

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 29th July 2014

Lead Member / Officer: Councillor Eryl Williams, Lead Member for Education

Report Author: Head of Customers and Education Support

Title: Modernising Education Programme

1. What is the report about?

This report is to update Cabinet Members of the progress on the Modernising Education Programme, and in particular seek approval for projects within the Programme. It also provides an overview of potential projects to be funded as part of the Corporate Plan.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

The Council is progressing an ambitious programme for investment in the school estate. This report provides information for Members to review current progress and understand the capital required for all of the projects. It also seeks approval to progress to the next stage of work for some projects.

3. What are the Recommendations?

Cabinet are asked:

- (i) To authorise the commencement of feasibility studies in respect of the projects set out in Appendix 2, the completion of which will be subject of future budget decisions.**
- (ii) To note the authority will continue to maintain provision at Ysgol Borthyn.**
- (iii) To note the requirement to consult on the future of Ysgol Rhewl following the feasibility study of the Glasdir site.**
- (iv) To approve proceeding to formal consultation for the proposed change to a school with a religious designation for Ysgol Esgob Morgan by closing it as a community school and re-opening it as a Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled school as of the 1st September 2015.**

4. 21st Century Schools Programme

4.1 The 21st Century Schools Programme continues to make progress with the business case approval mechanisms now completed for 3 of the 5 projects as illustrated below. The current financial commitments for 21st Century Schools Programme are attached in Appendix 1.

Project	Strategic Outline Case (SOC)	Outline Business Case (OBC)	Full Business Case (FBC)	Business Justification Case (BJC)	Timelines
Rhyl New School	Approved September 2013	Combined Business Case Approved March 2014			Anticipated Completion date – January 2016
Ysgol Glan Clwyd	Approved May 2013	Approved October 2013	Scheduled to be submitted Spring 2015		Anticipated Completion date – July 2017
Shared Faith Secondary	Submitted May 2014	tbc	Tbc		Anticipated Completion date – August 2018
Ysgol Bro Dyfrdwy				Approved April 2013	Completed – March 2014
Bodnant Community School				Approved April 2013	Anticipated Completion date – July 2016

4.2 Rhyl New School Project

4.3 In February 2014 Council gave approval for the Full Business Case for the Rhyl New School project to be submitted to the Welsh Government who subsequently confirmed their approval in April 2014. A separate Part II report is on this agenda regarding the next steps for this project.

4.4 Bodnant Community School

4.5 The Bodnant Community School extension project continues to progress. Members approved the Detailed Design stage of this project in February 2013. The Business Justification Case was approved by the Welsh Government in April 2013 and this allowed the Council to enter into a contract with the Welsh Government for the sum of £1.67m as their element of match funding for the project. Approval will be sought via the Council's regular Capital reports for the remainder of the Council's contribution of approximately £1.411m towards this project.

4.6 The planning application was submitted in June 2014, and is scheduled to be determined in July 2014. The current project timetable suggests an award of contract by November 2014. This should enable commencement of works by the start of 2015 and an estimated completion date of July 2016.

4.7 Faith Schools

4.8 The Strategic Outline Case for the Faith Secondary School project has been submitted to the Welsh Government and this will be considered in July. The Welsh Government have confirmed that *“the funding arrangements for Voluntary Aided schools within 21st Century Schools is an intervention rate of up to 85% from Welsh Government and 15% from the VA sector. The 85% will need to be sourced at programme level from Welsh Government’s 50% of your current programme costs this means that the 35% you would have initially had earmarked as your contribution may be deployed to other projects in your band A programme. I can confirm that this percentage share will be reflected in the issue of our grant award letters for business cases already approved or to be approved to ensure Welsh Government’s 50% share of the programme remains as was approved by the Minister for Education and Skills.”* In view of this statement further dialogue is taking place with the Welsh Government.

4.9 The proposal endorsed by the Bishop of Wrexham and the Bishop of St Asaph is for St Brigids and Blessed Edward Jones to be closed as of August 2018 and for a new shared faith secondary school to be built for 750 pupils, of an age range 11-16 to be built in the Rhuddlan / Bodelwyddan area and to be opened on 1st September 2018. All of the promoters expressed their preferences from the long list of options which included the existing schools sites. Denbighshire expressed a preference for a Rhyl location whilst the Diocesan Authorities expressed a preference for the Rhuddlan / Bodelwyddan area. Based on these views the consensus for the Rhuddlan / Bodelwyddan area emerged. A further option to be explored with the St Brigid’s trust and the Catholic Diocesan of Wrexham would be for the retention of the primary provision of St Brigid’s on the existing site. Work is being done to assess the potential sites for the new school. Following completion of this feasibility work permission will be sought from Cabinet to commence formal consultation in early 2015.

5. **Corporate Plan Funding**

5.1 As part of the Council’s Corporate Plan members made a commitment to invest a further £23million to implement the area reviews, refurbishments and other improvements to our schools. Appendix 2 to this report provides an overview of the potential projects which could be developed over the next few years. The timing of these projects will be dependent upon the overall resources available. To enable projects to commence approval is sought initially for feasibility funding to develop the main options for capital investment arising from the Ruthin Primary review.

5.2 Ruthin Review

5.3 Cabinet during 2013 gave approval to a range of proposals for reviewing primary school provision in the Ruthin area. Appendix 3 provides an overview of progress for all six proposals. Three of the six areas will be dependent upon the allocation of capital resources and these are detailed below.

5.4 Ruthin Town Schools – Glasdir site

5.5 Cabinet gave their approval to consider the future of Rhos Street School, Ysgol Borthyn, Ysgol Pen Barras and Ysgol Rhewl in connection with options for the development of the Glasdir site. The findings of the Ruthin review and the subsequent proposal for the closure of Ysgol Llanbedr showed a strong commitment to the requirement to maintain Ysgol Borthyn as an English medium faith school to serve the town of Ruthin and the wider community. Current and future pupil numbers remain strong and therefore for the purpose of future proposals the focus will be on Rhos Street School, Ysgol Penbarras and Ysgol Rhewl. The progress of developing options has initially focussed on flood risk issues and land availability.

5.6 The flood line remains a sufficient distance away from the land proposed to be used for a school build. During the Strategic Flood Assessment meeting held in the spring of 2014 no significant issues were envisaged regarding the site. A potential risk around the 'overflow' route from the stream through the site (in the event of flooding) has been identified. However, Natural Resources Wales have expressed confidence that this could easily be overcome and they have requested that Denbighshire works with them at the earliest stages of any proposals to build to negate this risk.

5.7 At this stage agreement is sought to fund further feasibility works on the options. The findings of this work will provide greater clarity over a range of issues such as traffic implications, confirmation of land availability and the clarification of likely costs for this option. This will enable a full Business Case to be considered within the next 6 months. The agreement of the Business Case and the progression of this project would allow the Cabinet to give full consideration to the future status of Ysgol Rhewl. This Business Case would need to consider whether this investment in school facilities at the Glasdir site would allow the option of closing Ysgol Rhewl to be proposed at this stage. The indicative timescales suggest that this consultation would commence in early 2015.

5.8 Ysgol Carreg Emlyn - New Area school for Clocaenog and Cyffylliog

5.9 Cabinet approved the implementation of the statutory notice to amalgamate Ysgol Clocaenog and Ysgol Cyffylliog as of 1st September 2014 and for the new school, to be known as Ysgol Carreg Emlyn, to operate from their existing sites. The long term aspiration is to build a new school on one site.

5.10 As part of the discussions about the area School for Clocaenog and Cyffylliog, initial feasibility works were commenced to examine potential sites. The

findings indicate that there are a couple of suitable sites in the village of Clocaenog which could accommodate a school of a potential size of 105 full time pupils.

5.11 The next stage will be for the options identified to be considered and for a business case to be developed on a preferred option. It is anticipated that this will be presented to the Strategic Investment Group in the autumn.

5.12 New Area school for Llanfair and Pentrecelyn

5.13 During May 2014 it became apparent that the preferred option for Ysgol Llanfair and Ysgol Pentrecelyn to federate would not be permitted under new Welsh Government regulations. Alternative options are being explored by both governing bodies including the option of moving straight to the development of a new area school for Ysgol Llanfair and Ysgol Pentrecelyn.

5.14 Approval is sought to provisionally allocate a sum of £10k for feasibility works to identify whether the potential sites in the Llanfair area would be capable of accommodating a new school in the region of 140 pupils. Any further investment would be dependent upon securing approval for the amalgamation of the two existing schools.

5.15 School Site Traffic Management

5.16 As part of investment plans the need to address traffic issues on school sites needs to be considered. Previously a block allocation had been made on an annual basis to address the high risk sites. All school sites have been assessed by the corporate Health and Safety Officer and there are a small number of high risk sites outstanding. The Strategic Investment Group approved £400k in principle subject to detailed business cases being approved for works for the high priority sites at Ysgol Dewi Sant, Rhyl and Ysgol Llewelyn, Rhyl to be completed by the autumn of 2015.

5.17 Ysgol Pendref

5.18 The Council amalgamated Ysgol Gwaenynog and Ysgol Heulfre in Denbigh in 2012 to create Ysgol Pendref. The school remains in two buildings on an adjoining site. The long term aspiration remains for one building to be extended to allow for the release of all or part of the other site.

5.19 Rhyl Primary Provision

5.20 There is an emerging requirement to consider the options to meet the growing demand for pupil places in the primary sector in Rhyl. Current pupil projections suggest that the overall number of pupils will increase from 2672 as of 2015 to 2785 by 2019. This will create a situation where the level of surplus places in the town will reduce from 5.7% in 2015 to 1.7% (48 places) out of a total pupil capacity of 2833.

5.21 Bodelwyddan Key Strategic Site

- 5.22 Discussions are being progressed with Barwood, the developer for the key strategic site in Bodelwyddan, regarding options for future primary school provision. The current primary school is at capacity and any growth in housing in the area will place pressures upon local schools. The discussions are focussed on seeking financial contributions to ensure that the need for additional places is met by the developer.

6. **Future Area Reviews – Primary Provision**

- 6.1 Over the last four years the Council has completed primary area reviews for the Dee Valley East, Edeyrnion and Prestatyn areas and is in the process of completing the Ruthin area based on the proposals approved by Cabinet last June and October.
- 6.2 This leaves three areas to be reviewed in the future; Denbigh, St Asaph and Rhyl. To date the focus of primary reviews has been the need to reduce surplus places. Currently on an area basis surplus places are 9.17% in Denbigh, 2.56% in St Asaph and 7.94% in Rhyl and it is forecast that due to demographic pressures the surplus will reduce further in these areas.
- 6.3 Clearly the issue of surplus places will not be a driver for these reviews and the demands of any review are likely to pose different issues. Predominately in these three areas the issues to be addressed are meeting likely growth from the Key Strategic Site at Bodelwyddan, addressing infant and junior amalgamation and the need for investment to improve the school estate.
- 6.4 It is suggested that reviews are carried out in two distinct geographical areas : North of the A55 and South of the A55. This would allow the opportunity to consider growth in areas such as Bodelwyddan and Rhyl together whilst allowing for a wider solution to emerge for the St Asaph and Denbigh area together.

7. **Religious Designation of Ysgol Esgob Morgan**

- 7.1 At present there are two primary schools in St Asaph, namely St Asaph Infants Voluntary Controlled School and Ysgol Esgob Morgan Junior school. Following representations from the Governing Body of Ysgol Esgob Morgan and the Church in Wales, Cabinet are asked to provide permission to commence consultation on proposals to alter the designation of Ysgol Esgob Morgan from Community school to Voluntary Controlled under the auspices of the Church in Wales. The draft consultation paper is included as Appendix 4. The Church in Wales Diocesan Authority as a co-promoter has been consulted on the proposal in accordance with the School Organisation Code. They met on the 8th July and have confirmed their unanimous support to the proposal.
- 7.2 The proposal would require Denbighshire to close Ysgol Esgob Morgan as a Community School as of the 31st August 2015 and concurrently the Church in Wales in partnership with the Governing Body of Ysgol Esgob Morgan would

publish proposals to open Ysgol Esgob Morgan as a Voluntary Controlled School as of the 1st September 2015. It is anticipated that the formal consultation on this proposal would commence on the 8th September until the 22nd October 2014. Following this, Cabinet and the Church in Wales Diocesan Authority would need to consider the findings of the consultation and agree whether to proceed to the next stage which would be the publication of statutory notices.

8. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

- 8.1 The proposal will support the corporate priority of “improving performance in education and the quality of our school buildings”.

9. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 9.1 The overall cost of the 21st Century Schools Programme is £73.4m and provisional allocations have been made by Denbighshire for its overall 50% contribution. The remaining 50% will be accessed via the Welsh Government and approvals have been received for 3 of the 5 projects to date. The allocation of funding by the Welsh Government for the faith school will have a significant impact on the programme. The Corporate Plan also included an aim to invest a further £23m to implement the outcomes of the area reviews, refurbishments and other improvements to schools.

10. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

The main decision within the report is to proceed towards consultation regarding the status of Ysgol Esgob Morgan of changing from a community school to a voluntary controlled school. The findings of the impact assessment suggest that the proposal would have a positive impact on religion. (see Appendix 5)

11. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 11.1 The options for investment for 21st Century Schools has previously been approved by Cabinet and discussed with Scrutiny. The options for investment in the Corporate Plan were discussed with Communities Scrutiny Committee on the 24th June and the Committee supported the ambitious vision for modernising education facilities across the County.

12. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 12.1 The report highlights the aspiration to invest in a significant school improvement programme. The figures quoted need to be reviewed to take account of the latest assumptions in respect of both internal and external funding, costs and cash-flow. Future internal contributions will have to be assessed as part of the annual budget round.

13. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

13.1 There are a number of risks currently being managed at a programme level by the Modernising Education Programme Board. All individual projects will include risk management procedures.

14. Power to make the Decision

The proposals are in accordance with the Modernising Education Policy Framework.

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 provides the legislative requirement for local authorities to review school proposals and to progress proposals to reconfigure school provision.