

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 13th January 2015

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

Report Author: Head of Customers and Education Support

Title: Modernising Education Programme – Ruthin Primary Area

1. What is the report about?

This report is to seek approval to commence consultation on school organisation proposals and to recommend to Council approval of investment for three primary school projects in the Ruthin area.

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 and seeks approval to progress to the next stage.

3. What are the Recommendations?

Cabinet are asked:

- (i) To approve proceeding to formal consultation for the proposed closure of Ysgol Llanfair DC and Ysgol Pentrecelyn as of the 31st August 2016 and to open a new Category 2 Voluntary Controlled school based on the existing sites on the 1st September 2016.
- (ii) To approve proceeding to formal consultation for the proposed closure of Ysgol Rhewl as of the 31st August 2017 with pupils transferring to either Ysgol Penbarras or Rhos Street to coincide with the opening of the new school buildings.
- (iii) To recommend to Council the approval of the business cases and capital allocation for
 - 1. the replacement of the existing Rhos Street / Ysgol Penbarras provision at the Glasdir Site
 - 2. a new school building for Ysgol Carreg Emlyn
 - 3. a new school building for the Llanfair and Pentrecelyn area school, subject to the outcome of the school organisation proposals

4. Ruthin Primary Area Review Proposals

- 4.1 As part of the Council's Corporate Plan the Council has made a commitment that, in addition to funding the 21st Century Schools, we would seek to invest further resources towards implementing our area reviews, refurbishments, and other improvements to our schools. Cabinet in July 2014 provided authorisation to commence feasibility studies in respect of three projects, the completion of which will be the subject of future budget decisions.
- 4.2 The Strategic Investment Group has recommended to Cabinet approval of the business cases for investment in the following three capital projects:-
- New primary school at the Glasdir site in Ruthin to replace the existing school buildings for Ysgol Penbarras and Rhos Street Schools.
 - New school building at Clocaenog for Ysgol Carrog Emlyn to replace the existing school buildings in Clocaenog and Cyffylliog
 - New school building for an area school to serve the communities of Llanfair and Pentrecelyn

A summary of the rationale for the projects is included in Appendix 1 and explains the reasons for the proposed investments. The Strategic Investment Group considered at their meeting on the 16th December the full Business Cases for the projects and recommended their approval to Cabinet.

- 4.3 To progress these projects Cabinet will need to give approval to commence consultation on two school organisation proposals.
- 4.4 Proposal for New Area School to serve Llanfair and Pentrecelyn
- 4.5 The Council in partnership with the Church in Wales Diocese seek to commence consultation on a proposal to close Ysgol Llanfair and Ysgol Pentrecelyn as of the 31st August 2016 to facilitate the opening of a new area school to serve the communities of Llanfair and Pentrecelyn. Long term the Council considers maintaining the status quo would not be sustainable and the current proposal would be the first stage in delivering a new build school to serve the community. The proposal recommends that the new area school would open as a Voluntary Controlled School providing education both through the medium of Welsh and through the medium of English (Category 2) in accordance with parental preference. At the moment Ysgol Llanfair operates this dual stream model whilst Ysgol Pentrecelyn provides education through the medium of Welsh. For pupils educated through the medium of Welsh there should be no impact in terms of outcomes arising from the proposals and it will be important that the new Governing Body established closely monitors this issue in the future to ensure the strong Welsh ethos is retained.
- 4.6 The draft Consultation document has been prepared (see Appendix 2) and if Cabinet agree it is proposed to consult on this proposal between the 3rd February and the 16th March. It is anticipated that the findings from the consultation exercise will be presented to Cabinet in May 2015. In accordance with the School Organisation Code the Church in Wales have been consulted on the draft proposal and are in general support of the proposal.

4.7 Ysgol Rhewl – Proposal for Closure

- 4.8 The future of Ysgol Rhewl has been considered as part of the options appraisal for the Glasdir site. The main drivers in proposals for the Ruthin have included addressing the condition of buildings and surplus places and it is considered that these drivers impact on the long term sustainability of Ysgol Rhewl. As of September 2014 Ysgol Rhewl had 53 full time pupils with a surplus of 29 places or 35%.
- 4.9 In considering the wide range of options for the Glasdir site there was a need to consider what the impact of new facilities at this location would have on the viability of Ysgol Rhewl approximately 1.1 miles away. The recent assessment of the building suggested that most of the existing fabric is beyond its expected design life and would require extensive work to bring it up to current standards. In view of the pupil numbers and long term need to invest in the building on balance it is believed that closing the school and transferring pupils to either Ysgol Penbarras and Rhos Street would be the most sustainable option long term.
- 4.10 The draft Consultation document on the proposal has been prepared (see Appendix 3) and if Cabinet agree consultation will take place between the 10th February and the 23rd March. It is anticipated that the findings from the consultation exercise will be presented to Cabinet in May 2015.

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

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

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

- 6.1 The cost of undertaking the consultation on the proposals would be relatively small and would mainly be printing and postage costs together with officer time. Should the Proposals proceed and become implemented, it is anticipated that there may be a need for HR support for staff members who will be affected directly or indirectly by the proposed changes.
- 6.2 The cost of the three capital projects for the Ruthin area is approximately £15.1m. This cost has been earmarked for investment in Modernising Education projects as part of the development of the Corporate Plan Capital funding. The progression of the projects will have an impact on a number of sections including Design, Construction and Maintenance, Valuation and Estates and Legal Services.

7. 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.

An EqIA has been undertaken on the proposals and are attached to this report as Appendix 4.

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

The Council previously undertook informal consultation on the issues impacting on the wider Ruthin Primary area in early 2013. The Chairs of Governors, Headteachers and Local Members for the three schools are aware of the proposals being presented to Cabinet and will also have the opportunity for formally respond as part of the formal consultation process.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1 The cost of the three capital projects for the Ruthin Area review is approximately £15.m. As the schemes are not part of the Band A 21st Century Schools projects, the Council will have to fund all of the capital costs associated with the proposals. Investment on this scale comes with associated financial risks and therefore robust project and financial management and monitoring is essential. The proposals should generate revenue savings which can be reinvested into the Council's investment programme to fund borrowing. The completion of the three projects also gives potential to generate capital receipts.

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

- 10.1 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.

11. 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.