BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2017

REPORT OF THE INTERIM CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

STRATEGIC REVIEW INTO THE DEVELOPMENT AND RATIONALISATION OF THE CURRICULUM AND ESTATE PROVISION OF PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND POST-16 EDUCATION

1.   Purpose of report

1.1   The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the work to date of the strategic review into the development and rationalisation of the curriculum and estate provision of primary, secondary and post-16 education.

2.   Connection to corporate improvement objectives/other corporate priorities

2.1   This programme supports the following priorities in the Corporate Plan 2016-2020:

- Supporting a successful economy
- Smarter use of resources

2.2   The principles to underpin the process of school re-organisation reflect the priorities of the Corporate Plan and also draw upon the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code which requires proposals to comply with and support national policies and overarching aims, in particular, Welsh Government's commitment to increase school effectiveness, and narrow inequalities in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged areas, groups and individuals, together with the Welsh Government guidance 'Federation process of maintained schools in Wales' (Circular No:011/2014).

3.   Background

3.1   In August 2014, the then Children's Directorate established the Schools Task Group to consider the way forward for schools within the county borough and to ensure we continue to plan for and provide a high-quality education system for our young people, that gives them the very best opportunities for their lives in the 21st century and builds upon the excellence and good practice that we already have in our county.

3.2   The Schools Task Group established six workstreams:

1. **Analytics**
    This group analysed the data and prepared calculations of projected numbers for the future and secured a high degree of confidence from stakeholders. Surplus capacity within schools was also reviewed.

2. **School Modelling**

This group researched a variety of school delivery models to facilitate raising standards and developed a menu of delivery models including hard federations, soft federations, all-through schools and amalgamations.

3. Post-16 Provision
This group considered the options for post-16 provision.

4. Welsh-Medium Provision
This group explored potential future developments related to Welsh medium provision in the borough.

5. Catchment Review
This group considered a proposed methodology for revising/determining catchment areas.

6. 21st Century School Modernisation
This group worked to develop criteria which may determine/influence decisions about which schools should form part of the school modernisation programme in the future to meet the needs of the future.

3.3 Through these workstreams the Schools Task Group developed five principles to underpin the process of developing and implementing school improvement proposals. These are set out below.

1. Commitment to high standards and excellence in provision.
2. Equality of opportunity, so that all pupils can access quality learning opportunities, regardless of which school they attend.
3. Inclusive schools, which cater for the learning needs of all their pupils.
4. Community focused schools, where the school actively engages with its local community.
5. Value for money.

3.4 In order to build upon and further develop this work, on 1 September 2015, Cabinet approved recommendations to source a strategic partner to support the development of a strategy that would provide an evidence based rationale for change and to form a basis in order to reach informed conclusions about the nature of provision and the need to add, remove or relocate school places.

3.5 Extensive market research was conducted to find a suitable partner but it was felt that externally there was a lack of expertise and knowledge and that a better, more cost effective approach would be to invest in increasing and supporting internal resources to deliver a strategic review into the development and rationalisation of the curriculum, and estate provision of primary, secondary and post-16 education.

3.6 In order to undertake this strategic review, four workstreams were established. The rationale for each workstream is detailed below:

1. Leadership and Collaboration
To deliver a sustainable strategy for leadership and collaboration in Bridgend underpinned by robust models, which will deliver the right education in the right place and with the best outcomes for children.

- Establish and drive forward a strategic approach to leadership and collaboration within education providers.
- Co-design models and finalise options which are to be designed with the input from all stakeholders.
- Identify triggers to collaboration.
- Identify the pathways to collaboration.
- Assess the implications of any proposals and advise the strategic board.
- To ensure the Leadership and Collaboration workstream operates within agreed timeframes.
- To apply a project structure and project plan to the project.

2. **Curriculum and Workforce**

To deliver a sustainable strategy for curriculum and workforce issues in Bridgend underpinned by robust models, which will deliver the right education in the right place and with the best outcomes for children.

- Review the curriculum offer in Bridgend, ensuring there is consistency of learning through 3-19 education, with consideration made to the Schools Strategic Review Programme (Post-16 Education, School Modification, Leadership and Collaboration, Curriculum and Workforce).
- Develop a strategy for implementing the Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales (Successful Futures) written by Professor Graham Donaldson in Bridgend County Borough Council, ensuring schools are prepared to adopt Welsh Government proposals.
- Identification of a list of options to include a recommended way forward, an assessment of the strengths, weaknesses and risks of each option and details of all stakeholders' commitments required to implement any suggested change.
- Ensure that the developments of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Reform Bill are built into the curriculum planning arrangements.

3. **School Modernisation Band B**

To deliver recommendations for Band B schemes which are underpinned by robust data and aligned to the emerging work from other work streams in order to maximise the opportunities for schools, community and the local authority.

The recommendations will assist in the delivery of the overarching outcome of the strategic review and aid in delivering the best outcomes for children and young people.

4. **Post-16 Education**

To deliver a sustainable strategy for post-16 education in Bridgend underpinned by robust models, which will deliver the right education in the right place and with the best outcomes for children.
- Establish and drive forward a strategic approach to post-16 education provision in the borough.
- Finalise options which are to be designed with the input from all stakeholders.
- Assess the implications of any proposals and advise the strategic board.

- To ensure the Post-16 workstream operates within agreed timeframes.
- To apply a project structure and project plan to the project.

3.7   The five principles detailed in point 3.3 were embedded into each workstream and a programme management approach was taken to ensure the interdependencies between each workstream were considered.

4.   Current situation

4.1   Please see workstream summaries below. Workstream reports are included as appendices A-D.

4.2   Leadership and Collaboration

4.2.1 The leadership and collaboration workstream clearly identified the objectives and adequately discussed the implications of the development of an alternative approach to collaboration and leadership within schools. Although the intention of the workstream was to address both collaboration and leadership equally, it became evident that any proposed change to leadership within schools would be unlikely to happen without greater collaboration.

4.2.2 It was clear at the outset that a rigid approach to master planning collaborations across Bridgend schools was not seen as desirable. It was agreed that the right model for Bridgend schools should be a supportive one, where the right tools and the right support were made available to allow schools to develop their own agendas around collaboration. As part of the potential for further developing collaborations, federations were considered and discussed at length. However, it was determined that an overly prescriptive approach was not seen to be a priority and carried significant risks to buy-in from schools/governing bodies. It was acknowledged that moving through the collaborative process to a more formal federation, would take a variable length of time and would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

4.2.3 While working to achieve the objectives of the workstream, it became clear that the Central South Consortium (CSC) had initiated a similar project, but on a regional basis. This gave the workstream the opportunity to confirm that there was a good awareness of the opportunities for collaboration across schools within Bridgend and to marry the local and regional agenda in respect of collaboration.

4.2.4 To reinforce the regional agenda, CSC issued documents regarding leadership and federation at the end of 2016. These documents contained an information pack and a supporting offer for schools that were potentially looking to federate, asking them for expressions of interest as 'trailblazer' federations.

4.2.5 Supporting information was presented to the group detailing the work of other local authorities in taking forward collaborations. Whilst useful, these models were seen to offer only a number of examples of the approaches that would lead to greater collaboration between schools, rather than offering a definitive list. The group identified that any Bridgend model could look very different and be bespoke for each initiative.

4.2.6 There were also significant discussions in relation to the triggers for collaboration. Information was presented to the group to identify the expected triggers such as poor governance of schools and budgetary issues such as schools being in significant deficit budget over a number of years. However, the group also discussed more positive triggers where schools would naturally work together to share resources and expertise, for example, to the benefit of learner outcomes.

4.2.7 It became clear that support arrangements would need to be in place in advance of any formal collaboration, to assist schools in making collaborations effective. The detail of this support required further work. To this end, the group discussed the various roles of the local authority, CSC, governing bodies, Bridgend Governors Association and the possible use of governor improvement groups, in developing this agenda.

4.2.8 The timescales identified in the original project brief were adhered to. The workstream concluded prior to the deadline identified in the project brief ie, May 2017.

4.3 Curriculum and Workforce

4.3.1 The Curriculum and Workforce workstream comprised of representatives from key stakeholder groups. The board identified objectives and established terms of reference.

4.3.2 The operational board discussed factors to consider when looking at the structure of the curriculum. Further discussions took place regarding the emphasis on making the curriculum irresistible to learners, improving transition between key stages, aspiring for some schools to be 3-19 schools in order to improve continuity and consistency, and involving learners in decisions around curriculum. The 12 pedagogical principals contained within Professor Graham Donaldson's Successful Futures report were explored.

4.3.3 One of the aspects which was taken into consideration was the development of digital competency and its implications for curriculum development. A presentation was given by the lead for digital competency in the CSC and a lengthy debate followed.

4.3.4 While working to achieve the objectives of the workstream, it became clear that the CSC had initiated a similar project, but on a regional basis. This gave the workstream the opportunity to confirm that there was a good awareness of the opportunity to marry the local and regional agenda in respect of curriculum development.

4.3.5 The board conducted a meeting in the style of a workshop with the focus upon the implications of the new curriculum for Welsh Government, CSC and the local authority. Another important aspect is the implications for school and cluster working and what the response to this should be.

4.3.6 The operational board stated that cluster working is at the heart of the curriculum design in Bridgend. With regards to cluster working the operational board commented that collaboration and consistency are key elements to successful working. The group also commented that cluster working needs to be connected to

the pioneer work. It was highlighted by the group that time, resources and teachers' personal professional development are also key points to consider.

4.3.7 The board agreed that for successful collaboration there needs to be awareness of the work of the pioneer schools and that feedback from these schools is critical. Comments were also made and discussed regarding the need for additional INSET days. The group agreed that direction is needed from a national level regarding requirements needed to allow for implementation of the new curriculum.

4.3.8 To reinforce the regional agenda, in November 2016, CSC issued a draft document regarding curriculum developments. This document provided an update and a way forward in the Central South Region regarding 'Successful Futures'. The expectation was that CSC will continue with work in this area for developing the curriculum in light of the Donaldson report.

4.3.9 Following the conclusion of the workstream the CSC have issued a document entitled 'Realising successful futures; a proposal for engaging all schools' (Appendix D). The workstream concluded prior to the deadline in the project brief ie May 2017.

4.4   School Modernisation Band B

4.4.1 The school modernisation operational board determined the data required in order to assist in identifying the Band B priorities for future investment in schools.

4.4.2 Data included information relating to school buildings (eg building condition, suitability and sufficiency); and information regarding the pupil population within Bridgend eg pupil projections, housing developments and pupil places.

4.4.3 The data was weighted and scored, and although it was informative, it was agreed that the priorities should focus on the primary issues of building condition and the supply of school places.

4.4.4 Information was provided on a geographical basis and this presented a clear indication that there would be a pressing need for places within the north east and south east of Bridgend, plus the valleys gateway area. Also, it was recognised that there is an increased demand for places for pupils with special educational needs. While the building condition varied between A – C, there were no buildings with a D rating.

4.4.5 It was determined that the statutory duty on the Council to ensure there is sufficient supply of school places should take precedence over building condition.

4.4.6 The emerging priorities for Band B were shared with Welsh Government in order to assist them in establishing the potential funding requirement across Wales for the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme.

4.4.7 While working on the deliverable, Welsh Government advised that construction schemes for Band B would be funded on an elemental basis in respect of an appropriate size of school ie floor area and component parts (eg cost per m², fees, furniture and IT), which would exclude additional areas for non-core teaching and learning eg community use, full-time nursery provision. Capital funding required to

provide any additionality with this regard would have to be fully funded by the Council.

4.4.8 Welsh Government also advised that a standardised cost would be applied to building elements, where appropriate, resulting in a maximum value for a school that can be benchmarked and inflated year on year.

4.4.9 Welsh Ministers confirmed that there would be a capital and revenue funding element to Band B. As with Band A, capital would be funded on a 50:50 intervention rate. The revenue scheme (ie the Mutual Investment Model (a Private Public Partnership for design, build and maintenance)), would be funded on a 75% intervention rate.

4.4.10 During the course of the project, Internal Audit was asked to undertake an evaluation of the investment made in Band A projects. At that time they had no capacity to undertake this work and therefore the evaluation will be incorporated into future planned work.

4.4.11 Work in developing a plan for promoting Welsh-medium education to 2050 is ongoing and is projected to be completed by the end of summer 2017.

4.4.12 The workstream recommended that an options appraisal of secondary school catchments must be undertaken by 2022, plus work relating to area reviews; this work would help inform future bands of the programme and this was agreed by the over-arching review board.

4.4.13 The timescales identified in the original project brief were adhered to.

4.5 Post-16 Education

4.5.1 The Post-16 Education workstream will be finalising its report in mid-September 2017 and making a detailed submission to Cabinet in October 2017.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 School Modernisation Band B: Although an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out for the overall programme, it has been considered timely to review and refresh the EIA. An initial screening has therefore been undertaken for Band B. Once schemes have been determined and are taken forward they will be subject to a separate EIA, as the detail may vary between projects. Equality reports on all proposals will be referred to as part of the individual Cabinet reports on each individual scheme.

6.2 The Post-16 Education workstream has considered the equalities impact assessment whilst discussing and scoring concepts. This will be detailed further in the 31 October 2017 Cabinet report.

6.3 A full Equality Impact Assessment will be conducted if phase two work is approved.

7. Financial implications

7.1 School Modernisation Band B: The financial implications for the Council will be calculated and incorporated into the financial detail for Band B by the Schools Programme Manager in consultation with technical and finance officers. Cabinet will be provided with further detail regarding the proposed Band B schemes, and approval of match funding will be sought in a future report. It is anticipated that Welsh Government will review the Band B submission and give the initial 'approval in principal' to the successful schemes by the end of October 2017.

7.2 Post-16 Education: Any costs will be calculated and incorporated into the further feasibility studies that will be undertaken if Cabinet approves phase two work subsequent to receiving the full Post-16 report on 31 October 2017.

7.3 There have been no financial implications for Leadership and Collaboration and Curriculum and Workforce workstreams.

8. Recommendation

Cabinet is recommended to:

8.1 note the recommendations of the Leadership and Collaboration and Curriculum and Workforce workstreams and the next steps for the School Modernisation Band B workstream which are detailed in appendix A-C;

8.2 agree the closure of the Leadership and Collaboration and Curriculum and Workforce workstreams with work transferring to CSC;

8.3 agree the closure of the School Modernisation Band B workstream through the strategic review with work progressing at an operational level with strategic oversight from the School Modernisation Board; and

8.4 agree to receive the full Post-16 Education report on 31 October 2017.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Leadership and Collaboration Workstream Report

Appendix B: School Modernisation Band B Workstream Report

Appendix C: Curriculum and Workforce Workstream Report

Appendix D: Central South Consortium: Realising Successful Futures; A proposal for engaging all schools

Background documents

Cabinet Report 1ˢ September 2015 - Strategic Review into the Development and Rationalization of the Curriculum and Estate Provision of Primary, Secondary and Post-16 Education.