

Report to	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	22nd October 2020
Lead Officer	Geraint Davies, Interim Head of Education
Report author	James Curran, Principal Manager – School Support
Title	Process for Band B submission

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. This report has been produced to detail the process followed in order to determine which schools benefited from 21st Century Schools Band B investment.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. The report has been produced at the request of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That the Committee considers the approach taken to determining the Band B priorities.

4. Report details

- 4.1. The 21st Century Schools Programme in Wales was launched in 2010 and has enabled nearly £1.4 billion of improvements in school buildings to occur in Wales via the 1st wave of funding Band A. Within Denbighshire this allowed through partnership working with the Welsh Government £90 million worth of investment to take place. This investment has made a considerable impact on the quality of the school estate.
- 4.2. The second wave of funding for the Programme is Band B and is scheduled to take place from 2019 onwards for a period of at least 5 years. In advance of

this the Welsh Government sought expressions of interest from local authorities in the autumn of 2016 to gain an understanding of the likely requirements for investment. At this stage the guidance on the grant intervention rate and criteria for Band B had not been issued.

- 4.3. To shape this an informal Council session was held in December 2016 to provide elected members with an opportunity to review where investment had or was scheduled to take place in Band A and then to discuss the potential priority areas for Band B. The approach in Denbighshire had been to examine Primary provision on an area basis to ensure that investment in school sites is seen in the wider context. This approach commenced with reviews of the Prestatyn and Dee Valley East (Llangollen) areas followed by reviews of the Dee Valley West (Corwen) and Ruthin areas. For secondary schools the approach had been to make investment in those schools deemed to be in the lower building condition category.
- 4.4. The seminar reviewed the revised position for the areas highlighted above and addressed the remaining areas for review and the issues arising particularly in respect of demand for school places and the condition of school buildings. The presentation reflected on areas where there was a concern over the sustainability of provision which included the position on school places, condition and suitability of buildings and the overall provision of services. Based on this knowledge the seminar then considered a long list for potential priority investment. This list to the value of approximately £137m was communicated to the Welsh Government in December 2016.
- 4.5. In May 2017 all local authorities were invited to submit their Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) for Band B investment for 21st Century Schools by the 31st July 2017. The invitation acknowledged that the overall demand for investment outstripped the likely size of the programme. Consideration was also required from an affordability perspective for Denbighshire. As a consequence a report was presented by the Lead Member for discussion at Cabinet on the 18th July. The SOP was approved for submission to the Welsh Government.
- 4.6. Confirmation was received in December 2017 for approval in principal for the programme envelope for the second wave of investment, subject to the approval of individual project business cases.

- 4.7. In November 2018 all local authorities were informed that the funding intervention rates for 21st Century Schools were to be amended. The decision was that rather than Community and Special schools being funded 50/50 as per Band A, Community Schools would now be funded 65% Welsh Government / 35% Local Authority and Special Schools 75% Welsh Government / 25% Local Authority. This effectively changed the balance of the programme and required a review of how Denbighshire could seek to develop a programme to deliver the aspirations of the original Strategic Outline Programme.
- 4.8. During 2019 feasibility work was undertaken on nearly 20 schools which form part of the identified review areas around Denbigh, Rhyl and Llangollen and this work assessed the likely trends regarding pupil demands. This enabled a revised programme to emerge and the costs of these projects were likely to exceed the allocated programme envelope of £80m approved in November 2017 and the Welsh Government contribution of £45m. This position had been complicated further via the implication for the changes to the funding split. This balance reduced the potential split for Denbighshire from £32m to a figure which closer to £21m. Based on this a paper was submitted to Cabinet in December 2019 seeking approval for a revised approach to delivering the Programme based on the agreed priority areas from 2017. This would require an additional contribution of £14.7 from the Welsh Government.
- 4.9. The view from the Welsh Government was that at this initial stage of the Programme they were not in a position to amend their allocation of resources. This required Denbighshire to amend its approach as to how it would deliver the agreed priority areas. A paper proposing a phased approach was considered by Cabinet on the 22nd September.

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

- 5.1. The overall proposals for 21st Century Schools 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?

- 6.1. The anticipated costs to Denbighshire as part of the submission in July 2017 was £32m. Subsequent announcements from the Welsh Government regarding changes to the intervention effectively reduced Denbighshire's contribution.
- 6.2. The successful delivery of Band A was led by the Education team with support from colleagues across a number of service areas. A similar approach will be required for Band B.

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

- 7.1. A Well-being Impact Assessment was produced as part of the original decision making regarding the approval of the Band B submission. As this report outlines the decision making process already undertaken a revised assessment has not been undertaken.

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

- 8.1. The report has been produced at the request of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Sub-heading (delete as needed)

- 9.1. Text here

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

- 10.1. This is a report for members to assess the information with no decisions / recommendations so there are no identified risks associated with the report.

11. Power to make the decision

- 11.1. Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 7 of the Council's Constitution outlines Scrutiny's powers in relation to considering matters which affect the Council's area or its inhabitants, policy development and review, along with monitoring performance and the delivery of policy objectives.