

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April, 2018

- PRESENT:** Councillor Aled Morris Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dylan Rees (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors Lewis Davies, Richard Griffiths, Alun Roberts, Nicola Roberts
- Co-opted Member: Mr Keith Roberts (The Catholic Church)
- Portfolio Members**
- Councillor Llinos Medi Huws (Leader & Portfolio Member for Social Services (for items 4 and 5)
Councillor R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Youth & Culture) (for item 3)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community & Service Transformation) (for item 3)
Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process Transformation & Statutory Director of Social Services (for items 4 and 5)
Head of Function (Resources) and Section 151 Officer (for item 3)
Head of Adults' Services (for items 4 and 5)
Head of Children's Services (for item 4)
Head of Democratic Services
Programme Manager (Adults' Services) (ST) (for item 4)
Committee Officer (ATH)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Richard Owain Jones, J. Arwel Roberts, Shaun Redmond, John Griffith (Portfolio Member for Finance)
- ALSO PRESENT:** **Portfolio Members:** Councillors Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Major Projects and Economic Development) Alun Mummery (Portfolio Member for Housing and Supporting Communities)
- Local Members:** Councillors Eric Wyn Jones, Dafydd Roberts
- Others:** Rhys Parry & Helen Munroe (Ysgol Henblas); Llinos Roberts, Gareth Parry & Ellis Wyn Roberts (Ysgol Bodffordd); Dafydd Tudur Jones (Ysgol Corn Hir)

The Chair welcomed all those present to this meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee including Members, Officers and representatives of Ysgol Bodffordd, Ysgol Henblas and Ysgol Corn Hir.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Richard Griffiths declared a personal but not prejudicial interest with regard to item 3 on the agenda due to his niece's children being pupils at Ysgol Henblas.

Councillor Dylan Rees declared a personal but not prejudicial interest with regard to item 3 on the agenda as the Chair of the Governing Body of Ysgol Bodffordd.

Councillor Nicola Roberts declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in item 3 on the agenda due to her niece being a pupil at Ysgol Corn Hir.

Councillor Llinos Medi Huws (not a member of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee) declared a personal interest with regard to item 3 on the agenda.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on the 12 March, 2018 were submitted and were confirmed as correct.

The Chair thanked Councillor Dylan Rees, the Vice-Chair for chairing the meeting in his absence.

3 SCHOOLS' MODERNISATION PROGRAMME – LLANGEFNI AREA

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive incorporating the report on the outcome of the Statutory Consultation on the reconfiguration of primary education provision in the Llangefni area (Ysgol Corn Hir, Ysgol Bodffordd and Ysgol Henblas) was presented for the Committee's consideration. The report set out two options for moving forwards with the modernisation process in the western area of Llangefni -

- To build a new school to replace Ysgol Bodffordd, Ysgol Henblas and Ysgol Corn Hir, or
- To build a new school to replace Ysgol Bodffordd and Ysgol Corn Hir and to maintain educational provision in Llangristiolus. This could involve maintaining Ysgol Henblas in its current form or as part of a multi-site school subject to assurances being given in a year's time that standards at Ysgol Henblas are improving, that the current pace of improvement increases and the prospects with regard to pupil numbers remain constant.

The Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries Youth & Culture reported that the schools' modernisation process involves assessing and weighing up the future of schools and the effect this will have on parents, children, teachers, school governors and a range of other stakeholders. It is often a contentious matter and is also one of the most challenging elements of the Council's business. As the Portfolio Holder he acknowledged this, and he understood the concerns of parents and stakeholders. On the other hand what is being discussed is the future of schools perhaps for the next 50 years; a schools' service that is sagging under the pressure of financial cuts; a maintenance backlog, the demands of the curriculum as well as a number of other issues. The Council must give serious consideration to making the schools system more effective so as to create an environment wherein both pupils and teachers can succeed, and also to making it more efficient so that resources are used effectively and all schools get a fair share of the budget. The Council has embarked on its modernisation programme in order to improve educational outcomes for children; in order to improve leadership standards and the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure there are leading sector schools in each area. The Portfolio Member for Education referred to the change drivers for modernisation that will influence any decision regarding the best provision for the area as set out in section 2 of the report. He also referred to the role of Elected Members in the modernisation process which encompasses both local and corporate responsibilities – requiring of them a duty to their individual communities but also a duty to provide strategic direction for the Council through firm and clear guidance. The Portfolio Member for Education said that notwithstanding there will be specific representations made on behalf of the three schools at this meeting, he trusted that the contents of the report would be scrutinised in facilitation of the process as a whole and also so as to assist the Executive

in this particular matter, and generally for the future. He thanked all those who had attended the consultation sessions and all those who had tendered their views although there had been many comments offered by individuals who had no connection with the three schools under consideration.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community & Service Transformation) said that she too wished to thank everyone who had participated in the consultation process either by sending in their responses or by being present in the consultation meetings at the three schools. 264 responses were received from stakeholders of Ysgol Bodffordd with the vast majority opposed to the proposed closure of the school; 2 responses were received from the stakeholders of Ysgol Corn Hir including one by the Governing Body and a total of 118 responses were received from the stakeholders of Ysgol Henblas with the vast majority again objecting to the proposal to close the school. A petition has been submitted to the Authority opposing the closure of Ysgol Bodffordd and a petition has also been submitted in support of keeping Ysgol Henblas open. In addition, an electronic survey was conducted. Meetings were also held to obtain the views of children in each of the three schools. The Officer drew specific attention to paragraph 8.2 of the consultation response report wherein it is stated that a response was received by the Assembly Member for Anglesey in relation to Ysgol Henblas. The Officer clarified that the response of Mr Rhun ap Iorwerth had been made in his capacity as a former parent, former school governor and as a resident of the community of Llangristiolus.

The Officer said that the report provides a synopsis of the responses received by conveying the main themes in comparison with the main drivers for change in the School's Modernisation Strategy (section 2 of the report). The Authority's response to the issues raised with regard to each of the three schools is set out in section 10 of the report. With regard to **Ysgol Bodffordd and Ysgol Henblas** many of the issues raised – for example in relation to standards, pupil numbers, condition of the school building, Welsh language and community use are common to both schools and the Authority's response to them can be summarised as follows –

- Standards at both schools have been low for some time as confirmed by Estyn inspection reports in May, 2015 and May, 2017 respectively. (*School standards are elaborated on in greater detail with regard to each of the three schools in section 3 of the Statutory Consultation Document*) The pace of progress has been slow although improvements have been made recently in Ysgol Henblas under the leadership of the interim Head teacher. The school support time provided for Ysgol Bodffordd is much higher than in a significant number of other schools; for Ysgol Henblas regardless of the final decision, there remains an urgent need for the Authority, parents and the Governing Body to continue to work together over the next year to ensure the necessary improvements.
- Issues of leadership exist in both schools. In Ysgol Henblas the size of the school does not allow the appointment of a deputy and considerable work is required to reach a point where delegated leadership would be one of the strengths at the school. Consequently, developing a culture of leadership development and succession planning would be a significant challenge for the school. The Authority recognises that quality of leadership is more of a challenge for smaller schools where leaders are responsible for a class for a significant part of the week and are also responsible for all aspects of leading a school.
- The statutory consultation document notes there is a maintenance backlog of £209,000 for Ysgol Bodffordd and although many of the respondents with regard to Ysgol Henblas note that the condition of the school is good, there is a maintenance backlog of £112,000 for the school.

- The size of both schools means that classes are of mixed age. This, together with the expectation that suitable work must be prepared for the range of abilities in a class, offers a higher level of challenge for teachers in smaller schools.
- Whilst it is questionable whether the community use of Ysgol Henblas is more than that made of a number of other schools, it is recognised that significant community use is made of Ysgol Bodffordd to the extent that should the school close, there would be a need to collaborate with the community to identify a solution that would allow community activities to continue.
- There is no evidence to support comments made that the use of the Welsh Language is better at Ysgol Henblas than in other schools. The use of Welsh is one of the strengths of all three schools and is recognised as such in Ysgol Bodffordd, and is confirmed by the Language Impact Assessment.
- The cost per pupil at Ysgol Henblas (£4,778) is the highest of the three schools and is significantly higher than the Anglesey average (£3,972). The cost per pupil at Ysgol Bodffordd is also high at £4,500. The Wales average is £3,690 per pupil.
- The forecast for pupil numbers at Ysgol Henblas indicates a decrease up until 2023. Ysgol Bodffordd will be over its capacity by September, 2018 onwards. (*Pupil forecasts are elaborated upon in greater detail in the Statutory Consultation Document*)

The position in relation to **Ysgol Corn Hir** is different. As the largest school of the three under consideration, the final position will have to reflect this. Ysgol Corn Hir suffers from a lack of capacity with no room to expand on the current school site. Whilst current standards are good there is still room for improvement. There is also a maintenance backlog at Ysgol Corn Hir to the value of £239,500 (*Statutory Consultation Document*). The cost per pupil at the school is the lowest of the three schools (£3,475). This arguably results in a significantly higher financial challenge in that class sizes are large and, given that larger schools often serve areas which are more deprived, it could be argued that this does not promote equality of opportunity.

The Officer said that a number of comments were received regarding the Welsh language which questioned the linguistic status and quality of Welsh at the proposed new school, it being suggested that school size can affect the quality of the Welsh language. It was also suggested that larger schools are less effective in creating a sense of family and make it less possible for children to have opportunities to represent the school. It is further alleged that school closures lead to the decline of communities. The Authority emphasises that any new school will need to follow the Welsh language policy and it expects any school which is part of the modernisation programme to continue to be community based, Welsh speaking schools. There is no evidence that larger schools offer less opportunities for participation – there are arrangements in primary schools to ensure opportunities for all pupils to participate. Neither is it true that communities necessarily decline when the local school closes – a new school can create a wider community and there are examples of communities continuing to thrive in villages where schools have closed.

Comments were also submitted by other stakeholders including by Teachers Unions, Estyn, Llangristiolus and Cerrigceinwen Community Councils, the Welsh Language Society Education Campaign Group and by Cymdeithas yr Iaith. A number of comments make reference to the Welsh Government's **revised School Organisation Code 2017** which is expected to come into effect in September, 2018. In response to a question by the Committee about the extent of the consideration given to the revised Code in making the proposals as presented, the Officer confirmed that every consideration has been given to the Code. She highlighted however that nowhere in the draft revised Code does it say that closing small rural schools is not possible; the Code recognises that the presumption against the closure of rural schools does not mean that a rural school will never close. What the Code does state is that a decision to propose and consult on

closure is taken only after all viable options (examples of which are set out in the Code) to closure have been considered. The revised Code mentions the current system as having enabled more rapid decision making – the Officer said that the Authority in Anglesey has not rushed into decisions, on average it has taken 3 years to open a new school from the point of consultation. Discussions with regard to the primary education provision in the western area of Llangefni began in 2016; moreover the consideration of alternative options has formed part of each consultation process which the Authority has undertaken to date as part of the schools' modernisation programme. However, experience has shown that most comments made during consultation are predominantly negative opposing the proposals put forward and that few positive comments are presented in terms of offering viable alternatives. The Code refers to standards and quality of education as key factors – the Authority is in agreement and further suggests that where standards are unsatisfactory then this is unfair to children. Improving and ensuring high educational standards is one of the Authority's main drivers for change. The Code refers to the centrality of some schools to community life and activity and to the sustainability of communities especially where the school building is used to provide a community service – the Authority, whilst it seeks to work with communities and has successfully done so e.g. in Llanddona, recognises that this is an aspect that might require further work as the new Code is implemented and as the Authority refines its processes. The Code acknowledges education as the primary consideration which links into the duty of the LEA to raise and maintain education standards – the quality of children's experiences is a silver thread that runs through the Authority's Schools Modernisation Programme. The list of rural schools attached to the Code does not mean that schools designated as a rural school on the list are safe and that alternative or different solutions should not be considered. More work needs to be done on this locally and it will receive attention once the new Code comes into effect.

The Committee considered the Officer's report and the information presented in support of the proposals put forward and it made the following points -

- The Committee noted that closing Ysgol Henblas was not an option in the consultation on the modernisation of schools in the western part of Llangefni that was conducted early in 2017. The Committee sought clarification therefore of the reasons for including the closure of Ysgol Henblas as part of the latest consultation.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community & Service Transformation) said that the Executive at its meeting on 18 December, 2018 decided on a pause and review period concerning the future of primary education provision in the Llangefni area. As a result of this, the options were re-assessed in light of confirmation also of the availability of substantial new finance. The Executive decided to ask Education Officers to look again at the Llangefni area. The additional finance made new proposals possible which in turn necessitated further statutory consultation meetings with parents, staff and governors. After reviewing the situation, on 5 February, 2018 the Head of Learning, in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Education Portfolio Member and in line with the Officers' delegated powers decided to re-start the consultation process in the western part of Llangefni on the proposal set out in the Statutory Consultation Document.

- The Committee noted that the new Schools Organisation Code is likely to be implemented in September, 2018. The Committee sought clarification of the Authority's approach in the event that the definitive Code differs from the draft version and whether it would be possible to reverse any decision the Executive might take with regard to the options under consideration especially as they involve the closure of two or three schools.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community & Service Transformation) said that it would not be possible to go back on a decision which the Executive is scheduled to make on 30 April, when the School Organisation Code comes into effect in September, 2018.

The Head of Function (Resources) and Section 151 Officer reported on the Authority's financial position. The Officer highlighted that education and schools are the largest budgets within the Council making up £40m out of a total Council budget of £130m. The Officer said that since the beginning of the squeeze on the Council's finances in around 2012 the Council has implemented budget cuts to the value of over £17m which includes £2.5m of savings in 2018/19. Looking to the future, the situation is not expected to improve with the settlement grant projected to decrease by a further 1% in 2019/20 equating to a loss of income of £1m to the Council, and no increase is predicted for the subsequent two years. Set against a decreasing budget are the Council's costs which are steadily increasing year on year – the pay of local government administrative staff is set to rise by 3% in 2019/20; if the remainder of the Council's staff were to receive a pay increase of 2% to 3% then it is anticipated that the pay settlement for teaching staff would also be in that region thereby adding significantly to the Council's costs. The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan seeks to look ahead on the basis of various scenarios; the plan projects that further savings of between £6m and £10m will be required of the Council over the next three year period. The Council's financial position therefore needs to be taken into account when decisions on schools are made and is one of the factors in the decision making process. The Officer said that over the years the Council has sought to protect schools from the worst of the budget cuts; affording schools this protection at the expense of other services which have had to find substantial savings over the past few years is no longer possible especially if the worst case scenario is realised and the Council has to find savings of £10m over the next three years.

The Officer referred to the funding arrangements for new schools which also puts pressure on the Council's finances. Funding for a new school project or a refurbishment project is divided to 50% from Welsh Government and 50% from the Local Authority. Capital receipts from the sale of redundant school buildings can form part of the Authority's contribution thereby bringing down the amount it must spend. The remaining amount is financed by means of borrowing where the Authority meets the costs of borrowing i.e. by making a provision from the revenue budget – the Minimum Revenue Provision (2% of the loan amount) – to repay the loan at end of term and by meeting the annual interest costs, currently 2.3% to 2.5%. For every £1m the Authority borrows to fund its part of the costs of a new school, the annual costs are in the region of £50k. A loan of £5m incurs annual costs of £250k which have to be met by the Authority. The financial aspect when considering various options for schools including new schools is therefore very important. Bringing Ysgol Henblas into the equation is advantageous from a financial perspective given that certain essential contract costs e.g. contract management costs, site safety costs would remain the same regardless of the size of the new school but economies of scale can be achieved by including Ysgol Henblas in the plan. The costs of running smaller schools generally are higher thereby driving up the cost per pupil; from a revenue point the Council has to consider whether it can afford to keep small rural schools going in the long term. The Officer referred to section 11 of the consultation response report which sets out the outcome of a financial appraisal of four options including the option of keeping the status quo.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Officer confirmed that borrowing would take place over a period of 50 years. The additional school transport costs for

each of the four options are set out in section 11; these are estimates and could change dependent on which school and where parents choose to send their children.

Representations by Ysgol Henblas

Rhys Parry (Chair of the Governing Body of Ysgol Henblas) and Helen Munroe (on behalf of the parents of pupils at Ysgol Henblas) addressed the Committee with their and the community of Llangristiolus's views on the proposals to modernise the primary education provision in the western part of Llangefni. They drew attention to the very energetic and passionate campaign which the stakeholders at Ysgol Henblas had launched to keep the school open because they considered there to be a robust case for not closing the school supported by compelling educational, cultural and social reasons. They highlighted that members of the Committee as well as members of the Executive had been invited to visit Ysgol Henblas but that this had not been possible on the date offered. In making their representations to the Committee, they brought the following matters to the Members' attention –

- That Ysgol Henblas is a school of 87 children which in the stakeholders' view make it a medium sized rather than a small school. The school serves an extensive rural area taking in Llangristiolus, Capel Mawr, Cerrigceinwen and Paradwys. It is a lively, happy Welsh language school which is prospering. It is a modern school with space either side to extend if necessary.
- Since last September under the Headship of Mr Elfed Williams, the school has developed and grown in strength and, following the very recent appointment of a new, talented and enthusiastic Head Teacher who shares his predecessor's vision for the school, there is every confidence that Ysgol Henblas will continue to thrive. Educational Standards at the school are on the rise. Despite going through a challenging period prior to summer 2017, of the three schools under consideration the results of Ysgol Henblas for 2016/17 in the Foundation Phase are the second best and in KS2, they are the best and are also better than Anglesey and Wales's results. Moreover, GwE in a report issued last month confirms that the school has made progress against each of the 6 recommendations made by Estyn following the inspection in May 2017. Under the leadership of the new Head Teacher, the school is continuing to make strides with improving standards.
- That there are significant shortcomings in the consultation process – specifically - the complete and unexpected U turn from the position taken in the previous consultation early in 2017 resulting now in the proposal to close Ysgol Henblas. Also the absence of a non-statutory consultation and whilst it is accepted that this is not mandatory, it is nevertheless regarded as good practice. Thirdly, the deliberate slant both in the statutory consultation document and in the consultation response report which seeks to convey an unfavourable picture of Ysgol Henblas. For example, the Governing Body of Ysgol Henblas drafted a detailed 8 page response to the consultation which in the report has been reduced to 6 bullet points whereas in previous consultation response reports, the response by the Governing Body of an affected school has been reproduced in full. It is a curtailment of the school's voice which has been remedied by the Chair of the Governing Body dispatching the Governing Body's response directly to members of both the Scrutiny Committee and the Executive.
- The importance of ensuring choice. Should all the Authority's plans be realised, it would mean there would only be two primary schools, albeit large schools, serving what is a huge area tantamount to a quarter of the Island. Does the Authority really believe that an educational wilderness like this is desirable? Although a number of parents do choose to send their children to larger schools, many others choose rural schools such as Ysgol Henblas because for many parents their priority is that

their children receive an education of standard in a rural, community and family environment rather than in an education factory.

- A school like Ysgol Henblas is inclusive and offers all pupils opportunities to participate in school activities e.g. in the football team or the school choir; in larger schools, it is often only the best who get the chance to take part.
- Since May, 2017 there has been an increase of nearly 10% in pupil numbers at Ysgol Henblas which is testament to the confidence of the surrounding community in the school.
- Ysgol Henblas is a focal point for the village of Llangristiolus which has grown around the school there being very little other provision within the village. Should the school close then a large rural area would be deprived of its only significant resource which binds the community together, and the loss of which could lead to the demise of yet another community.
- Schools such as Ysgol Henblas are integral to promoting use of the Welsh language. The proposed new super-school will be five times the size of Ysgol Henblas meaning there could be five times the number of children from non-Welsh language households attending the school thus increasing the opportunities for children not to speak Welsh. Keeping wherever possible, centres of education in the communities where children live is key to ensuring the Welsh language develops and thrives. Educating children through the medium of Welsh is not enough of itself to sustain the language – children need to be able to choose Welsh over English and this should start in their own village and their own community and not in a school four miles down the road.

In response to questions by the Committee regarding the steps the Governing Body of Ysgol Henblas is taking to ensure that the improvement in standards continues and is sustained, Mr Rhys Parry said that the school has worked diligently to implement the post inspection action plan and a Standards Panel has been established to make sure the 6 recommendations made by Estyn are put into effect. Significant progress has already been made e.g. in reading which is confirmed by the GwE report. However, the focus on improving standards has been diverted by the need to put every effort into fighting for the future of the school. With regard to mixed age classes, in any school there are pupils of different abilities within a class which requires differentiation.

Councillor Dafydd Robert and Eric Wyn Jones both spoke as Local Members. Both said that they had confidence in the progress being made by Ysgol Henblas and both were concerned by the ramifications of any closure which would leave a large area of the Island without any educational provision thereby depriving parents of a choice. Councillor Eric Jones said that he was astonished by the proposal to close the three schools and that he considered all three to be super schools.

Representations by Ysgol Bodffordd

Gareth Parry (School Governor), Llinos Roberts (parent) and Elis Wyn Roberts (Bodffordd Community Council) addressed the Committee with their and the community of Bodffordd's views on the proposals to modernise the primary education provision in the western part of Llangefni. In making their representations, they emphasised the role of Ysgol Bodffordd as a community school which is at the heart of the community and they also brought the following matters to the Committee's attention –

- That Ysgol Bodffordd is a popular school which is full with many parents from outside the catchment choosing to send their children to the school because of its community nature and strong Welsh language ethos.
- That new buildings and academic progress are not the only factors in children's development. Governors Wales's education policies suggest that any decisions about the future of schools should be made on a broad and holistic basis taking into account the welfare of children and the feeling of belonging they have in a close community

school such as Ysgol Bodffordd. In the short-term closing the school will have an effect on less fortunate families and on children with special needs; children will not be able to walk to school. Having to travel on a bus to a large school of 450 pupils is likely to have an impact on 4 and 5 year old children when it is challenging enough for them to make the move from nursery to primary school. The future of the excellent Cylch Meithrin in Bodffordd is also in question.

- Ysgol Bodffordd has especially strong community links; parents are doubtful that the Authority has fully assessed the impact which closing the school will have on this close rural community and on the Welsh language. There has to be a very strong case made for closing the school (other than financial reasons) that can stand up to scrutiny. The stakeholders at Ysgol Bodffordd do not believe that such a case has been made because of errors in the consultation response report not least the omission of the views of Estyn which is a mandatory requirement which undermines the idea of a fair consultation reducing it to the level of a “rubber-stamp.”
- The community centre which is inextricably linked to the school is fully utilised by the community; however there has been no indication of what will happen to the centre should the school close or the impact this will have on community activities and community life. Without the school there is no parking provision for the community centre.
- The playground and field on the school site was gifted to the school to be used by it and the village children many years ago by the then landowner. If the Authority proposes to use the capital receipts from the sale of Ysgol Bodffordd as a contribution towards the new school then it will have to provide evidence of its ownership of the land and centre.
- Stakeholders of Ysgol Bodffordd believe that there is a bias against Ysgol Bodffordd in the consultation response report; to say that it is not possible to justify the future for Ysgol Bodffordd is disgraceful. Since the Estyn inspection report in 2015 the school has made a very great effort to improve standards which is not recognised in the report. As well as a presumption against smaller schools there is also a presumption in the report that larger schools are better in many ways; larger primary schools are relatively new – there is therefore insufficient evidence to date to support this presumption.
- To say that some from Ysgol Bodffordd felt there was no point in replying to the consultation is an unfair representation of the position and ignores the fact that a total of 400 to 500 responses have been made over the course of three consultations (two statutory and one non-statutory). It is no wonder therefore when such facts are ignored that some might find no point in responding – parents and governors have lost faith in the ability of the LEA’s officers to listen and to accept a different viewpoint.
- In proposing to close Ysgol Bodffordd the Authority is acting contrary to the Well-being and Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 which amongst other things seeks to create viable, resilient and successful communities which promote equality, fairness and cohesion in which the Welsh language can prosper. The closure of schools such as Ysgol Bodffordd which can end up destroying communities can therefore not be justified.
- In proposing to close Ysgol Bodffordd the Authority is also acting contrary to its own Council Plan 2017-2022 which has as one of its objectives to ensure that the people of Anglesey can thrive and realise their long-term potential. Such an aspiration will not be realised by closing schools and destroying the foundations of communities.
- The new School Organisation Code will come into effect in September, 2018 and has the potential to render the current consultation a waste of time. Added to this is the announcement by the Welsh Government’s Education Secretary of £36m additional funding for schools in Wales to recruit teachers and to provide extra learning space in order to reduce infant class sizes. These developments will change the landscape. The statutory only consultation conducted at this time suggests that the Authority is

trying to push through a decision while there is still time. Given that the schools' modernisation process for this area began in 2016, to pause for another few months until the new Code is implemented would be a more reasonable course to take. Notwithstanding what is being emphasised by the Authority as a tight timetable, rushing to judgment is still a dangerous thing to do.

In response to points raised by the Committee in relation to the future of the current nursery provision at Ysgol Bodffordd and the arrangements for transporting nursery children to the nursery provision at the new school mindful of the fact that parents are at present able to walk to Cylch Meithrin, as well as the legal ownership of the playground and community part of the school building, the Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community & Service Transformation) said that Education Officers had explained in the consultation session with parents that consideration would have to be given to making arrangements for the Cylch Meithrin within Bodffordd itself. With regard to the question of the ownership of land and community centre, initial enquiries only have been made with Property Officers so as not to be seen as pre-empting the decision or giving the impression that the decision has been made; as with other aspects of the proposals, the detailed work will begin after the Executive has made a decision.

The Portfolio Member for Education clarified that the timetable is prescribed by the timing of the Band A and Band B phases of the Welsh Government's Twenty-First Century Schools Programme. With regard to the recently announced additional money by Welsh Government to reduce infant class sizes, the Portfolio Member in referring to the fact that the money is intended for new teachers to help create smaller infant classes so "a school which currently has two infant classes of 29 or more pupils could instead have three smaller more manageable infant classes" highlighted that very few schools in Anglesey fit this description to which the funding criteria would apply.

The Head of Function (Resources) and Section 151 Officer clarified that the capital receipts from the sale of a school although helpful in reducing the overall spend is not essential in the context of a total budget of £8m for the proposed new school. Any funding gap will be bridged by borrowing.

Councillor Dylan Rees as Chair of the Governing Body of Ysgol Bodffordd said that he thought the assessment of Ysgol Bodffordd with regard to standards reads unfairly. Much is made of the Estyn inspection which goes back to 2015; since then the school has made steady progress. It is only recently that he and the Head Teacher appeared before the Council's Schools Progress Review Scrutiny Panel where the school was complimented on the progress that had taken place with the support of GwE – there is confidence that with continued progress the school will move out of the amber classification in relation to performance and into the yellow classification by September, 2018. None of this is reflected in the report. As a Local Member, Councillor Dylan Rees referred to the current School Organisation Code 2013 which states that a school may be the focal point of community activity with closure having an effect beyond the educational. In such cases proposals should show that the impact on communities has been assessed through a Community Impact Assessment. Although the report acknowledges that a solution will need to be found to allow community activities to continue the Authority's approach seems to be one of "we'll cross that bridge when we get to it."

The Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community & Service Transformation) confirmed that all necessary assessments including a Community Impact Assessment had been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Code. In relation to standards at Ysgol Bodffordd the Officer said that there have been challenges in the early part of 2018 including staff changes leading to a further period of adaptation and restructuring. There is a need therefore to provide continuing intense support to the school and it was recommended that the school remains in the amber category.

Representations by Ysgol Corn Hir

Mr Dafydd Tudur Jones (School Governor) addressed the Committee from the perspective of the views of Ysgol Corn Hir on the proposals to modernise the primary education provision in the western part of Llangefni. In making his representations to the Committee, he drew attention to the following matters –

- That Ysgol Corn Hir is over capacity and has a shortage of funding.
- That although the school's admission number is 29, from next year onwards the reception class will have 31 children, Year 1 will have 35 children, Year 2 will have 35 children and Year 3 will have 35 children, Year 4 will have 31 children, Year 5 will have 27 children and Year 6 will have 34 children.
- That an arrangement was made with the LEA four years ago to increase the admission number to 35 following on from which the school received funding to create an additional classroom to ensure the school conforms to infant class size requirements.
- However, next year for the first time, Year 3 will have 35 pupils which brings with it a number of challenges. The need to make savings has prevented the school from engaging an additional teacher for the infant classes which it had hoped to do.
- That Ysgol Corn Hir suffers from a lack of space – the school building is small and the classrooms are small which when coupled with the large number of children at the school makes it increasingly difficult for the school to cope going forwards. Added to this are financial pressures which make cutting back on teaching staff a possibility.
- That any delay in coming to a decision on the future of Ysgol Corn Hir will have a significant effect on the school. The ongoing uncertainty makes it difficult to plan ahead with the consequent risk that standards at the school which have been consistently high, will eventually suffer; there are also health and safety risks associated with lack of space and a large number of children. The Executive needs to understand these risks in coming to its decision.

Councillor Nicola Roberts, also a Local Member, said that having both large and small primary schools in her ward and serving as a governor on one and the other she had seen the differentials in terms of school budgets/cost per head and was worried by the inequality which this can lead to. In light of the issues with standards that have existed in some of the schools she was particularly concerned that standards might be further eroded by any delay (she referenced Option 2) in implementing the modernisation programme in this area of Llangefni.

The Committee in considering all the information presented both orally and in writing, made the following points –

- The Committee noted that unlike in previous consultations, an informal or non-statutory consultation was not held with regard to the proposal in question. The Committee noted that although it is not a requirement, prior informal consultation is looked upon as good practice and could have given an opportunity to clarify a number of issues beforehand, to provide more information as well identifying alternative ideas and/or proposals. The impression created therefore is that the decision making process is being carried out with more haste this time.

The Portfolio Member for Education said that additional finance which the Welsh Government made available as part of the Twenty First Century Schools Programme as announced in January, 2018 enabled the Authority to look again at options for the Llangefni area and the size of the proposed new school for the western part of Llangefni. There are however time limitations in relation to the funding linked to the Band A phase of the programme. He emphasised that the Authority does not make decisions in advance but that consultation must be based on an idea of what is possible and/or desirable for the area in question. He emphasised that a range of

factors are taken into account but that the Authority does not have a magic money tree that would allow it to meet the wishes of all stakeholders for their schools. The Authority is faced with having to make difficult decisions but is keen to ensure they are the right ones.

- The Committee noted that Ysgol Henblas and Ysgol Bodffordd are seen as central to their communities and to community life, and that the closure of the schools could potentially have a devastating impact on both communities. The Committee noted that the School Organisation Code states that the impact of closure on the community needs to have been assessed. The Committee further noted that the outcome of such an assessment is not clear in the documentation presented and in the case of Ysgol Bodffordd where the community use of the school is recognised as significant it is only briefly referred to.
- The Committee further noted with regard to the community use of Ysgol Bodffordd that the ownership of land and community building associated with the school is uncertain. The Committee emphasised that the legal ownership of the land and building is a matter that should be clarified before any decision is made with regard to the school.
- The Committee noted that although pupil numbers are predicted to reduce in Ysgol Henblas over a period of time, surplus places are not an immediate issue in relation to either Ysgol Henblas or Ysgol Bodffordd.
- The Committee acknowledged that ensuring high standards of education is important. Whilst it accepted that both Ysgol Henblas and Ysgol Bodffordd have had to address issues in relation to standards, the Committee noted from the testimony provided that both schools are making progress in improving standards.
- The Committee noted that lack of space and over capacity are issues affecting Ysgol Corn Hir.
- The Committee noted that under the Joint Local Development Plan, 600 new homes are planned for Llangefni which is likely to bring in new families and children to the area. The Committee noted that any decisions on the primary education provision in the Llangefni area should take account of and plan on the basis of this eventuality ensuring that there is sufficient education capacity in the Llangefni area to meet this expansion.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community & Service Transformation) said that the JDLP refers to the building of 600 new homes in Llangefni in the period from 2011 to 2026. 60 of those homes have been completed and 13 have planning consent. Officers have assessed the effect of new houses by using a formula to predict the numbers of pupils in each of the catchment areas of the three schools. For this formal consultation the number of houses is 237 in the catchment area of the three schools; this would therefore mean 40 additional pupils.

- The Committee noted that larger schools do not necessarily address every problem and are not the right solution for every area. Testimony provided to the Schools Performance Review Panel indicates that some of the same problems still remain in the new schools already built as part of the school's modernisation programme in Anglesey. The Committee noted that there is no specific evidence to show that larger schools provide better education.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community & Service Transformation) said that testimony regarding the advantages of the new schools was also provided to the Schools Performance Review Panel.

- The Committee noted that the final definitive version of the draft revised School Organisation Code is expected to be come into effect in September, 2018. The Committee noted that the final Code may be different to the draft version. The Committee further noted that there will be no turning back on a decision implemented by the Executive with regard to the three schools in question by the time the final Code is issued regardless of what it may contain.
- The Committee noted that Option 2 provides for the possibility of maintaining Ysgol Henblas subject to monitoring standards for improvement for a year. The Committee sought clarification of the differentiation between Ysgol Henblas and Ysgol Bodffordd on this basis and why no such option is offered for Ysgol Bodffordd

The Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community & Service Transformation) said that the support provided to Ysgol Henblas over the past three years has been substantial. The support for Ysgol Bodffordd over 3 years has also been high. Feedback confirms that the pace of improvement at Ysgol Henblas has accelerated; the school's results for last year were the best of the three schools for KS2 being in the first quartile although the results for the Foundation Phase was in the third quartile. In the previous two years, results for the Foundation Phase were in the fourth quartile and for KS2 they were in the fourth and third quartiles Test results for the Foundation Phase have been in the fourth quartile for Ysgol Bodffordd for both the past two years and for KS2 results were in the first quartile in 2015/16 but have fallen back to the third quartile in 2016/17. The Assistant Chief Executive said that Estyn looks at schools' performance over a period of three years.

*The 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.***

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

- That a decision on any school is deferred until the Welsh Government's Cabinet Secretary for Education issues a statement on small rural schools.
- That Ysgol Henblas and Ysgol Bodffordd remain open due to the implications of the building of a large number of houses in the Llangefni area which is likely to lead to a significant increase in the number of children in future.

The Chair proposed and it was agreed that wording to reflect the Committee's concern over the uncertainty in relation to the ownership of land and community building in relation to Ysgol Bodffordd be added to the amendment.

The Head of Function (Resources) and Section 151 Officer advised that moving forwards on the basis of a new school to replace Ysgol Corn Hir only (as opposed to a new school to replace all three schools or a new school to replace Ysgol Corn Hir and Ysgol Bodffordd) would be problematic financially as it will not generate the same level of savings, and the costs will be higher. No plan has been made for such a proposal on the grounds that the business case for it is likely to be rejected by Welsh Government as not providing the level of savings which the Twenty First Century Schools' Programme requires and expects.

In the ensuing vote on the matter the majority of the Committee's Members supported the amendments as put forward.

Having considered all the information presented and the representations made, it was

RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive –

- **That a decision on any school is deferred until the Welsh Government's Cabinet Secretary for Education issues a statement on small rural schools.**
- **That Ysgol Henblas and Ysgol Bodffordd remain open due to the implications of the building of a large number of houses in the Llangefni area which is likely to lead to a significant increase in the number of children in future, and also -**
- **That the Corporate Scrutiny Committee has concerns regarding the uncertainty over the ownership of land and community building linked to Ysgol Bodffordd.**

4 SOCIAL SERVICES' PERFORMANCE – PROGRESS ON PRIORITY AREAS

The report of the Statutory Director of Social Services outlining the progress made to date against the Action Plan in response to the Annual Performance Review Letter of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) was presented for the Committee's consideration. The updated Action Plan was provided at Appendix 2 to the report.

The Statutory Director of Social Services reported that the CSSIW which since January, 2018 has been known as the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) published its Annual Review Letter in June 2017. The letter summarised progress on key areas for improvements over the previous year and included feedback on annual engagement themes (Safeguarding and Carers); progress on recommendations arising out of CSSIW inspections as well as areas requiring additional focus. An Action Plan was formed to respond to each issue raised with a timeframe for completion and this was presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in October, 2017. It was agreed at that time that an updated plan would be shared with the Committee's members within 6 months in order to review the progress made.

The Committee noted the information. The Committee sought clarification of whether there are any implications to the restructuring process which Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) has undergone. The Statutory Director of Social Services said that as a result of the restructuring, CIW will now be working on a national rather than regional basis with the aim of securing consistency throughout Wales in its approach across the range of its responsibilities. The inspections programme will continue and CIW remains in regular monitoring contact with Anglesey's Children's Services and is satisfied with the Authority's progress to date. It is expected that the Authority's Children's Services will be re-inspected by the end of the year. CIW has begun a programme of national thematic inspections including one in relation to Children in Care to which all authorities have responded. Anglesey is not among the six local authorities in which CIW will conduct more detailed fieldwork as part of this thematic inspection.

It was resolved –

- **To note that Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) has changed its name to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as from 15 January, 2018.**
- **To approve the April 2018 updated Action Plan as presented.**
- **To note that CIW has confirmed in correspondence dated 23 February, 2018 that following evaluation, it will not be issuing an annual performance letter in 2018.**

NO FURTHER ACTION WAS PROPOSED

5 TRANSFORMATION OF LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICES

The report of the Head of Adults' Services which provided an update on developments in the Learning Disability Service with particular reference to the Service's Transformation Programme was presented for the Committee's consideration. The report provided at

Appendix 1 details of each of the five ongoing projects within the Transformation Programme including the current status of each project, impact on stakeholders, activity to date and next quarter's planned activity.

The Committee noted the information and made the following points –

- The Committee noted the importance of informing existing tenants at Llawr y Dref of the purpose of the Llawr y Dref Move On project and what it involves i.e. providing 3 individuals with a learning disability the opportunity to be assessed for a period of 3 to 18 months for independent living.
- The Committee sought clarification of whether the In-House Day Services project has implication for the future of existing day centres. The Head of Adults' Services said that the Learning Disability in-house day services in their entirety are being reviewed to assess whether they are capable of meeting the needs of users into the future, whether they are modelled in the right way and are in the right place and whether they provide appropriate support to enable individuals to be independent.

The Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services said that Members were briefed a few months ago on the planned review of in-house day services.

The Chair said that it would be appropriate and that he was requesting that reports in relation to the review of in-house day services to be presented to Scrutiny in advance of any Executive decision on the matter.

It was resolved –

- **To accept the report as position statement on the Learning Disability Service**
- **To support the planned developments to the service.**

ADDITIONAL ACTION PROPOSED: Reports in relation to the review of Learning Disability in-house day services to be presented to Scrutiny in advance of any Executive decision on the matter.

6 NOMINATION TO THE SCHOOLS' PROGRESS REVIEW SCRUTINY PANEL

The report of the Scrutiny Officer seeking the Committee's nomination for a replacement member for Councillor Shaun Redmond on the School Progress Review Scrutiny Panel was presented. The report included at Appendix 1 the Panel's terms of reference and meeting and reporting arrangements as supporting information.

It was resolved to nominate Mr Keith Roberts (The Catholic Church) to serve on the Schools' Progress Review Scrutiny Panel.

7 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's Forward Work Programme for 2017/18 to 2018/19 was presented for comment and review.

The Chair informed the Committee that two additional meetings of the Committee to consider educational matters are expected to be scheduled into the Work Programme for July, 2018.

It was resolved to accept the Work Programme as presented, subject to noting the inclusion of two additional meetings for July, 2018.

NO ADDITIONAL ACTION WAS PROPOSED

**Councillor Aled Morris Jones
Chair**

DRAFT