies to create viable, resilient and successful communities; communities that promote equality, fairness and cohesion and where the Welsh language prospers – this will not be possible should Ysgol Beaumaris close. Conversely, if the school is to close it will destroy the community. Although education provision in Ysgol Llangoed and Ysgol Llandegfan is of high quality the villages are fairly remote and road connections are not the best. The residents of Beaumaris are therefore more likely to exercise parental choice based on their work and life patterns meaning that many will look to schools in the Bangor area especially as two new schools are planned for the city making it attractive in terms of education and convenience. The Local Member added that the Seiriol ward is not uniform or cohesive by its nature; the three communities which make up the ward are very different making a best fit solution of keeping two schools open and closing Ysgol Beaumaris unfeasible and unworkable. A better solution is to keep Ysgol Beaumaris open and to use the opportunity which the development of an Extra care facility on the same site will create to forge an inter-generational initiative.

The Chair referred to a statement (which he read out) made by Councillor Carwyn Jones, the third Local Member who could not be present at this meeting due to his attendance on behalf of the Council, at a nuclear conference. The statement refers to Councillor Jones's formal response as one of the three Local Members on behalf of the Seiriol ward which is reproduced in the report under Appendix 3 (which includes a declaration of interest in relation to which he has received special dispensation to participate in discussions on this matter from the Standards Committee). The Local Member states that during the consultation he made very strong representations for exploring every possible way of keeping the three schools open. He refers to towns as being central to place shaping strategies and that towns need schools. The future projections for pupil numbers are very good and the growth potential is likely to be even greater when the major developments on the Island are taken into account. Given that over the next ten years there are many unknowns with regard to population changes facing Anglesey Ysgol Beaumaris offers education capacity that might well be needed in a few years. The Local Member therefore suggests that the Authority should do nothing for now until more is known about how the numbers are likely to develop and retain the capacity in the South east corner of the Island.

The Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth said that whilst the sentiments against closing Ysgol Beaumaris have been made clear and are understandable, the Authority has also to consider Ysgol Llangoed and Ysgol Llandegfan in the context of the educational needs of the Seiriol area as a whole. The picture that has been portrayed is one of a positive future were Ysgol Beaumaris to remain open whereas the reality is different. There are under 50 pupils at present in Ysgol Beaumaris which is a school that was built to accommodate 240 pupils and which has a current capacity of 160. With regard to the 12 questions tabled by one of the Local Members, the Portfolio

Member said that it would have been helpful in order to be able to respond more fully if advanced notice of the questions had been given. However, a definitive answer cannot be given to many of the matters raised at this point because a decision has not been made, and therefore the detailed work which would necessarily follow on from a decision has yet to be undertaken. He said that the alternative options presented by Ysgol Beaumaris Governing Body have been considered but that he could not see that they displace the proposals recommended by the Authority.

The Head of Learning concurred with the comments made by the Portfolio Member and said that as she had not had prior sight of the questions tabled it was not possible to respond to them in a meaningful and informative way at this meeting. However, she recognised that a number of matters will need to be further examined and she confirmed that she would ensure that a statement and/or addendum would be made available to address some of the questions raised. She further clarified that the financial information within the consultation document is based on best estimates currently available and that the non-statutory consultation document contained fuller information because it set out the costings for all the options put forward at that time including capital costs, transport costs, revenue savings and net savings, capital receipts, net cost of the project, borrowing costs and annual costs. The outline costs given as part of the document presented to today's meeting refer only to the net savings ensuing from implementing the recommendation with regard to closing Ysgol Beaumaris.

The Committee considered the information presented both in writing and verbally and made the following points –

- The Committee acknowledged that closing a school is a difficult and unwelcome proposition; the Committee noted that it understood the strength of feeling in the community of Beaumaris in response to the recommendation that the town's primary school be closed.
- The Committee noted that a number of issues have been raised in the course of the meeting and that several remain unanswered. The Committee noted that some matters will become clearer once the detailed work begins post-decision; the Committee also noted that other matters need to be investigated further before a decision is made.
- The Committee noted that one of the drivers for change is the need to ensure an adequate supply of Head teachers for the future. The Committee further noted that the statutory consultation document states that over the next five years, it is likely that 50% of the Authority's primary head teachers will retire. The Committee sought clarification of how the figure had been arrived at and also the Authority's succession planning arrangements to address this eventuality. The Head of Learning said that this was a change driver in the original strategy presented in 2012. By now, 36% of the Authority's primary head teachers are over 50 years of age; a number of head teachers have retired during the past 5 years and it is expected that more will do so in the next 5 years. Eleven primary schools are currently sharing a Head teacher and joint management arrangements are in place in a number of other primary schools. The Authority has been experiencing difficulties in recruiting primary head teachers; a programme has been put in place to address the situation and the age profile of the Authority's primary head teachers has now reduced. Additionally, and equally significant is the need to increase the leadership capacity. Effective schools are well-led. A Head teacher needs adequate non-contact time to give attention to management, quality and education standards. This is far more difficult in smaller schools where Head teachers are actually in the classroom for 80% of the time. The Officer said that the Authority has been succession planning for the past few years which is why it is able to fulfil its obligations at this time. Eighteen young head teachers on the Island have attained the NPQH qualification in the last few years and this is due to the Authority's succession planning. The Authority is committed to doing

all it can to give individuals opportunities to take on responsibilities particularly with regard to soft federation opportunities and the advertisement process reflects this; one of the greatest challenges however is to persuade head teachers to become head teachers of small schools because of the teaching commitments which head teachers have to take on in smaller schools.

- The Committee noted that the schools' modernisation process in this instance involves closing a school and moving its pupils to the two remaining schools in the area which is tantamount to a transfer. The Committee noted that the reorganisation process in some other areas of the Island has resulted in a new school; it sought clarification of the reasons why a similar scheme is not being proposed for the Seiriol area. The Head of Learning said that a new area school was among the original 20 options in the non-statutory consultation document; it was not pursued because it was not considered it would provide a solution not least because identifying a suitable site to accommodate the pupils from all three schools was problematic; neither was it the most cost-effective solution in this instance.
- The Committee noted that the statutory consultation document does not make a comprehensive financial case for the modernisation solution proposed; the financial considerations are only briefly summarised. The Head of Learning clarified that the business case for all modernising proposals is put together at a later stage in the process. What has been made available are the results of the work undertaken jointly with the Finance Service which are rough estimates of costs; this is as far as the Authority is able to go until the final details of the location of the school are known. A comparison of costs for each option considered was included in the non-statutory consultation document.
- The Committee noted that there is an element of uncertainty, and therefore of risk in assuming that in the event that Ysgol Beaumaris closes, parents will express a preference for either Ysgol Llangoed or Ysgol Llandegfan when they might decide to send their children to a school elsewhere. The Committee noted that the consultation report does not indicate what the outcome would be if parents decide not to send their children to either Ysgol Llangoed or Ysgol Llandegfan nor what effect this would have on those two schools. The Committee therefore sought clarification of whether the Authority has made an assessment of the impact of parents not choosing to send their children to either Ysgol Llangoed or Ysgol Llandegfan. The Head of Learning said that the Authority does seek to update the impact assessment regularly at every stage of the process meaning that for this kind of work impact assessing is ongoing. The Officer said that whilst which school the 263 pupils in the area will attend over the next 4 to 5 years is a matter of choice for the parents, it is also a matter of the Authority being able to plan the catchment area, hence the recommendation that the current catchment area be reviewed. As the Authority is the Admission Authority, parents can therefore make an application to move their children to a different school but subject to there being room in the preferred school. The Authority tries to look at the various cases and what the impact would be on the whole catchment area if that were to happen.
- The Committee sought clarification of the demographics of the area in terms of the number of children who receive their education outside of the area and the number of children who come into the area for their education. The Committee noted that for Beaumaris market conditions and economic factors in the form of high house prices and rents might well influence the choices people make. The Head of Learning said that 14% attend Ysgol Beaumaris from outside the catchment area; 37% in Ysgol Llandegfan and 30% in Ysgol Llangoed. In terms of numbers, 9 children leave the Ysgol Llandegfan catchment area for their education while 53 come in to the catchment area; for Ysgol Llangoed the number coming in is 25 and the number going out is 29; for Ysgol Beaumaris the number coming in is 5 and the number going out is

34. This is a factor which has led to the situation in which Ysgol Beaumaris now finds itself.

- The Committee noted that the Assembly Member along with the Member of Parliament for Anglesey have in the past few days expressed concerns regarding the proposed closure of Ysgol Beaumaris. The Head of Learning said that the receipt of comments/communication by the A.M. and M.P. and others in the last few days is disappointing for the Authority as it would have expected those expressions of concern to have been made during the consultation period, not afterwards. The Authority will however give consideration to every issue raised and will try to ensure that the Executive is able to make a decision in possession of all the facts.
- The Committee sought assurance that were Ysgol Beaumaris to close and mindful of the number of working parents who depend upon it, provision for nursery school children i.e. breakfast clubs and pre and after school care clubs would continue in the other two remaining schools. The Head of Learning said that it is the Authority's ambition to ensure as far as possible appropriate provision for all age ranges on the one site. However, the Authority is aware that the Cylch Meithrin and WPPA provision currently operate from the Ysgol Beaumaris site; the Authority would therefore have to give careful consideration to the provision for this age range alongside the plans for statutory school age children.

The Chief Executive made the following points –

- That the Authority has a duty and a responsibility to have regard for the views of stakeholders in the Seiriol area as a whole. While the representations made at this meeting have focused on the needs of Beaumaris, it is probable that the residents of Llangoed and Llandegfan would have also been able to make a robust case for safeguarding the education provision in their areas.
- That in 2012 Estyn made it clear that the Authority was not taking sufficient action to address the issue of empty places in its schools which was one of the reasons for placing the Education Service in Anglesey in special measures at that time. There is a high percentage of empty places in Ysgol Beaumaris which in turn is contributing to the number of empty places in Seiriol and is grounds for re-considering the education provision in the area.
- Both the Welsh Government and Estyn note that a school with less than 150 pupils is deemed to be a small school. Ysgol Beaumaris and Ysgol Llangoed combined have in the region of 110 pupils meaning they fall short of the Welsh Government and Estyn's expectations of a 21st Century school that is fit for the future.
- That concerns were also raised when a new area school was mooted for Holyhead because it involved adapting the existing Cybi site and school. This school is now up and running and is established. Any refurbishment of Ysgol Llangoed and Ysgol Llandegfan would be made with a view to bringing them to the standards expected of 21st Century Schools and would be equivalent to the standards found in a new school.
- That when the non-statutory consultation document on modernising schools in the Seiriol area was discussed at a previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, it was pointed out that a high percentage of parents choose not to send their children to the local school in Beaumaris; this is factor in the equation and is true to a certain extent for the wider Seiriol area.

Councillor Lewis Davies proposed the following amendments to the Officer's recommendations as set out in the written report –

- That a decision be deferred in order give more time to review and to assess the impact on the community, and also that a stakeholder group be formed to look in detail at other ways of mitigating the risks in the area.

- That a primary school be retained on the current site in Beaumaris on the basis that the projections for pupil numbers show an increase in future.
- That the primary school on the current site in Beaumaris be retained and integrated with the Extra Care Housing facility to create a new model where pupils and older citizens work together and share experiences.

In the ensuing vote the majority of the Committee's Members supported the first amendment. The Chair advised therefore that in approving this proposal, a vote on the second and third amendments was unnecessary since the Committee in supporting the first amendment is accepting that the process be subject to a pause and review. Any further proposals should be considered after the review has taken place.

Having considered all the information presented, the representations made, and in light of the level of concern expressed and the number of issues which the Committee deemed remain unanswered, the Committee RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive that a decision on the modernisation of schools in the Seiriol area be deferred in order give more time to review and to assess the impact on the community, and also that a stakeholder group be formed to look in detail at other ways of mitigating the risks in the area.

5 SCHOOLS' MODERNISATION PROGRAMME – LLANGEFNI AREA

The report of the Head of Learning incorporating the report on the outcome of the Statutory Consultation on the reconfiguration of primary education provision in the Llangefni area (Ysgol Talwrn and Ysgol y Graig) along with recommendations for moving forwards therewith were presented for the Committee's consideration.

The Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries Youth & Culture reported on the consultation process which ran from 26 September, 2017 to 13 November, 2017 which included meetings with staff, governors and parents of both Ysgol Talwrn and Ysgol y Graig. The report summarises the observations from the consultation meetings as well as feedback from the pupils of both schools. The Portfolio Member said that based on the conclusions reached following the statutory consultation process, 5 recommendations are presented for the Committee's consideration and these again regrettably involve the closure of a school.

The Head of Learning said that in this instance the bulk of the responses have come from stakeholders at Ysgol Talwrn which is to be expected given that the school is under threat of closure. The proposals have been amended slightly from those originally consulted on because after assessing the situation around Ysgol y Graig it was considered that a new block or building is necessary for the school rather than simply extending the current school building and bringing in pupils from Ysgol Talwrn to the current site. A number of alternative proposals were offered during the consultation period which included using Ysgol Talwrn to train head teachers; modernising or building a new school in Talwrn or merging Ysgol Talwrn with either Ysgol Llanbedrgoch or Ysgol Pentraeth. However, having considered all the submissions and all the comments made, the Authority is recommending that the proposals as set out in the report are supported.

Mr Islwyn Humphreys (Ysgol Talwrn Governing Body) and Bethan Wyn Jones (Parents and Residents of Talwrn) both addressed the Committee with their and the community of Talwrn's views on the proposals in relation to Ysgol y Graig and Ysgol Talwrn. They emphasised the strong opposition within the Governing Body of Ysgol Talwrn and the community of Talwrn to the proposed closure of the village's school and they asked that the proposals be re-considered. In making their representations they drew the following points to the Committee's attention –

- That there are currently only 6 empty places in Ysgol Talwrn. Four properties have recently been built in the area and a family is now attached to most. A family of 6 has also moved into the village recently and the children attend Ysgol Talwrn.
- That education standards at Ysgol Talwrn are good. The school has a young and enthusiastic Head teacher who is continuing with the school's successes in previous years. The school has an excellent record on developing the personal, social and well-being elements of the children's education. The school is also able to evidence achievement in KS2 and in terms of outcomes, is at the forefront of Anglesey schools in KS2.
- That the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have a right to give their views and for those views to be heard. The children at Ysgol Talwrn have expressed sadness at the prospect of the school closing and are anxious about it.
- That the Authority's assessment finds that Ysgol Talwrn is expensive to run. This is due to years of underinvestment in the school.
- That due to the nature of the road and the lack of a footway, there are real concerns regarding the safety of pupils travelling home to Talwrn from Ysgol y Graig particularly following after-school activities.
- That no Business Plan has been presented in support of the proposals or the savings that are projected to stem therefrom. Approving the proposal will ultimately cost the Authority in the region of £650k and will place a burden on future generations with a 50-year commitment that will still have to be paid 20 years after the completion of the proposed building.
- That one of the objectives of the Council Plan for 2017-22 is to ensure that the citizens of Anglesey flourish and fulfil their potential – this will not be achieved by closing a community's school. The residents of Talwrn wish to see a viable and naturally Welsh community of people of all ages where incomers become integrated into the family of Talwrn.
- That the Welsh Government has set a target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050; closing a Welsh speaking primary school will not help draw people to the area nor contribute towards the achievement of the Welsh Government's ambition for the Welsh language.
- That the statutory consultation document does not do justice to the 108 letters of objection to the proposed closure of Ysgol Talwrn
- That the Authority's Community Impact Assessment does not accurately reflect the real impact of closing Ysgol Talwrn on the community as testified to by the letters from a range of associations and societies.
- That the proposal seeks to ensure effective integration of services; the proposal means that more facilities are being given to a town whose infrastructure and range of services are already extensive whilst at the same time closing these off from the residents of Talwrn.
- That the information presented to the Committee to enable it to come to a viewpoint is inaccurate, dated and is not made on a balanced basis.

The Chair referred to an e-mail which he had received from Mr Tony McQuire-Jones which had been sent also to Mr Mark Isherwood, Assembly Member for North Wales. The e-mail refers to the School Organisation Code 2013 which requires that the Authority within 13 weeks of the period allowed for responses and in any event prior to the publication of the proposals must publish a consultation report summarising each of the issues raised by the consultees, responding to these by means of clarification, amendment to the proposals, rejecting the concerns with supporting reasons and setting out Estyn's view regarding the overall merits of the proposals. Mr McQuire-Jones seeks an explanation for the omission from the consultation report of the Authority's response to the issues raised in the consultation as well Estyn's response to the consultation.

The Head of Learning said that notwithstanding it is not possible to list all the objections in the consultation document as that would make it inordinately lengthy, all the responses and appendices are available. The consultation document seeks to summarise the substance of the responses made. With regard to Estyn, as with the consultation under the previous item, the response of Estyn to the consultation has not yet been received. The Authority will make follow-up enquiries.

Councillors Nicola Roberts and Dylan Rees both spoke as Local Members. Councillor Nicola Roberts highlighted concerns in relation to the safety of the pupils of Ysgol y Graig during the construction/adaptations period; the arrangements for integrating the proposed new block with the existing building so that they operate as one school and the arrangements for the provision of additional resources and/or wraparound services. She said that whilst the proposals presented are an improvement on those originally put forward in so far as the Authority has recognised the local view that an additional building is required, they are still not ideal. Councillor Nicola Roberts said that the situation in Llangefni is different to that in the other areas where the school modernisation programme has been implemented in that in Llangefni there are not enough (rather than too many) school places. She referred to the potential challenge in seeking to integrate children from a small rural school such as Ysgol Talwrn to a larger two block school such as Ysgol y Graig where the faces and location will be unfamiliar whilst at the same time ensuring their well-being and resilience. She said that Ysgol Talwrn is giving up a great deal for the modernisation process. She also referred to the green credentials of Ysgol y Graig which could be affected by the influx of more pupils travelling to the school and the already problematic situation with regard to parking in and around the school. She sought assurance that given that Ysgol y Graig is itself a fairly recent construction, the proposals presented are this time, the right solution for this area of Llangefni and take account of the future growth of the area.

The Head of Learning said that site safety is of paramount importance; a risk assessment will be made before any work is undertaken and every aspect of the children's safety will be given the appropriate attention. With regard to integrating the two separate blocks each block will have to have its own hall and dining hall as the space within the current Ysgol y Graig building is insufficient and would entail having to organise a number of phased play and lunch times. Additional services in the form of pre-school clubs, care clubs, Flying Start etc will be incorporated into the scheme going forwards and this scheme does offer the potential to work alongside the Mudiad Meithrin and with the Children's Centre to ensure the wraparound provision referred to. In relation to being able to cope with future growth, the Authority is required to base its business plan on facts i.e. developments that have had planning approval; the Authority has had regard of the projections within the JLDP for the whole area for the next few years and in planning any new school it will seek to allow for further future growth. Ysgol y Graig does at present have capacity for two additional classrooms but in this instance, it is not enough and a new block is required. The Authority is not permitted to build a new school which has 10% empty places without having a very robust business case for doing so e.g. if it knows that a specific industry is coming to the area and that planning consent has been given for housing that will draw in a high level of young families. Bringing two schools together into one entity does not happen instantaneously through the immediate closure of a school; it is a process that takes over 2 years whereby groups of children are brought together to familiarise with each other and their new situation; activities take place jointly and the curriculum is co-ordinated so that the children do the same work at the same time to the same level for the same age range. The Authority is therefore confident that the children will know what is happening so that any fears are allayed and they will have had the time to prepare for the change. In terms of travel, there is currently a taxi provision going back and forth between Llangefni and Talwrn so the situation as regards the proposed scheme will not altogether be different. The Authority will be looking at the number of journeys made, the number of children involved and the state and safety of footpaths as part of the broader assessment of the area. The

Authority is aware of the parking issues in relation to the current Ysgol y Graig; the Authority has to balance the right to parking provision that it is able to offer with the outcome of the traffic impact assessment which the Authority will undertake as a key aspect of the work. The Authority is however aware of the challenges in the area which have been clearly articulated in the consultation responses. In reply to a further question by the Local Member in relation to the availability of land, the Officer confirmed that the process of identifying suitable land for the new block has begun – the Authority has to have started this process in order to be able to present some of the proposals before the Committee.

Councillor Dylan Rees also speaking as a Local Member said that while he supported expanding Ysgol y Graig as part of solving the problem of insufficient school places in Llangefni he was uncomfortable with the proposed closure of Ysgol Talwrn as part of the solution on the basis that this is a problem within the schools in Llangefni for which rural schools should not be made to suffer. He referred to the statement made last year by the Welsh Government's Minister for Education which he quoted from and which made clear that there should be a presumption against closing rural schools and that closures should only be considered once alternatives and impacts on communities have been explored. The Minister says that in considering closures, regard must be had of the guidance in assessing the likely impact on quality and standards of education, likely impact on the community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements. Councillor Dylan Rees said that previous speakers have referred to the high standard of education in Ysgol Talwrn and the devastating impact which closing the school will have on the community and on organisations that rely upon it e.g. the local Eisteddfod. References have also been made to potential transport problems and the existing congestion around Ysgol y Graig. Therefore, while he welcomed the proposals to address the issues at Ysgol y Graig, he did not accept that closing Ysgol Talwrn should be part of the solution.

*Councillor Dylan Rees as Chair highlighted at this juncture that as the Committee had now been in session for three hours, under the provisions of paragraph 4.1.10 of the Council's Constitution, a resolution was required by the majority of those Members of the Committee present to agree to continue with the meeting. **It was resolved that the meeting should continue.***

The Committee considered the information presented both in writing and verbally and made the following points –

- The Committee noted and acknowledged the strength of feeling in the community of Talwrn against the closure of its school and it accepted again that closing a school is a difficult and regrettable proposition.
- The Committee noted that the issue in Llangefni is a shortage of school places as opposed to surplus places. Whilst the Committee recognised that the situation with regard to Ysgol y Graig needs to be addressed, it noted further that the proposed closure of Ysgol Talwrn as part of the answer to solving the problem in the area and the added congestion in Llangefni which this might cause appears contradictory and is a solution which the Committee has difficulty with.

The Head of Learning said that a traffic impact assessment will be carried out as part of the scheme and that the Authority's business plan is unlikely to be approved unless it can show that it has consulted with the Highways Authority and can demonstrate that the area is safe.

- The Committee noted that there are only 6 empty places currently in Ysgol y Talwrn and that these are likely to be filled by families taking up four newly built properties. The Committee also noted that the school is performing well under the leadership of a young

recently appointed head and that it is the focus for community life, community activity and the Welsh language. The case for closing the school is therefore not clear cut.

- The Committee sought clarification of the number of pupils who attend both Ysgol y Graig and Ysgol Talwrn from outside their respective areas and whether the plans take account of the 300 new properties planned for the Llangefni area which have already received planning consent.

The Head of Learning said that approximately 50% of the pupils in Ysgol Talwrn are out of catchment pupils; 4 pupils attend by taxi from Llangefni because there is no place for them in Ysgol y Graig. The number of out of catchment pupils in Ysgol y Graig has reduced recently with the school only having room for local pupils. The Officer confirmed that consideration has been given to planned housing developments in Llangefni.

The Chief Executive made the following points –

- That closing a school is difficult and hard to accept but has to be considered given the reality of the situation.
- That Ysgol Talwrn is performing well in KS2 but its performance and that of Anglesey generally is not as good in KS1 (The Foundation Phase).
- That Ysgol Talwrn currently has 6 empty places. However, the percentage of empty places at the school was high at one time hence the reason why the future of the school has been under consideration. The number of empty places did reduce as a result of the lack of places in schools in Llangefni with children from Llangefni going to Ysgol Talwrn.
- That the Authority is, and will continue to face financial challenges; school budgets are also reducing significantly meaning that the future of small schools has to be considered.
- While Ysgol Talwrn has succeeded in appointing a head teacher, the pattern is for head teachers of small schools to move on when the opportunity arises; it is also more of a challenge to recruit and to retain head teachers in small schools which is a factor in the Authority's succession planning arrangements.

The Head of Learning said that Ysgol Talwrn has had three different head teachers in a relatively short period which is an important consideration for the Authority when planning for the sustainability of its school provision in future.

Having considered all the information presented and the representations made, the Committee RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive –

- **That the current Ysgol y Graig building be used and adapted for Key Stage 2 i.e. years 3 to 6.**
- **That a new block or building be built for the Foundation Phase i.e. Reception Year and Years 1 and 2.**
- **That Ysgol Talwrn should not be closed.**
- **That consideration be given to relocating the Flying Start provision within the new provision.**
- **That it be ensured the wind turbine on the site is working by the opening date of the new building.**

6 PLAY SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

It was resolved to defer consideration of this item due to lack of time.

7 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

It was resolved to defer consideration of this item due to lack of time.

**Councillor Dylan Rees
Chair**

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