

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 24th January 2017

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

Report Author: Head of Education and Children's Services

Title: Proposed 3-16 Catholic School in Rhyl

1. What is the report about?

This report is to seek approval to commence consultation on school organisation proposals

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 on a proposal to close Ysgol Mair Catholic primary and Blessed Edward Jones Catholic High school as of the 31st August 2019 and to open a 3-16 Catholic school on the same site on 1st September 2019 and,**
- (ii) To recommend approval of the funding to commence to the concept/ detailed design stage.**

4. Report Details:

- 4.1 As part of the Council's 21st Century Schools Programme Band A proposals that were submitted to the Welsh Government in 2010 there was a commitment and financial allocation for investment in a Joint Faith Secondary Provision.
- 4.2 Over the last six years there has been extensive discussions with partners from the Wrexham Catholic Diocese and from the St Asaph Church in Wales Diocese. The discussions over the last twelve months have focused on the location and how this may impact on the future direction of the school. An important factor in these discussions have been the deliverability of the project within the timescales for Band A. Over the summer all parties understood for the project to be delivered a consensus was needed.

- 4.3 As a consequence the project proposal which has emerged is for a new 3-16 Catholic School to replace the existing Catholic Provision of Ysgol Mair (3-11 Primary) and Blessed Edward Jones Catholic High School (11-16 Secondary).
- 4.4 The Wrexham Catholic Diocese confirmed their support of this project on the 26th October 2016.
- 4.5 The Council in partnership with the Catholic Diocese of Wrexham to commence consultation on a proposal to close Ysgol Mair Catholic primary and Blessed Edward Jones Catholic High school as of the 31st August 2019 and to open a 3-16 Catholic school on the same site on 1st September 2019. The draft Consultation document has been prepared (see Appendix 1) and if Cabinet agree, it is proposed to consult on this proposal between the 7th February and the 20th March. It is anticipated that the findings from the consultation exercise will be presented to Cabinet in May/ June 2017. In accordance with the School Organisation Code the Catholic Diocese of Wrexham have been consulted on the draft proposal and are in general support of the proposal.
- 4.6 The current Corporate Plan includes £23.8m allocated to this project. The overall programme of £86.1m is funded 50/50 between Welsh Government and Denbighshire. However there is flexibility within individual projects for reallocation of this split so long as the overall programme remains 50/50. There will also be a requirement for the Welsh Government funding to be spent by March 2019. This will mean that the finances of the project will need to ensure that the Welsh Government allocation is spent by this date and then for the remaining months of the project Denbighshire's share of funding is used. The Welsh Government are aware of this position and this has been discussed in the regular progress meetings between both parties.
- 4.7 Denbighshire County Council will be the grant recipient body for the project and will be submitting the applications for Business Case approval to the Welsh Government. In view of this Denbighshire will be taking a lead on the project and will be the commissioning body for the design and construction element of the project. These elements will be delivered in partnership with the Catholic Diocese of Wrexham and their project team, which will be established by the Bishop.
- 4.8 The Strategic Investment Group has recommended approval of the initial business case for the project which will be subject to further detailed Business Cases for submission to the Welsh Government and the initial allocation for Denbighshire to fund the design stages for the project through to the construction stage. It is estimated that this will be in the region of £1.5m.
- 4.9 The procurement for a preferred construction partner will be undertaken via Lot 3 of the North Wales Construction Framework. The delivery of the project will present challenges through the development of a new building on a live school site and the programming of such works will be crucial to the delivery of the scheme within the timescale as a consequence of funding deadlines.

- 4.10 The first stage will be to develop the concept design for the school to enable a detailed design to emerge. Based on this detailed design an agreed cost will be submitted by the Contractor and the Cabinet will then be required to determine whether the project should proceed to the construction stage. Should this be approved the Contractor would be appointed for the second stage, namely construction and demolition. Subject to agreement by Cabinet to progress this project it is envisaged that the mini competition to appoint the Construction Partner will commence in February 2017 with a partner appointed by March 2017.

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 overall budget currently outlined in the Council’s Corporate plan is £23.8 million. This will be funded in partnership between Denbighshire County Council and the Welsh Government as part of the 21st Century Schools programme.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment? The completed Well-being Impact Assessment report can be downloaded from the website and should be attached as an appendix to the report

- 7.1 Please see attached the Well-Being Impact Assessment- New Catholic 3-16 school in Rhyl.

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

- 8.1 The Catholic Diocese of Wrexham, both Ysgol Mair and Blessed Edward Jones Chairs of Governors and Headteachers are aware of the proposals being presented to Cabinet and will also have the opportunity to formally respond as part of the formal consultation process. The project was supported by the Rhyl Member Area Group on the 11th January.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1 The cost of undertaking the consultation on the proposals can be contained within existing resources. As with all 21st Century Schools Schemes the council has to provide the initial funds to fully develop a business case before Welsh Government will commit to the 50% funding share. Although this entails

a small risk, the project would not be able to proceed without the council's investment. Both recommendations are therefore supported.

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

- 10.1 To ensure that the key milestone of the school being opened by September 2019 is achieved there will be a need to manage the risks associated with the process.
- 10.2 As per the approach with other projects the design stage will be progressed at risk as per the approval of the overall funding package from the Welsh Government. However on the basis that the design stage needs to be progressed to reach this stage this has to be seen as an acceptable risk. The difference in this approach is that the school organisation proposals will need to run concurrently with the design stages.
- 10.3 The mitigating risk at this stage is that the formal appointment of the lead contractor is likely to take place following the completion of the formal consultation process. Therefore should there be significant opposition to the proposal at an early stage the Council could seek to delay the appointment of the lead contractor as appropriate.

11. Power to make the Decision

- 11.1 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.