

**Report To:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2015

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

**Report Author:** Head of Customers and Education Support

**Title:** Ysgol Llanbedr

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**1. What is the report about?**

The report is to inform Cabinet Members of the discussions with the Church in Wales Diocesan Authority regarding the future of Ysgol Llanbedr.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

A decision will be required by Cabinet whether to proceed to formal consultation for the proposal in relation to Ysgol Llanbedr.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

To approve formal consultation for proposals to close Ysgol Llanbedr VC on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016 with existing pupils transferring to Ysgol Borthyn VC, subject to parental preference.

**4. Report details.**

- 4.1 The Welsh Government in January 2015 rejected Denbighshire's proposal to close Ysgol Llanbedr. Cabinet in February 2015 authorised officers to commence consultation with the Church in Wales on the proposal they may have regarding the future of Ysgol Llanbedr and report back to Members.

Case for Change

- 4.2 Ysgol Llanbedr is an English Medium, Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School which serves an age range of 3-11. The school is located on the outskirts of the Village of Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd. As at January 2015 (the date of the annual pupil census) Ysgol Llanbedr had 22 Full Time pupils on roll. Pupil numbers have remained steady over the past 3 years following a previous decline. These are as illustrated in the table below;

**Full Time Pupil Numbers 2011-2015**

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
59	37	21	21	22

\*Data from January of each year

4.3 At the January 2015 the year groups were as follows;

**Year Groups 2014-2015**

Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
7	3	6	2	3	0	1

\*Data from January 2015

4.4 The Council's pupil projection forecast based on current pupil numbers suggests that there will be an increase in numbers of pupils at the school, this is illustrated below;

**Pupil Projections 2016-2020\***

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
32	39	44	51	53

\*Data from May Pupil Projections 2015

4.5 The applications for Nursery and Reception for the academic year 2015/2016 was as follows;

<b>Nursery</b>	4
<b>Reception</b>	11

Based on these figures the pupil projections for the next five years are as follows.

**Pupil Projections 2016-2020\***

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
32	36	40	45	45

\*Data from May Pupil Projections 2015

4.6 The capacity of the permanent school building is presently recorded as 54. Following representations from the Governing Body this capacity has been recalculated and a revised capacity of 77 will be implemented as of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016. This revised capacity will create a further increase in surplus places should the school remain open.

4.7 Based on the January 2015 pupil return the school currently has 22 Full Time Pupils and 7 Part Time Pupils. Using the current capacity figure of 54 the school currently has 32 surplus places and a surplus % of 59.3%. By 2020 with the revised capacity assessment at best the school is predicted to have 31.2% surplus places and at worst 41.6% surplus places. Authorities are advised by the Welsh Government to 'act purposefully' in instances where schools have a surplus above 25%.

4.8 Although pupil projections show an increase in pupil numbers over the coming years that could reduce surplus places at the school, Ysgol Llanbedr will still remain a 'small school' and issues will still remain regarding the sustainability and viability of Ysgol Llanbedr and standards of education and attainment in the future. As part of the wider review of the Ruthin area all schools with pupil numbers less than 80 have been subject to proposals for change.

- 4.9 The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 requires consultation with the appropriate religious body for 28 days before any decision is made to proceed to formal consultation. Consultation with the St Asaph Church in Wales Diocese took place between the 20<sup>th</sup> April and the 18<sup>th</sup> May. Representatives of the Governing Body and the Diocesan of St Asaph have met informally with Cabinet Members during this period of consultation to present their views on the future of Ysgol Llanbedr. Their proposal was to suspend the proposed consultation to close Ysgol Llanbedr to allow the St Asaph Diocesan Board of Statutory Education to secure a federation partner for Ysgol Llanbedr VC School and commence the consultation to change status from Voluntary Controlled to Voluntary Aided. As part of the proposal there is a commitment to review the future of the school in May 2018 and if the Diocesan have not achieved a successful federation, changed status and reduced surplus places to within 10% of extended capacity, the Diocese will work with the Authority to commence further consultation on closure. The formal submission from the Diocesan is contained in Appendix 1.
- 4.10 In considering the submission from the Diocese, Cabinet must have due regard to comments received before any decision is made to proceed to general consultation. In considering these comments Cabinet Members need to consider whether there is sufficient information to justify suspending formal consultation. Should a decision be made to consult this would not preclude further work being undertaken by the Governing Body in partnership with the Diocese and Local Authority on developing more firm proposals regarding the options for federation.
- 4.11 It is anticipated that the Consultation on the proposal (see Appendix 2) to close Ysgol Llanbedr would take place between the 16<sup>th</sup> June and the 28<sup>th</sup> July. This will allow the discussions to commence during the school term with consultation taking place for at least six week with at least 20 days of the consultation period taking place within the school term in accordance with the School Organisation Code. The consultation process will give parents, pupils, governors, staff and other stakeholders the opportunity to comment upon the proposals before a decision is made by Cabinet whether to proceed and formally publish proposals for change.

## **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 The main cost for this stage of proposals will be around printing and posting and the costs associated with arranging public meetings. Should the proposals

proceed and become implemented, it is anticipated that there will be a need for HR support for staff that will be impacted upon by the proposed changes.

**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 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out regarding the proposal to close Ysgol Llanbedr. The main findings are as follows;

7.2 The proposal would result in the closure of a faith based Church in Wales school in the village of Ysgol Llanbedr. The Council does not believe that this will have a disproportionate impact on any of the protected characteristic- specifically faith as the proposed alternative school is offers a faith based provision. Additionally there are other available faith based pupil places that offer an English medium provision.

7.3 The Council recognise that the proposal would result in a change in learning environment for all pupils should it be implemented. The Council recognise that this may be particularly challenging for pupils with ALN. In this instance the Council would work closely with parents and pupils prior and during the transition period to an alternative school. Support that pupils with ALN currently receive would be replicated within their new learning environment. The proposed alternative provision provides at least an equal standard of provision for ALN pupils that they would currently receive in Ysgol Llanbedr. Should the proposal be progressed appropriate officers would work with individual parents and pupils. No pupils at Ysgol Llanbedr have English as an additional language.

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

8.1 Initial consultation has taken place with the Church in Wales Diocesan Authority and their views are recorded in paragraph 4.9.

**9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

The costs around the statutory process are not significant and will be contained within existing resources. The delay in any possible implementation of the proposal has resulted in a pressure that is being maintained within existing resources for 2015/16. A permanent solution may be required depending on the results of the consultation.

**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)