

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 14th January 2014

Lead Member / Officer: Councillor Eryl Williams, Lead Member for Education

Report Author: Head of Customers and Education Support

Title: Proposed closure of Ysgol Llanbedr

1. What is this report about?

This report is to inform Cabinet members of the findings of the Formal Consultation that took place from the 11th of November 2013 to the 23rd of December 2013 regarding the following proposal;

Proposal to close Ysgol Llanbedr as of the 31st of August 2014 and to transfer existing pupils to Ysgol Borthyn, Ruthin subject to parental preference.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

A decision is required by Cabinet to approve the publication of a statutory notice to close Ysgol Llanbedr as of the 31st of August 2014.

3. What are the recommendations?

The recommendation is that Cabinet approve the publication of a statutory notice on the proposal to close Ysgol Llanbedr as of the 31st of August 2014 with existing pupils transferring to Ysgol Borthyn, Ruthin subject to parental preference.

4. Background to Proposal

4.1 In November 2012, Denbighshire County Council's Cabinet approved the commencement of the Ruthin Area Review encompassing 11 primary schools within the Ruthin area. The Informal Consultation was held between the 4th of February 2013 and the 22nd of March 2013.

4.2 On the 25th of June Cabinet approved 6 proposals (these can be found in Appendix A) as a result of the findings of the informal consultation. Following a period of consultation with the St. Asaph Church in Wales Diocesan Authority, Cabinet on the 29th of October, approved the commencement of the Formal Consultation relating to one of these proposals, namely the closure of Ysgol Llanbedr as of the 31st of August 2014.

5. Report Details- Ysgol Llanbedr

5.1 Denbighshire County Council has undertaken a period of Formal Consultation on the proposal to close Ysgol Llanbedr as of the 31st of August 2014 and transfer existing pupils to Ysgol Borthyn, Ruthin subject to parental preference. As the

proposal is to close a Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled School the proposal refers to Ysgol Borthyn, which has the same designation, as the alternative school.

5.2 The Formal Consultation began on the 11th of November 2013 and ended on the 23rd of December 2013. During the consultation period a number of meetings were held with stakeholders including parents, Governing Bodies, staff and children;

Consultation Meeting	Date
Ysgol Llanbedr Parents Meeting	19/11/2013
Ysgol Llanbedr Staff Meeting	25/11/2013
Ysgol Llanbedr Governing Body Meeting	02/12/2013
Ysgol Llanbedr School Council	N/A (permission refused)
Ysgol Borthyn Parents Meeting	20/11/2013
Ysgol Borthyn Staff Meeting	13/11/2013
Ysgol Borthyn Governing Body Meeting	20/11/2013
Ysgol Borthyn School Council	05/11/2013

5.3 A standard response form was issued to consultees in hardcopy which was attached to the formal consultation document. The standard response form was also provided electronically via 'Survey Monkey' in both English and Welsh. Details on how to respond to the Formal Consultation were published within the Formal Consultation documents, via Denbighshire County Councils website and in a press release.

5.4 In total 50 letters and emails were received during the Formal Consultation period. In addition 85 standard response forms were received (hardcopy and electronic) and a two file Formal Consultation was submitted by the school containing standard response forms (some had already been received by the authority) and 61 community questionnaires were also included within the submission.

Formal Consultation Findings

5.5 Below is a summary of the key themes that emerged during the Formal Consultation. The Formal Consultation Report, (see Appendix D) details these issues together with the response from Denbighshire County Council;

- **Ysgol Llanbedr provides an excellent level of education and is above the Denbighshire and Wales average for Key Stage 2 Level 4+ attainment. Provision in Ysgol Borthyn is not of the same standard; want the same or better standard of education.**
- **Pupils who transferred to Ysgol Borthyn would have to be taught in a mobile classroom; the site does not have the same grounds and facilities as Ysgol Llanbedr; the building is not fit for purpose; there is not sufficient capacity.**

- Previous issues around leadership and management at the school which resulted in a significant decrease in pupil numbers (2011-2012) has not been taken into account regarding the current pupil numbers; failure by the LEA.
- Numbers are growing at Ysgol Llanbedr and the school will be back to full capacity in a few years.
- Ysgol Llanbedr has been treated unfairly in the review process with other schools not being proposed with closure, even those with similar % of surplus places.
- Closure of Ysgol Llanbedr would limit parental choice; Ysgol Llanbedr provides and English Medium, Faith based education in a rural setting, no other school provides this.
- Faith education is being undermined by closure of Ysgol Llanbedr and proposals within the wider review.
- Other options, such as Federation, have not been considered for Ysgol Llanbedr but have been considered for other schools such as Ysgol Clocaenog and Ysgol Cyffylliog.
- The proposal is not generating large savings; document states £68,000

6. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The proposal supports the priority of “Improving performance in education and the quality of our school buildings” and has been highlighted as a work stream as follows;

“We will continue to review school provision across the County to ensure we provide the right number of school places, of the right type, in the right location.”

7. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The proposal will not have an effect on other services within the organisation.

The proposal will result in an initial revenue saving of £68,000 per annum, this £68,000 would be used for prudential borrowing. At the current prudential borrowing rate this £68,000 would generate approximately £884k based on the current borrowing rate. This would be allocated for future projects.

Based on all existing pupils transferring to Ysgol Borthyn in Ruthin the transport costs have been estimated at around £26,000 (for pupils eligible under the Denbighshire School Transport Policy). Cost of provision in Ysgol Llanbedr is £8,498 per pupil, this is the second highest rate per pupil within Denbighshire. The cost of provision in Ysgol Borthyn is £4,583 per pupil, this would be reduced if a number of

pupils transferred from Ysgol Llanbedr to Ysgol Borthyn should the Current Proposal be implemented

8. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

8.1 The EqIA undertaken in relation to the proposal highlights that Ysgol Llanbedr is a Voluntary Controlled school (Church in Wales) which provides a faith based primary education in the Medium of English. If the proposal were to progress this provision would cease in Llanbedr.

8.2 Ysgol Borthyn has been named as the alternative school in the proposal as the school also provides a faith based English Medium education within 3 miles of the village of Llanbedr.

8.3 The full EqIA can be found in Appendix C.

9. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

A full Formal Consultation has been carried out with all stakeholders and the findings of the Formal Consultation can be found in the main body of the report.

10. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The proposed closure will make savings on the schools' budget and reduce the costs per pupil. The savings will be retained within the schools' budget, but any increase in the school transport budget will have to be funded by the Council. This increase will have to be included in future budget considerations.

11. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There is a strong possibility that the proposal could result in adverse publicity for the Council and in adverse public comments.

To minimise this risk the Council will seek to ensure clear communication with all stakeholders.

12. Power to make the Decision

School Standards and Organisations (Wales) Act 2013
Modernising Education Policy Framework (approved by Cabinet January 2009)