

CABINET MEMBER DECISION NOTICE

SUBJECT: To publish a Statutory Notice on the proposal to close Ysgol Machreth, Llanfachreth, on 31 August 2016

CABINET MEMBER: Coun. Gareth Thomas

DECISION

Based on the fact that there were no pupils on the school register for Ysgol Machreth, Llanfachreth on the pupil census register on the third Tuesday in January 2016, before the exact date the proposals are made (in accordance with Section 56 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013), it is recommended to:

- Approve the commencement of an alternative process on the proposal to close Ysgol Machreth, Llanfachreth on 31 August 2016 and offer places for the pupils at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain during the transition period before the establishment of the All Through Catchment Area School in Y Gader district on 1 September 2017.
 - In accordance with the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 and guidance within the School Organisation Code 006/2013, publish a statutory notice on 14 June 2016 declaring that the school will close on 31 August 2016, whilst allowing an objection period of 28 days between 14 June and 13 July 2016.
 - Offer transport to the alternative school, namely Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain during the transition period, in accordance with the transport policy.
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REASON FOR THE DECISION

In the Cabinet meeting on 19 May 2015, Gwynedd Council decided:

To implement the proposal to close Ysgol y Gader, Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau, Ysgol Brithdir, Ysgol Machreth (Llanfachreth), Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd (Rhydymain), Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy, Ysgol Llanelltyd, Ysgol Friog, Ysgol Clogau (Bontddu) and Ysgol Ganllwyd on 31 August 2017 and establish a Welsh medium community Catchment Area All Through School for 3-16 year olds on the existing sites of Y Gader, Cynradd Dolgellau, Ieuan Gwynedd (Rhydymain), Dinas Mawddwy, Llanelltyd and Friog on 1 September 2017.

Following this decision, a letter was received from the Chair of Governors for Ysgol Machreth, Llanfachreth noting that the governing body had concerns that the school was no longer sustainable as a staffing crisis had arisen and that the school governors, with the co-operation of the parents, had arranged to move the pupils to an alternative school in accordance with the usual

admissions procedure.

In the Annual School Census on Pupil Numbers in January 2015, there were 11 pupils on the school register. By May 2015, admission applications had been received to transfer 10 of the 11 pupils to other schools in the catchment by 1 September 2015.

Because of these circumstances, in its meeting on 23 June 2015, the Cabinet approved:

- the withdrawal of the statutory notice regarding Ysgol Machreth, Llanfachreth.
- the approval of the commencement of an alternative process based on the proposal to close the school early in 2016.
- following the statutory process, to offer places to Ysgol Machreth pupils at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain during the transition period prior to the establishment of the All-through Catchment Area School on 1 September 2017.

The School Organisation Code 006/2013 states that *‘where a school has fewer than 10 registered pupils (or there are no pupils remaining at a school) at the January census point the 2013 Act permits governing bodies/local authorities to undertake a streamlined procedure to bring about official closure. This means that the requirement for general consultation being waived.*

Considering this requirement, and the fact that there were no pupils at Ysgol Machreth, Llanfachreth, on the 3rd Tuesday in January 2016, it is recommended that a Statutory Notice on the proposal to close Ysgol Machreth on 31 August 2016 is published, which is sooner than was originally intended (31 August 2017), in accordance with the approvals made by the Cabinet at its meeting on 23 June 2015.

The Statutory Notice will be published in accordance with the the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 and guidance within the School Organisation Code (006/2013).

The Statutory Notice will be published on 14 June 2016 and there will be an objection period of 28 days from the publication date of the notice. Anyone can object to the proposal during this period.

Following the objection period, a report will be presented to Gwynedd Council’s Cabinet Member for Education. This report will note any objections received during the objection period and the Cabinet Member will then make a final decision on the future of Ysgol Machreth, Llanfachreth. It is worth noting that, under certain circumstances, the Council’s final decision can be referred to the Welsh Government’s Minister for Education and Skills in accordance with the School Organisation Code (006/2013).

As Ysgol Machreth, Llanfachreth is a Voluntary Controlled School (VC) with a

(Church in Wales) religious denomination, in accordance with the School Organisation Code (006/2013), which states before presenting such a proposal, the proposer **must** seek the opinion of any trust which has an interest in the school, or with the relevant religious body, and consider those views before commencing. Gwynedd Council has asked the Church in Wales for their views on the matter and has received the following response:

“As far as the Bangor Diocese is concerned, it has no objection to the process of closing Ysgol Machreth going ahead.”

In order to implement the recommendations, it is intended to follow the proposed timetable below:

Action	Outline timetable
Publish statutory notice and undertake a statutory objection period (28 days)	14 June – 13 July 2016
Cabinet Member for Education to consider the report on any objections	14 - 29 July 2016
Cabinet Member for Education to publish a decision notice	1 August 2016
Decision is implemented (subject to it not being recalled or referred to the Government)	15 August 2016
Ysgol Machreth, Llanfachreth to formally close (subject to the decision by the Cabinet Member for Education)	31 August 2016

RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Transport – In accordance with Gwynedd Council’s transport policy, free transport will be available for pupils from the Ysgol Machreth, Llanfachreth catchment, to Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain during the transition period before the establishment of the All Through Catchment Area School on 1 September 2017.

Post-use of sites - In accordance with Gwynedd Council’s post-use policy it is possible for the Council to dispose of (school) sites which are surplus to requirement for less than the best terms, but only in specific circumstances and upon receipt of a business case which clearly justifies the financial loss. The Church in Wales are co-owners of the building and have noted:

“As co-owners of the building we would like to be involved in any discussions regarding the future of the building, and we are aware of the Authority’s priority to identify whether there could be any community use for the building in the future. We would like to collaborate on this.”

VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

1. Chief Executive:- Nothing further to add
2. Monitoring Officer:- The notice has received input from the Legal Department therefore I have nothing to add regarding its propriety.
3. Chief Finance Officer:- In the circumstances, I support the decisions sought, which are completely reasonable. I confirm that the net savings arising from these decisions have already been committed and contribute towards the target school savings (£4.3m).

VIEWS OF THE LOCAL MEMBER

Cllr. Peredur Jenkins, Member for Brithdir, Llanfachreth, Y Ganllwyd and Llanelltyd :

No comment on the decision

SIGNATURE



DATE

02/06/2016
