

Penmaemawr Area – Nominated Stakeholder Meeting Notes
Thursday 22nd October 2009

Present: Geraint James (GJ) (Statutory Head of Education Services)
Dilwyn Price (DP) (Head of School Improvement Services)
Emma Bayliss (EB) (Project Manager)
Gareth Thomas (GT) (TJB)
David Batten (DB) (TJB)

Observers: Cllr K. A. Stevens
Cllr G. Hall

1. Introduction

DB provided an introduction to the meeting and explained what would be involved including the workshop element.

2. Presentations

GJ gave a presentation on the progress of the project so far and the development of the Areas for Review document.

Question and Answer Session (Q = question, A = Answer, C= Comment)

Q: What is the benefit of refurbishing two separate schools compared with building a new amalgamated school?

A: We would need to look at a cost benefit analysis of this.

Q: Areas for initial review – Are these only areas with 2 or more schools?

A: No because some of them only have one school.

Q: Concerned that the areas are only based on geographics?

A: No we didn't start with geographical areas, we began with a review of the 4 main drivers.

C: Concerned that just chosen schools for initial review based on geographical area where as the four main drivers are more important. There are lots of schools in the report that come out worse than ours under 'fit for purpose' etc so this just perpetuates my argument.

A: Have to prove to WAG that we have robustly challenged each school / area and need to provide a benefit to the area rather than just one school.

C: Think a newly built school could be a positive but would need to consider the livelihood of the schools that exist now.

Q: 10 parents have submitted their names from each school but this is going to affect everybody so more key stakeholders should have been invited.

A: Have to remember that changes may not occur for 10-15 years. This is the first of a series of consultations which will then lead to more in depth consultations regarding each school with more stakeholders.

Q: Not convinced that you don't have a preferred option – what influence can this group have on any options you may have in mind?

A: It is evident that there are a limited range of options but there are no proposals in place for this area as yet.

Q: The funding for improvements will come from the Welsh Assembly – Is the Assembly driving this consultation for their own outcome?

- A: There is a political drive to reduce unfilled places and in order to achieve this we have to rationalise. If WAG were pushing this, we only have limited capital and revenue pots which are reducing in any case, so we would have had to do something to make the spending more efficient.
- Q: Could you put a bid forward to WAG for improvements that could get refused?
- A: That's the reason for these meetings – need to be confident that whatever a bid is put forward for any area, the community will support it and bids will be approved.
- Q: 10-15 years is supposed to be reassuring but I worry about the individual communities. Do you see Penmaenmawr and Dwygyfylchi as one or two communities?
- A: Difficult to answer and need to consider both villages.

DP then gave a presentation on the specific school data including information on 'fit for purpose', unfilled places and catchment areas. Noted that Ysgol Capelulo is now English / Welsh rather than just English. Noted where the 'fit for purpose' criteria came from and how pupil projections are calculated.

Question and Answer Session (Q = question, A = Answer, C= Comment)

- Q: What is catchment for Capelulo?
- A: Explained geographically
- Q: Looked at combined catchment for both schools?
- A: Have not done so as this is one step too far in terms of consultation undertaken so far.
- Q: Would you be content to share the information that has led to the production of these graphs?
- A: Of course, but this evidence needs to be annually reviewed. Anyone is welcome to come and look at how the information is gathered.
- Q: Is there a target in place to reduce unfilled places to 25%?
- A: No ceiling but there is a pressure on us to reduce unfilled places. We are hoping to reduce them to between 10% and 20%.
- Q: So you are definitely not following a policy of no unfilled places as you obviously need flexibility and capacity?
- A: Definitely do take capacity into account but the birth rate is not increasing and there is an increase in the ageing population.
- C: Have read statistics that state birth rates will increase over the next few years.
- A: It does seem to have bottomed out but we accept that we need to keep flexibility in the system.
- C: Think that the percentage of unfilled places should have been displayed the other way round. Shows schools in a bad light and graphs should go up to 100%.
- A: Accept what you have said and take this on board.
- C: It is difficult for you to make changes in the future as the strategy will be funded and therefore it cannot be too flexible.

GT explained workshop part of the meeting.

3. Workshop Feedback

Buildings

Capelulo

- Covered/shady area needed
- Improve toilet facilities
- We have a great early years unit
- We have a great outdoor area – easy access to fabulous location and outstanding views
- Good classrooms – close together – good team spirit
- ICT Suite? Why? Foundation phase does not encourage use.
- ICT suite more for secondary schools – keep them in the classroom!

Pencae

- Obviously what we have at Pencae is fit for purpose BUT to be objective over ½ is old and on the side of a mountain
- Access issues i.e. disability
- Fit for purpose
- Not just about buildings but also green space, playground, field
- Environmentally friendly & energy efficient (would like to develop)
- Positive learning environment i.e. classroom to stimulate the children
- Pencae covered areas (would like to have)
- Pencae needs a lift
- Pencae insulation?
- Solar panels (would like to have)
- Heat loss
- Double glazing (would like to have more)

Community use of Buildings

Capelulo

- Already used by Brownies & Playgroup
- Potential after school care club
- All after school interest clubs
- New community “summer show” (produce & craft etc)
- Encourage more use with community groups
-

Pencae

- Pencae hall available to the public– publicise this
- Make more use of the facility at evening & weekends. Pencae has this potential

What it could look like

Capelulo

- 2 modernised schools – 1 in each community – retaining individuality and own sense of community
- 2 school open more to the community & making use of facilities (i.e. playgroup, brownies, after school club)
- Local building for local needs (i.e. available easily)
- The children & staff would like to continue the hard work of developing orchard, garden, outdoor area, polytunnel, summer show, community links – i.e. church festivals
- Children need to be a part of a village community – they need to learn the skills to be part of it as an adult

Pencae

- A Church aided school (VA) that give the highest educational standard to the children of the Penmaenmawr/ Dwygyfylchi area with a Christian ethos/character that promotes the development of each pupil
- A new building that is suitable for the educational needs of this century and is also a valuable asset for both communities

The school as a part of the community

Capelulo

- Important part of our community
- Local school sustains local shops, bus service, local PO is a governor
- Strategy of schools should follow other policies i.e. planning – sustainability of local communities – crime prevention- healthy living – walking/cycling to school – community strategy
- Early years unit used for local play group – parents have “one drop” in one building for pre-school & school

Pencae

- Mae'r ysgol yn gymuned o fewn cymuned ac yn hapus (the school is a community within a community and is happy)
- Pencae with dual streaming caters for the whole community
- Encourage more community use in cross section of out of hours clubs
- The smaller the school community the more likely people will know each other – reduces crime rates & fear of crime
- Schools build community cohesion
- Schools can affect the local community (keeping shops open)

Education

Capelulo

- Tailored for individual needs
- Knowledge & understanding of family context at our school
- Challenging
- Effort involved in raising standards i.e. Welsh, IT hardware, maths scheme, ALN (renowned at our school)
- After school club
- Broad curriculum with many firsthand experiences
- Availability of support from local people for outdoor visits
- Access to mountain/sea
- New nursery provision & playgroup on site allows continuity & progression
- Comenius project

Pencae

- We need to keep the superb provision of a church school that we have at the moment
- We need to ensure that streaming is carried on – even better would be a bilingual school
- Two schools offer choice
- The standards of education offered in both schools are good – despite building “shortcomings” – other schools do not perform as well and are not under initial review?

Children's Needs and Welfare

Capelulo

- Paramount concern – children have a voice – ask the school council
- Being able to walk safely to school (Green Issues)
- Not being a number – the staff know the children
- Children know other children & staff
- Parents know the children
- Safe school environment
- Children need to feel safe & secure
- Life skills being offered via after school clubs
- Some children operate better within a smaller environment (especially confidence/staff/pupil relationship)
- Staff welfare not considered?
- If we combine both schools & faces with a situation like Porth y Felin that they have 46% projected drop in numbers – is this a success?
- Human nature favours small schools & small classes but we still feel that we need to make things larger i.e. combine schools

Pencae

- The need for children to have space to play, physical activity & be creative
- Safe & secure environment
- Teacher/child ratio should not increase

Social

Capelulo

- The schools input within the community i.e. Harvests thanksgiving in the church, Christmas service in the church, school fair in the Parish Hall, Concerts (i.e. Gwyl Ddewi/St David's)in the church hall,
- Links with WI Dwygyfylchi
- Website open to community links
- Newsletter available at shop
- Planting flowers outside shop
- Walking to school
- Breakfast club
- Liaise with community support officer that helps with education & local issues (low crime as a result)
- Invite local people to help i.e. gardening, reading, craft, D&T, nursery
- Comenius project
- Open evenings as a result of mew initiative i.e. sex education policy, improvement of Welsh provision
- Community loses its focal point

Pencae

- Small school with a mix of ages = a closer community
- Bilingual school will lead to development of bilingual social skills
- Retain links with the church

Transport

Capelulo

- An ability to walk to school or cycle
- Lack of safe pavements between 2 communities
- Poor public transport (unreliability) if school was out of community

Pencafe

- Improve road safety i.e. sleeping policemen
- Park & ride?
- Lighting
- Pavements
- Traffic control system
- Better parking facilities
- Improve access
- Lift sharing
- Encourage more bus use instead of car use – adult supervision

Capelulo

- Capelulo transport

4. Final Question and Answer Session (Q = question, A = Answer, C= Comment)

C: In terms of the buildings, we would welcome investment in sites. It is also important to highlight the achievement of good standards.

A: Accept this.

Q: The Playgroup has got an important part to play in schools. The Playgroup feeds children into schools and is registered with the CSSIW. The Playgroup should be within any new school building.

A: Will definitely take this comment into account and will be taken into consideration in any new builds. Will accept any information or feedback up until November 2009.

C: Remember the responsibility to teachers and those who keep a school together. Teachers are part of the community and need to consider them in the future.

A: Establishing HR Team to ensure this is captured.

Q: Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out as yet?

A: This will be carried out when preferred options are put forwards and decided upon.

Q: Has this project been going on longer than 18 months?

A: There was a policy in place in 2006 to review schools with under 25 pupils but Capelulo was never in this situation. This was misquoted in the paper.

Q: There has been investment in both schools recently. Do you have any ideas yet for the schools that will be made redundant?

A: We have joined up thinking with the Community Development Service to look at this.

DB thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution to the meeting as a lot of important information was gained.