

Report to	Cabinet
Date of meeting	26 th July
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Gill German, Lead Member for Education, Children and Families / Geraint Davies, Head of Education
Report author	James Curran, Principal Manager – School Support
Title	Sustainable Communities for Learning – Band B

1. What is the report about?

1.1. To consider the findings from the review by the Modernising Education Programme Board of the prioritisation process as requested by Council in January 2022.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. A notice of motion was considered by Council in January 2022 regarding the prioritisation process for Band B of Sustainable Communities for Learning (formerly known as 21st Century Schools Programme). Council resolved that the Modernising Education Board be asked to review the condition surveys of all schools to see whether those had been significantly changed to the condition of the school estate which would call into question that the current priority order of schools is still current and correct. It was also agreed that the outcome of this review could be reported to Cabinet together with any recommendations the Modernising Education Board may have as a result.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. That the Committee confirms the view of the Modernising Education Programme Board that no significant change had occurred in respect of the condition of school buildings and that the current priority order of schools is still current and correct.

4. Report details

- 4.1. At the request of Council, the Modernising Education Programme Board met on the 27th April to review the prioritisation process for the determination of priorities for Band B of the Sustainable Communities for Learning. The Board considered a report which provided detail on the process taken by Denbighshire in developing its priorities for investment in Band B. The meeting was attended by the Corporate Director – Communities (who Chairs the Board), former Lead Member for Finance and Assets, Head of Finance, Lead Officer – Corporate Property and Housing Stock, Head of Education and Principal Manager – School Support.
- 4.2. The Board considered how the prioritisation process developed and evolved and reviewed the actual condition date for all schools and those considered as part of the review area. The Board were of the view that no significant change had occurred in respect of the condition of schools during the period when schools were initially considered in 2016 and the determination of current priorities which would impact on the chosen priorities.
- 4.3. The Board also considered the investment in the structure of school buildings via the capital allocation for Building Maintenance. Whilst the main driver for change in recent years had been large scale investments via Band A, this additional capital investment would assist in making a difference in the overall condition of Denbighshire schools. The condition of school buildings is reviewed on a periodical nature and as such investment in schemes such as window replacement or roofs may not be immediately reflected in the condition of school buildings pending the next cycle of surveys.
- 4.4. The Board also noted that the Notice of Motion had originated from concerns over the condition of Prestatyn High School. The Board noted the work that had been undertaken with the school to make best use of capital investment from the Building Maintenance scheme and further information regarding this has been collated in Appendix 2.

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

- 5.1. 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 Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and if we are successful we expect to see modern school facilities that further enhance pupils' learning.
- 5.2. Band B projects and what we do with any potential redundant sites could make a significant contribution towards the Council's aim of becoming Net Carbon Zero and Ecologically Positive by 2030 and in doing so show a clear contribution to tackling the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency- which was declared by Full Council in July 2019. Welsh Government through their Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales Plan (2019) has targeted for the public sector in Wales to be net carbon zero by 2030 and decarbonisation has the potential to be a key consideration in the Sustainable Communities for Learning funding programme. Through learning lessons from 21st Century Schools Band A and by developing, delivering and managing-in-use zero/low carbon buildings the 21st Century Schools Band B projects could reduce the running costs for the Authority from both a financial and carbon point of view alongside creating exemplar learning environments.

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

- 6.1. The first phase of works to be approved have an overall value of £51.9m of which £15.8m will be funded by Denbighshire via 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 and Construction. The costs of these teams are absorbed in the overall outline costs.

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

- 7.1. As the recommendations re-affirm the decisions taken by Cabinet an additional or revised Well-being Impact Assessment has not been undertaken.

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

- 8.1. 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 took place with stakeholders in December 2019 and further discussions with Headteachers took place in advance of approval of the revised Strategic Outline Programme in September 2020. Individual projects will have a clear focus on communication and dialogue with the Member Area Groups.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1. The costs of the Band B programme have been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan based on current plans. 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?

- 10.1. 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.

11. Power to make the decision

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