

**FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:**           **CABINET**

**DATE:**                   **TUESDAY, 18 MARCH 2014**

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

**SUBJECT:**               **RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATIONS ON 6TH  
FORM PROVISION AT ST RICHARD GWYN  
CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL AND FLINT HIGH  
SCHOOL**

**1.00   PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01    To inform members of the responses to the consultation on the options for post-16 provision in the Flint area and to set out the process for Cabinet evaluating the options before taking a policy position.

**2.00   BACKGROUND**

2.01    In March 2013 Members approved consultation in relation to post-16 provision in Flint. This followed the consultations held in relation to the post-16 provision at Buckley Elfed, Holywell, Connah's Quay and Queensferry. The consultation took place from the Autumn of 2013 following requests on timing from the schools involved.

2.02    The current post-16 provision located in Flint is separate Sixth Forms serving the two school communities. In September 2013 the two schools launched an informal collaboration between Flint High School and St. Richard Gwyn Catholic High School, known as the Flint 6. This is an informal arrangement. Students walk between the two schools to access the curriculum opportunities delivered across the partners.

2.03    In accordance with the Welsh Government approved business cases for transformation of post-16 education in Flintshire, the new Sixth Form Centre at Connah's Quay is scheduled to be opened in September 2016. This will provide the whole curriculum on one site, and will be the designated destination for post-16 students from Holywell, Connah's Quay, Shotton and Queensferry. An independent Gateway Review in the Autumn of 2013 supported the state of readiness for implementation.

2.04    The presence of new high quality provision would be expected to have an impact on student preferences and heightens the need for appropriate strategic planning by other providers.

2.05 In recognition of the different ethos of Flint High School as the local community school and the Catholic ethos of St. Richard Gwyn, which serves the whole County, a different set of options for each school was presented at the consultations. In each case the content of the consultation papers was “signed off” in terms of accuracy by the Headteachers of the individual schools.

2.06 **The consultation options for St. Richard Gwyn Catholic High School were:**

1. Retain 11-19 provision at St. Richard Gwyn Catholic high School

2. Retain 11-19 provision at St. Richard Gwyn Catholic high School and develop links with Coleg Cambria (Deeside College) including vocational pathways in order to provide a comprehensive curriculum including the requirements of the Learning and Skills measure for all learners. Strengthen the pastoral and chaplaincy provision for Catholic learners accessing vocational Education or Training.

3. Retain 11-16 provision at St. Richard Gwyn Catholic high School. Post-16 provision would be accessed at the new post-16 hub from September 2016, with St. Richard Gwyn Catholic High School as founding partner involved in governance and operational delivery.

4. Retain 11-19 provision at St. Richard Gwyn Catholic High School and formalise collaboration with Flint High School in seeking to maintain the post-16 provision between the two schools.

2.07 **The Consultation Options for Flint High School were:**

1. Retain 11-16 provision at Flint High School. Use any surplus accommodation to accommodate other education, leisure or cultural uses. Post-16 provision would be accessed at the new Hub at Connah’s Quay from September 2016.

2. Retain 11-19 provision at Flint High School and formalise collaboration with St. Richard Gwyn Catholic High School in seeking to maintain the post-16 provision between the two schools

2.08 In option 1 at Flint High School, the existing 16-19 provision would be phased out and closed to new students for September 2016. Students who had already started on courses at that time would be able to continue and complete the course at the school. Future post-16 provision would be centred at the post-16 Hub at Connah’s Quay. Students integrated into post-16 provision at Flint High School from Ysgol Maes Hyfryd would be similarly integrated into provision at the

proposed new Hub at Connah's Quay.

2.09 Meetings were held for staff/Governors and Parents at the two schools in December, with wide distribution of the written consultation documents. The consultation period in accordance with Welsh government requirements ended on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2014.

2.10 Responses were received via e-mail, letter, web page and the hard-copy response forms.

### **3.00 CONSIDERATIONS**

3.01 The consultation received the following level of response forms:

- 630 – Flint High School Response Forms
- 453 – St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School Response Forms
- 470 – Young People's Consultation Response Forms

3.02 There is evidence of multiple completion of forms. 216 students completed a consultation form for both the Flint High and St Richard Gwyn consultations. 222 students completed a form for Flint High, St Richard Gwyn and also for the Children and Young People consultations. A comprehensive report containing the details of all the response forms received by the Authority has been placed in the Members' Library.

3.03 St. Richard Gwyn Catholic High School Consultation Paper responses were as follows:

1. How strongly do you agree with the consultation Option 1 for St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School? (**Retain 11-19 education**)

Strongly Agree	79 (17.4%)
Tend to Agree	17 (3.8%)
Neither Agree nor Disagree	14 (3.1%)
Tend to Disagree	8 (1.8%)
Strongly Disagree	329 (72.6%)

2. How strongly do you agree with the consultation Option 2 for St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School? (**Retain 11-19 provision, and develop links with Coleg Cambria**)

Strongly Agree	41 (9.1%)
Tend to Agree	23 (5.1%)
Neither Agree nor Disagree	19 (4.2%)
Tend to Disagree	22 (4.9%)
Strongly Disagree	342 (75.5%)

3. How strongly do you agree with the consultation Option 3 for St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School? **(Establish 11-16 provision with post-16 based at the Connah's Quay Hub)**

Strongly Agree	9 (2.0%)
Tend to Agree	2 (0.4%)
Neither Agree nor Disagree	10 (2.2%)
Tend to Disagree	17 (3.8%)
Strongly Disagree	406 (89.6%)

4. How strongly do you agree with the consultation Option 4 for St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School? **(11-19 provision at St. Richard Gwyn and further develop the links with Flint High School for post-16 provision)**

Strongly Agree	385 (85.0%)
Tend to Agree	28 (6.2%)
Neither Agree nor Disagree	12 (2.6%)
Tend to Disagree	0 (0.0%)
Strongly Disagree	24 (5.3%)

3.04

The breakdown of responses shows that the vast majority of responses were from students:

Parent/Carer	72 (15.9%)
Teacher	11 (2.4%)
Support Staff	5 (1.1%)
Governor	14 (3.1%)
Other	369 (81.5%)

**These were categorised as:**

- 1 Diocesan Director
  - 1 Diocesan Office
  - 1 Former parent and former teacher
  - 2 Former parents
  - 9 Former students
  - 1 Former trainee teacher at St. Richard Gwyn
  - 3 Grandparents
  - 1 Member of public
  - 1 Potential parent
  - 1 Retired Head of 6th Form
  - 320 Students
  - 28 Did not complete a category.
- 3.05

Flint High School Consultation Paper responses were as follows:

1. How strongly do you agree with the consultation Option 1 for Flint High School? **(11-16 provision at the school, with Post-16 to be accessed at the new Hub in Connah's Quay)**

Strongly Agree	13 (2.1%)
Tend to Agree	4 (0.6%)
Neither Agree nor Disagree	9 (1.4%)
Tend to Disagree	13 (2.1%)
Strongly Disagree	591 (93.8%)

2. How strongly do you agree with the consultation Option 2 for Flint High School? **(Retain 11-18 provision and to continue to develop the collaboration with St. Richard Gwyn)**

Strongly Agree	591 (93.8%)
Tend to Agree	12 (1.9%)
Neither Agree nor Disagree	10 (1.6%)
Tend to Disagree	3 (0.5%)
Strongly Disagree	14 (2.2%)

- 3.06 The vast majority of respondents found the collaboration with St. Richard Gwyn to be the most acceptable option.
- 3.07 In the consultations in both St. Richard Gwyn and Flint High Schools, the majority of respondents were students at the schools. The responses from both school consultations and the dedicated consultation with young people strongly support development of collaborative arrangements of post-16 provision between the schools.
- 3.08 In addition to the response forms, frequently asked questions posed in the meetings and the responses are attached as an Appendix.
- 3.09 Letters sent from Town Council and individuals echo the messages in the main response, in that the new collaborative arrangement between the two schools is felt to be a positive move, and that it needs time to prove itself. The letters and e-mailed responses to the consultations are available for members in the members' library, together with the written replies from the Authority.
- 3.10 Correspondents felt that there would be a lack of pastoral care for students, that there would be a need for transport, for which some would need to pay under the current Flintshire post-16 school transport policy, and also that quality of provision was an unknown at the present.
- 3.11 The main response to reservations about quality is that the Hub would offer high levels of provision delivered by the best of existing practitioners, based on the positive contributions of partner schools and the College. Deeside College (Coleg Cambria) as a key partner has received particularly positive feedback from Estyn. There is no reason to believe that the quality of provision in a new Hub would be of any lower standard.

- 3.12 Issues have been raised over pastoral care and concerns that students would need to integrate into a more impersonal larger environment. As well as through designing smaller pastoral groups supported by skilled professionals, this can be countered by the fact that school pupils have traditionally attended College for a variety of courses, particularly vocational courses, including those provided for pupils under the age of 16.
- 3.13 The College has a well developed pastoral system, and is a centre for the provision of courses to particularly vulnerable students. For example, Ysgol Maes Hyfryd is eager to develop close working links with the proposed new Sixth Form Centre, which would provide for those young people who could integrate easily into a more mainstream provision. This would in turn free up provision at Maes Hyfryd for those young people who are currently attending special provision outside of the County.
- 3.14 Much discussion has centred on the role of the sixth form in encouraging high standards of attainment and staff recruitment. Although this may on the face of it provide a persuasive argument, the only 11-16 school in Flintshire has amongst the best of outcomes and has never experienced difficulties in the recruitment of highly qualified and experienced staff. In the experience of senior officers, the situation is not dissimilar in other areas with more 11-16 provision. The experience of 11-16 schools is that they provide the same opportunities for older students to mentor and support younger students and also to provide community leadership as those with sixth forms. The opportunities come earlier at Key Stage 4.
- 3.15 The key test for any proposal for school organisational change is whether it has realistic prospects of securing better opportunities and outcomes for learners, together with greater resilience and efficiency. The case for the consolidation of small sixth form provision at Connah's Quay has already been supported locally and nationally. The decision here is whether any options in relation to the two Flint schools are also sufficiently resilient to take forward or whether further work is needed.
- 3.16 Flint High School and St Richard Gwyn have developed a joint business case for a collaborative sixth form arrangement. The collaboration, which is embryonic, is being run in the current academic year with the full support and self-belief of the two governing bodies. The Council's position, communicated to both schools, is that if proven as a workable and sustainable business case, then the collaboration will be supported, otherwise we would have no alternative but to pursue another option. Both schools accept that the governance and business model for the collaboration is in development as the collaboration is new. The onus is on the schools to prove, to themselves and to the Council, and beyond doubt, that the collaboration is workable and sustainable.

3.17 A resilient business case would not require the issuing of statutory proposals, but would require us all to ensure that in its delivery it continues to offer efficiency and effectiveness for learners. The two schools have been invited to make a full business case submission which includes:

- purpose and aims of the collaboration;
- shared vision and ethos for the collaboration;
- governance arrangements (noting that the intent is to legally retain two separate sixth forms but to act as one on planning, funding and delivery);
- a statement of commitment to medium term collaboration between the two schools with a dispute resolution procedure should there be a material disagreement e.g. over funding;
- joint accountabilities to the Governing Bodies, the Local Authority and to Estyn;
- educational standards and ongoing improvement strategy (including performance measures, targets and reporting arrangements);
- evidence of the planned curriculum provision and meeting the breadth requirements of the Learning and Skills Measure;
- vision and arrangements for pastoral care, inclusion, anti-poverty working, wellbeing and other operational management arrangements;
- strategy for economic and effective use of resources and co-funding agreement;
- sustainable funding projections to 2017-18 with detailed supporting evidence;
- sustainable pupil projection figures to 2017-18 with detailed supporting evidence; and
- processes for annual review (and ideally a proposal for a more formal mid-point review) on the resilience and sustainability of the collaboration.

3.18 At the time of writing the report the two schools were in the process of completing their own business model and providing the Council with a complete and final business case for consideration. Until the final business case is available and has been evaluated a formal recommendation cannot be made. It is central to the business case that sufficient sixth form pupils are appropriately recruited and retained, securing sufficient funding to meet the requirements of the Learning and Skills Measure and to be resilient and sustainable for the medium term.

#### **4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.01 Cabinet notes the evaluation of consultation process.
- 4.02 Cabinet notes that the two schools are in the process of finalising and submitting their final business case in support of their preferred option for a voluntary collaboration.
- 4.03 Cabinet is prepared to evaluate the options and take a policy position once the final business case has been received.

#### **5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.01 Funding for each school can only be drawn down in accordance with the numbers of post-16 students on programmes of study. Flint High School currently has 92 on roll and is well below even the low local policy number of 120 to indicate viable numbers of post-16 students. At St. Richard Gwyn the number is currently 131. Clearly, there are efficiencies that can be secured through collaborative working. These would be lower or at best similar to consolidation of post-16 activity in Flint on one site only. If working collaboratively, the funding model will need to demonstrate that St. Richard Gwyn with the larger provision is not providing a hidden subsidy for the smaller provision at Flint High School.

#### **6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

- 6.01 None as a direct result of this report

#### **7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

- 7.01 None as a direct result of this report.

#### **8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 8.01 None as a direct result of this report.

#### **9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.01 None as a direct result of this report.

#### **10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED**

- 10.01 Any decision to make changes to sixth form provision would require a further report seeking approval for the publication of a statutory notice, which would start a period for lodging formal objections.

## **11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

11.01 Consultation meetings and written consultation were undertaken with the school communities between 16<sup>th</sup> December 2013 and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014.

## **12.00 APPENDICES**

12.01 Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions for Flint High School and St. Richard Gwyn Catholic High School.

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

All individual letters and responses have been placed in the Members' Library.

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