

## FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:**           **CABINET**

**DATE:**               **TUESDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2012**

**REPORT BY:**       **DIRECTOR OF LIFELONG LEARNING**

**SUBJECT:**           **YSGOL RHES Y CAE - FEEDBACK FROM  
CONSULTATION**

### **1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01 To inform members of the Cabinet of the outcome from the consultations held at Ysgol Rhes y Cae relating to the option to close the school due to the low numbers of pupils

### **2.00 BACKGROUND**

2.01 At the meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2012, members of the Cabinet approved the process for consultations with Staff, Parents and Governors of Ysgol Rhes y Cae.

2.02 There are currently 9 pupils registered at the school (July 2012), leading to the highest percentage of surplus places (80%) in any Flintshire school, and a high unit cost of £14,029 compared to the county average of £ 3,139.

2.03 Officers were accompanied by the lead member for Education and the Diocesan Director of Education at a series of meetings held at the school, at which there was the opportunity to discuss:

- staffing issues in the event of closure;
- alternative arrangements that could be put in place for pupils registered at the school in the event of closure; and
- strategies for recognition of the contribution of the school to community life.

2.04 The meetings also provided the parents and governors to express their feelings about the falling numbers in the school, and their sadness at the decline in the pupil numbers over the past few years as a result of parental preference.

2.05 Compliments were paid to the Headteacher and her staff in their hard work in trying to reverse the decline in numbers.

### **3.00 CONSIDERATIONS**

3.01 The legal framework for the proposal to close a school requires the

adequate consultation with the relevant groups at the school, with an opportunity for them to respond to the consultation.

- 3.02 Following the consultations held in June, consultees were asked to send any comments to the Director in the following four weeks.
- 3.03 At the close of the four week period, there was one written response to the consultations from the Diocesan Director acknowledging that the decline in numbers had led to an inevitable conclusion that the closure of the school was an appropriate action, and one relating to the ownership of the school building in the event of closure.
- 3.04 The final stage in the consultation process on closure is the publication of the statutory notice in a local newspaper, which clearly states the proposal to close the school, at which date and the alternatives available to pupils registered at the school at the time of closure. The notice will remain for one month, during which time there is the opportunity for anyone to lodge a formal (written) objection to the proposal. In this event the final decision rests with Welsh ministers at the Welsh Government. If however there are no written objections in the prescribed period, the final decision will be local, and made by the Flintshire Cabinet.
- 3.05 It has been proposed in the consultation meetings that the school should remain open in the next academic year pending the closure process. However, depending on the pupil numbers, staff will be deployed at other suitable schools in the area. This will make the best use of the workforce.
- 3.06 Staffing issues are being addressed on a one to one basis with meetings with the Human Resources officer. If the closure is approved, alternative positions will be sought wherever possible in other schools. In accordance with the teachers' pay and conditions document, teacher salary salaries can be protected for a three year period. If no viable alternative employment is available, the normal Flintshire redundancy process will be implemented.
- 3.07 Low numbers at the school mean also mean that it is possible to work closely with individual families to determine their preferences for the future education of their children should the closure procedure be completed.

#### **4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.01 That Members of the Cabinet approve the publication of the statutory notice for the period of one month, which will propose the closure of Ysgol Rhes y Cae from August 31<sup>st</sup> 2013.

#### **5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.01 It is estimated that there will be total savings of £119,328 per annum from the closure. This money will form part of the delegated budget allocated to other schools.

#### **6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

6.01 There is no direct implication from the publication of the notice.

#### **7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

7.01 Reduction in the maintaining and heating/lighting of the school building.

#### **8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

8.01 Any alternative school offered to pupils registered at the school will be subject to the same requirements relating to equalities of opportunity, including access to Welsh education as detailed in the Welsh National Curriculum.

Alternative schools offering Community or Anglican Faith based education are available in the area.

#### **9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.01 Individual discussions have been held with relevant members of staff to discuss options if the proposal is approved.

#### **10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED**

No further consultations are required.

#### **11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

11.01 Consultations conducted according to Welsh Government guidance.

#### **12.00 APPENDICES**

12.01 Appendix 1 - Statutory Notice.  
Appendix 2 – Letter from the Diocesan Director of Education

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

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