

MEETING	Gwynedd Council Cabinet
DATE	17 January 2017
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr Gareth Thomas
OFFICER	Arwyn Thomas
ITEM	Review of Bangor catchment area primary education provision

DECISION SOUGHT

The purpose of this report is to request permission to commence discussions at a local level as outlined in the report on reviewing primary education provision in Bangor.

View of the Local Members:

Member's comments to follow.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Gwynedd Council has received approval for 6 projects within Band A of the 21st Century Schools Programme. It is expected that all will be completed on time. The Government has also notified Local Authorities regarding their capacity to complete additional projects within Band A (i.e. before the end of March 2019).
- 1.2 The Education Department has identified Bangor as a catchment-area that requires urgent attention due to several factors relating to concerns about primary education that have been identified over several years.
- 1.3 In December 2014, a letter was received from the Welsh Government seeking brief (outline) details and the cost of strategic projects in our area that required completion within Band B time-table for 21st Century Schools Programme. The Band B period will run between 2019-24. The Bangor catchment-area was identified as a catchment-area that would be considered if the Authority prepared future applications.
- 1.4 A recent change has occurred at Bangor schools, especially the primary schools in the Penrhosgarnedd and Coed Mawr areas, that has raised concerns locally and in the Education Department.
- 1.5 2 primary schools in the Penrhosgarnedd area are over capacity. In September 2016, Ysgol Y Faenol exceeded capacity by 20 and Ysgol Y Garnedd exceeded capacity by 106.
- 1.6 The development of new houses at Goetre Uchaf, Penrhosgarnedd will lead to the construction of 245 dwellings and it is estimated that over 90 primary school age and 70 secondary school age pupils will reside in them.

- 1.7 As a result of the challenges listed above, the Education Department is of the opinion that there is a need to start discussions on the future of primary education provision in Bangor without delay, the Band B phase (2019-24) could lead to a crisis in some of the schools within the catchment.

2 REASONS FOR CONSIDERING THE DECISION

2.1 Increase in pupil population and present school numbers

- 2.1.1 A new housing development at Goetre Uchaf, Penrhosgarnedd means that 245 dwellings will be built and it is estimated that over 90 primary and 70 secondary school pupils will reside in them.
- 2.1.2 The two nearest primary schools to Goetre Uchaf are Ysgol Y Faenol and Ysgol Y Garnedd. As it is estimated that the housing development will lead to over 90 additional primary age pupils in the area, there will be a greater demand on the capacity of the 2 local schools to admit pupils. The two schools are already significantly over capacity, with Ysgol Y Faenol 20 and Ysgol Y Garnedd 106 over capacity.
- 2.1.3 There is adequate capacity at the 2 secondary schools for any additional pupils who will reside in the new houses.
- 2.1.4 The developer has committed to a contribution of £1,115,387 towards developing additional primary provision in the area in response to the increase in the demand for places due to the additional houses. Any new primary provision will need to address the demand for these additional places.
- 2.1.5 There are two primary schools with low numbers of pupils, namely Ysgol Coed Mawr (25) and Ysgol Glanadda (50).
- 2.1.6 There are concerns that a capacity of 210 (excluding nursery) will be inadequate for Ysgol Glancegin.
- 2.1.7 The table below shows the capacity for all primary schools and pupil numbers in September 2016.

	Numbers September 2016	Capacity	% surplus places
Ysgol y Garnedd	316	210	0%
Ysgol y Faenol	206	186	0%
Ysgol Cae Top	210	210	0%
Ysgol Babanod Coed Mawr	25	56	55%
Ysgol Glanadda	50	81	38%
Ysgol Hiracl	138	186	26%
Ysgol Llandygai	133	157	15%
Our Lady's	120	113	0%
Ysgol Glancegin	204	210*	3%

*capacity from September 2017

2.2 Pupil numbers and surplus places in secondary schools

- 2.2.1 As the following table indicates, 1,213 pupils attended Ysgol Friars and 465 attended Ysgol Tryfan in September 2016.

	Numbers September 2016	Capacity	% surplus places
Ysgol Friars	1,213	1,328	9%
Ysgol Tryfan	465	628	26%

2.2.2 Over the last 5 years, on average, 63% of pupils from all Bangor primary schools have transferred to Ysgol Friars with 34% transferring to Ysgol Tryfan.

2.2.3 In addition over the last 5 years, on average, over 80% of pupils at Glanadda, Y Faenol, Cae Top, and Our Lady's schools transferred to Ysgol Friars whilst over 80% of pupils at Ysgol Y Garnedd transferred to Ysgol Tryfan. Of the other 3 schools, between 54-66% transferred to Ysgol Friars.

2.3 Condition

On the whole, the condition of schools in the Bangor area is reasonable and categorised as A or B. However, a recent condition and suitability survey on Ysgol Y Garnedd carried out by 'Faithful and Gould' on behalf of the Welsh Government, concluded that there is a need for significant work in order to improve that school's condition from C- to B.

2.4 Educational standards

2.4.1 Recruiting for the post of Head of Coed Mawr and Glanadda schools has proven very challenging and this has created leadership instability over many years. At present there is a part-time, temporary arrangement in place until the end of this academic year.

2.4.2 Ysgol Coed Mawr has been categorised as amber and Ysgol Glanadda as red in the Welsh Government performance categorisation in 2015. In addition, Ysgol Glanadda was graded as 'unsatisfactory' for its school improvement projections following an Estyn inspection in 2013. Following a follow-up inspection in 2014, it was adjudged that:

'Ysgol Glanadda has made adequate progress in addressing the recommendations following the core inspection held in February 2013. Consequently, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales is withdrawing Ysgol Glanadda from the list of schools requiring significant improvement.'

2.4.3 Ysgol Babanod Coed Mawr was graded as 'adequate' in its 2015 Estyn inspection. Following Estyn follow-up monitoring visits in 2016 it was noted that:

'Ysgol Babanod Coed Mawr has made good progress in key matters for action following Estyn visit in June 2016. The school will now be withdrawn from the list of schools requiring Estyn monitoring. There will be no more Estyn monitoring visits as regards this inspection.'

2.4.4 All other schools in Bangor have received 'good' or 'adequate' following their latest Estyn inspections. Any new primary development will aim to raise educational standards in the area.

2.5 Additional Learning Needs

- 2.5.1 The Gwynedd and Ynys Môn Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Strategic Review notes the need for centres to improve resources for pupils who have speech, language and communication difficulties and those who have social communication difficulties.
- 2.5.2 Language Disorder Centres offer provision that focuses on specific language disorders, where aspects of the pupil's understanding, expression, speech and a short term memory continues to develop problematically despite appropriate non-verbal ability.
- 2.5.3 Social Communication Centres focus on disorders with social use of language, interaction and communication skills, behavioural needs that stem from social communication difficulties and understanding of social situations. The resource is appropriate for children who have such requirements (i.e. not necessarily a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder).

3. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Application for Welsh Government funding

- 3.1.1 As part of the Band A 21st Century Schools Programme, the Council has already secured a contribution of £2,555,000 from the Welsh Government towards building a new school to accommodate 240 (including 30 nursery places) in Maesgeirchen, to replace the current Ysgol Glancegin. It is envisaged that the construction work will need to be completed by the Autumn 2017 term.
- 3.1.2 An application for £12,730,000 was submitted in September asking for a contribution of £6,365,000 from the Government. This application was approved in principal in October 2016. Gwynedd Council's contribution will be met through a contribution of £1,115,387 from Redrow (Goetre Uchaf development), £4,500,000 of Assets Management Plan funds, and any receipts from the sale of sites up to £749,613.
- 3.1.3 A successful Business Case (5 case *business model*) will need to be presented to secure the contribution from the Welsh Government.

3.2 Timetable for spending the Welsh Government contribution

We know that there are numerous possible options for the future of children's education in Bangor and that the favoured option will become apparent during the consultation process. However, we also know that the Government's 21st Century School Programme grant contribution must be spent by March 2019. This means that £6,365,000 must be spent in a little over 2 years which is a very challenging timetable. If we are to reach this target, there is no alternative but to start the work immediately, in parallel with discussions on educational options.

We know with certainty that we cannot continue to teach children in the present Ysgol Y Garnedd in the medium term because it is not large enough to cope with the present number of children, not to mention housing any additional children that come to live in the city as a result of the proposed housing developments.

We also know that substantial work is needed to deal with some sub-standard classrooms on the Ysgol Y Faenol site as well as the need to improve the present entrance to the site.

The discussion on educational options are unlikely to affect these two requirements and therefore we can begin the design work immediately without prejudicing the outcome of the local discussions. Whatever the model or options that are identified, they are very likely to include constructing a school for the children who are presently on the Ysgol Y Garnedd and the Ysgol Y Faenol sites and therefore, in order to lower the risk of losing the grant funding, it is necessary to commence the design work without delay at the two sites.

3.3 Education Strategies

Gwynedd Council has prepared 2 strategic documents in recent years outlining the strategic direction for education in the county. These strategies will be used as well as those matters identified at a local level as a basis for our discussions.

3.3.1 The strategy '*Excellent Primary Education for Children in Gwynedd*' outlines the vision, objectives and clear principles for the task of reviewing schools organization in the county.

The principal aims of the strategy are to:

- Provide the County's children with the best possible experiences and opportunities by ensuring classes of appropriate size and high quality school leadership;
- Aim to promote and strengthen the Welsh language – as an educational and social medium - by presenting new proposals for primary education within the County;
- Respond pro-actively and creatively to the needs and opportunities provided by the current education system through fostering a collaborative, sustainable and practical longterm plan ;
- Ensure that children gain the greatest positive from education spending within the county by fully utilising all available resources – whether human, technological or financial;
- Improve resources and buildings to create a learning environment of the best possible quality.
- Develop our schools into establishments that are central to community activity.

3.1.2 '*Strategy Programme - Towards 2025*' that lays a strategic foundation to set a direction for education and training developments in Gwynedd. The main aims of this strategy is to:

- Provide the best possible learning experiences - for all learners within the County, ensuring an exciting and broad curriculum, as well as the extra-curricular curriculum, that motivates them to learn and comprehend, which leads to improved standards, making the best possible use of Information Technology;
- Promote and support the physical health and emotional well-being of children and young people - ensuring that the principal education and training establishments in the County are key players when planning and introducing integrated services for children, young people and their families;
- Prepare young people for the workplace - ensuring that they are equipped with the correct kind of skills for employment, especially within the local economy;
- Create an excellent learning environment for children, young people and teachers within the County - principally through improving facilities and buildings, and ensuring that schools are structured to respond to the change in contemporary teaching and learning process practices, especially when using Information Technology;
- Develop educational establishments of the correct type (primary and secondary) so that they provide a focal point for public and community - based services where appropriate - and enrich experiences for children and young people as they become involved with establishments that provide services for the wider community;

- Strengthen the Welsh Language - as an educational and social medium – and to enable children and young people to gain access to bilingual education and training.

3.4 Future Developments

- 3.4.1 Since planning the application at Pen y Ffridd, Bangor was rejected by Gwynedd Council’s Planning Committee, the developer has appealed against the decision and the Welsh Government are considering the appeal. If this decision is overturned, additional places will need to be found for around 146 primary and 113 secondary pupils.
- 3.4.2 There is enough room at the 2 secondary schools to accommodate additional pupils but there will be a need to find places for any primary pupils in schools close to the development. In order to do this, the matter will need to be considered when discussing the area’s needs in the future.
- 3.4.3 The developer has committed to a contribution of £907,018 towards developing additional primary provision in the area if the development goes ahead.

4. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

- 4.1 If the Cabinet allows the Cabinet Member to proceed to commence local discussions on reviewing primary education provision in Bangor, the next step will be to establish a Catchment Review Committee (CRC) to identify and discuss options, agreeing on a preferred option that will address the area’s future educational needs.
- 4.2 As a result of the local discussions, there will be a need to create and present the first stage of the business case (SOC) to the Welsh Government for their approval for the strategic case for change and the preferred option that we would recommend for consultation. If approved, this will allow us to proceed to the next step of drawing up a final business case, following consultation, to secure a contribution of £6,365,000 from the Welsh Government.
- 4.3 Following local discussions, return to the Cabinet to ask permission to move forward including permission to hold any statutory processes, in accordance with Schools Organization Code guidelines 006/2013, according to the need.

Work Programme

Date	Work
February – May 2017	Hold a series of Catchment Review Panel meetings. The purpose of these meetings will be to agree on a remit, strategy and aims, schools information, process, communication, discuss options, appraise options, impact assessment, agree on a preferred option.
March - May 2017	Prepare and present a SOC application (strategic outline case)
July 2017	Cabinet - Report back to the Cabinet, following local feedback, to request permission to move forward including permission to hold any statutory processes, in accordance with the Schools Organization Code 006/2013 guidelines, according to the need.

5. VIEW OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

The Chief Executive:

The case for reviewing the provision is very clear with issues such as present and future numbers and educational standards meriting the main attention. Of course, this is only the start of a process, and there is a long way to go before anything can be realized, but it is important to begin local discussions as soon as possible.

Monitoring Officer:

It is noted that this is the start of local discussions and therefore there is no specific view from a propriety perspective. However we should note that there is a statutory process to follow as the process develops.

Head of Finance:

I welcome the effort to plan ahead to strengthen the education provision in Bangor, and foreseeing developments in the future.