

# CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 5 July, 2018

- PRESENT:** Councillor Aled M. Jones (Chair)  
Councillor Dylan Rees (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors Lewis Davies, Richard Griffiths, Richard Owain Jones, Alun Roberts, Nicola Roberts.
- Co-opted Members: Mr Keith Roberts (The Catholic Church), Mrs Anest Frazer (The Church in Wales)
- Portfolio Member**
- R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Youth & Culture)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive  
Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community & Service Improvement)(for item 3)  
Assistant Chief Executive (Governance & Business Process Transformation) (for item 2)  
Head of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer (for item 3)  
Head of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer  
Head of Children and Families' Services (for item 2)  
Service Manager (Learning Disabilities (BW) (for item 2)  
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)  
Committee Officer (ATH)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors J. Arwel Roberts, Llinos Medi Huws (Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services), Councillor Dylan Morgan (Llanddyfnan Community Council) and Mr Huw Redvers Jones (Ysgol y Graig (Public Speakers)
- ALSO PRESENT:** **Portfolio Members:** Councillors Robin Williams (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), Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Major Projects and Economic Development), R.G. Parry, OBE, FRAGS (Portfolio Member for Highways, Property and Waste)
- Officers:** Head of Learning, Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager
- Public Speakers:** Mr Islwyn Humphreys (Ysgol Talwrn Governing Body), Siwan Mathias (Ysgol Talwrn Campaign Committee), Elwyn and Bethan Wyn Jones (Community of Talwrn)
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The Chair welcomed all those present to this meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee including Members, Officers and representatives of Ysgol Talwrn and the community of Talwrn.

Councillor Lewis Davies paid tribute to the National Health Service on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its creation, and to the vision of those who made it possible. The Committee's members echoed the tribute and agreed that much was owing to the NHS and the health care it provides.

## **1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Councillor Richard Griffiths declared a personal but not prejudicial interest with regard to item 3 on the agenda as his prospective daughter in law is employed at Ysgol y Graig.

Councillor Nicola Roberts declared a personal but not prejudicial interest with regard to item 3 on the agenda as a member of the Governing Body of Ysgol y Graig and the Governing Body of Ysgol Talwrn and also as the parent of a child who is a pupil at the Ysgol y Graig.

## **2 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATUTORY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

The draft Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services on the effectiveness of the Social Services in the 2017/18 financial year was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Governance & Business Process Transformation)/ Statutory Director of Social Services reported that the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 since its implementation has fundamentally changed the way the Authority's Social Services operate. It also sets the format which Welsh Government expects the Statutory Directors of Social Services of all the 22 Welsh local authorities to apply in formulating the contents of the annual report which encompass Adults' Services, Children's Services and Corporate Services. The Annual Report is intended to provide information about Social Services' performance to a wide-ranging audience including Elected Members, the general public, service users and the Care Inspectorate Wales. This being so its contents provide a balance between on the one hand being easily accessible and on the other hand, providing sufficiently detailed information to the Inspectorate. As part of the process of preparing the Annual Report a service challenge session was held in June to which a range of partners was invited the aim being to obtain their input on the Social Services' activities in the financial year gone by along with the Services' plans going forwards.

In referring to Adults' Services, the Officer said that she was pleased with the progress that had been made in 2017/18 especially the collaborative working with the Health Service as a key partner. During the year Garreglwyd in Holyhead was remodelled to provide specialist support for older people with dementia and is a valuable local resource enabling those with dementia to remain on Anglesey closer to family and friends. Hafan Cefni, the new extra care facility in Llangefni will open later in 2018 and will enable more people to stay within their communities as their care and support needs increase. The facility will also provide care for a small number of dementia clients. There has also been significant work during the year between the Social Services, the Health Service and local communities to strengthen dementia services for people within their own communities across the Island.

The significant progress made in improving Children and Families' Services during 2017/18 has been well documented in reports to the Council's committees and has also been recognised by the Care Inspectorate Wales in its letter in January, 2018. The Annual Report describes a number of new elements in Children and Families' Services including the Prevention and Early Intervention Service, the Resilient Families Team, and

Teulu Môn. Alongside the new initiatives, the Service continues to fulfil its core responsibilities i.e. looking after children in care and children who are on the Child Protection Register. Although a great deal has been achieved in terms of improving Children and Families' Services in the past eighteen months, transforming the Service does not happen overnight and the Service therefore remains on a journey of improvement; it is anticipated that the improvements currently ongoing will take a further eighteen months to complete and to consolidate. A follow-up inspection of Children and Families' Services will be carried out by Care Inspectorate Wales in the autumn.

The Officer went on to refer to the impact of corporate services in supporting the provision of effective frontline Social Services for example, good progress has been achieved in 2017/18 to ensure that the Council is a safe employer and that it employs and sets contracts in a responsible and safe way that protects the Island's residents. As part of its corporate responsibilities the Service has arranged for training to be provided to all Council staff on domestic abuse to be followed in the course of this year by training on modern slavery, child sexual abuse, and Prevent, the Government's programme to stop people from becoming radicalised.

The Committee considered the Statutory Director's Annual Report for 2017/18 and made the following observations for consideration by the Statutory Director –

- The Committee noted and recognised that the work undertaken during the 2017/18 financial year was significant with notable developments in both Adults' Services and Children and Families' Services.
- It was also noted that there has been a focus on dementia care services during the reporting period and in particular on developing more community-based dementia provision. Given that the number of people suffering from dementia especially younger people, is expected to grow rapidly in future the Committee sought clarification of how the Authority proposes to support individuals so affected.

The Service Manager for Learning Disability Services said that the new facility at Garreglwyd is designed to provide support for individuals with acute needs; however, this support is not confined to older people but can be extended to younger people who may be in the process of developing dementia and who might otherwise have to go out of county to receive support appropriate to meet their care needs.

The Statutory Director of Social Services said that dementia is a condition that evolves and changes over time. Whilst the objective of the Service is to help people stay independent within their communities for as long as possible, it must also ensure that appropriate provision is available for those whose needs are more severe requiring specialist care. The Garreglwyd resource which was planned, developed and staffed conjointly with the Health Service is in this respect, a truly pioneering initiative.

- The Committee noted that the report states that Social Services' collaboration with partners has also improved, in particular with BCUHB, North Wales Police and Third Sector partners. The Committee welcomed this evaluation and emphasised that Social Services cannot work in isolation and that continuing to strengthen partnership working is important if vulnerable adults and children are to receive the best and most effective services.

The Statutory Director of Social Services acknowledged the point made and confirmed that collaboration especially with the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board is much improved. She added that similarly, the Service's relationship with North Wales Police has improved with monthly meetings being held and close collaboration on a number of matters both strategically and operationally at local level.

There is still further scope for improvement as regards day to day work and Children and Families' Services continue to work with the Police to ensure that the referrals it makes are appropriate.

- The Committee noted that there are many legal requirements in relation to Children's Services. The Chair asked for clarification of the Service's relationship with the Courts and the impact of new processes and procedures on the Service.

The Statutory Director of Social Services said Social Services operates within a legislative system where there are statutory requirements especially in relation to Children's Services. The introduction of the Public Law Outline has set a timescale of six months for completing care proceedings meaning that the Service has had to invest resources in meeting this requirement in terms of the preparation of assessments and related documentation in a timely manner. At the same time the number of children entering care nationally has increased significantly and in Anglesey it has doubled over the last four years from in the region of 70 to 150 at the present time. The reason for this increase are complex and varied. However, the Social Services in Anglesey have a good relationship with the courts – the Statutory Director and the Head of Children and Families' Services have held a meeting with the Family Court Judge to update him on developments in Anglesey; in addition, the Heads of Children's Services of the six North Wales authorities meet periodically with judges. The Officer referred to CAF/CASS as the agency which safeguards the child and ensures that the child's perspective is put across in courts – the Head of Children's Services confirmed that quarterly meetings are held with CAF/CASS Cymru.

- The Committee noted that Children's Services have been under significant financial pressure in recent years partly because as a statutory service it has to respond to demand and partly because the number of children needing care has increased steadily. The Committee sought assurance that the situation is improving and that it is manageable.

The Statutory Director of Social Services said that funding in Children and Families Services is a challenge. The increase in the number of children and young people who enter the care system and are formally looked after by the Authority be that in placements where they remain with parents, in foster care, or with friends and family, has put a strain on the Service's budget. Whilst the Service is prioritising the recruitment of additional foster carers to the service on Anglesey, there are occasions when it has to have recourse to independent foster carers or out of county placements. A small proportion of young people in the Authority's care – in the region of 10% - have acute or complex needs which can only be met through specialised residential placements which incur significant costs. The Service has invested in strengthening prevention services and has created the Resilient Families Team to work with children and families so that children are able to remain safely with their families. The Officer said that a great amount of work is being done by the service to maintain looked after children in the locality and to keep them safe within a family setting. The Service is currently considering setting up a Small Group Homes arrangement.

In response to a question about the additional resources allocated to Children and Families Services, the Head of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer said that 0.8% (£265k) of the 4.8% increase in Council Tax in 2018/19 has been set aside for Children's Services. The Executive in April, 2018 also authorised the release of a further additional sum in the region of £300k to enable Children and Families Services to recruit additional agency staff to support Newly Qualified Social Workers and to

deal with legacy cases. The Officer said that based on the information available at this point in time, an overspend of approximately £1.2m is projected for Children's and Families Services for 2018/19 but, being early in the financial year, the situation can change quickly.

- The Committee acknowledged that mitigating measures are being taken to try to contain costs within Children's Services but that being a demand led service these measures can only go so far. The Committee also noted that rising demand in Children's Social Care is replicated nationally and is matched by similar demand in Adult Social Care which has been described in media reports as a "ticking timebomb". The Committee sought clarification of whether the situation at present is sustainable and if not, whether there is a case to be made to Welsh Government for a direct injection of funds.

The Statutory Director of Social Services said the Service's approach is to encourage older people to remain as independent as possible within their communities for as long as possible with the "What Matters" conversation being the guiding principle in making decisions regarding the kind of provision needed. The Officer said that individuals' needs vary but it has been shown that older people are better able to stay independent if they have a network of family and friends around them on which they can draw – meaning they require lower level support from Social Services. The Service is therefore encouraging people to look at what forms of support is available to them already within their family and communities. The Adults' Services' budget is currently being managed successfully; the pressures on the budget are not as great as those on the Children and Families Services' budget even though Adults' Services deal with a far greater number of individuals in a year than Children's Services. However, as public service budgets continue to reduce year on year, and services are forced to make further savings, managing the pressures becomes more difficult. Although Children and Families' Services have been protected, Adults' Services have had to find savings and the situation overall is becoming more challenging. Whilst additional Government funding for Health Care is welcome social care also needs investment as the two are inextricably linked.

- The Committee noted with regard to the demographics of older people that some areas e.g. the southeast corner of the Island, have a higher concentration of older people than other areas due in part to the influx of retirees who after a short time can require Social Services' support because they have no family in the area to which they have retired. The Committee sought clarification of whether Welsh Government's funding allocation has regard to the fact that some areas are under greater pressure than others.

The Head of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer said that whilst the local government settlement does take into consideration the number of older people in an area it does not take this analysis further to reflect levels of family support available to them so no additional funding is allocated on that basis.

- The Committee noted that the safe and timely discharge of older people from hospital can be problematic because of issues in relation to delayed transfers of care. The Committee sought clarification of whether the Social Services are satisfied with the transfer of care arrangements and whether the Service is able to do more to address discharge from hospital.

The Statutory Director of Social Services said that the Service has recently re-tendered the Domiciliary Care contract and where previously Home Care providers were able to select care packages the new contract is based on three areas

("patches") with the successful companies becoming responsible for all the domiciliary care needs within their patch. Whilst the benefits of the new model will take a few months to become evident it is expected to facilitate the discharge of older people from hospital. Also, the new Garreglwyd facility is a valuable local resource for people with dementia. These two elements will improve the situation and should help ease the pressure on hospitals.

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee acknowledged the extent of the improvement and developmental work undertaken in Social Services during 2017/18 which is ongoing and the Committee thanked the Statutory Director of Social Services for providing the leadership and guidance for the work.

**Having considered the information and having received assurance on the matters raised, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee RESOLVED to accept and to note the Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services for 2017/18 and to recommend the report to the Executive.**

### **3 SCHOOLS' MODERNISATION PROGRAMME – LLANGEFNI AREA**

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community and Service Improvement) 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) held during the period from 1 May, to 18 June, 2018 was presented for the Committee's consideration.

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. Although Ysgol Talwrn and Ysgol y Graig and the issues affecting them are under consideration at this meeting those issues form part of a bigger picture encompassing the Island as a whole and the Education Service within it. They link into the Council's corporate priorities and particularly its ambition that every child, every young person and every learner whatever their background and their circumstances, achieves their full potential.

The Portfolio Member highlighted that the Education Service's budget makes up 40% of the Council's overall budget with savings of in the region of £5.2m being mooted for the Service over the next 3 years. In the past, the Council has sought to protect Education from the worst of the financial cuts; that is no longer possible and the Education Service is expected to contribute its share of the savings which the Council will have to identify in that period. Added to this is the school maintenance backlog cost which is approximately £16m. The financial squeeze which Anglesey and other councils are experiencing comes ultimately from the Westminster Government's prolonged austerity agenda. The Portfolio Member said that whilst closing a school is not done lightly, the current situation is not sustainable. 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 sector leading schools in

each area. The drivers of change remain the same; these are listed in the report with one of the most prominent being improving teaching standards and attainment. Also significant is the aim of reducing the expenditure range per pupil thereby ensuring more equal opportunities across schools in Anglesey. The Portfolio Member acknowledged that Elected Members have a dual role in the schools' modernisation process 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. He thanked all those who had contributed to the consultation process either by attending the drop-in sessions or by other forms of communication.

The Assistant Chief Executive referred to the themes and issues raised by stakeholders at the two schools in responding to the consultation process and the Authority's response to those matters as set out in section 9 of the report. Those issues can be summarised as follows –

- A number of stakeholders mention the percentage of pupils achieving the standard at KS2 in Ysgol Talwrn as being 100%. Whilst the performance of the two schools in KS 2 is similar (the second table at paragraph 9.1 refers) the performance of Ysgol Talwrn in the Foundation Phase is lower than that for similar schools both on Anglesey and nationally and has placed it in the lower quartile for the past three years. For Ysgol y Graig, its performance in the Foundation Phase has varied over the same period with the school in the upper quartile in 2014/15; the lower median in 2015/16 and the upper median in 2016/17.
- The two schools have been inspected by Estyn recently with Ysgol Talwrn assessed as Excellent against one indicator, Good against 12 and Adequate against 2. Ysgol y Graig was judged to be Excellent against 4 indicators and Good against the remaining 11 indicators thus giving Ysgol y Graig a stronger inspection profile than Ysgol Talwrn.
- The size of Ysgol Talwrn means that the school has classes of mixed age. This, together with the expectation that suitable work is prepared for the range of abilities in a class offers a higher level of challenge for teachers in smaller schools.
- There is no reference to costs per pupil in the stakeholder responses. The cost per pupil for Ysgol Talwrn for 2017/18 at £4,447 is above both the average for Wales (£3,690) and the average for Anglesey (£3,972). It could be said that every place in Ysgol Talwrn costs £475 per pupil more and that the school therefore receives £22,325 additional finance. The spend per pupil for Ysgol y Graig at £3,395 is below the Welsh average and the Anglesey average. Reducing the variance in expenditure across schools is one of the main drivers for change.
- Both schools have a maintenance backlog for work that is required to bring their condition up to the required standards to ensure the safety of all school users. For Ysgol Talwrn the maintenance backlog cost is £82.5k plus £250k for a new external mobile classroom (valuation provided by a professional valuer, details are provided in the report) and for Ysgol y Graig, the cost is £36.5k. The Authority does not have the resources to meet the maintenance backlog needs of Ysgol Talwrn.
- In September, 2017 Ysgol Talwrn had 12% of surplus places, this is despite the fact that the percentage of pupils from outside the catchment area is relatively high at 45% making the surplus places position more vulnerable. At Ysgol y Graig surplus places were 1% in September, 2017.
- Some responses from Ysgol Talwrn refer to the draft revised School Organisation Code which although it sets out a presumption against the closure of rural schools does not state that rural schools should not close. The Code makes it clear that there is a priority to provide high-quality education in small and rural schools and it recognises that education is the paramount consideration. Although both Ysgol Talwrn and Ysgol y Graig perform well in terms of expected levels, Ysgol y Graig succeeds in achieving higher percentages at level 5+ which suggests it is able to

stretch pupils well and attain levels that exceed both Anglesey and Wales. Additionally, the revised School Organisation Code is not at present legally binding but the Authority has sought to address its contents in this process.

- Responses raise concerns about the traffic situation around Ysgol y Graig and that walking to the school from Talwrn would be dangerous. This concern is acknowledged and, should the proposals of the report be approved, a traffic impact assessment will be undertaken and will include the walking journey to Ysgol y Graig. Whilst the volume of traffic passing Ysgol y Graig has reduced since the opening of the Llangefni Link road as confirmed by a road traffic assessment conducted on the completion of the Link road, the parking situation remains problematic and will be addressed in the traffic impact assessment.
- Many comments by Ysgol Talwrn stakeholders emphasise the centrality of the school to the village and concerns are raised about the impact which closing the school would have on community life and activities. Whilst accepting that this is a challenge, there are examples where a new school has created a wider community and there are examples also where communities have continued to thrive despite the closure of the village school e.g. Marianglas.
- Some of the general comments received suggest that school size affects the quality of the Welsh language and that larger schools are less effective in creating a sense of family and in affording all pupils opportunities to participate. There is no evidence that either perspective is true. The Council expects that schools that are part of the modernisation programme continue to be community, Welsh speaking schools. In relation to opportunities, there are arrangements in primary schools to ensure that all pupils are given the opportunity to take part in school activities e.g. choir and year teams.
- The revenue savings generated in running one larger school (building maintenance, energy and management costs) are an important consideration in the financial assessment. Although building an extension to Ysgol y Graig to replace Ysgol Talwrn would be more expensive, the additional cost would be partly offset by an increase in the Welsh Government contribution and the capital receipt from selling the Ysgol Talwrn site.
- Section 12 of the report summarises the key issues in light of which it is recommended that the capacity of Ysgol y Graig be increased to accommodate pupils from Ysgol Talwrn and that Ysgol Talwrn be closed. This would be achieved by implementing the 3 steps described in paragraph 12.3 of the report.

The Committee noted the information presented and sought clarification of the Officer with regard to the following matters –

- The Committee noted that there is evidence across the Island that smaller schools can and do deliver excellent standards of education.

The Assistant Chief Executive acknowledged the point and clarified that the Authority has not stated otherwise. There are smaller schools on the Island that do perform well but there are also larger schools that perform equally well.

- The Committee also noted that there is a perception that the modernisation process with regard to schools in the Llangefni and the Seiriol areas is being rushed ahead of the implementation of the revised Schools' Organisation Code.

The Assistant Chief Executive said that consultation on the modernisation of schools in both the Llangefni and Seiriol areas began some years ago and as this is the latest of three consultations for the Llangefni area it cannot be said that the Authority is acting with haste.



- It was noted that the report on the outcome of the consultation process with reference to Ysgol y Graig and Ysgol Talwrn does not include school transport data. The Committee noted further that having such data would be helpful in building a complete picture of the considerations involved in modernising schools in this and other areas.

The Assistant Chief Executive said that details in relation to school transport will be made available once a decision has been made. For example, 45% of the pupils at Ysgol Talwrn come from outside the catchment area so following a decision as to the final configuration of schools in this area and having regard to the traffic impact assessment, a calculation will have to be made in relation to the number of children who will be requiring transport to school.

The Head of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer said that the delivery of the first phase of the Twenty-First Century Schools Programme namely Band A will come to an end in March, 2019 so school modernisation projects for this phase need to be confirmed and plans made by that date. Any slippage into the second Band B phase will mean that Band A funding will be lost thereby impacting on planned school modernisation projects in other areas of the Island under Band B.

- The Committee noted that the proposals include building a new block for Ysgol y Graig for the Foundation Phase. The Committee sought clarification of whether land had been identified for this building.

The Chief Executive said that initial work has been done on ascertaining whether suitable land is available but there has been no land purchase as no decision on the modernisation of schools in Llangefni with reference to Ysgol y Graig and Ysgol Talwrn has yet been made.

- The Committee sought clarification of the catchment area of Ysgol y Graig should the scheme be implemented and whether children from e.g. the Penmynydd area who would have attended Ysgol Talwrn would be eligible for free transport.

The Assistant Chief Executive said that in accordance with its school transport policy, the Authority will provide free transport to school for primary school children residing 2 miles or more from the school in whose catchment area they live but subject to a safety risk assessment. The distance from Ysgol Talwrn to Ysgol y Graig is 1.8 miles so the Authority does not have to provide free school transport for children in the area. However, should the scheme be approved, the Authority will conduct a road safety assessment.

Siwan Mathias (Ysgol Talwrn Campaign Committee), Mr Islwyn Humphreys (Ysgol Talwrn Governing Body), and Bethan Wyn Jones (Community of Talwrn) all addressed the Committee with their views on the proposals in relation to Ysgol y Graig and Ysgol Talwrn. They articulated the school and the community's opposition to the proposed closure of Ysgol Talwrn and asked that the Scrutiny Committee reject the proposal. In making their representations they drew the following points to the Committee's attention –

- That Ysgol Talwrn is an excellent school with a warm family environment and an exceptional standard of education. It has been a beneficial factor in parents and children's' lives.
- That schools such as Ysgol Talwrn have made the Isle of Anglesey what it is; closing the school and educating the children in a huge school will deprive the children of their heritage and change the dynamics of the Island forever.
- That parents of children at Ysgol Talwrn believe that despite their best efforts, their voice has been ignored by the Authority and their very reasonable arguments

overlooked or worse, rejected because they are similar and not deemed worth presenting to the Committee. It is the parents who know what is best for their children and who are legally responsible for their welfare.

- That parents have spent many hours responding to this and the previous consultations in an attempt to enlighten the Authority on the serious effects of the proposal – the Authority has been selective in its responses to the submissions made and when it has responded, it has not addressed the concerns raised e.g. there has been no reply within timescale to an FOI request for information on how the total maintenance backlog costs for Ysgol Talwrn have been calculated.
- That it is difficult for parents to exercise parental choice with regard to their children's school and for the Authority to comply with the statutory requirements in this respect when Ysgol Talwrn has been under threat for 10 years.
- That there is no assessment of the effects which the series of statutory consultations have had on the health and welfare of the children or the stress and anxiety they have caused parents who might have to change their hours of work and/or jobs to ensure their children catch a bus to school when the children can at present walk or cycle there.
- That most of the drivers for change are not applicable to Ysgol Talwrn and where they are relevant, parents have been able to use the Authority's own figures to challenge them. The only constant in all of the consultations is the fact that funding is available and that the Authority has made a mistake in relation to the primary education provision in the Llangefni area. It is money that is driving this proposal; the Council needs to find savings and small schools such as Ysgol Talwrn are a vexation to it.
- That the proposed scheme will lead to greater costs for the people of Anglesey and will place a burden of debt on the Island's children before they are old enough to have a bank account. It is a poor example to give where the Council is committing itself to long-term debt for a short-term solution in a context where interest rates are about to rise and there is uncertainty over Brexit. The scheme does not represent value for money.
- That no new evidence has been presented that justifies continuing with the proposal to close Ysgol Talwrn.
- That the report is perceived as one-sided being slanted in favour of Ysgol y Graig. There is a feeling that Ysgol Talwrn has been put under pressure from the Authority in its attempt to bring this matter to fruition.
- That there are currently only 5 empty places in Ysgol Talwrn with 3 new children having registered at the school in the last few weeks. The formula for predicting empty places is not appropriate for rural schools.
- That although the report makes a great deal of raising educational standards it does not provide any evidence as to how this will be done. The assessment of results over a three-year period shows that only one pupil from Ysgol Talwrn did not reach the attainment level compared to 15 from Ysgol y Graig. Ysgol Talwrn has the best results in KS1 and KS2 and Level 6+ data and national tests are stronger.
- That the Authority is expecting to use the capital receipt from the sale of Ysgol Talwrn as a contribution towards funding the new extension at Ysgol y Graig. Given that the condition of the school is not particularly good according to the Authority and given that the owner of the School House has access rights over school land and that the school might be subject to a lease, the value of Ysgol Talwrn on the open market could be limited.
- That no mention is made of Welsh Government funding to improve small rural schools.
- That the cost of installing a new mobile classroom at Ysgol Talwrn at £250k seems excessively high.
- That no full Business Plan has been presented in support of the proposal.
- That there are concerns about the future of the staff at Ysgol Talwrn.

- That there has been a school in Talwrn since 1879 with very little having been invested in it. In the same period there have been six schools in Llangefni and a seventh is in the offing with the proposed new extension to Ysgol y Graig.
- That 2 letters compiled by professional individuals submitted as part of the consultation process are not included in the documentation; these raise a number of valid issues and counter arguments and provide a basis for the recommendation made previously by the Scrutiny Committee that Ysgol Talwrn should not close. The Committee should see the contents of the letters.

In responding to some of points made the Assistant Chief Executive said that the matter of the FOI request had been raised in one of the drop-in sessions and that it had been confirmed to her by the Education Officer that a reply had been sent to the individual who had made the request. The Assistant Chief Executive also confirmed that the Authority had read and considered every letter and submission and has sought to convey their substance in a document that is readable and accessible. With regard to calculating empty places, she said the formula is prescribed by Welsh Government. The Authority recognises that there is movement of pupils in and out of schools and the figures for Ysgol Talwrn reflect the position at a specific time as at September, 2017. The Officer said that work is being done in relation to confirming land ownership matters and that with regard to teaching staff there is a process to be followed in circumstances of school closure and the Authority is also subject to the restrictions of the Staffing Regulations. The estimated cost of a new mobile classroom has been assessed and provided by a professional valuer. It is recognised that whilst building new schools involves significant capital investment, the reduction in ongoing revenue costs is also an important factor.

In relation to the reference made during the course of the representations on behalf of Ysgol Talwrn to two specific letters presented as part of the consultation process, the Chief Executive confirmed that he had read both letters and that he was grateful to the authors for taking the time to respond in detail. Whilst the report mentions the letters it does not reproduce them in full. The Chief Executive referred to one of the letters that concentrated on funding issues and noted that although it makes some valid contributions which are referred to in the report, it also contains contributions which do not fully take into account the school funding formula and therefore does not convey a complete picture e.g. it is stated that schools are funded on the basis of pupil numbers alone – this is not true. Schools are funded also on the basis of size and condition, the number of pupils in receipt of Free School Meals and the grants received. Additionally, school budgets are set based on the number of pupils at a school in the previous September and this then becomes the fixed budget for the year – the letter does not always take sufficient account of factors such as these.

The Head of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer said that the letter referred to is based on the author's understanding of how schools are funded but reflects incomplete knowledge especially in relation to the revenue and capital elements of the school funding process which affects the analysis which the author has made. The Officer said that he was happy to discuss the matter with the individual and to provide an explanation thereon.

At the request of the Chair who sought clarification of the treatment of correspondence received as part of the consultation process and whether the Committee should have sight of it, the Head of Function (Council Business)/ Monitoring Officer advised that the legal obligation is for the Officers who produce the report to the Scrutiny Committee and then to the Executive to have considered all the consultation responses whatever the format and to have given them due consideration within the report. There is no legal constitutional requirement to publish

all the letters received for the Scrutiny Committee or the Executive. Should the Scrutiny Committee so request or if the public speaker (Mr Islwyn Humphreys) wishes to submit the letters in question to the Committee and the authors of the letters are agreeable to it, then there is no reason why the Committee should not see them. The Officer said that unless the consultation process was conducted on the basis that documentation will be published - and in the case of the school modernisation process it was not (unlike the Planning consultation process) she advised that the Committee should not receive the letters in open session not having had the explicit consent of the authors to do so.

The Committee was of the view that Members should with the authors' consent, have access to the letters and that this should happen before the 16th July meeting of the Executive at which this matter is due to be considered. The Chair suggested that it might be helpful in future if individuals were to indicate when responding to a consultation by letter that they are happy for the correspondence to be published.

Councillors Nicola Roberts and Dylan Rees both spoke as Local Members.

Councillor Nicola Roberts acknowledged that this was a very difficult situation. She said that she had concerns regarding the proposed scheme and had questioned from the outset whether this is the best solution for improving the current position. Notwithstanding a shortage of places at Ysgol y Graig being a problem almost from the start she was unsure as to how the proposed two block solution would work in practice especially in terms of integrating pupils and facilities. Also, although the traffic situation immediately around Ysgol y Graig has improved, helped in part by the school's engaging an officer to manage traffic in and out of the school entrance, the wider situation in and around nearby streets and housing estates remains problematic. Councillor Nicola Roberts referred to Ysgol Talwrn as a community school in the true sense of the word, the school being the focal point for community activities which is a characteristic she thought was sometimes missing from Ysgol y Graig. The delivery of the education provision at the two schools is also different and although mixed age classes at Ysgol Talwrn can prove a challenge at times, she still believed the school's children are well served by the education they receive at the school. Ysgol Talwrn has improved over recent years and the improvement is due to the concerted efforts of the Head Teacher, staff, parents and community. Councillor Roberts said that the threat of closure that has hung over Ysgol Talwrn for many years is unfair and that not merging the two schools when Ysgol y Graig was built so that this area's pupils could start in a new school together and at the same time was a missed opportunity. She feared it would be difficult for some pupils to adjust from school life at Ysgol Talwrn to the new provision at Ysgol y Graig, and should the scheme be approved, some time should be set aside to specifically help the children adapt. It is the children that will have to deal with the change and she hoped that the main driver in this instance is not money but the benefit and welfare of those children. The Local Member also requested that following the meeting, the Head Teachers of the two school be informed of the Committee's decision.

The Assistant Chief Executive said that integrating the two blocks is a matter for the school and the school's Leadership Team; the two-block arrangement is not new and works well in other areas e.g. primary school children on a secondary school campus. There will be times when it is appropriate for the children occupying the two blocks to come together and at other times it will be appropriate that they are apart. The Officer said that subject to the scheme being approved there are a number of associated elements that will have to be addressed in consultation with stakeholders e.g. staff and visitor parking, traffic management etc. and these will be subject to an impact assessment. The location of the pre-school Flying Start provision will also have to be considered in the context of what is best for the area in terms of place planning. The Officer confirmed that funding is a factor in the school modernisation programme based on the fact that the status quo is not sustainable not least

because of the notable variation in spend per head between small and large primary schools meaning an unequal distribution of funding across schools in the primary sector. The modernisation programme is also happening in a context of reducing council funding and enforced budget cuts; the Authority is seeking to ensure the Island has a quality primary education provision that is sustainable over the next decade and beyond whilst at the same making the best and efficient use of the resources that are available.

In response to a question by the Chair whether informing Head Teachers of the outcome of meetings when school modernisation proposals are considered should become practice, the Head of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer advised that the matter should be considered on a case by case basis. The Committee agreed that the two Head Teachers should be informed of the outcome of the meeting in this instance.

Councillor Dylan Rees also speaking as a Local Member said that while he supported the Schools' Modernisation Programme he had an issue with the solution proposed for the Llangefni area. He said that it is acknowledged that one of the main drivers of the programme is to reduce the number of empty places in the primary sector and the costs that go with them. However, the issue of empty places does not apply in the Llangefni area as has been shown by the testimony provided; the problem in Llangefni and the main driver for the proposals put forward is the lack of school places at Ysgol y Graig with Ysgol Talwrn being drawn into the solution. Councillor Dylan Rees referred to the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 as a factor that has not been mentioned but which is significant in requiring Councils to think about the long-term impact of their decisions. One of the seven well-being goals of the Act refers to "a Wales of cohesive communities." The Council jointly with Gwynedd Council has produced a Well-being Plan which embraces the seven well-being goals and which has as its first aim the need to maintain a healthy community spirit. A multitude of the consultation responses for Ysgol Talwrn emphasise that closing the school will kill the community; Councillor Rees said that he was very uncomfortable with the impact which closing the school might have on the community of Talwrn and that the Council should it go down this route, is not complying with the requirements of the Act. Additionally, it was not clear to him that the Council has plans to mitigate the impact on the community in the event of the school's closure.

The Assistant Chief Executive said that the Impact Assessment carried out addresses Section 2 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act in relation to healthy, prosperous, resilient, cohesive and more equal communities. The Assessment also describes patterns where after a school closure, communities which are at a distance from the nearest school have succeeded in becoming stronger and have flourished. Essentially, communities are expected to become more self-supporting and more resilient which is in keeping with the expectations of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Additionally, Ysgol y Graig should also be considered a community school in the sense that it would be expected to serve the wider community of which Talwrn is a part.

The Chair referred to an e-mail sent by Mr Huw Redvers Jones, Chair of the Governing Body of Ysgol y Graig in which he confirms that he is satisfied with the consultation process and that he does not wish to add to the responses set out in the consultation response report.

The Committee considered the information presented and the views expressed and it made the following points –

- There are concerns over the effects which closing Ysgol Talwrn might have on the community and community life which have been well articulated. The Committee also noted that the Authority acknowledges that this can be a challenge.
- That surplus places is not an immediate issue at Ysgol Talwrn at present.

- Insufficient capacity and a squeeze on funding are challenges at Ysgol y Graig which are having an impact on the school.
- The current pattern of funding in the area in which the expenditure per pupil for Ysgol y Graig is £3,395 compared to £4,447 for Ysgol Talwrn is unequal. The Committee recognised that this can give rise to feelings of unfairness with the perception being that small schools are receiving a disproportionate share of the funding.
- It was also noted that other suggestions were made in the consultation process in relation to dealing with Ysgol Talwrn but that these were not considered practical because of the pupil numbers involved. The Committee sought clarification of what is considered the optimum number of pupils for a viable primary school on Anglesey.

The Assistant Chief Executive said that a school of 150 pupils is considered by Welsh Government to be a small school. However, it is possible to have a school of 120 pupils with 4 classrooms. The Officer said that in referring to viability she was also referring to maintenance backlog costs.

- That one of the main drivers of the School Modernisation Programme is raising education standards. The Committee sought clarification of how the proposed scheme would achieve this objective in this area of Llangefni and the support processes that would be put in place as part of it.

The Assistant Chief Executive said that school standards are driven by leadership and management capacity. In a larger school, there is greater opportunity for non-contact time for the Head Teacher and the school's Management team enabling them to give due attention to leadership issues. Also, the work which GwE undertakes alongside the Authority in relation to improving education standards means that the service would only have to work with one school in the area instead of two, leading to better focus.

- The Committee sought clarification of the capacity of the new extended Ysgol y Graig as proposed particularly in light of the new developments in the area.

The Assistant Chief Executive said that in formulating its school modernisation proposals the Authority has to have regard to approved housing developments in an area as well as other planned developments in future and is only permitted to plan for 10% additional capacity. The Officer confirmed that the Authority has considered both approved and planned developments in this area of Llangefni. She said that Ysgol y Graig with the new extension could accommodate 400+ pupils.

- The future of the teaching staff at Ysgol Talwrn is a concern in the event that the school is closed. The Committee sought assurance that there is a process for addressing this matter.

The Assistant Chief Executive said that the Statutory Consultation Document sets out at section 7 the process to be followed with regard to staffing matters both in relation to re-deployment and redundancy.

The Chief Executive made the following points –

- That the aim of the Authority is to ensure that the primary education provision in Anglesey is the best it can be. That is not the situation at present.
- That the education system needs to be both effective and efficient if it is to succeed in future. It is neither at present.

- That small and large schools are capable of being successful; the two schools under consideration – one large and one small are both currently doing relatively well. However, from experience, smaller schools find it more difficult to deal with setbacks and are less resilient.
- That the performance of both schools is good thereby providing a sound foundation for a merged school were that to be approved.
- That the proposals will not lead to the creation of a huge school. Ysgol y Graig is large by Anglesey standards but not in comparison with primary schools in other parts of Wales. Adding 40 places to Ysgol y Graig does not create a huge school.
- That it has been said that the Authority has ignored individual voices especially in the community of Talwrn. Parents of pupils at Ysgol y Graig if they were making representations at the meeting could make the same case for themselves. The Authority has listened carefully to representations and has read all the correspondence submitted the substance of which it has then sought to reproduce in the report on the consultation. In relation to the two specific letters mentioned in the course of the representations, the contents of one has been referred to while the contents of the other have been addressed in the report.
- That he was disappointed that the report is perceived as one sided. The Authority has sought to convey a balanced assessment of the position in relation to the two schools.
- That 45% (19) of the pupils at Ysgol Talwrn are from outside the catchment area. This does not represent an efficient use of resources and puts the school at greater risk of surplus places in future.
- That concerns have been raised about the debt which the Authority would be taking on in implementing the proposed scheme. In 2013, the Authority was criticised by Estyn for not being ambitious enough in its Twenty-First Century Schools programme. This is the only way in which the Authority can access sufficient funding to renew its schools and it is an opportunity it cannot forego.
- That the use of the Welsh language is a strength in both schools.
- That although mitigating the effects of school closure on a community is a challenge, it need not lead to the demise of a community. There are communities on Anglesey which have experienced the loss of their schools but which have continued to thrive regardless by becoming self-sustaining and making use of the former school building.
- That a range of other options have been considered. To close a school is not a recommendation that is made without due consideration or reason. However, having considered alternative options, it is the Officers' opinion that the scheme proposed is the most appropriate for this area.

*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 after a short interval.***

Having noted the information presented and the representations made at the meeting, the Committee considered its proposals.

It was proposed and seconded that the recommendations of the Officer's report be accepted, namely that the capacity of Ysgol y Graig be increased to accommodate pupils from Ysgol Talwrn, and Ysgol Talwrn be closed. This would be done by using the existing building for KS2 (i.e. years 3 to 6 and adapting it; building a new "Block" for the Foundation Phase, namely Nursery, Reception, Years 1 and 2 and considering relocating the Flying Start provision within the Ysgol y Graig campus.

Councillor Lewis Davies proposed an amendment which was seconded, to the effect that the Committee recommends that the Executive defers its decision on the modernisation of the

primary education in the Llangefni area (Y Graig and Talwrn) until the revised Schools Organisation Code is implemented.

In the ensuing vote, 2 voted in favour of the amendment and 7 against.

The Chair declared that the amendment had fallen.

Councillor Lewis Davies put forward a second amendment which was seconded, namely that the Committee recommends to the Executive that Ysgol Talwrn remains open because of the recurrent risk of overfilling at Ysgol y Graig and also because of the potential increase in population on the back of the building of 600 houses which is in the offing in Llangefni as evidenced by the Joint Local Development Plan.

In the ensuing vote 5 voted in favour of the amendment and 4 voted against.

The Chair declared that the amendment was carried and now became the substantive motion on which the Committee would need to vote.

The Chief Executive said that he was unclear as to the basis for saying that Ysgol y Graig is at risk of overfilling and he sought clarification thereof.

At the request of the Chair, the Head of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer advised that although a member of the Committee may advance a recommendation without evidence it is recommended practice that the justification for the recommendation is recorded in the minutes. She advised therefore that the reasons for the recommendation be clarified and the evidence shown.

Councillor Lewis Davies said that his reasoning was that the Joint Local Development Plan shows that 600 more houses are on the way in the area. Also, experience has shown that Ysgol y Graig was built without having sufficient capacity and has become overfull. Added to this is the arrival of Wylfa Newydd which is likely to bring with it an influx of people during construction and thereafter, many of whom might choose to live in Llangefni because of its convenience and proximity to the A55, and for whom housing provision will have to be made.

The Head of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer advised further that the reasons given are sufficient for the purpose of the minutes but that the Executive will need to examine the justification on Officer advice when it considers the recommendation.

The Assistant Chief Executive said that Officers have assessed the effect of new houses in the Llangefni area and that those details were contained in a previous report to this Committee. A number of the projected 600 houses have already been built and in any case, they relate to another primary school in another part of Llangefni.

The Committee then proceeded to vote on the substantive motion i.e. Councillor Lewis Davies's second amendment as justified by him. In the vote that followed, 4 voted in favour and 5 voted against.

The Chair declared that the motion had fallen.

The Committee then took a vote on the primary motion i.e. that the recommendations of the Officer's report be accepted. In the subsequent vote, 4 voted in favour and 4 voted against with one abstention. The Chair used his casting vote against the motion.

**Having considered all the information presented both verbally and in writing, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee Resolved -**

- **Not to accept the recommendations of the Officer's report.**



- To recommend as follows with regard to the reporting process in future –
  - That any issues regarding land ownership be clarified in advance.
  - That more detailed information be provided in relation to school transport and parking issues.
  - That where public speakers making representations to the Committee on behalf of a school refer to specific correspondence submitted as part of the consultation process, the correspondence will be made available to the Committee providing the authors give their consent.

**ADDITIONAL ACTION:** That following the meeting, the Head Teachers of Ysgol y Graig and Ysgol Talwrn be informed of the outcome of the Committee's deliberations.

**Councillor Aled M. Jones**  
**Chair**

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