

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 2nd June 2015

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

Report Author: Head of Customers and Education Support

Title: Ysgol Rhewl

1. What is the report about?

The report is to inform Cabinet Members of the findings of the formal consultation for the future of Ysgol Rhewl and to seek support to publish the required statutory proposal for the closure of the school.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

A decision is required by Cabinet to give approval to proceed to the next stage for the proposed closure of Ysgol Rhewl.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- (i) To note the findings of the formal consultation for the closure of Ysgol Rhewl;
- (ii) To approve the publication of a statutory notice to close Ysgol Rhewl on the 31st August 2017 with pupils transferring to Ysgol Pen Barras or Rhos Street School to coincide with the opening of the new school buildings.

4. Report details.

- 4.1 Denbighshire County Council has undertaken formal consultation on the proposal to close Ysgol Rhewl on the 31st August 2017 with pupils transferring to Ysgol Pen Barras or Rhos Street School to coincide with the opening of the new school buildings. The formal consultation started on the 10th of February 2015 and came to an end on the 23rd of March 2015. Currently Ysgol Rhewl has 54 Full time pupils against a capacity of 82 places. (see Appendix 1 for distribution of pupils) The consultation included a range of meetings for stakeholders and a questionnaire to gain the views of both children and parents. We received 19 letters and emails and 93 online response forms. A summary of all views received is included within the Formal Consultation Report (see Appendix 2).

Formal Consultations Findings

- 4.2 Of the 112 responses received 85 had a connection with Ysgol Rhewl. There were 16 positive responses supporting the proposal and 96 responses against the proposal. The main issues arising from the proposal were as follows:-

Issue	Concern	Response
Glasdir Development	Concerns over the development area including planning, flood risk and traffic issues	All of these issues have been considered as part of the feasibility works on the Glasdir site
Language Impact	Loss of bilingual provision – Rhewl provides dual stream provision	Very few pupils have been assessed in the medium of Welsh in recent years. Concern whether school can deliver full dual stream provision at present
Strengths of Ysgol Rhewl	School has good standards and facilities	The facilities at Glasdir will be fit for purpose and both Rhos Street and Ysgol Pen Barras also have good standards
Community	The proposal will have a negative impact on the atmosphere of the community	Concerns noted and the Council work with the schools and the community to mitigate this where possible
Consultation Process	Concern over length of consultation period and whether procedures have been followed	Consultation has taken place in accordance with the School Organisation Code. This allows for 42 days of consultation as per this consultation
Housing Development	Increase in housing likely to occur in the village	The likely increase in housing was considered when the proposal was drafted

- 4.3 The full response to the issues raised is included within Appendix 2. In considering these responses the Council remains of the view that the closure of Ysgol Rhewl as of 31st August 2017 with pupils transferring to Rhos Street School or Ysgol Pen Barras would represent the best option for ensuring pupils in the area remain able to access good standards of education in modern, fit for purpose facilities.

The Way Forward

- 4.6 Following the conclusion of the consultation period it is recommended that the Council proceeds to publish a statutory notice based upon the current proposal. The Statutory Notice will be required to be published for 28 days. During this 28 day period anyone wishing to make objections to the proposal has the opportunity to do so. To be considered as statutory objections, they must be made in writing or by e-mail, and sent to the proposer within 28 days of the date on which the proposal was published. It is intended that subject to

approval this proposal will be published on the 16th June 2015 with the objection period ending on the 13rd July 2015.

- 4.7 Following this date the Council will need to publish an objections report and the Cabinet will be asked to utilise its powers under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to consider any objections submitted and to determine whether to implement the proposal.

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

- 5.1 The proposal supports the priority of “Improving performance in education and the quality of our school buildings” and has been highlighted as a workstream as follows:

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

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

- 6.1 There will be minimum costs to the Council via the publication of the statutory notices. This will be mainly postage and printing costs associated with the actual publication. The requirement for such notices to be published in local newspapers has now been removed reducing such costs.

- 6.2 Should the recommendation be approved the school would remain in operation until August 2017. At this stage there may be additional transport costs arising, dependent upon parental preference. Should this occur discussions would occur with colleagues in Highways.

7. 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.

- 7.1 The main impact of this proposal would be a change in the learning environment for existing pupils of the school at the point of closure (should this proposal be implemented).

- 7.2 The proposal could impact positively on some of the protected characteristics, specifically disability. The proposal recommends that existing pupils transfer to new, purpose built educational facilities that would be fully compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. The full Equality Impact Assessment is included as Appendix 3.

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

- 8.1 Full consultation has been undertaken with all stakeholders and the findings from the Formal Consultation period are summarised in the main body of the report.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The costs around the statutory process are not significant and will be contained within existing resources. The full cost and savings implications of the project, including the impact on school transport will become clearer as it progresses and clear recommendations regarding these will be made at that time.

10. 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.

11. Power to make the Decision

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