

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **6 AUGUST 2015**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER, EDUCATION AND YOUTH**

SUBJECT: **SCHOOL MODERNISATION – SCHOOL STANDARDS
AND ORGANISATION ACT 2013
– JOHN SUMMERS HIGH SCHOOL**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.01 To inform Cabinet of the responses from the statutory consultation period on the sustainability of John Summers High School and options for future educational provision in the area.
- 1.02 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.

2.00 BACKGROUND

- 2.01 The Cabinet in February 2013 agreed to open a consultation on the sustainability of post-16 provision and opportunities, to make best use of school resources, in accordance with the requirements of the 21st Century Schools Programme and the agreed Strategic Outline Case.
- 2.02 The pause and review of the Queensferry Campus project was held due to concern around resilience of the critical data required to support submission of a capital business case to Welsh Government (WG) for funding through the 21st Century Schools programme.
- 2.03 Following consideration of the risk posed by low current and projected pupil numbers for the John Summers High School the Cabinet later resolved, in February 2015, to open a further consultation with stakeholders on how best to secure resilient high quality education for the local area and its learners. This most recent consultation ran from 5 June to 17 July.
- 2.04 Under the School Organisational Code only those proposals which receive an objection from a local authority, or which propose the removal or establishment of sixth form provision, will be referred to Welsh Government Ministers. Any proposal for John Summers High School would therefore be determined at Ministerial level.

2.05 Education and Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 30 July 2015 to consider the outcomes from consultation. Comments from that meeting will be reported orally to Cabinet.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 The report to Scrutiny (at Appendix 1) sets out that John Summers High School cannot be sustained year on year with a low annual intake of pupils into year seven and a school budget under increasing pressure.

3.02 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 secondary 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.

3.03 During the consultation many responses have focused on three main concerns:

- the range of alternative schools available to current and future pupils and how their welfare will be guaranteed;
- how pupils will get to and from an alternative school; and
- how students in GCSE study groups would be given continuity of study and support and not be disadvantaged.

3.04 The importance of all three issues is fully recognised and answers in relation to each issue are considered in the Scrutiny and Consultation reports. There are sufficient places in Connah's Quay High School and Saltney St. David's for pupils who would be transferred if the school were to close. New pupils would also be eligible for Hawarden High School at year seven entry. The options for transport being provided, and subsidised in the case of families in need, are being worked through. Students in all year groups would be supported and guided through their future education options and choices. The current GCSE study groups would also be given support to complete their current examination choices without disruption.

3.05 Estyn in its response to the consultation has commented authoritatively that the consultation document provides a clear rationale for a proposal to close based on Council strategy and projected pupil numbers.

3.06 The Education and Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee received the report attached at Appendix 1 at their special meeting held on 30

July 2015.

The Committee passed comment on the following issues which had been raised during the public consultation: pupil transfer and transition; transport; redeployment of teaching staff and teaching and support expertise; support for new uniform provision. These are all issues which are recognised as needing support in implementation of any change.

The Leader, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member, Chief Executive and Chief Officer were present to take part in the discussion and hear the comments first hand to relay to the Cabinet.

The Committee made the following proposal for consideration by Cabinet:-

That Flintshire County Council planning officers work closely with the two developers of the Northern Gateway site, to come to an arrangement where a sum of money can be agreed and ring fenced to build a new secondary school when the pupil number trigger is reached.

The Council's trigger for a sustainable secondary school is 600 students or 120 students per 11-16 year group.

The Committee made no other proposal for the Cabinet to take into consideration.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 Cabinet is requested to consider the responses from the statutory consultation period on the sustainability of John Summers High School and options for future education in the area.
- 4.02 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.
- 4.03 Cabinet is requested to determine the next steps for school organisational change in the area.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 Financial implications are considered in the Scrutiny Report at Appendix 1.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 School reorganisational change is part of our work to overcome the impact of poverty.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 Key environmental issues are addressed within the consultation report. Reduction in buildings through school organisational change has a positive impact on through a reduced “carbon footprint”.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 School modernisation aims to:

- provide equality of opportunity for all children to receive the best possible education in Flintshire schools; and
- sustainable options for education in Flintshire that meet the needs of children and young people now and in the future.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 Personnel implications are considered in the Scrutiny Report at Appendix 1.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 If the Cabinet decision is to proceed to a statutory proposal, the consultation report is issued to the Welsh Minister and the Council will publish a Statutory notice providing a 28 day notice period for objections. If objections are received, the Council prepares an Objection Report, setting out the grounds for objection and the Council’s response. This report is also forwarded to the Minister to support final adjudication.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 The 42 day period of consultation for the proposals at John Summers High School commenced on 5th June 2015 and ended on 17th July 2015.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix 1: Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Report - 30th July 2015

Appendix 2: Consultation Report

Appendix 3: Transition Plan

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

The following are available in the Members' library:

- Appendix A – Timeline for the Statutory Code
- Appendix B - Pause and review Cabinet report 17th February 2015 with data pack
- Appendix C - Copies of consultation documentation and all responses
- Appendix D - Hawarden High School pupil map

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