

# **BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **REPORT TO SCRUTINY**

**10 JANUARY 2018**

### **REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT**

#### **A REVIEW OF THE FUTURE OF POST-16 EDUCATION PROVISION ACROSS BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

##### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 This report presents a position statement on the process of the post-16 review and reflects the work of the Strategic Review Board and the Post-16 Operational Board and consequent recommendations to Cabinet on 31 October 2017 on the potential future direction of post-16 education provision in Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC).
- 1.2 Cabinet gave approval to the next phase of the review and this will be outlined in the body of this report.

##### **2. Connection to corporate improvement objectives/other corporate priorities**

- 2.1 The work covered by this report is linked to the following corporate priority:
  - Supporting a successful economy
- 2.2 This review seeks to evaluate education provision and curriculum delivery with Bridgend College to ensure that there are clear options available to provide the best possible opportunities for learners in Bridgend.

##### **3. Background**

- 3.1 In 2011, BCBC, in partnership with its secondary schools developed, in response to Welsh Government's (WG) Transformation agenda, a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) to take forward post-16 education in the borough. The case was made to develop a collaborative and distributed tertiary model whereby close partnership arrangements would be developed through clusters of schools and also across the whole post-16 network including the further education (FE) college. Significant use was made of BCBC's 14 -19 Grant to support these developments and, in particular, to provide a transport budget that enabled learners to move between schools as well as the college in order to pursue shared subjects.
- 3.2 In 2013, Welsh Government asked BCBC to review the position of post-16 provision and the progress made under the SOC. BCBC agreed terms of reference with WG and commissioned Tribal to undertake the review. A copy of that report finalised in December 2013 is attached as Appendix A.
- 3.3 Tribal noted the improvements in access to a wide range of subjects, the ability of schools to meet the requirements of the Learning and Skills Measure and an increase in the numbers of learners accessing partnership courses. Some efficiency savings were recognised alongside rationalisation of minority subjects. Participation

rates were seen to be improving slowly but there was little impact seen on the quality of provision.

- 3.4 Among the concerns raised by Tribal were that this “distributed tertiary model” produced a slower rate of change in the anticipated outcomes and there was a need to provide a more comprehensive progression offer for learners with additional learning needs (ALN). Anxiety was expressed over the impact of transport costs if the burden of these fell on school budgets and the need for better quality impartial advice and guidance.
- 3.5 The Tribal review makes reference to a number of other reports related to post-16 provision in BCBC and proposed an action plan for the Partnership Steering Group (PSG) - the Borough’s 14-19 Strategic Group - to take forward. The action plan was only partially implemented.
- 3.6 In 2015, in response to changing policy and funding conditions, the Schools Task Group received a further report from the PSG.
- 3.7 In 2016, the Director for Education and Family Support established a Strategic Review Board (SRB) with this key objective:  
  
*“A strategic review is required to evaluate education provision and curriculum delivery across Bridgend County Borough including with Bridgend College, and to determine the future direction needed by means of an options appraisal and the recommendation of a preferred option.”*
- 3.8 A review of post-16 provision across BCBC was one of the workstreams established under the SRB and a Post-16 Operational Board was created to oversee this work and generate a report for the SRB. The terms of reference for the Post-16 Board along with its membership can be found at Appendix 4 to the Post-16 Board report. The full report from the Post-16 Board to the SRB is Appendix A.

#### **4. Current situation/proposal**

- 4.1 A resume of the report from the Post-16 Board is provided below. The SRB added a few additional features to its report to Cabinet. Cabinet noted the recommendations of both the SRB and Post-16 Boards and gave approval for feasibility studies to be undertaken on the range of concepts considered with a further report requested to go to Cabinet in April 2018 that would make recommendations on preferred options for public consultation.
- 4.2 The current education provision for 16 to 18 year-olds in Bridgend is as follows:
  - 4.2.1 sixth forms present in each secondary school varying in size from 76 to 377 (January 2017 PLASC) delivering predominantly A levels;
  - 4.2.2 sixth forms present in the two special schools with approximately 40 learners in each;
  - 4.2.3 Bridgend College and Pencoed Comprehensive School working in partnership to develop Penybont Sixth Form College;

- 4.2.4 Bridgend College provides a range of vocational pathways for approximately 2000 learners aged 16-18;
  - 4.2.5 Options X and Y timetabled in common (two afternoons per week) across all nine sixth forms with around 17 collaborative subjects available – around 27 students participating in collaborative courses;
  - 4.2.6 twilight provision at Bridgend College to deliver Law, Film Studies and Psychology to about 100 learners;
  - 4.2.7 Welsh-medium provision enhanced through extensive collaboration between YGG Llangynwyd in Bridgend and YGG Llanhari in RCT;
  - 4.2.8 some local arrangements between schools may occur (eg Brynteg, Porthcawl, CCYD and Maesteg);
  - 4.2.9 transport costs are met by the schools for daytime partnership courses;
  - 4.2.10 transport costs for twilight provision are met by Bridgend College which registers students as part-time learners;
  - 4.2.11 five work-based training organisations provide 60 to 70 places on Engagement (Level 1) and Traineeship programmes for Year 11 leavers;
  - 4.2.12 a small number of Year 11 learners will go on to Foundation Apprenticeships; and
  - 4.2.13 in 2015, approximately 29 learners from Year 11 went into employment.
- 4.3 The table below is an extract from the July 2015 post-16 options paper from the PSG (and thus reflects the views of headteachers at that time) comparing the positive and negative aspects of current provision. The full paper was made available to the Post-16 Board.

Positives	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The retention of sixth forms is seen as essential in some areas in response to community aspirations</li> <li>• Maintaining the link between sixth form students and the rest of the school, especially as role models and supporting younger learners</li> <li>• Sixth forms add to the overall ethos of the school</li> <li>• Perceived as popular with parents, staff, students, governors</li> <li>• Some schools believe they can have a viable sixth form under this approach</li> <li>• Faith-based and Welsh-medium schools see this as a highly desirable/only acceptable model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to maintain curriculum breadth; some traditional subjects are already being lost in schools</li> <li>• Resources/budgets/funding all set to reduce, and many regard this model as unsustainable</li> <li>• Does not address the issue of surplus places</li> <li>• Does not provide value for money and in small sixth forms is likely to lead to cross-stage subsidisation</li> <li>• The transport costs of current collaborative arrangements are a drain on resources and will be difficult to maintain</li> <li>• Withdrawal of transport grants may require students to pay for own transport or remain in their home school with consequential reduction in subject choice</li> <li>• Where subjects are delivered in small groups this is not always conducive to high standards and a dynamic learning environment</li> </ul>

4.4 The Post-16 Board also took account of the opinion of student councils in all secondary and special schools and the majority of governing bodies. In order to ascertain a comprehensive picture of the current situation, the Post-16 Board commissioned a major survey of staff and students currently engaged in 16-18 education and received over 2000 responses. The detail of this work is attached as Appendix C.

4.5 The Post-16 Board then reviewed a range of concepts for the future of post-16 provision across BCBC. These included the following:

4.5.1 the retention of the status quo;

4.5.2a the merger of sixth forms into a BCBC sixth-form centre; or

4.5.2b the development of a new independent sixth-form college; or

4.5.2c the development of one or more sixth-form centres as part of the FE college;

4.5.3 a mixed model with some school sixth forms being retained and others merged in line with the three models described above; or

4.5.4 a full tertiary model.

4.6 The detailed description of these concepts can be found in section 10.4 of the report from the Post-16 Board attached as Appendix A.

- 4.7 The Post-16 Board undertook a detailed assessment of these concepts as described in sections 10.6, 10.7 and 10.8 of its report. In summary, the recommendations on the concepts from the Post-16 Board are:
- 4.7.1 not to consider further the concept of an independent sixth-form college (this was based on the evidence from St. David's Catholic Sixth Form College consultation on its own future with Cardiff Local Authority (see Appendix B from the Post-16 Board report));
  - 4.7.2 to generate specific proposals in relation to Welsh-medium, faith-based and ALN provisions; and
  - 4.7.3 to take forward the preferred concepts of 3a and 3c for further detailed consideration and feasibility analysis (concepts described in section 4.5.3 above).
- 4.8 Following consideration of the Post-16 Board report, the SRB endorsed its recommendations and also highlighted three other aspects of provision where it felt progress could be made and were therefore also worthy of further investigation:
- 4.8.1 an increase in the amount of collaborative or common timetabling among the school sixth forms and with Bridgend College;
  - 4.8.2 consideration of the implications of moving staff between centres rather than students; and
  - 4.8.3 the use of internet-based technology to support e-learning and using staff resource more efficiently.
- 4.9 Phase 2 of the review is now under preparation and papers will be presented to a joint Post-16/SRB Board on 15 January 2018. The new project initiation document, terms of reference and project milestones will be available after that date.

## **5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules**

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

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 6.1 The Post-16 Board took account of faith, gender and Welsh language aspects of provision when considering the range of concepts. An initial EIA impact screening has been undertaken and raised no issues.

## **7. Financial implications**

- 7.1 Cost implications will be calculated once concepts are fully explored.

## **8. Recommendation**

- 8.1 Scrutiny is recommended to:
- 8.1.1 note the contents of this report and the concepts considered by the Post-16 Board along with the recommendations from the SRB to Cabinet on 31 October 2017; and

- 8.2 contribute to the on-going review of post-16 provision prior to the next submission to Cabinet in April 2018 and any consultation undertaken after that date.

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#### **Background documents**

Appendix A - Post-16 Operational Board Report

Appendix B - Post-16 Operational Board – Concept for testing

Appendix C – Post 16 Survey Report