

Report to	Cabinet
Date of meeting	17 December 2019
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Huw Hilditch Roberts, Lead Member for Education, Children's Services and Public Engagement
Report author	Karen Evans, Head of Education and Children's Services
Title	21 st Century Schools Programme – Band B Proposals

1. What is the report about?

The report provides an update on the progression of Denbighshire's proposals for Band B of the 21st Century Schools Programme to be delivered in partnership with the Welsh Government.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To enable Cabinet to consider and approve the revised Strategic Outline Programme for consideration by the Welsh Government.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Cabinet approve the revised Strategic Outline Programme for submission to the Welsh Government

That the Committee confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 3) as part of its consideration.

4. Report details

4.1 The authority has delivered Band A of the 21st Century Schools Programme over the last 7 years. This has seen just over £90m successfully invested in Denbighshire schools and has transformed the teaching and learning offer for many pupils. For Band B

the criteria for 21st Century Schools has changed with a reduced focus on addressing surplus places with a defined target. The Welsh Government investment objectives for Band B are:-

Investment Objective One – to provide efficient and effective educational infrastructure that will meet current and future demand for places by 2024.

Backlog maintenance costs for the schools and colleges selected for Band B are reduced by at least 50% (based on the assumption that approximately 50% of the projects in the Programme will be replacements for existing assets)

No category D buildings in the estate

25% of Category C condition buildings are improved to Category A or B

Provide the right number of places for the delivery of Welsh and English medium education

Addressing sufficiency issues where relevant.

Investment Objective Two – optimise the use of infrastructure and resources, to deliver public services for our communities by 2024. This will include flexibility of our assets so that space and facilities available for our stakeholders are maximised.

Our aspiration is for all facilities that receive investment commit to making assets available for community use if local demand exists.

10% of schools / colleges that receive funding from the Programme have co-located public services on site if local demand exists.

4.2 The strategic direction of the Programme was agreed by Cabinet in July 2017 and the Strategic Outline Programme was approved by Welsh Government in November 2017. Work has continued with the Welsh Government on the transition between Band A and Band B which will run from 2019 to 2024. This work was agreed to focus on the Denbigh, Rhyl and Llangollen areas.

4.3 In November 2018 the Cabinet Secretary announced revised intervention rates for Band B of the 21st Century Schools Programme. For Band A the overall Programme split was 50% for Welsh Government (WG) and 50% from local authorities. For Band B it will now be a 65% WG contribution, for special schools including pupil referral units a 75%

contribution and for Voluntary Aided schools the WG contribution would be 85% with 15% to be provided by the Diocesan Authority or the Governing Body.

4.4 Over the last 12 months detailed consideration has been given to the likely direction for Band B of 21st Century Schools. Feasibility work has been undertaken on nearly 20 schools which form part of the review area and the likely trends regarding pupil demands have been reviewed. Based on these findings a revised programme has emerged and the current costs of these projects are likely to exceed the allocated programme envelope of £80m approved in November 2017 and the Welsh Government contribution of £45m. This position is complicated further via the implication for the changes to the funding split. This has reduced the potential split for Denbighshire from £32m to a figure which will be closer to £21m. It is suggested that there are three options for consideration in terms of the way forward.

4.5 The first option would be to seek additional funding from Welsh Government via a revised Strategic Outline Programme. This would require discussions with Welsh Government to seek whether this is feasible and affordable from their perspective. Based on the indicative figures an increase of approximately £15m may be required from the Welsh Government to deliver the programme in Appendix 1. This would also mean that the DCC contribution may be reduced from the £32m in the approved SOP to a figure closer to £21m. For the delivery of Band A DCC asked a similar question to the Welsh Government and the size of the programme increased from £73.4m to £86.1m based on an increase in resources from both parties, this was an increase of just under £13m.

4.6 The second option would be to reduce the scope of the DCC programme to ensure that the Welsh Government contribution remains at £45m. This would require either projects to be reduced in scale or removed from the indicative programme.

4.7 The third option would be to consider whether to fund any projects as a DCC project outside of the 21st Century Schools Programme. An option could be to suggest one of the smaller projects is 100% funded by DCC outside of the programme. This could give flexibility for DCC but may not represent value for money.

4.8 The Modernising Education Programme Board met on the 1st October to consider the findings and provide a steer in terms of moving Band B forward. The view of the Board was that the Welsh Government be approached to discuss a potential increase in their

resources. This was based on Denbighshire's track record for delivery on 21st Century Schools and the affordability of what is proposed.

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

The proposals will assist the Council meet the priority for Young People that Denbighshire is a place where young people will want to live and work and have the skills to do. In particular this will see Denbighshire continue to modernise schools via the 21st Century Schools Programme and if we are successful we expect to see modern school facilities that further enhance pupils' learning.

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

The overall submission for Band B would cost Denbighshire £21m as illustrated in Appendix 1. The funding for the Band B proposals comes from the Council's Corporate Plan. Should the proposals be progressed the development of the Programme would continue to have workstreams for other teams within the Council in particularly Design, Construction and Maintenance. The costs of these teams are absorbed in the overall outline costs.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

The development of a programme for investment for 21st Century Schools should have a positive impact on Denbighshire. The construction phase will lead to increased investment in local companies and improve employment prospects. Site selection may have a negative impact on a resilient Denbighshire and this will need to be carefully considered. The provision of modern buildings should impact positively on a healthier and equal Denbighshire whilst providing an opportunity for a more cohesive community. Lessons learnt from Band A will need to be applied to the approach to energy management for Band B. The impact on Welsh Language will be guided by where investment is made.

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

Consultation took place with Councillors at an informal meeting in December 2016. The identified priorities were then incorporated into the Strategic Outline Programme approved by Cabinet in 2017. Discussions have subsequently taken place with Headteachers in the areas likely to be impacted by the proposals.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Initial funding has been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan over the next 5 years, initially as part of the current Corporate Plan but continuing into future years due to the long term commitment. It is obviously a large financial commitment and it is welcome to see the careful and considered approach contained in this report. Further financial commitments will be included as appropriate.

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

The current Modernising Education Programme includes clear procedures for the management and escalation of risks at both the Programme and Project level. Should the programme be progressed these procedures would continue. The risks associated with the reduction in the programme would mainly impact two areas. By accepting the risk around maintaining poor or life expired buildings the costs around maintenance are expected to increase over time. For pupils in such buildings their learning opportunities may be impacted upon.

11. Power to make the decision

Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on local authorities to secure sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education.