

MEETING

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 19 January 2016
Report Subject	School Organisation – Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education and Youth
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education and Youth)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To inform Cabinet of the responses from the statutory consultation period for Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain.

To inform Cabinet of the outcomes from the Education and Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to invite Cabinet to determine whether to proceed with a statutory proposal for school organisational change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Cabinet is requested to consider the responses from the statutory consultation period for Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain.
2	Cabinet is requested to consider comments from the Education and Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the evidence and analysis provided by officers within the reports.
3	Cabinet is requested to determine the next steps for school organisational change for Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND AND CONSIDERATIONS
1.01	In June 2015, Cabinet determined that we enter into formal consultation on closure and other school organisation options for Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain by September 2016.
1.02	<p>The proposal was put forward on the basis of criteria laid down in the Council's School Modernisation Strategy, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfilled places across the primary school portfolio – Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain as at January 2015 (PLASC) had 66 full time pupils with unfilled places of 13.16%. As of September 2015 the school population has 55 full time pupils with unfilled places at 27.63%; • Diminishing resource criteria (i.e. schools supported by pupils not from their local community and/or small numbers within the community raise concern regarding sustainability within the school's portfolio) - 83.63% of pupils attending Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain are not attending their local school; • Small School Criteria – The School population and capacity of Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain is lower than national designation of a small school, additionally school numbers do not meet the minimum requirements of primary school models as noted in the Council's School Modernisation Strategy, and • Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain is currently (July 2015) in Welsh Government categorisation 4, on a scale of 1 - 4, with 4 being the lowest for educational standards.
1.03	The formal consultation period for Ysgol Maes Edwin commenced on Wednesday 21 October 2015 and ended on Wednesday 2 December 2015.
1.04	The Council has issued consultation documents in accordance with the statutory School Organisation Code.
1.05	Reviewing the future of any school is controversial and emotive. Pupils, parents, carers and teachers, past and present, have strong ties to local schools as part of their own life-stories. The Council is challenged with balancing the sensitivities of community feeling on the one hand, with providing a high quality education offer which can be sustained and afforded. The Council cannot avoid making decisions for the future which are in the best interests of pupils and students.
1.06	<p>During the consultation responses from the pupils, community, staff, parents and carers have focused on the following concerns, in summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impact on pupils/transition/friendship groups; • impact on community; • impact of housing developments in the area; • accuracy of data contained within the consultation documents;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capacity of other schools in the area to accommodate pupils; • admissions to other schools should Ysgol Maes Edwin close; • transport.
1.07	Responses also focus on the strengths of the school, such as the family ethos, the condition of the building and the inclusive nature of the school.
1.08	As part of the consultation the views of children and young people have been sought. The pupils of Ysgol Maes Edwin do not want their school to close. They have expressed concern that peer groups and siblings will be split up and that their emotional welfare has not been taken into consideration. Other nearby school councils consulted wanted to make Ysgol Maes Edwin pupils welcome and hoped to make new friends should the school close. (see Appendix 2 Consultation Report).
1.09	An alternative suggestion of federation has been suggested by a number of consultees, notably the governing body. They wish for Cabinet to use powers to promote a federation with another school or schools. The Governing Body of a maintained school can also promote a federation. The Governing body of Ysgol Maes Edwin has not been able to identify a willing partnering school or schools with which to pursue a federation. The prospect of developing a successful federation without a willing partner or partners is minimal.
1.10	Neighbouring schools have confirmed that they have not and will not be bringing forward a federation proposal with Ysgol Maes Edwin.
1.11	School organisation consultation documents are subject to rigorous compliance checks prior to their publication, which includes verifying information provided by the schools and national sources (see Appendix 1- Compliance Statement).
1.12	The Council would take all practicable steps to ease the transition for all pupils, most especially for vulnerable groups of learners such as Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Should the proposal be implemented the Council would work alongside pupils, their parents and the relevant schools to make appropriate transition arrangements for pupils to familiarise themselves with their new environments (subject to parental preference).
1.13	The Council has fully considered school capacity and potential housing development yield within its consultation documents.
1.14	Data regarding potential pupils which could be generated from new housing developments is calculated using a housing yield formula. The housing yield formula has been derived from research work from a partnering authority. This was applied to all current housing development planning applications approved by the planning authority.
1.15	The housing yield figures produced are a maximum figure and do not take into account parental choice and/or pupil movement i.e. pupils moving into the new homes but who are already in the local education system.

1.16	The pace of housing developments will be constrained by the plans of the site owners/developers, the housing market, current economic climate and other factors which are unpredictable.
1.17	It is the Council's view that there is sufficient capacity within the local school network to accommodate pupils from Ysgol Maes Edwin should it close. Estyn have commented <i>that 'The local authority has given a clear rationale for the proposed expected benefits when compared with the status quo in relation to finance, surplus places and the continuity and progression in pupils' learning.'</i>
1.18	Under current transport policy fewer than ten pupils would be entitled to free home to school transport based on the assumption they transfer to their nearest school Ysgol Owen Jones, Northop. This would be on the basis that the route to the alternative school from Flint Mountain would be considered to be hazardous due to its rural location which has limited footpaths in and out of the village.
1.19	At the time of writing the admissions team have approved fifteen applications from Ysgol Maes Edwin pupils wishing to transfer to other schools in line with the Council's Admissions Policy. A mini admissions process will be administered to assist families in transition to other school should Cabinet determine closure.
1.20	The community impact assessment has identified the impact of closure on a small number of local families and on the local community. The loss of the school would impact on a small number of community activities taking place and the range of community facilities within Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain.
1.21	The Council has no plans for the school site should the school close. In line with established practice, future usage of the school site will only be determined following confirmation that the school site is no longer required for educational purposes.
1.22	Estyn has provided its statutory response to the consultation. It is Estyn's view that this proposal is likely to at least maintain the present standards of education provision in the area. They noted that consultation documentation appropriately set out the advantages of the proposal, which include the efficient and effective use of resources; a reduction of unfilled pupil places within the primary school network; at least maintaining the current standards and the quality of education in the area; and the reduction in travel to school for the majority of pupils should they choose their local school.
1.23	Education and Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 6 January 2016 to consider the outcomes from consultation. The recommendations of the committee to Cabinet were: (i) That the process be suspended for two months to allow the opportunity for federation to be reviewed and (ii) that comments be collated and

	presented to Cabinet. Comments from individual scrutiny members are included in Appendix 5.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS														
2.01	There is sufficient team capacity to prepare the detailed transition plans for students.														
2.02	Should the current proposals be implemented, the Council will work with the current members of staff at Ysgol Maes Edwin, including teaching and support staff, should they seek redeployment opportunities. Staff displaced by the proposal may have the opportunity to be employed in the local primary network.														
2.03	The estimated net saving that could be achieved if the proposal to close the Ysgol Maes Edwin goes ahead, is as follows:- <table border="1" data-bbox="304 884 1369 1151"> <thead> <tr> <th>Saving/Costs</th> <th>Amount</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Formula Funding Saving</td> <td>£106,606 pa</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transport Costs</td> <td>-£9,120 pa</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Catering Saving</td> <td>£5,000 pa</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Net Saving</td> <td>£102,486 pa</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Backlog Maintenance Saving</td> <td>£129,694 (5 year cycle estimate)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Saving/Costs	Amount	Formula Funding Saving	£106,606 pa	Transport Costs	-£9,120 pa	Catering Saving	£5,000 pa	Net Saving	£102,486 pa	Backlog Maintenance Saving	£129,694 (5 year cycle estimate)		
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2.04	The estimated annual costs of transport as a result of the proposal are £9,120. However, actual transport costs can only be confirmed once all families have chosen their preferred school.														

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	In addition to the consultation undertaken in line with the school Organisation Code, consultation has also been undertaken with the Council's Education and Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
3.02	If the Cabinet decision is to proceed, the Council will publish a Statutory Notice providing a 28 day notice period for objections. If objections are received, the Council must publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and their responses to them within 28 days of the end of the objection period.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	A Programme Board is set up to oversee the implementation of business plans and manage risks in close detail. Reports are made to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny at key stages of decision-taking, performance

	reporting and evaluation.
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5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix 1 – Compliance statement Appendix 2 – Consultation report Appendix 3 – Estyn response Appendix 4 – Statutory proposal anticipated timeline Appendix 5 – Comments raised by Education and Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>All responses from the consultation period (and responses received before the consultation period) are available in the members' library.</p> <p>Consultation documentation links:</p> <p>http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Schools/School-Modernisation-Related/Home.aspx</p> <p>Contact Officer: Damian Hughes, Senior Manager, School Planning Provision Telephone: 01352 761209 E-mail: Damian.hughes@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>PLASC – The Welsh Government Pupil Level Annual School Census is mandatory with returns for all sectors required every January including nursery, primary, middle, secondary and special. Returns are required every January.</p> <p>School Organisation Code – The new School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 makes Local Authorities responsible (rather than the Welsh Ministers prior to October 2013) for the determination of most statutory school organisation proposals that receive objections. Such provisions apply to any proposals published on or after 1st October 2013 that consider the establishment, discontinuance or otherwise significantly alter schools.</p> <p>The Council does this in line with the Welsh Government's statutory School Organisation Code</p> <p>http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/130719-school-organisation-codes-en.pdf</p>

Estyn - Estyn is the education and training inspectorate for Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting primary and secondary schools and nursery schools maintained by, or receive funding, from local authorities.

Federation – The federation of schools is a legal process which enables schools to work together through a formal structured process by sharing a governing body that will make decisions in the best interest of all the schools, staff and pupils in that federation.

The Welsh Government have brought in new regulations around federation of maintained schools in Wales. The Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014 which came into force on 22 May 2014 gives effect to Council's powers to federate schools. (School governors already have powers to federate by choice under provisions introduced in 2010). These powers have now been consolidated into the 2014 Regulations.

Estyn's definition of small school - Is a school of 100 or less.