

Appendix E

Council's response to the concerns raised in the consultation

A) Transport

Concern 1: Suitability of vehicles used for transport

Response: The suitability of all vehicles used for transporting pupils is monitored by Denbighshire County Council and ultimately by VOSA. Parents or Head teachers with any specific concerns are encouraged to contact officers.

Concern 2: How pupils will be transported from one site to the other?

Response: Pupils will be transported using existing passenger transport. Pupils receiving home to school transport whose site changes would remain on the transport at their home base where pupils who walk to school and attend breakfast club would be picked up. Similarly pupils attending after school club would be dropped off in their home school.

Siblings would remain on the same home to school transport provision.

Concern 3: Suitability of the road network

Response: Pupils are currently transported along the road network to their current school. The extent pupils are transported will be as a result of how classrooms are organised over two sites. The organisation of classrooms across two sites is up to the Temporary Governing Body and the Head teacher.

Concern 4: Length of travel for pupils

Response: Welsh Government Guidance limits a pupil's journey time to 45 minutes.

Concern 5: Will there be chaperones on the transport?

Response: Welsh Government standards must be met. We try to meet requirements of individual set of parents based upon circumstances and configuration of classrooms.

B) Language

Concern 6: Important to retain a Welsh Medium School in the area

Response: The current proposal is for a Category 1 Welsh Medium Area School. Changing the language category would not meet the objectives of Denbighshire County Council's Welsh Education Strategic Plan of sustaining the number of Welsh Medium places.

Concern 7: Important to retain Bilingual Language choice

Response: Pupils attending Welsh Medium Schools are required to reach the same standard at the end of KS2 in English as pupils in an English Medium School. Over the last 5 years 89% of the pupils assessed at the end of Key Stage 2 in both schools have been assessed through the medium of Welsh and English. This is how they would be assessed under the current proposal.

Concern 8: Long term impact on the community of only having Welsh Medium provision for the area.

Response: Welsh Medium provision provides every pupil with the opportunity to be assessed in both languages at the end of Key Stage 2.

C) Phase 2: New School Building

Concern 9: Funding for the new build/ Competing Projects

Response: Cabinet will be asked to support a commitment to the long term plan of a single site school.

Concern 10: Admission number / Size of the new school building.

Response: The capacity and admission number of the new building would be determined as part of the design process. It is important for the Authority not to create significant surplus places.

Concern 11: Why Clocaenog has been proposed as a location rather than alternative locations?

Response:

If the proposal to create an area school is implemented, the Area school needs to be the nearest suitable school for the entire area.

Locating the school at one end of the area will cause pupils to become ineligible for transport to the new school as it would no longer be their nearest suitable school.

D) Education Provision

Concern 12: Standards of Education in Cyffylliog in comparison to Clocaenog

Response: Estyn visited Ysgol Cyffylliog in November 2013. On the 2nd of December 2013 their report was published. It has been judged that Ysgol Cyffylliog has made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in May 2011.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from the list of schools requiring significant improvement.

Concern 13: Standards deteriorating in new school

Response: The responsibilities for standards will be with the Temporary Governing Body / Governing Body and Head Teacher. Denbighshire County Council and the North Wales School Improvement Service – GWE will provide support for the new school to maintain and improve standards.

It is Estyn's opinion that this proposal is likely to at least maintain the present standards of education provision in the area.

E) Phase 1: Dual Site

Concern 14: Configuration of classes across two sites

Response: The Temporary Governing Body and Head Teacher will have the final decision on how the classes are configured across both sites to make the best use of the available space.

Denbighshire County Council will support the Temporary Governing Body by providing the required transport.

Concern 15: Splitting up siblings

Response: Siblings will remain on the same Home to School provision but may be educated on different sites. The Temporary Governing Body and Head Teacher will decide the extent of how many pupils are transported to make the best use of the available space.

Concern 16: Class sizes will increase

Response: The Temporary Governing Body and Head Teacher will have the final decision on how the classes are configured across both sites to make the best use of the available space. Class sizes will be determined by the configuration that the Temporary Governing Body chooses. None of the classroom spaces on either site are large enough to accommodate 30 pupils.

Concern 17: The School needs a new Identity

Response: The Temporary Governing Body will decide on the new identity for the school.

F) Community

Concern 18: One area is gaining of the other – Closure will have a considerable impact on Cyffylliog

Response: During the first phase a school will remain open within Cyffylliog. Once Phase 2 is implemented the school building will close in the village. Policy 10 of the Modernising Education Policy states that:

“In the case of sites owned by the County Council, the Council will consider proposals for retention of the building and the minimum necessary land for access/car parking / playing fields for community use on the following basis only:

- (a) There is no alternative provision in the community for community events and meetings such as a community or village hall, church institute or sports club. Evidence suggests that communities have difficulty in properly funding and supporting more than one such facility;
- (b) Responsibility for running and maintaining the building would be passed in full to the local Town or Community Council or other community organisation. Community facilities should be funded by local residents in line with the arrangements which exist in many other communities across the county. The County Council is prepared to consider transferring the freehold of the building at nil consideration;

Concern 19: It is important to fund community activities that bring together both sites in one location

Response:

The school will be funded through the funding formula. How the school uses the funding will be the decision of the Temporary Governing Body. Denbighshire County Council would encourage the new school to maintain strong links with both communities.

G) Staffing

Concern 20: Head teacher Appointment

Response: The first responsibility for the Temporary Governing Body will be the appointment of the Head Teacher. Support will be provided by Denbighshire County Council through the appointment process.

Concern 21: Retention of current staff

Response: Staff will be supported through the transition by the Council's Human Resource Department and every effort will be made to avoid job losses. The process will focus on slotting in/ring-fencing of posts, if possible.

H) Timescale

Concern 22: There is a risk of losing support of parents, pupil retention and damage to future intake from a prolonged period on two sites.

Response: This is acknowledged as a risk to the new area school due to the strength of the concern expressed regarding additional transport. Similar projects have taken between 2 and 3 years to be completed and over that timescale there has been no evidence of this risk becoming an issue.

Concern 23: We want to be kept informed of the timescale for the new build.

Response: Information will be made available, to the Governing Body, Staff and Parents.

Concern 24: Timescale to appoint Temporary Governing Body / Head teacher is too short

Response: Although the timescale to appoint the Temporary Governing Body and Head teacher is short, it has been proven in the past that both Temporary Governing Body and Head teacher appointment can be made in the timescale.

I) Breakfast / after school provision

Concern 25: It is important to retain provision on both sites and it is linked to transport provided.

Response: Breakfast and After School provision are arranged by the school.

Concern 26: Breakfast / after school provision should operate at parent friendly times.

Response: The operating times for Breakfast and after school provision are determined by the School. Within Denbighshire some schools open their Breakfast Clubs at 7.45am and have after school clubs that finish at 5.45pm.

J) Other concerns

Concern 27: There is no need to change; Cyffylliog will not have a problem in 3 years' time.

Response: The proposal is being made to ensure the sustainability of high-quality education in the area.

Concern 28: A federation would be better and cheaper.

Response: The Authority is of the view that an informal partnership will not provide the necessary accountability structure required to ensure that education provision at both schools improves. Both schools would remain separate and the real benefits of increased integration will not be achieved. With a federation, the schools would still remain separate entities for funding and inspection purposes, even though there would be one governing body.

Concern 29: How would existing Cylch Meithrin provision tie in with the Current Proposal?

Response: The Authority will discuss with Cylch Meithrin leaders to ensure that the changes proposed do not undermine existing provision in Clocaenog.

Concern 30: Current dining arrangements are poor.

Response: Not every area will be addressed by the current proposal. Dining arrangements will not change until Phase 2 has been implemented.