

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **TUESDAY, 19 MARCH 2013**

REPORT BY: **DIRECTOR OF LIFELONG LEARNING**

SUBJECT: **SECONDARY SCHOOL REVIEW**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To report on the responses to consultations in each of the three designated areas of Holywell, Connah's Quay/ Queensferry and Buckley/Mynydd Isa/Mold. To provide the opportunity for members to note the outcomes of the consultations, and to take these into account when considering the progress of the proposals

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 Members received a report on the outcome of consultations on the various options agreed by councillors at their meeting on the 12th July 2012.

2.02 The outcome of the meeting was an agreement to consult further with the School Communities on the preferred option for each of the areas. A series of meetings were held with the School communities, including Staff, Governors, Parents and Students at the various schools.

2.03 The consultation process began in November 2012, and remained open until the end of term on 21st. December 2012.

2.04 Subsequently, all responses have been collated and prepared as a document, and analysis of the responses carried out. Information has been placed in the Members Library.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 The preferred options that were the subject of consultations were:

3.02 **1. Holywell High School, Ysgol Perth y Terfyn and Ysgol y Fron Preferred Option – Build a new High School for pupils aged 11-16, together with a new primary school to replace Ysgol Perth y Terfyn and Ysgol y Fron.**

- 3.03 This option would bring together the local infant and junior schools as a new purpose built primary school, at the same site as the High School. This would provide better continuity for learners throughout the full Primary School age range. Key consultation responses identify that Holywell also has a “once in a generation” opportunity to develop a new secondary school to serve local communities.
- 3.04 The present Infant and Junior schools are on limited sites and provide little scope for improvement or development for the future. The amalgamation of these two schools is in accordance with the policy of the Council to bring together schools whenever appropriate. The efficiencies that can be provided for both the new Primary and Secondary schools are a significant element in the initial approval for this proposed scheme by the Welsh Government. Establishing the schools on the same site would be a model for future development at other sites, when resources are available. Any savings that can be made by this model increases the affordability and resourcing of the schools. This approach has attracted the support of the local community.
- 3.05 The challenge remains over how to meet the expectations of Welsh Government to transform sixth form education for learners from the area. A significant number of responses have expressed a view that post-16 education should be retained at the High School. However, the present number on-roll in the Sixth Form is below the level which would provide financial viability and sustain efficiently the required breadth of curriculum under the Learning and Skills Measure. Evidence shows that student numbers and outcomes continue to present viability challenges. The provision of grant-funding for this option is allied to the transformation agenda of the Welsh Government which requires Local Authorities to review the sustainability of post-16 provision, particularly where there are small sixth forms.
- 3.06 An important element in the sustainability of the post-16 provision is the level of funding which is drawn down directly from the Welsh Government, and does not form part of the schools 11-16 budget delegated by the Authority. Post-16 funding is related to the number of student’s registered post-16 and the subjects studied and is distributed to schools by the Authority in a way agreed by the High Schools.
- 3.07 In the case of Holywell High School, and some other High Schools in similar positions, the funding for post-16 provision has to be topped-up from the delegated budget for 11-16 education. The continuation of the post – 16 provision places a severe strain on the school budget, and could have a wider implication for the funding of pre-16 provision.

- 3.08 It is right that any new school should reflect the hopes and aspirations of a genuine community school. This must involve working with other further and higher education partners, other public sector bodies and the voluntary sector to secure community and vocational learning, together with leisure opportunities which will enhance the opportunities available to the people of Holywell and surrounding areas.
- 3.09 This option is linked with the provision of a Post-16 facility at Connah's Quay. This option has been approved in principle for 50% funding by Welsh Government.
- 3.10 Responses at the consultation meetings were generally against the establishment of an 11-16 High School, with feelings that the area would be depleted of an important provision if the transfer of post-16 provision was to be moved to Connah's Quay, and that many local young people would not access higher education as a result. Transport difficulties and the cost/time involved in travel also featured in the responses. 2012 destination data from Careers Wales indicate that 28% of Year 11 stayed on for the 6th form whereas 54% chose to attend college. This shows that a significant majority of students have already chosen the college for their post-16 provision.
- 3.11 The analysis of responses shows no overall agreement or disagreement with the Holywell proposals in the main consultation exercise, however the responses from Children and Young people shows a clear disagreement with the proposals.
- 3.12 In view of the reduced numbers in the High School as a whole, and the financial implications of maintaining an unviable sixth form, maintaining the status quo is clearly not an option that could be considered. Currently, the size of the sixth form would indicate a cross-subsidy from the pre-16 budget to maintain the post-16 provision. This is not a sustainable situation and could have a wider negative effect on the whole school.

3.13 **2. Queensferry, Shotton & Connah's Quay
Preferred Option – Develop 3-16 facility at John Summers High School with a Post-16 hub at Connah's Quay High School.**

The outcome of the consultation meetings and the written responses indicate that there is strong interest from the John Summers High School Community in the creation of a new Sixth Form centre at Connah's Quay to benefit learners from Deeside, for which there is funding available from the Welsh Government. There is also a creative option put forward by John Summers' High School Governors to work more closely with Queensferry primary school in a new community 3-16 arrangement. This would involve the new school being led by a single Headteacher and one Governing body.

- 3.14 The Headteacher and the Governors at John Summers High School have endorsed this option as their preferred way forward.
- 3.15 A small secondary department within a 3 to 16 'all through' school would not meet resilience criteria within Flintshire's School Modernisation Strategy. However, it is in line with emerging models in Ceredigion and Shropshire. As one school, it would present a larger critical mass which would better justify the continuing secondary provision in an area of social need. We will also need to continue to further assess implications arising from the growing Northern Gateway programme. The demographic profile for the area shows a strong growth in the birth data, which will add to the eventual increased numbers accessing the school. This growth in numbers of Primary age children is already being seen in the numbers of children admitted to the local schools.
- 3.16 This is the option that therefore deserves detail development and business case planning.
- 3.17 This option has resulted in additional consultations with the Croft Nursery, Queensferry Primary School and St Ethelwold's Primary School in relation to the creation of additional child care and nursery class provision for the area.
- 3.18 Queensferry Primary School and St Ethelwold's School are the only schools in Flintshire without nursery provision. The transfer of provision to these schools would facilitate better delivery of the foundation phase which would have a positive effect on outcomes for children. This transfer would also offer opportunities for existing nursery staff.
- 3.19 The Flying Start provision which currently shares the Croft site is an important programme which targets support to families with children under four years of age in areas of high social need. As this programme is to double the numbers of children who are supported over the next four years, additional accommodation will be required, which would be available at the Croft site if the nursery provision was transferred to the two schools.
- 3.20 This option would not result in a loss of provision, but would provide a positive opportunity to enhance the overall provision for children and families in the area.
- 3.21 Connah's Quay High School would become an 11-16 school, with the post -16 provision accessed in the adjacent post-16 hub. There is a possible sharing of facilities namely laboratories at the School and vocational facilities at Deeside College. This would provide the full range of curriculum access to the students entering year 12 and 13.

- 3.22 This option which involves the establishment of the post-16 hub did not meet with the approval of many at the consultation meetings. Certain members of staff and the governing body at Connah's Quay High School were particularly critical of this option. Parents however were generally positive about the preferred option.
- 3.23 The analysis of the responses from the Queensferry, Shotton and Connah's Quay area however shows an overall majority in agreement with the proposal in both consultation exercises.
- 3.24 The post-16 hub is a pivotal element of the transformation of post-16 provision in North Flintshire. Providers (Flintshire Secondary Headteachers and Deeside College) confirmed that a centre in Connah's Quay was the best option in order to rationalise the sixth form provision across the schools, in accordance with Welsh Government policy. This work was undertaken independently by consultants funded by the then Welsh Assembly Government.
- 3.25 Whilst acknowledging the individual issues raised by staff and Governors, the overall advantages to all the affected young people would outweigh the objections. This conclusion is confirmed by the responses to the consultations.
- 3.26 Responses specifically about the proposed closure of the Croft Nursery were not commonly related to the accommodation of Nursery age children in the same school as 16 year olds.
- 3.27 The site currently accommodates children from 4 years of age in its reception, so the extension of the age-range would not have a significant effect. Even as one integrated school, the Primary phase children would always be accommodated separately from the Secondary phase. There has never been a suggestion of shared accommodation. Some respondents praised the quality of provision at the Croft Nursery. This has not been an issue. Any proposed transfer of provision with existing staff should not have a negative effect, and closer integration of the foundation phase will have a positive effect on learner outcomes. Many respondents commented on the possibilities of smooth transition through the different phases of education.
- 3.28 **3. Buckley, Mynydd Isa & Mold Preferred Option – To retain 11-16 provision at Elfed High School. Rationalise to 600 places, to include Additional Learning Needs and other education, leisure and cultural uses.**
- 3.29 There is a positive vision to develop and enhance Westwood Primary School on its current site, together with a willingness to consider possible relocation of office accommodation from the Westwood Centre to the Elfed campus.

- 3.30 The increase in pupil numbers in the Buckley area has led to oversubscription in some of the town's Primary schools. There is potential for the capacity of Westwood Primary School to be reinstated in order to provide additional Primary places and to meet the increase in demand. This would be in accordance with the Welsh Government Guidance to Local Authorities to use existing school capacity and not to expand those popular schools, at the expense of others. Consultation provided a clear message that the movement of Primary provision to the Elfed High School site was not acceptable to this community at this point in time.
- 3.31 The accommodation at Elfed High School continues to remain too large for projected 11 to 16 pupil numbers. Further consideration needs to be given to developing options for secondary provision in the Buckley area and for alternative uses to safeguard school provision. There are a range of alternative uses available for surplus school accommodation which can be of benefit to education and community. They include alternative public service, leisure and cultural uses. As well as increasing efficiency within the campus, these may also safeguard infrastructure for any long term changes in patterns of demographic demand.
- 3.32 Meeting the expectations of the Welsh Government in relation to the organisation and rationalisation of sixth form provision is a challenge for schools and the Authority.
- 3.33 A significant body of opinion, including the Governing Body of Elfed High School have expressed the view that post-16 education should be retained at the school. However, it is acknowledged that the present number on-roll in the sixth form is below the level which can provide financial viability, and to efficiently sustain the required breadth of curriculum in accordance with the Learning and Skills measure. From the projections of student numbers currently available it is unlikely that the viability issues will be resolved and as a result, the option of establishing the 11-16 provision, with post-16 being accessed elsewhere provides the best in terms of provision for students in the community. Sufficient places are available for the whole of the post-16 provision in the Alun High School Mold.
- 3.34 As part of any emerging arrangements related to the rationalisation of post-16 provision, is the role of partners in other sectors of education to provide enhanced adult and community provision, for the benefit of the community as a whole. The future development of the post-16 provision has been subject to discussion during the preparation of the Strategic Outline Case for post-16 education which was submitted for consideration by the Welsh Assembly in July, 2010.

- 3.35 The programme board made up of all post-16 providers which formulated the options at that time will be closely engaged in developing the out-workings of any agreed options as part of this review.
- 3.36 It is clear that the strategy for sustainable post-16 provision shows that developments in any area will have an interlinked effect on other provision. An holistic approach to the post-16 provision will provide a basis for further development in the area.
- 3.37 The consultation process provided a range of stakeholders with different methodologies which best suited their needs. Informal public consultation events for parents/carers, individual meetings with Teachers other school staff, Governors and series of workshops for Children & Young People.
- 3.38 The consultation meetings revealed:
- The preferred option gained varied levels of support from local communities, schools communities and local members, in terms of being beneficial in achieving educational and community objectives, meeting Council and Welsh Government policy and being affordable and achievable.
- 3.39 Significant feelings were expressed in the wish to retain post -16 provision, but without reference to the affordability of this. Responses also indicated a feeling that large communities should be able to sustain a post-16 provision. However, if the local community for one reason or another is not supporting the provision, the school is effectively funding a provision that is not affordable.
- 3.40 In the case of Elfed High School, the Headteacher and Governors have stated that the post – 16 provision is unsustainable with the present and projected numbers. The authority is assisting the school to move to a point of change, and in the consultation, a suggested withdrawal of the post – 16 provision has been put forward from September 2014. The registered students at that time in both years 12 and 13 would continue their courses at the Elfed School in accordance with the arrangements in place at the time. All future post-16 courses would be provided at Alun School Mold as detailed previously.
- 3.41 Analysis of the responses shows a disagreement with the proposals in both of the consultation exercises.

Responses to the consultations on the preferred option:

Buckley, Mynydd Isa and Mold	49 responses	28%
Queensfarry, Shotton & Connah's Quay	105 responses	60%
Holywell	21 responses	12%

In addition the responses received specifically from Children and Young People are as follows:

Buckley, Mynydd Isa and Mold	8 responses	2.1%
Queensferry, Shotton & Connah's Quay	265 responses	67.9%
Holywell	117 responses	30%

Responses from consultees in each of the areas were requested on the form which was distributed with the consultation document. Consultees were asked to rate how strongly they agreed with the preferred option.

3.42 Buckley, Mynydd Isa and Mold

To retain 11-16 provision at Elfed High School. Rationalise to 600 places, to include Additional Learning Needs and other education, leisure and cultural uses.

	Buckley	
Strongly Agree	15	30.6%
Tend to Agree	4	8.2%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0	0.0%
Tend to Disagree	2	4.0%
Strongly Disagree	28	57.2%
Total	49	100.0%

Children and Young People

	Buckley	
Strongly Agree	1	12.5%
Tend to Agree	1	12.5%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0	0.0%
Tend to Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	6	75.0%
Total	8	100.0%

3.43 **Queensferry, Shotton and Connah's Quay**

Develop a 3-16 facility at John Summers High School with a Post-16 hub at Connah's Quay High School

	Queensferry, Shotton and Connah's Quay	
Strongly Agree	36	34.3%
Tend to Agree	16	15.2%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	6	5.7%
Tend to Disagree	4	3.8%
Strongly Disagree	43	41.0%
Total	105	100.0%

Children and Young People

	Queensferry, Shotton and Connah's Quay	
Strongly Agree	53	20.1%
Tend to Agree	103	39.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	49	18.6%
Tend to Disagree	14	5.3%
Strongly Disagree	45	17.0%
Total	264	100.0%

3.44 Holywell – High School, Ysgol Perth y Terfyn and Ysgol y Fron

Build a new High School for pupils aged 11-16, together with a new primary school to replace Ysgol Perth y Terfyn and Ysgol y Fron

	Holywell	
Strongly Agree	3	14.3%
Tend to Agree	7	33.3%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	4.8%
Tend to Disagree	4	19.0%
Strongly Disagree	6	28.6%
Total	21	100.0%

Children and Young People

	Holywell	
Strongly Agree	1	0.9%
Tend to Agree	1	0.9%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	14	12.0%
Tend to Disagree	6	5.1%
Strongly Disagree	95	81.1%
Total	117	100.0%

3.45 In all consultation exercises, the overall number of responses has to be taken in context with the overall number of potential consultees.

3.46 All responses to the consultations have been considered carefully. It is acknowledged that there is a body of opinion against some of the options put forward, however, it is noted that a significant number of respondents were positive about the proposals.

3.47 In considering those objections to the re-organisation of post-16 provision, it is necessary to balance these against the need for the Authority to respond to National Policies in relation to the transformation of sixth-form provision, reduction in surplus places and the need for modern comprehensive centres which can offer a wide curriculum in accordance with current requirements. Some schools face serious financial deficits as a result of an unviable provision. This is a situation that cannot be sustained.

3.48 In relation to the proposals to transfer the nursery provision from the Croft Nursery to neighbouring Primary schools, the proposed changes would increase provision for children and families in the community. The issues raised about segregation of young children in a 3-16 age range school have been acknowledged, but the present practical arrangements at existing schools demonstrate the effectiveness of the segregation. This would be maintained in a 3-16 school.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That Members agree to progress the development of the preferred options for each of the areas and that Statutory Notices are prepared for publication when appropriate.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 If options are approved for progression to the Statutory stage, the commitment to fund the overall £64.2m 21 Century Schools Programme will be called upon.

5.02 The liability for Flintshire County Council under these arrangements would be £32.1m in accordance with the agreement of County Council on 1 March 2012, and the subsequent inclusion of the Prudential Borrowing in the Medium Term Financial plan.

5.03 The indicative capital development costs which have been included in the Strategic Outline Business Case for the preferred options are as follows:

Holywell High School, Ysgol Perth y Terfyn and Ysgol y Fron	£31.25m
Queensferry, Shotton and Connah's Quay and Post-16 Hub	£18.25m
3-16 Facility at John Summers	£14.70m

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 No impact as a result of this report.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 No impact as a direct result of this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 No impact as a direct result of this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 No direct impact as a result of this report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

No further consultations needed as a result of the proposals.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 A total of 33 meetings held in two rounds – Feb/Mar and November 2012.

12.00 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Final report from Consultation Response Forms

Appendix 2 – Additional comments/correspondence received.

(Both Appendices available in the Member's Library for viewing)

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

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