

CABINET MEETING

Date of Meeting	15 th September 2015
Report Subject	School Modernisation – School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 – John Summers High School
Portfolio Holder	Executive Member- Education and Youth
Report Author	Chief Officer- Education and Youth
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is presented to Cabinet following a 'call in' of its previous decision on John Summers High School for reconsideration by the Education and Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

At its meeting on 6th August 2015 Cabinet agreed to proceed to the next stage for the closure of John Summers and to refer the proposals for school organisational change at John Summers High School to the Welsh Government Minister.

Cabinet also made a commitment to consider options for home to school transport in the area should John Summers High School close.

The call in was initiated because of concerns from the community over transition plans for pupils, transport to and from alternative schools and its cost, and the need for assurance about the future use of the site.

The previous Cabinet decision was not conditional on the agreement of detailed advanced plans on transition and transport. These issues were and are to be resolved through the detailed planning of transition.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which met on 24th August, referred the issue back to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Cabinet is reassured by the plans for transition and the openness to consider home to school transport options explored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
2	That Cabinet reaffirm their commitment to reviewing in detail options for home to school transport.
3	That Cabinet direct the officer and head teacher planning group to plan in detail for transition taking into account the feedback of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
4	That a commitment is made to a full public consultation exercise on the future use of the site, should the school be closed, including the options for open space and fields in trust protection.
5	That Cabinet reaffirms the previous decision to refer the proposal of closure of the Sixth Form at John Summers High School from 31 st August 2016 and closure of the School from 31 st August 2017 to the Welsh Government.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLORING THE CALL IN CONCERNS
1.01	<p>The call in was made because the initiators felt that the Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its previous meeting (30th July 2015) had recognised some of the concerns which the local community had voiced during the consultation – notably transport plans for individual pupils, particularly those in the lead up to GCSE examinations and transport to and from alternative schools and its cost. The initiators of the call in had noted that the Cabinet at its meeting on 6th August had considered these concerns, but felt that there was a need for more detail and assurance. There had been local rumour over the future of the John Summers High School site and so they were seeking an assurance that there was no plan in place for its future disposal. In addition, they were asking that, should the school be closed, that a commitment be made for an open public consultation on the future options for the site including public open space.</p>
1.02	<p>At the call in meeting, the decision makers, represented by the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Education & Youth, supported by the Chief Executive, the 21st Century Schools Programme Manager and the Principal Learning Advisor (Secondary) gave detailed responses to all of the issues raised. However, at the end of the process, the committee resolved to refer the decision back to the Cabinet. It was acknowledged that a further report on a number of issues was already being prepared for the Cabinet.</p> <p>Home to School Transport</p>
1.03	<p>Cabinet had previously given a commitment to receiving a full and separate report on transport options in detail.</p>

1.04 Future transport arrangements, in the event of a school closure, cannot be planned in detail until parents and carers have expressed their preference for a new school, had their place confirmed through the school admissions team and have applied for home to school transport.

A timetable for planning is set out below:

Ministerial decision	February 2016 (expected)
Expression of preferences for School Admissions for September 2017	Starts - Sept 2016
Allocation of school Places	1 st March 2017 (statutory day)
Transport Applications	March 2017 onwards

1.05 Individual mileage calculations for the remaining John Summers High School cohort to the Connah's Quay High school (partnering school), have been re-run using the Council's "Autoroute" system. The mileage calculations take into account the pupils' home addresses, nearest available appropriate school and eligibility for transport from home to school in accordance with the current transport policy (excluding Hawarden High School which is not yet available for intake).

1.06 Out of the remaining John Summers High School cohort (predicted to be approximately 199 by September 2017) there would be approximately 140 pupils eligible for free transport (73.2%) to Connah's Quay High school.

Distance to Connah's Quay High School	Number of Pupils
Over 3 miles	89
Between 2.5 miles and 3 miles	62 (51 Income support)
Between 2 miles and 2.5 miles	19
Between 1 and 2 miles	19
Under 1 mile	2

1.07 Hawarden High School is currently full. It is likely that the majority of pupils within the existing John Summers High School cohort would not gain a place through the admission process should they apply for a place at Hawarden High School. However, Hawarden High School would become the nearest school for some pupils currently in primary education who would normally transfer to John Summers High School. Preferences for Hawarden High School would be managed in line with current admissions criteria. Those for whom it is the nearest school will take priority for places, displacing intake to the school from pupils expressing a preference from further afield. Hawarden High School has an admission number of 195.

1.08 Should John Summers High School close then Hawarden High School would be the nearest secondary school for pupils who reside in Sealand/Garden City. The route from Garden City to Hawarden High School would need to be reviewed under the Hazardous route criteria. If it is found that the route is hazardous, free transport would be provided from the Garden City area to Hawarden High School.

1.09 In the case of St David’s High School, Saltney, only pupils from the Sandycroft area refused a place at Hawarden High would be entitled to free transport to St David’s High School. Based on the predicted number of pupils and the current transport policy there would be approximately three pupils eligible for free transport to St David’s High School.

1.10 The four home to school transport options to be considered in more detail in the forthcoming Cabinet report on transport provision are as follows:

Option A	Apply current Home to School Transport Policy
Option B	Apply current Home to School Transport Policy with consideration given to additional discretionary transport for families on income support who do not meet the mileage criteria and/or have large family groups over two children (in the current year groups) and are between 2-2.5 miles away from the school.
Option C	Apply discretionary transport arrangements for the full current pupil cohort to the partnering school (transport from home area)
Option D	Apply discretionary transport arrangements for the full current pupil cohort to the partnering school (transport provided from Queensferry campus only)

Transition

1.11 A representative group of Secondary Heads was established to develop and evaluate future educational models for the area and included the Headteachers of John Summers High School, Hawarden High School, Connah’s Quay High School and St David’s High School, Saltney.

1.12 This group was integral to the development of the Statutory Proposal timeline with their prime consideration being the impact on learners. Their input led directly to the decision on a staggered timeline for proposed closure of post 16 from September 2016 and closure of the school (11-16) from September 2017 at John Summers High School. Consideration was also given to the timeline for the Code, the Ministerial decision and alignment to option choices at the local schools.

1.13 There was an outline agreement between the four schools that they work with the Local Authority to align their school option processes with the timescales of the School Organisation Code.

1.14 The representative group will continue to meet to work on detailed transition plans between September 2015 and December 2015. These plans will also include a contingency plan should the Minister not determine within the timeline prescribed in the Code. The timeline for closure and the transition plan, which the Authority is advocating, covers both eventualities and provides the best option for continuity of education.

1.15 The principles of the plan have also been discussed with GwE, the Regional School Improvement Service. They are in agreement with the proposal to build on collaborative work within the option choices whilst ensuring continuity with the core curriculum, which form approximately 60% activities at Key Stage 4. GwE agreed that the plan as it stood was positive and

	<p>provided enhanced option choices. Transition plans have also been positively viewed by Estyn in their response to the consultation.</p>
1.16	<p>A suggestion arose from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to remove or keep together the GCSE year group from the school by September 2016. In initial planning stages this was the starting point for the representative group. However, there are a number of issues why this is not possible to enforce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● it would not meet the requirements of the School Organisation Code in relation to pre-determination; ● it would offer no resilience to mitigate the risks for GCSE continuity should there be a delay in the Ministerial decision; ● it would offer no resilience to John Summers High School in offering appropriate breadth of curriculum; ● poor interaction with the timing and publication of options to learners; ● lack of coordination with schools' work on curriculum design; and ● lack of coordination with schools' staffing decisions. <p>How Transitional Plans will be developed</p>
1.17	<p>The representative group of Head Teachers will continue to meet and will be integral to the transition planning process.</p>
1.18	<p>Identification of vulnerable groups such as pupils with Additional Learning needs (ALN), Gypsy/Traveller pupils and Looked After Children (LAC) will be prioritised. This will enable continuation of support given to individual learners through the Inclusion Service.</p>
1.19	<p>Once alternative placements have been determined by pupils, parents and carers, Inclusion Officers will facilitate transition planning for young people with additional needs. Where the young person is subject to a Statement of Special Educational Need or Service Level Agreement, the school is required to hold annual review meetings. Each young person has a named officer and they would be in attendance at the meetings to oversee the proposed transition plan and support implementation of the agreed actions.</p>
1.20	<p>A similar review process is in place for young people who are 'Looked After' (LAC) by the Council. Each young person has a designated education officer who would work with all parties to support a smooth and effective transition.</p>
1.21	<p>The Local Authority provides distinct services to support children and young people who have English as an Additional Language and also the Gypsy/Traveller communities. Where young people are in receipt of individual intervention, this would transfer to the new school placement. Officers also have a key role in supporting cultural understanding. They offer training and awareness raising to all educational settings. They have well established links with all High Schools identified as part of the proposal and have supported young people from a range of backgrounds to achieve success. Officers also have a role to play in community development and cohesion, working as advocates and mediators on occasions between young people, their families and schools. The importance of this aspect of the Council's role is recognised should the proposal for closure be agreed.</p>

1.22	<p>Development of collaborative work between all schools in the North Flintshire consortium has successfully integrated pupils into shared teaching groups in the past. During discussions with the Headteacher at Connah's Quay High School, support was confirmed for a collaborative solution which covers learners' options and core curriculum entitlements. This approach will enhance option choices for John Summers High School pupils in the key year group regardless of the timing of the Ministerial decision. The professional advice is that the Authority needs to commit to the options offered to young people no matter what the decision may be.</p> <p>Future Use of John Summer High School Site</p>
1.23	<p>The Local Authority has no alternative plans for the future use of the John Summers site.</p>
1.24	<p>The Capital programme for Queensferry Primary School continues and this will be developed further as part of the Council's 21st Century schools programme, existing services located on the site namely, the Youth Centre, Pupil Referral unit and Community first office base will be retained.</p>
1.25	<p>Any future plans for the site would be brought back to Cabinet. Public consultation would be guaranteed.</p>
1.26	<p>The Leader of the Council had commented at Overview and Scrutiny that should the Minister take the decision to close the School he would be in favour of land being protected as "open space" for community use in perpetuity, due to the density of development in the locality and open and playing space being at a premium.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>The estimated costs of transport options will be included in the forthcoming transport report to Cabinet. Actual transport costs will be assessed once all families have chosen their preferred school. There is sufficient staff capacity to prepare the detailed transition plans for students.</p>

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	<p>If the Cabinet decision is to proceed, 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 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. This report is also forwarded to the Minister to support final adjudication.</p>

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	A Programme Board is set up to oversee the implementation of the Chief Officer portfolio business plans and manage these risks in close detail, with reports being made to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny at key stages of decision-taking and, later, performance reporting and evaluation.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Timetable for Statutory proposals

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Not Applicable Contact Officer: Damian Hughes Senior Manager, School Planning and Provision Telephone: 01352 704135 E-mail: damian.hughes@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Authoroute System – A software package used to determine mileage calculations for school admissions and home to school transport applications.