

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 18 th October 2016
Report Subject	School Modernisation – Nercwys VA School Review
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education and Youth
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education and Youth)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To inform Cabinet of the progress of the review to date.

To invite Cabinet to pause the review to allow time to consider its strategic options for collaboration and sustainable school estate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Cabinet is requested to consider the progress of discussions undertaken to date between the Council, Diocesan Authorities and the school's Governing Body.
2	Cabinet is requested to approve the request to pause the review and allow more time to follow through strategic options for collaboration and sustainability of its school estate.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE SCHOOL MODERNISATION – NERCWYS VA SCHOOL REVIEW
1.01	In June 2015, the cabinet determined that officers could undertake a soft consultation of Nercwys Voluntary Aided (VA) school.
1.02	<p>Nercwys VA school met a number of triggers for review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small School trigger – School Population under the National designated number for a small school.• Diminishing Resource Criteria - Schools supported by pupils not from their local community and/or small numbers within the community raise concern regarding sustainability within the schools portfolio, higher costs per pupil, unnecessary building and administration costs.• Building Condition Trigger – School Condition and Suitability issues.
1.03	<p>The Education Standards at the school are good and this is positively acknowledged by Welsh Governments categorisation (January 2015) as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• School as Standards group – 1• Improvement Capacity - A• Support Category – Green
1.04	A series of meetings have been held with Officers from the Council, Diocesan Authority and representatives of school governors, which looked at all possible options.
1.05	The Governing Body has acted as appropriate and passionate advocates on behalf of their school community. They have also had a clear understanding of the budgetary pressures on both the Council and small schools. The governors have indicated formally that they are willing to consider and pursue formal federation arrangements.
1.06	The Council has an excellent working relationship with the St Asaph Diocesan Authority. All parties feel that it would be prudent to pause the review to allow additional time to pursue further strategic options for collaboration to support a sustainable school network.
1.07	The Cabinet will be aware that The Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014 which came into force on 22 May 2014 give effect to LA's powers to federate schools. (School governors already have powers to federate by choice under provisions introduced in 2010. These powers have now been consolidated into the 2014 Regulations).

1.08	Under this Act a Voluntary Aided (VA) school is unable to federate with a community or foundation school. However VA schools are able to federate with other VA and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools. Alternatively Federation would be an option if they are able to persuade a community or foundation school to convert to VA or VC status.
1.09	As Cabinet is fully aware from reviews in other areas, reviewing schools, can cause uncertainty in the school community and it is important that we provide some certainty to ensure that the school can focus on continued education improvement.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no resource implications associated with this report.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Should cabinet agree with the recommendation currently no further consultations would be required as part of the School Organisation Code.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	A Programme Board is set up to oversee the implementation business plans and manage risks in close detail. High level risks will be reported to Programme board, Operational risks will be managed by the project team in accordance with agreed tolerances.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	No appendices.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None. 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	<p>Federation and Collaboration - The federation of schools is a legal process which enables schools to work together through a formal structured process by sharing a governing body that will make decisions in the best interest of all the schools, staff and pupils in that federation.</p> <p>The term federation is often used to describe many forms of collaboration between schools. The Statutory process of Federation is often referred to as “Hard Federation” An informal, non-statutory arrangement between schools is often called “soft federation” or collaboration, where schools have made a commitment to work together through some form of joint governance.</p> <p>School Organisation Code – The new School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 makes Local Authorities responsible (rather than the Welsh Ministers prior to October 2013) for the determination of most statutory school organisation proposals that receive objections. Such provisions apply to any proposals published on or after 1st October 2013 that consider the establishment, discontinuance or otherwise significantly alter schools.</p> <p>The Council does this in line with the Welsh Government’s statutory School Organisation Code</p> <p>http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/130719-school-organisation-codes-en.pdf</p>