

Committee	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report	Restructuring of Language Centres
Date of meeting	24 January 2019
Relevant Officer	Garem Jackson, Head of Education
Relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Gareth Thomas

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Historically, the Language Centres were funded by a grant from the Welsh Language Board, with the Council providing match funding. When the Welsh Language Board was abolished, the Language Centres were funded in the same way through the Welsh Government's Welsh in Education Grant with the Council continuing to provide the match funding.
- 1.2 In 2015, Welsh Government brought 11 education grants together under the heading of the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) (this included the Welsh in Education Grant (WEG).) By now, Welsh Government funds the Welsh in Education Grant through the regional consortia (GwE), and every Council contributes match funding to the region before the WEG is then transferred from the regional consortia back to the Councils.

2. CONTEXT

- 2.1 In 2018/19, Welsh Government cut the Education Improvement Grant by 10%. This means a shortfall of £61,000 in the budget of Gwynedd Language Centres from 2018/29 onwards. This year, we succeeded to bridge this shortfall, although cuts have been made to other headings within the EIG, such as the Foundation Phase.
- 2.2 For 2019/20, the news we received from Welsh Government was better than expected for the EIG, namely confirmation of a neutral settlement for the EIG for 2019/20. However, in light of inflation to salaries and pensions, this means a further shortfall in the budget of approximately £35,000 from September 2019 onwards. (The GwE Management Board and Joint-committee have not yet convened to agree on the exact allocation for the EIG headings for 2019/20.) At the same time, the GwE Management Board has also decided to carry out a regional review of the Welsh Language heading in the EIG.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The staffing structure of the Language Centres is currently as follows:

Language Centre	Staffing Structure	Numbers
Dolgellau	Leader Assistant	8
Llangybi	Leader Teacher	16
Maesincla	Leader Teacher	16
Penrhyndeudraeth	Leader Teacher	16
Eifionydd - Secondary	Leader Teacher	16

3.2 The trend for pupil numbers attending the Primary Language Centres over the last five years is as follows:

Pupil numbers at the Gwynedd Primary Language Centres per term 2013 – 2018					
TERM	Dolgellau	Llangybi	Maesincla	Penrhyn	Total
CAPACITY	8	16	16	16	
Spring 2013	6	7	13	11	37
Summer 2013	8	7	13	15	43
Autumn 2013	9	13	15	13	50
Total 2013	23	27	41	39	130
Spring 2014	8	8	14	15	45
Summer 2014	26*	4*	16	10**	64
Autumn 2014	8	10	14	14	46
Total 2014	42	22	44	47	155
Spring 2015	8	11*	11	14	44
Summer 2015	9	4*	15	15*	43
Autumn 2015	7	12	9	17	45
Total 2015	24	27	35	46	132
Spring 2016	8	10	13	16	47
Summer 2016	11	6	16	19	52
Autumn 2016	9	14	16	18	56
Total 2016	27	30	45	53	155
Spring 2017	10	13	13	15	51
Summer 2017	7**	10	17	17	51
Autumn 2017	8	13	17	16	54
Total 2017	25	36	47	48	156
Spring 2018	6 + 1*	14	15	11	47
Summer 2018	5 ** / 7 *	8	16	14	45
Total 2018					

4. INITIAL STEPS

- 4.1 In light of the budget shortfall from 2019/20 onwards for the Language Centres, a meeting was held with the staff on 10 September 2018⁹ to notify them of the financial position of the Language Centres from 2019/20 onwards. During the meeting, staff were invited to come together to consider how the service could be restructured in future to meet the budget shortfall.
- 4.2 Following this meeting, we were notified that the staff of the Language Centres were not keen to create their own options for the service's structure in future. Rather, their wish was for the Education Department to consider and create options, with an opportunity for them to express their opinion and present comments on those options.
- 4.3 On 24 October 2018, a meeting was held between the Education Department, Human Resources, staff of the Language Centres (and their Union representatives) to present options for their consideration.

5. OPTIONS

- 5.1 As a basis for the options to restructure the Language Centres in future, the Education Department formed the following criteria:

	PRINCIPLES	
1.	The restructuring will not affect the availability of the provision for latecomers (i.e. That the same number of pupils or more will have access to the service)	✓
2.	Minimum staffing level of 2FTE at every Language Centre	✓

- 5.2 It is also noted that none of the following options include any change to the aftercare provision, and aftercare will be considered when proceeding with the preferred option for the future.

Option 1

- Close one Primary Language Centre
- Increase the capacity of every Language Centre to 19 learners
- A staffing structure of a Leader and a Teacher at every Language Centre

Option 2

- Every Language Centre to remain open.
- The capacity of the Dolgellau Language Centre to increase to 16. The capacity of every other Language Centre to remain the same.
- A staffing structure of a Leader and a Teacher at every Language Centre

Option 3

- Every Language Centre to remain open.
- The capacity of the Dolgellau Language Centre to increase to 16. The capacity of every other Language Centre to remain the same.

- One Leader for all Primary Language Centres, a staffing structure of a Teacher and an Assistant at every Language Centre (where the Leader is not based).
- A staffing structure of a Leader and an Assistant at the Secondary Language Centre.

Option 4

- Every Language Centre to remain open.
- The capacity of the Dolgellau Language Centre to increase to 16. The capacity of every other Language Centre to remain the same.
- One Leader for all Primary and Secondary Language Centres, a staffing structure of a Teacher and an Assistant at every Language Centre (where the Leader is not based).

6. THE CONSULTATION OBSERVATIONS

6.1 A Human Resources process for restructuring the Language Centres was followed, therefore consulting with the staff and the Units on options for restructuring the service in future.

6.2 The following is a summary of the Unions' observations:

UCAC

General observations:

Keep staffing levels at two teachers

The teachers must:

- be specialist for effective 'language immersion'
- be enthusiastic and ambitious
- possess oral language of a good standard
- be able to plan lively lessons that are carefully structured to conform to the course
- be able to identify and respond to learners' needs (ALN, emotional and behavioural problems)
- training and support for teachers and school assistants
- be knowledgeable of the latest developments in the field of education
- be able to lead a centre in each other's absence

The Centres' Locations: Equal Opportunity - ensure that every school is within reasonable reach of the Language Centre.

The following is a summary of UCAC's main observations on the individual options:

Option 1

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 specialist teachers • The success of the course and service is secured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre Ch closing will have an impact on the area (where the centre is based). • Increasing journeys from schools to the nearest Language Centre

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centres to remain in every area of Gwynedd 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 area without a Language Centre Losing specialist teaching jobs
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Option 2

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Centres' Locations - 1 in every area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Losing specialist teacher posts Increases the teacher : pupil ratio The Leader's absence will cause disorder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - course structure responsibility for the learner transport parents A supply teacher cannot step in as a stranger Losing opportunities to share good practice Weakens the support for individual learners The aftercare strategy will be less effective

Option 3

In addition to the observations for Option 2:

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centre A (The Leader's Centre) will be ineffective in light of the responsibility for all the Language Centres.

Option 4

In addition to the observations for Options 2 and 3:

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centre A (The Leader's Centre) will be ineffective in light of the responsibility for all the primary and secondary Language Centres. 1 Leader responsible for the primary and secondary without an understanding of one sector

6.3 NEU

The following is a summary of NEU's main observations:

- It is crucial to avoid excessive travel for pupils and this important principle cannot be kept should one of the centres close. (Oppose Option 1).
- The Leader's absence will cause disorder without a second teacher in terms of the course structure.
- A supply teacher cannot step in as a 'stranger'

- Object to any action on the increase in costs of £35,000 until there is clarity on the need to do so.

NEU also asked:

- How does restructuring tie in with the Council's strategic objectives of promoting the Welsh language and the Welsh language policy?
- Have any discussions been held with the primary and secondary headteachers?

6.4 Dolgellau Language Centre

Observations were received from the Leader and Assistant at the Dolgellau Language Centre as part of the consultation.

The following are their main observations on Option 2 - Leader and Assistant:

- Dolgellau Language Centre has been operating under Option 2, namely a teacher and an assistant since 2002.
- The Language Centre is full with 100% capacity each term, and at times we have more than the capacity of children (up to 10).
- The course requirements is delivered with a Teacher and Assistant, and is cost effective and cheaper than the other options under consideration.
- The Teacher presents the language learning work and the Assistant supports the learning – working together in the classroom.
- The Dolgarrog Language Centre works as a 'Leader and Senior Assistant', and they accept up to a maximum of 12 children.

6.5 Observations from Stakeholders, Organisations and Individuals

As already noted, a Human Resources process was followed for restructuring the Language Centres, consulting with the staff and the Unions on options for restructuring the service in future.

Nevertheless, the Education Department also briefed key stakeholders during the consultation period, including:

- Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
- Schools Funding Forum
- Unions' Forum
- Primary and Special Catchment Areas Consultative Group
- Secondary Strategic Planning Group

Observations were also received from organisations and individuals, including:

- The Welsh language
- Cylch yr Iaith
- Popeth Cymraeg
- CYDAG
- RHAG

- Individuals

The themes of the observations received from organisations and individuals include:

- Object to any change
- Quality (need 2 teachers)
- Changing demography

7. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 We know that the GwE Management Board has also decided to carry out a regional review of the Welsh Language heading in the EIG.
- 7.2 Additionally, we already know that the Education Improvement Grant will be a neutral settlement for 2019/20, but with inflation, this equates to an actual cut of 5%. Should there be another neutral settlement in 2020/21, this would mean a further 5% cut to the budget.
- 7.3 In light of the success of the capital bid to have an additional Language Centre for Bangor, there will be a need to find a revenue source to staff this Language Centre, when it comes into existence.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to:

- express their opinion on the options for restructuring the Language Centres, along with the observations submitted as part of the consultation.