

## **FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** **LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** **THURSDAY, 6 MARCH 2014**

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

**SUBJECT:** **ANNUAL SCHOOL MODERNISATION REPORT**

### **1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01 To update members on the progress made with School Modernisation.

### **2.00 BACKGROUND**

2.01 The Flintshire School Modernisation Strategy sets out the need to make schools 'fit for purpose' for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This strategy complements the Welsh Government 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme, which aims to provide upgraded school learning environments to reduce surplus places and to ensure efficient use of resources.

2.02 Various National initiatives have been produced by the Welsh Government relating to the provision of school places. These include the reduction in overall surplus places in both Primary and Secondary schools and the rationalisation of post-16 provision.

2.03 Significant re-organisations of school provision require large capital investment. This investment has traditionally been met by a combination of Local Authority and National funding streams.

2.04 The third and last tranche of the School Building improvement Grant (SBIG) grant been used to establish the new Ysgol Ty Ffynnon in Shotton to replace the existing Shotton infant and Taliesin Junior Schools. The cost of the school is £6.4m based on 70% Welsh Government and 30% Flintshire County Council contributions.

2.05 Following the cessation of the SBIG grant, the only current source of capital funding from central Government is via the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme. This grant funding is available only if an Authority is able to demonstrate that its modernisation proposals meet national criteria, and is shared on a 50/50 Local Authority/ Welsh government cost basis.

- 2.06 The Minister for Education and Skills approved the Flintshire 21 Century Schools Programme in December 2012, and since then development of the various schemes in conjunction with schools and Coleg Cambria has taken place.
- 2.07 Final consultations were held in the communities of Holywell in relation to the new Secondary and Primary Schools, Connah's Quay in respect of the proposed post-16 Hub and Queensferry in respect of a new 3-16 age range school to replace the existing John Summers High School. Statutory notices were published in July of 2013, and Ministerial decision is awaited on the proposals for the three communities.
- 2.08 Consultations were also held in respect of a reduction in age range of the Elfed High School in Buckley, to form an 11-16 age range school. Ministerial approval for this proposal was received in December 2013, and will entail the cessation of recruitment of year 12 students to the sixth form from September 2014, whilst existing students will complete their courses at the Elfed High School. Alternative provision is available at the Mold Alun High School.
- 2.09 Cabinet has also commissioned local consultation on the principles and actions needed to address sustainability of post-16 provision in Saltney and Flint. The two high schools located in Flint have recently extended their local collaborative working to form the Flint 6 where provision is shared between Flint High School and St. Richard Gwyn Catholic High School arrangements. This arrangement would need to be underpinned by appropriate planning, governance and operational arrangements in order to be resilient. Cabinet are scheduled to receive a report on the outcomes of community consultation in Flint at a forthcoming meeting.
- 2.10 Consultations in the community of Saltney will take place before Easter 2014 in order to consider options for the post 16 provision and ensuring resilience for the school into the future. The current consortium arrangements which enable the school to meet the Learning and Skills measure in respect of the post-16 curriculum will come to an end with the opening of the Connah's Quay Hub in 2016, so arrangements to harmonise the curriculum offer at the schools and the Hub from that date will need to be discussed in the summer term of 2014.
- 2.11 The proposals satisfy the Welsh Government directive to local Authorities to 'transform' their post – 16 provision to make it more effective for students and cost efficient by reducing duplication of provision, particularly in schools where the sixth form provision is small.

### **3.00 CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.01 The Band A schemes of the 21st Century Schools Programme are progressing according to schedule. Final plans for the new Holywell schools have been submitted for planning approval, as have those for the post – 16 Hub at Connah’s Quay. Design details are still being finalised for the proposed 3-16 school in Queensferry.
- 3.02 The Local Authority now needs to consider a number of potential ‘Band B’ schemes for submission to Welsh Government for funding via the next tranche of 21 Century Schools. This funding is not expected to be available until 2017.
- 3.03 Plans to occupy surplus school places at the Elfed High School are currently being drawn up, in accordance with the agreed statutory proposal to use surplus places for Education, Leisure or Additional Learning Needs purposes.
- 3.04 A closure of a small primary school was effected in September of 2013 and the series of consultations and approvals for the amalgamation of infant and junior schools is now complete. With the completion of the new primary school in Holywell, all infant and junior schools will have been closed, and new all-through primary schools established in their place.
- 3.05 The issue of amalgamated schools operating on split sites will be a priority concern for funding bids to band B of the Welsh Government 21st Century Schools programme.
- 3.06 There is a need to commission further review work in relation to primary education as some primary schools have high percentages of surplus places. Some have high backlogs of repairs and maintenance. Some have shortcomings in terms of outcomes for the pupils. The criteria of the Flintshire School Modernisation Strategy will be applied in order to prioritise the review.

### **4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.01 That members note the progress outlined in the report.

### **5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.01 The 21st Century Schools programme current tranche is funded via the Welsh government and Flintshire Local Authority funding package of £64.2m.

## **6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

- 6.01 The establishing of new learning environments, particularly in those communities first areas can have a positive effect on the outcomes for children and young people in those areas. It is recognised that improved learning environments have a positive effect on outcomes for learners generally.

## **7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

- 7.01 New Schools are designed to meet with the requirements of the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM), which ensures the highest standards in terms of environmental impact, and the incorporation of the latest technologies in the efficient use of energy, which will reduce future revenue costs for the schools.

## **8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 8.01 There are no equalities implications from this report.

## **9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.01 Re-organisations of schools will impact in various ways on the personnel employed. Whenever there is an impact on the workforce of school modernisation proposals, the Flintshire County council policies related to personnel matters together with the National Teachers Pay and Conditions documents and adhered to in order to minimise any negative effect.

## **10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED**

- 10.01 No consultations required for this report.

## **11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

- 11.01 No consultations required for this report.

## **12.00 APPENDICES**

- 12.01 None.

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

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