

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the extraordinary virtual meeting held on 10 December, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Aled Morris Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dylan Rees (Vice-Chair)

Councillors John Griffith, Richard Griffiths, Bryan Owen, Alun Roberts,
Nicola Roberts.

Co-opted Members: Mrs Anest Frazer (The Church in Wales), Mr Dyfed
Wyn Jones (Parent-Governor – Primary Schools Sector), Mr Keith
Roberts (The Catholic Church)

Portfolio Members

Councillor Llinos Medi Huws (Leader and Portfolio Member for Social
Services)
Councillor R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries,
Culture and Youth)
Councillor Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance)
Councillor R.G. Parry, OBE, FRAGS (Portfolio Member for Highways,
Property and Waste) *(a Local Member in respect of item 2 on the
agenda)*
Councillor Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Major Projects and
Economic Development)
Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Corporate
Business)
Councillor Richard Dew (Portfolio Member for Planning and Public
Protection)
Councillor Alun Mummery (Portfolio Member for Housing and
Supporting Communities)

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Education, Skills and Young People
Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer
Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer
Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation
Head of Highways, Property and Waste
Head of Democratic Services
Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Richard Owain Jones and J A Roberts, Llio Johnson (Parent
Governor – Secondary Schools Sector)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Kenneth Hughes, Dafydd Roberts, Mr Robat Idris Davies (on
behalf of Ysgol Talwrn and community), Ms Bethan Roberts (Wales
Audit), Interim Director of Social Services, Communications Officer (GJ)

The Chair welcomed all those present to this virtual meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and extended a particular welcome to Mr Robat Idris Davies who was present to make representations on behalf of the parents of pupils at Ysgol Talwrn and also the wider community of Ysgol Talwrn. Members and Officers were asked to introduce themselves and the Chair set out the process he intended to follow with regard to the business under item 2 on the agenda and he explained that the recommendation made by the Scrutiny Committee at today's meeting would be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 17 December, 2020.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were made as follows –

Councillor Nicola Roberts declared a personal but not prejudicial interest with regard to item 2 on the agenda as a member of the governing bodies of Ysgol Y Graig and Ysgol Talwrn.

Mr Marc Jones, Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in item 2 on the agenda on the basis of his father in law being Chair of the Governing Body of Ysgol Talwrn.

2 THE COUNCIL'S SCHOOLS' MODERNISATION PROGRAMME – LLANGFNI AREA: YSGOL TALWRN AND YSGOL Y GRAIG

The report of the Director of Education, Skills and Young People with regard to the schools' modernisation programme in relation to the Llangefni area was presented for the Committee's consideration. The report set out the responses to the statutory consultation held in February/March 2020 on Ysgol Talwrn and Ysgol Y Graig and sought the Committee's views on the recommendation that in light of all the consultation responses and impact assessments the most appropriate way forward is to proceed with the original proposal namely *to increase the capacity of Ysgol Y Graig to accommodate pupils from Ysgol Talwrn, close Ysgol Talwrn and review the catchment areas of Ysgol Y Graig and Ysgol Talwrn.*

The Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth introduced the report with general remarks about the Schools' Modernisation Programme which in this case involves weighing and assessing the future of Ysgol Talwrn and Ysgol Y Graig and the consequent impact on all the stakeholders, and in particular the children at the two schools. He emphasised that the interests of the children should be uppermost in all participants' considerations. Modernising schools can be a contentious issue and is among the most challenging aspects of the Council's work; parents' concerns on this matter are understandable and appreciated. The schools modernisation programme sets the groundwork for the future of schools over the next 50 years at a time when they are under pressure from budgetary cuts, burdensome maintenance costs and meeting the requirements of the New Curriculum to which can now be added the impact of Covid. The Council is duty bound to consider how the school system can be made more effective in the sense of creating the conditions under which teachers and pupils can flourish and also how it can be made more efficient in terms of making the best use of resources and ensuring that all schools receive their fair share of the budget. The Portfolio Member referred to the Authority's strategies which are linked to the Schools' Modernisation Programme as set out in section 2 of the introductory report. He reported that between 6 February and 20 March, 2020 Council officials undertook a statutory consultation on the

future of the two schools in question. Officials were authorised to carry out the consultation after the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and the Executive considered the proposal paper in January, 2020. The consultation closed on the last day of school before the first lockdown period as a result of the global pandemic that transformed education provision for a time. He highlighted that the Council had received a letter from the School Organisation and Admissions Branch of Welsh Government confirming that Welsh Government Ministers were giving the Council an extension until March, 2021 to publish any proposal. The Council has operated in accordance with the Schools Organisation Code 2018 throughout the pandemic period.

The key drivers for change as set out in the Schools Modernisation Strategy 2018 include improving educational standards; improving leadership and management; ensuring that school buildings are fit for purpose; reducing the number of surplus places; reducing the overall cost of education and the variation in cost per pupil; maintaining and improving Welsh-medium provision and increasing the community use of school buildings. In addition, it is considered that the proposal presented would secure sufficient school places for the future.

The Portfolio Member for Education acknowledged the role of elected members within the process who, as well being accountable to their individual communities have as the Council's policy makers, a number of strategic and corporate management responsibilities including governing their areas well and participating in the work of managing and governing the Council which also involves scrutiny.

The Portfolio Member concluded his introduction by thanking all those who had contributed to the process.

The Director of Education, Skills and Young People in guiding the Committee through the written report confirmed the original proposal namely increasing the capacity of Ysgol Y Graig to accommodate pupils from Ysgol Talwrn, closing Ysgol Talwrn and reviewing the catchment areas of Ysgol Talwrn and Ysgol Y Graig as the recommended option adding that a number of other alternative options had also been considered as part of the consultation process an analysis of which is provided at section 6 of the report. The Council received 57 responses from the smart survey undertaken and 10 responses in the form of letters and e-mails with both individuals and community organisations responding to the consultation (summary provided at section 5 of the report). Other educational models were put forward and were assessed by officers against the criteria and drivers of the current Schools Modernisation Strategy (section 6.4 of the report refers). After considering all the alternatives and following a comprehensive analysis of their strengths and weaknesses against the drivers of the Schools' Modernisation Strategy, the original proposal is considered the most appropriate way forward because it meets both the key challenges faced by Ysgol Talwrn and Ysgol Y Graig and satisfies the key drivers for change set out in the Strategy in the following way –

- Standards across all schools must be at least good or excellent and would be expected to be in the green category needing the lowest level of support. The new expanded school would be in a position to maintain the Estyn grade and retain the green categorisation in the medium to long-term.
- Leadership and management must be good or better in all schools. Head teachers need sufficient non-contact time to balance leadership and management challenges with teaching commitments. At the new expanded Ysgol Y Graig it is envisaged that the Head teacher would have no teaching commitment. It would be possible to build and further develop a senior management team, which could improve leadership and management.
- The school building needs to provide an inspiring learning environment that will encourage all pupils to achieve their potential across all areas of learning and must comply with the Equality Act 2010 in term of accessibility. A new 21st century low

maintenance building will be designed to BREEM specifications and will be fully compliant with the Equality Act, 2010. The current and projected maintenance costs of both schools of £408,500 would be written off.

- Sufficient school places need to be available in the area to meet current demand, future forecast numbers as well as reduce surplus places. Pupil movement from within and outside the catchment area needs to be reduced. The proposal addresses the need to provide sufficient places at Ysgol y Graig as well as enabling pupils from Ysgol Talwrn to be taught in classes where the age range is smaller. Fewer pupils will move between catchment areas.
- Any revised school provision in the area needs to be cost efficient and needs also to reduce the variation in cost per pupil across individual schools. The projected cost per pupil at the new expanded school at £3,436 (based on the 2019/20 budget) would eliminate the variation in cost per pupil between Ysgol Talwrn (£4,553) and Ysgol Y Graig (£3,429) and is lower than the average for Anglesey primary schools (£3,988). The proposal incurs an additional revenue cost of approximately £33k per annum, (details provided in section 7) but eliminates current and projected maintenance costs of £408,500 which it would cost the Council £32,000 per annum to fund through an unsupported loan over a 20 year period. It can therefore be concluded that the proposal is close to cost neutral.
- At the very least, the existing good Welsh medium provision would be maintained.
- The wider community would continue to benefit from the use of the newly expanded school building.

Impact assessments in relation to the Equality Act, Language, Community and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 were conducted and are included as one composite Impact Assessment under Appendix 1 to the consultation report. A total of 40 respondents (70% of them online) commented on the impact assessment a breakdown of which is given at section 6 of the introductory report. The number of responses to the impact assessment question provides 95% certainty that the response is correct and matches the feelings of the rest of the consultation respondents. A 95% confidence level means that if the survey was conducted 100 times, the same results would be provided 95% of the time. The Impact Assessment remains a live document and has been updated to include stakeholder comments received during the statutory consultation period; it will continue to be regularly updated throughout the development period so that should another risk/issue arise, the Council in partnership with the local community can put in place mitigation measures to overcome the risk or issue that arises. This arrangement will operate throughout the development phase and will be accountable to the Corporate Programme Board for Services Transformation.

The cost of building the proposed new provision is estimated at approximately £6m. Subject to approval, it will be funded by a Welsh Government contribution of 65% through the 21st Century School Band B programme and a contribution of 35% by the Isle of Anglesey County Council.

In considering the case for change put forward by the Portfolio Member for Education and the Director of Education, Skills and Young People, the Committee raised the following points –

- In light of the consultation taking place just before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the beginning of the first lockdown, whether the number of consultation responses was higher or lower than in the previous consultations held since 2017. The Committee was advised that 57 responses were received with regard to the latest consultation compared with 50 responses to the consultation conducted in 2018 and 29 responses to the consultation conducted in 2019.
- That that it would have been useful had there been a separation of the current and projected maintenance costs the Chair being of the view that the two figures can be

differentiated on the basis that current maintenance costs reflect work that is known and quantifiable whilst projected maintenance costs are estimates of possible future work. The Committee was advised that the figure of £408k is the projected cost of work required on the two schools if the Council were to proceed to maintain both schools in the future. It was confirmed that the current Ysgol Y Graig school building was opened in 2009.

- Should the proposal be approved, whether in the event of a further post-Christmas lockdown, the next stage of the process would be paused? The Committee was advised that at the time of the first lockdown in March, 2020 when schools were closed, Welsh Government issued additional guidance for local authorities going through the schools organisation process which introduced minor changes in the expectations with regard to consultation. As there was nothing in the additional guidance (which was effective up until 25 July, 2020) that prohibits authorities from proceeding with the process, the Authority would be able to move forward with the proposal subject to its approval and subject also to any new guidance which Welsh Government might issue.
- Notwithstanding that the Authority may be permitted to proceed, whether in light of the restrictions and limitations imposed by the pandemic, the Authority is right to do so and whether it can be sure that stakeholders will respond in the event of another lockdown it being noted from comments which a Local Member said that he had received that parents are unhappy that the Authority is rushing ahead with the modernisation programme in the midst of a pandemic. The Committee was advised that stakeholders need to know definitively where they stand on the matter of schools organisation and that Audit Wales in its assessment of the Authority's response to the Covid-19 crisis and its approach to recovery dated 4 November, 2020 states "the Council may be able to identify opportunities to continue to deliver prioritised elements of the transformation programme and formalise recovery plans, which will contribute to the resilience of the Council's services." As the likely duration of the pandemic is not known, the Authority, in the interests of ensuring the resilience of its services into the future has to move forward albeit in different ways and by adopting different forms of engagement. In addition, the time limitations with regard to the Welsh Government 21st Century School Band B programme funding is an important factor in the scheduling of the proposal and associated process.
- The Committee sought clarity on the latest figure for empty places at Ysgol Talwrn it being noted that reducing surplus places is one of the key drivers of the schools modernisation programme. The Committee also sought clarification with regard to the number of pupils that attend Ysgol Talwrn from outside the school's catchment as well as the number of children who reside in Talwrn who attend schools elsewhere. The Committee was advised that based on the most current data held by the schools SIMS information management system, the number of pupils at Ysgol Talwrn has reduced since the consultation and that at the beginning of December it stood at 36 pupils meaning that the number of surplus places at the school has increased to 13 or 27%. Further, 33% of the pupils at Ysgol Talwrn are from the village of Talwrn, 13% of the pupils at the school are from the Ysgol Goronwy Owen catchment, 37% of pupils at the school are from the Ysgol Y Graig catchment and 17% of pupils are from other catchment areas including Henblas, Bodffordd, Pentraeth, Llanfairpwll and Corn Hir.
- Whether any mitigating measures have been developed to reduce the potential impact on the Welsh language of transferring pupils from Ysgol Talwrn to Ysgol Y Graig where the use of Welsh socially and informally outside the classroom may not be as prevalent. The Committee was advised that the Welsh language is a key consideration across all the Authority's schools and that 72% of pupils at Ysgol y Graig speak Welsh at home with the figure for Ysgol Talwrn being 40%. Should the proposal be approved, safeguarding and promoting the Welsh language and bilingual education will be a priority of the new school at it is in all the Authority's schools and

the proposed new extended school will be a Welsh medium community school. The Authority has a number of plans for language centres across the Island and is working to develop resilience within each school in terms of developing the Welsh language.

- Whether in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Island's economy and its ongoing implications for local government funding specifically for education budgets, the proposal for a new extended school is affordable and reasonable. The Committee was advised that whereas a number of the schemes under the Schools' Modernisation Programme have generated ongoing revenue savings the priority for schemes in the Llangefni area has been the creation of additional capacity, insufficient capacity having been identified as a pressure point in the area that needs to be addressed. Although the borrowing costs to implement the proposal under consideration exceed the expected revenue savings, not proceeding at this time would risk losing the 65% grant funding offer by Welsh Government meaning that any future capital investment costs linked to the two schools would have to be borne by the Council in full. A further risk is that given the age of the school building, other unforeseen and therefore unbudgeted for costs may emerge in future were Ysgol Talwrn to remain open. The proposal eliminates this risk.
- Having regard to concerns voiced by parents about pupils from Ysgol Talwrn potentially struggling to settle in a school the size of the proposed extended Ysgol Y Graig and the move being disruptive, what plans does the Authority have to assure parents and their children that they have a happy and brilliant future at Ysgol Y Graig? The Committee was advised that although the Authority recognises that the change may be difficult for some pupils especially from Ysgol Talwrn, every effort would be made to ensure the transfer is as seamless as possible and to extend the warmest welcome to pupils from Ysgol Talwrn. Whilst joint activities have been held between schools involved in previous mergers to enable pupils to get to know each other Covid-19 related restrictions makes this more challenging. However, the Authority will use the experience gained from Year 6 pupils transitioning to Year 7 where virtual activities in the form of virtual tours, videos and podcasts have been arranged, in order to draw up an appropriate plan. The Committee was further advised that as the proposed extended Ysgol y Graig would not be ready until the summer of 2023, the change will not be immediate meaning that hopefully circumstances will have changed by that time and the challenges posed by the pandemic will have receded.

Mr Robat Idris Davies, was given the opportunity to present observations on the proposal paper from the perspective of Ysgol Talwrn and the community. The Committee noted that Mr Davies was the only person to request to speak at the meeting under the Council's Protocol for public speaking at virtual Scrutiny Committee meetings.

Mr Davies in saying that it was a privilege to have been asked to speak on behalf of the community raised the following concerns:

- That it was sad that he had to be present at the meeting at all to defend Ysgol Talwrn from closure this being the third consultation in 3 years with a number of attempts to close the school having been made in the preceding years as well. This is unfair and dispiriting and must surely be a factor in the decision by parents to take their children to schools outside the catchment area, the continuing uncertainty being a worry to them.
- That at a time when communities are under siege for a number of reasons, the loss of a school is a severe blow; the impact may not be apparent immediately but over time the heart of the community is lost and its young people move out elsewhere. A school is more than a building in which to formally teach children; a village is needed to nurture a child.
- That the consultation response paper is a catalogue which rejects every argument for keeping Ysgol Talwrn open and is opposed to every reasoned argument for

alternative solutions to the real problem of organising a good education provision for the children in the Llangefni area. This is not a quarrel between Talwrn and Llangefni.

- That a week only has been afforded to read and digest such a lengthy document. Is it fair to expect the Committee to come to such a far-reaching decision if it has not had time to consider the paper fully and reasonably? Is it also reasonable to be prioritising this matter in the middle of a pandemic when it has been difficult for parents to meet to have a reasoned discussion? Shouldn't the matter be postponed? Given that the issue has been under consideration for such a long time, it cannot be that urgent apart from reasons of securing Welsh Government funding.
- That it appears that the Council's response to the consultation is this – the majority of people disagree with our proposal but we will carry on with it regardless; as long as we follow the process correctly, we'll close the school. The viewpoints in the consultation response report are those of Council Officers – they do not become the Council's position until or if the paper is adopted by the Executive and the distinction is important.
- That the School Organisation Code requires that the work be undertaken with an open mind. However, as far as he was aware, after last year's scheme was withdrawn the Council's Officers have not approached the two schools to try to reach a consensus on the way forward. The insistence on not accepting any opposing views is obvious in the report and whilst it is not unusual for the parents of pupils at Ysgol Talwrn to object to its closure, the depth of opposition by parents, staff, governors and community groups should be a cause for reflection. Mr Davies offered an example of what he saw as the report's bias by reference to section 5.2.1 of the document where the comment of one parent from Ysgol Talwrn who agrees with the proposal is quoted but none of the comments of the 91% of respondents who disagree.
- That whilst it is recognised that every reasonable step should be taken to increase capacity in Llangefni there is no need to close Ysgol Talwrn in order to do so. Educational standards at the school are good and the building although old, is not in danger of collapse. The comment that standards at the school cannot be guaranteed in future could be applied to any school; the Council's arguments with regard to cost per pupil, non-contact time for the head teacher and multi-age classrooms are all generic statements that could be used to close dozens of rural schools in Wales and are not specific to Ysgol Talwrn. It is not the Welsh Government's policy to close rural schools and while it is accepted that mathematically the cost per head of providing services in a rural area is higher than that for more populated urban areas, fewer services are provided in rural areas making the total expenditure per head lower in rural areas.
- That the statements in relation to language and community impacts are felt to be deficient and have not been updated to reflect that radical changes wrought by the pandemic. It is feared the effects of the school's closure will be destructive to the Welsh speaking community - families with children are less likely to buy houses in a community that has no school leading to an older demographic and a community in which the number of second homes is likely to rise. For incomers, the presence of a school strengthens the connection with the Welsh language and culture and consequently improves a community's chances of survival.
- That the issues raised by the consultation could be used to form a different conclusion and a reasonable way forward would be to apply for 21st Century Schools funding to extend and improve Ysgol Y Graig which stakeholders at Ysgol Talwrn agree is necessary and at the same time, to include a moderate sum for structural improvements at Ysgol Talwrn following which consideration can then be given to different educational models for all the schools in the Llangefni area. Done correctly, this could expand the educational and social horizons of all the pupils.

The Chief Executive acknowledged the representations made by Mr Davies and in response she re-emphasised that the process is not being rushed through and that answers are needed. With the variation in cost per pupils having reached a high point, it is especially important to ensure fairness and consistency across all communities. Whilst federating Ysgol Talwrn with another school was considered, it was found on analysis to only partially meet the challenges faced by the school. It is acknowledged that standards are currently good at Ysgol Talwrn but that they can also change rapidly in any school and there is a risk that this performance might be difficult to maintain in the long-term. Although communities have their own identities, Ysgol Talwrn and Ysgol y Graig are close enough to be part of the same extended community. Larger primary schools are also coming under increasing pressure meaning there is insufficient sustainability in the current education system. The 21st Century School Programme offers an unparalleled opportunity to transform schools for future generations. The Portfolio Member for Education said that further delay will not improve the situation and that consideration has to be given to the Island wide picture. Funding and resource considerations are among a number of reasons for wanting to proceed and, as it is impossible to meet the needs and preferences of all parents, generic factors do play a part in deliberations. However, ensuring general fairness across Island is a primary objective.

Councillors Nicola Roberts and Dylan Rees spoke in their capacity as Local Members as well as members of the Committee. Both acknowledged the high standard of education at Ysgol Talwrn which together with the nurturing ethos at the school make it a school of choice for many of the parents who enrol their children at the school. These considerations make the decision about the future of Ysgol Talwrn very difficult. Both members also recognised that it is the Authority's duty to ensure that all the Island's children are taught in the very best schools which are able to provide the latest and best educational resources but in doing so they sought assurance with regard to the following matters –

- That it is appropriate to be making such a significant decision in a pandemic situation. Covid-related restrictions have prevented the community of Talwrn from coming together to discuss and form a response to the proposal as a community and as a consequence they feel disenfranchised. The public perception is that the proposal is being introduced through the back door.
- That the proposal were it approved, really does address the lack of capacity in this part of Llangefni for the long-term. The area's schools and in particular Ysgol Talwrn and its community have endured uncertainty and the anxiety that goes with it for too long for this process to be repeated again.
- That the challenges in merging two schools in a pandemic situation can be overcome without detriment to the children involved.
- The reasons why the model now being proposed for the schools in the other part of Llangefni where Ysgol Bodffordd is to be retained and a new Ysgol Corn Hir built cannot also be applied to Ysgol Talwrn and Ysgol Y Graig.
- That due consideration has been given to approved and planned housing developments in the Llangefni area and their implications for school places have been factored into the Authority's plans.
- The potential impact of implementing the proposal on the community. The conclusion of the Impact Assessment that this would be neutral was challenged.
- The threat to community activities held locally at Talwrn from closing the school with specific reference to the Pensioners' Lunch Club which in being located in the school is an inter-generational activity; Cylch Meithrin Talwrn and the local Eisteddfod for which the school is the bedrock. Assurance was sought that the Authority will endeavour to provide support to enable the continuation of these community activities.

The Chief Executive referred to the higher number of responses to this consultation which indicates that the community has engaged more fully with the process. A further delay would put Welsh Government grant funding at risk and would also have implications for Ysgol Y Graig. She provided assurance that although the Authority is not able to provide financial support for community activities, it will as it does in all communities on the Island, use its best endeavours to promote such activities. The Portfolio Member for Education said that he did not believe a school to be a prerequisite for community activities and he gave examples of villages where such activities and in some cases, a local eisteddfod, have continued and flourished despite the absence of a school.

The Director of Education, Skills and Young People confirmed that if Covid-19 restrictions are still in effect, the Authority will use alternative virtual means to engage with and introduce pupils from Ysgol Talwrn to their new school and will support their familiarisation with the new arrangements. However, as it is not envisaged the change will happen overnight and that it will take time to complete the proposed extended Ysgol Y Graig in readiness to take pupils from Ysgol Talwrn the situation may be different at that time. The Officer confirmed the Authority has considered new housing developments in the area (section 5.4.8 of the report refers) and believes that the proposal put forward would provide sufficient places for the predicted peak number of pupils at the school in the next few years. Should the proposal be approved the Authority would discuss the possibilities with regard to maintaining the Cylch Meithrin. The Authority treats each school modernisation case individually and evaluates each case against a specific set of criteria e.g. repair and maintenance expenditure, building condition and location, transport costs, cost per pupil and budget allocation, before coming to a recommendation.

Councillor R.G. Parry, OBE, FRAGS, Executive Member and Local Member reiterated that the Authority is not rushing into a decision and that the future configuration of the schools in this part of Llangefni has been long in the consideration. He referred with surprise to the low number of pupils attending Ysgol Talwrn from the village itself (the Portfolio Member for Education having confirmed earlier in the meeting that from enquiries he had made some time ago the figure stood at 14) and requested in advance of the 17 December meeting of the Executive, a breakdown of the households from which those 14 pupils come i.e. whether they are all individual households or households with more than one child. He acknowledged that parent anxiety in anticipation of a change to their child's education arrangements is natural and understandable and referred to similar anxieties ahead of the previous mergers which have happened under the Schools' Modernisation Programme in Anglesey. The Head teachers of the Ysgol Cybi, Ysgol Rhyd y Llan and Ysgol Santes Dwynwen have confirmed that in their experience pupils have settled well with the new arrangements.

Mrs Anest Frazer, Co-opted Member and Church in Wales representative whilst agreeing that it was a difficult decision to make thought that her responsibility as a member of the Committee is to consider the needs of all the County's pupils and to ensure that they receive a provision that meets the requirements of the new curriculum and are provided with 21st century school resources. She acknowledged the importance of keeping communities and the Welsh language viable but felt that it was not a task that falls exclusively to schools but is everyone's responsibility. The Authority's duty is to make sure schools have the appropriate space and resources to enable pupils to achieve to the best of their ability.

Mr Dyfed Wyn Jones, Primary sector Parent Governor representative in recognising that the process must be difficult for Talwrn residents agreed that it is the Committee's place to consider the most appropriate steps to take in the context of providing children with the conditions that will allow them to develop and prosper educationally. He cited Ysgol

Llanfairpwll as a good example of a larger primary school which successfully sustains a Welsh school community which is also reflected on the school yard. Large primary schools are not necessarily negative and can be a vehicle for the Welsh language to prosper in term of both Welsh speakers and Welsh learners. Mr Jones further highlighted the necessity of progressing with the Schools Modernisation Programme in the interests of other communities on Anglesey which are awaiting their turn to benefit from the 21st Century Schools Programme.

Councillor Bryan Owen raised a number of concerns with regard to the proposal in relation to value for money highlighting that 10% of the proposed £2.1m (the Authority's 35% contribution) of borrowing which the Authority will undertake over 50 years to build the new extended school would be sufficient to bring Ysgol Talwrn up to standard; in relation to inconsistency in the treatment of areas highlighting that federation was deemed a suitable solution for schools in Llanbedrgoch, Moelfre and Benllech but not for schools in the Cefni area and in relation to the location of the proposed extension to Ysgol Y Graig on the opposite side of the main school building on what is part of the busy Llangefni orbital road meaning that children will have to cross the road to access the new extension. Councillor Owen in addition believed that closing Ysgol Talwrn will change the character of the community in the long term as properties are bought by incomers looking to purchase second homes in the area.

The Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager clarified that the aim of the work being undertaken in this part of Llangefni is to increase capacity to ensure there are sufficient places to meet current and future needs; housing provision in the area is expanding and the work undertaken with the Housing and Planning Services shows that the number of primary school age children will rise as consequence. Any capital investment in Ysgol Talwrn would have to be fully funded by the Authority as the main purpose of the 21st Century Schools Programme is to provide for school buildings for the next 50 to 60 years; for example a proposal to procure and fit a new mobile classroom at Ysgol Talwrn would not be in line with the objectives of the Programme. Officers have over the course of the past 18 months looked at potential sites for the Ysgol Y Graig extension; the preferred site is on the same side of the road as the main Ysgol Y Graig school building.

The Head of Highways, Waste and Property confirmed that the proposed location of the Ysgol y Graig extension lies to the left of the main road on the same side as the principal school building meaning that children will not have to cross the Llangefni link road to go from one building to the other. With regard to highway safety and associated considerations, he advised that the proposed new extension is subject both to Executive approval and planning process approval and as part of the latter a traffic impact assessment would be carried out and the scheme would be developed in consultation with officers from the Highways Service prior to the submission of the application. The proposed scheme would also provide an opportunity to resolve current parking issues at Ysgol Y Graig especially during school arrival and departure times. Although Ysgol Y Graig was designed as a green school with excellent walking and cycling routes to the school being provided, these are not fully utilised by parents taking their children to school. Whereas with Ysgol Y Graig the Authority followed Welsh Government guidance in terms of providing minimum parking provision to encourage walking and cycling, with the new development the Authority would seek to provide maximum parking provision in recognition of the fact that it is not practical for children from Talwrn to walk or cycle to Ysgol Y Graig. In addition, transport by bus will be provided free of charge to children from Talwrn transferring to Ysgol Y Graig. It should also be noted that since the opening of the new Llangefni link road in 2017, traffic flow past Ysgol Y Graig has reduced significantly.

Responding to the issue of federalisation, the Director of Education, Skills and Young People reiterated that the option was considered and appraised in the consultation document but was found not to meet the requirements nor to address the challenges in this case.

The Chair in conclusion briefly summarised the main issues arising from the discussion.

Councillor Bryan Owen proposed that Ysgol Talwrn be federated with Ysgol Y Graig or the new Ysgol Corn Hir.

There followed further discussion about the appropriateness of the proposal (given that Ysgol Corn Hir did not form part of the business of this meeting) and questions were put by Councillor Nicola Roberts regarding how the proposal would work in practice given the current pressures of a full time workload on the Head teachers of Ysgol Y Graig and Ysgol Corn Hir who would be asked to manage a larger entity and also given the opinion of Officers who are of the view that federalisation is unfeasible in this case. In response to a request by the Chair, the Director of Function (Council Business)/ Monitoring Officer provided procedural advice and confirmed that the proposal could be made and that further, any member of the Committee could seek clarifications of the proposer to better understand the proposal and the justification for it. Councillor Bryan Owen confirmed that in order to ensure the continuing viability of the community of Talwrn he proposed ***that Ysgol Talwrn be federated with Ysgol Y Graig or the new Ysgol Corn Hir***. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Aled Morris Jones.

Officers were asked to give their opinion on the proposal and confirmed that federalisation was not in their view the most appropriate solution in this instance.

In the ensuing vote, the proposal was defeated by 8 votes to 2.

Councillor John Griffith proposed, seconded by Councillor Richard Griffiths ***that the most appropriate way forward is to increase the capacity of Ysgol Y Graig to accommodate pupils from Ysgol Talwrn, close Ysgol Talwrn and review the catchment areas of Ysgol Y Graig and Ysgol Talwrn***. (i. e. the recommendation of the Officer's report).

In the ensuing vote, the proposal was carried by 8 votes to 2.

Having considered all the information presented and the representations made, the Committee RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive that it proceed with the original proposal as the most appropriate way forward, namely to increase the capacity of Ysgol y Graig to accommodate pupils from Ysgol Talwrn, close Ysgol Talwrn and review the catchment areas of Ysgol y Graig and Ysgol Talwrn.

Councillor Aled Morris Jones
Chair