

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

24 APRIL 2018

REPORT TO CABINET

REPORT OF THE INTERIM CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

REVIEW OF POST-16 EDUCATION (PHASE TWO)

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide detailed feedback to Cabinet on the feasibility analysis of the concepts described in the report of the Post-16 Operational Board and subsequent submission by the Strategic Review Board (SRB) to Cabinet on 31 October 2017.
- 1.2 In addition, this report seeks Cabinet approval to go to public consultation on the six concepts set out at paragraph 3.6.
- 1.3 The further work undertaken has been presented in a report to the Post-16 Education (Phase Two) Board. The key objectives for this phase of work are set out at paragraph 3.

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 The Strategic Review of Post-16 Education and Training evaluates education provision and curriculum delivery with Bridgend County Borough to ensure that there are clear options available to provide the best possible opportunities for post-16 learners in the county borough.
- 2.3 Furthermore, this was amplified in the Corporate Plan 2016-2020 (reviewed for 2017-2018) where it was stated (refer to p.7):

‘Complete the review into the curriculum and schools estates for primary, secondary and post-16 education and begin consultation on the proposals, where required, with all stakeholders.’

3. Background

- 3.1 Following the Cabinet meeting on 31 October 2017, work was undertaken to define the Phase 2 programme. The key objectives for the Phase Two post-16 workstream were defined as follows:
 - 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 learners; and to

- generate a feasibility report around the preferred concepts as outlined in the report to Cabinet of 31 October 2017 (the Project Initiation Document at Appendix 1 sets out further detail on how the work in Phase Two will be taken forward).

3.2 With the other strategic workstreams now concluded, it was agreed to merge the Post-16 Operational Board with the Strategic Review Board (SRB) into a single Post-16 Phase Two Board. The collective membership was agreed along with a Terms of Reference which can be found at Appendix 2.

3.3 In setting out to review the provision of post-16 education across Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC), the Post-16 Operational Board established a set of key ambitions upon which any new system would need to deliver. It is important not to lose sight of these, a number of which were proposed by learners in our schools, and they are brought forward into this report as Appendix 3.

3.4 In order to make the assessment process more manageable, the Post-16 Operational Board identified the 16 most critical ambitions and each of the concepts was assessed against its ability to deliver on these 16. They are:

- quality of teaching and learning and outcomes achieved;
- the range of the offer;
- expert and inspiring staff with positive relationships;
- high quality impartial advice and guidance;
- likelihood of increased participation 16-19;
- transport (willingness to travel, costs to learners, local authority discretionary transport costs);
- impact on 11-16 provision in schools;
- impact on viability of organisations already delivering post-16 provision;
- financial aspects of provision;
- support for learners;
- standard of facilities including IT;
- additional benefits to learners including extra-curricular and work experience;
- impact for learners with additional learning needs (ALN) in mainstream settings and in ALN in specialist settings;
- impact on Welsh-medium provisions;
- impact on provision in school with a religious character (or 'faith' schools); and
- contribution to 14-19 agenda in context of local partnerships and networks.

3.5 The original list of concepts under consideration was:

- The retention of the status quo – sixth forms in all secondary schools
- The merger of sixth forms into a BCBC sixth form centre(s) or
- The development of a new independent sixth form college or
- The development of one or more sixth form centres as part of Bridgend College
- A mixed model with some school sixth forms being retained and and others being merged

- A full tertiary education model

3.6 Following the assessment of the concepts, it was agreed that, in the light of the experience of St David's Catholic Sixth Form College as indicated in their consultation document that recommends the college re-joining the local authority as a voluntary aided sixth form college, the concept of a new independent sixth form college would not be taken any further forward.

3.7 Going forward therefore, there are six concepts under consideration. These are:

Concept 1 The retention of sixth forms in all schools – the 'status quo'

Concept 2 The closure of all sixth forms and the development of a local authority maintained sixth form centre

Concept 3 The closure of all sixth forms and the development of a further education (FE) college governed sixth form centre

Concept 4 A mix of school sixth forms with some mergers to create new local authority maintained sixth form centre(s)

Concept 5 A mix of school sixth forms with some mergers to create new FE college governed sixth form centre(s)

Concept 6 A full tertiary model governed by the FE sector

3.8 Appendix 5 outlines the key issues associated with each concept.

3.9 In addition, the SRB proposed three other elements to be considered. These were:

- an increase in the amount of collaborative or common timetabling among the school sixth forms and with Bridgend College;
- consideration of the implications of moving staff between centres rather than students; and
- the use of internet-based technology to support e-learning and using staff resource more efficiently.

3.10 Since the SRB report was presented to Cabinet on 31 October 2017, additional detailed work has been undertaken in order to gain further insights into post-16 provision. This has included:

- A detailed analysis of subject performance in sixth forms for the past three academic years has been undertaken. This has confirmed the general strength of A level performance but also revealed some areas of under-performance. This data has been used to underpin discussions on standards with individual schools.
- An audit of recent numbers in sixth forms and projections to 2029 of the future size of sixth forms and their host schools; this audit and analysis shows that

over the next decade both the overall school population and numbers in post-16 numbers will grow. There is a strong possibility that four schools may well be significantly over-subscribed (ie Bryntirion, Coleg Cymunedol y Dderwen (CCYD), Pencoed and YGG Llangynwyd) while others, notably Brynteg and Cynffig, may well have surplus places.

- A post-16 review with every secondary school (excluding special schools at this point in time); a particular issue emerging from the review is significant support for strengthening and improving the partnership and collaboration between sixth forms and also including Bridgend College.
- A closer analysis of the underlying cost of providing sixth form education; this reveals clear evidence that a number of schools are having to cross-subsidise their sixth form provision from their 11-16 income.
- The development of new software platforms to support careers advice and guidance (eg the new Bridgend Pathways to Success website).

3.11 There have been a number of significant updates since 31 October 2017, these include:

- BCBC's post-16 allocation from Welsh Government for 2018-2019 has been reduced by 7.34% or £461,581 compared to 2017-2018. This is as a result of falling student numbers.
- The reduction does not hit all schools equally but is a significant additional financial pressure for schools.
- Welsh Government has advised of a 2.5% reduction in the overall post-16 budget for Wales in 2019-2020; BCBC will also face a potential further reduction of 0.54% from a further small fall in demographics (ie lower pupil numbers).
- A 3.04% reduction in 2019-2020 would convert to a budget reduction of £177,214.
- A confirmed Band B proposal from Bridgend College for a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) centre on the Pencoed campus with the facility, in the future, to add a sixth form centre of approximately 200 students.
- A growing profile for the Penybont Sixth Form College joint venture between Bridgend College and Pencoed Comprehensive School.
- Universal adoption of the advanced Welsh Baccalaureate in Year 12 in line with meeting the expectations of Welsh Government.
- Increasing pressure on minority subjects with more being identified as at risk of not appearing in the final options for September 2018 due to a lack of numbers and financial pressure; as a result schools are looking to add more subjects into the collaborative options in order to keep them viable.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 It is generally recognised by the local authority, schools and Bridgend College that the current partnership arrangements are not fit for purpose. From a learner perspective, there are significant anomalies and equity issues across the Borough.
- 4.2 In order to reach a position where concepts that include the development of sixth form centres can be taken forward, capital funding will need to be identified/secured. Currently, the School Modernisation Band B strategic outline business cases for work in the primary and special school sector are being prepared. There are no plans within Band B for capital to be focused on sixth form provision. The next possibility will be to include post-16 facilities in the Band C proposals which will commence from 2025 onwards. This is on the assumption that Welsh Government proceeds with a Band C allocation.
- 4.3 In the short to medium term, this paper is putting forward two distinct proposals:
- The first proposal is to seek cabinet approval to take the six concepts to public consultation with an indication of the current preferred concepts. They are concepts 4 and 5 as listed in section 3.7. These preferred concepts were arrived at by the Post-16 Operational Board through the assessment process and scoring exercise referred to in section 3.4. The 16 key criteria used in the assessment are also described in section 3.4. The consultation could be launched during the period from June to December 2018. It is anticipated that alongside an online consultation and survey, interactive workshops would be held with key stakeholders, including parents, in order to allow the public an opportunity to explore the issues and potential solutions. There would also be specific workshops with students in the schools in order to ensure a strong representation of the learner voice.
 - The detailed consultation document and process would be made available to Cabinet in May 2018.
 - The second proposal, which would be developed alongside the consultation, is to significantly improve the level and organisation of partnership and collaboration among the existing sixth forms and with Bridgend College. The target date for implementation of these changes would be September 2019. However, given the extended planning time needed to introduce major changes to the curriculum, the work on these changes would commence during summer term 2018 in order to be able to inform students in Year 11 (currently in Year 10) as they start to make their post-16 destination and subject choices in the latter part of autumn term 2018.
 - Although the changes to collaboration may be seen as a short-term measure, the integrated timetables described below will still be needed, if and when, the preferred Concepts 4 and 5 come to reality. Thus, this second approach is also very much a first step that will be part of a longer-term strategy.
- 4.4 The Penybont Sixth Form College partnership has been developed between Pencoed Comprehensive School and Bridgend College. It has established a formal management committee which is being operated under the guidance set out in the Welsh Government's regulations for the collaboration of schools and FE colleges.
- The majority of the funding is sourced through the local authority post-16 grant with further additional funds and management support from Bridgend College.

- The partnership has seen a significant rise in performance in 2017 and is able to provide access to a wider range of courses for school-based students and access to A levels for college students.
- The longer-term direction of this partnership is linked to the Band B submission by the college for a STEAM centre on the Pencoed campus. This centre would replace the outdated engineering sections on the Cowbridge Road campus. It is essentially a like-for-like proposal but upgraded to modern standards and with a growth capacity built in to respond to the projected increases in apprenticeships in engineering and construction. Currently, the Cowbridge Road site caters for around 750 students and the proposed Pencoed development would be able to cater for up to 850/900 students. This facility could also be expanded to accommodate a sixth form centre, an ambition that has been discussed by the Penybont Sixth Form College partnership. This would involve the transfer of Pencoed Comprehensive School's Sixth Form into these extended premises probably in line with Band C timescales. The capacity of this new sixth form centre could be in the region of 200 to 250.
- Consideration needs to be given as to whether this development can be included in the consultation exercise as an example of a new sixth form centre that falls within the scope of Concepts 4 and 5.

- 4.5 The 'status quo' concept is defined as the retention of sixth forms in all secondary school settings. For this to be effective in mainstream settings, it is recognised that collaboration between the sixth forms is essential. This was the premise behind the establishment of the original collaborations outlined in BCBC's transformation plans in 2011.
- 4.6 At the current time, there are shifting patterns of subject choice by learners, a much tighter fiscal environment, the loss of dedicated 14-19 grant funds to cover transport costs and a reduction in the number of subjects available in the post-16 offer.
- 4.7 The recent reviews with schools both individually and through forums such as the Formal Learning Group (FLG) of senior curriculum managers have revealed that the existing arrangements are unsatisfactory. Proposals to modify the model of collaboration were discussed with individual schools during the recent post-16 reviews and there was significant support for change.
- 4.8 Due to the lead time for applying for capital funding and undertaking detailed options analysis and consultation on the six concepts, the 'status quo' concept would need to remain in place for some years ahead. As indicated above, it is recognised that improvements need to be made to the arrangements for collaboration in order to make them more fit for purpose. The concerns over the current arrangements are set out below:
- There has been a steady erosion in the range of subjects offered with the loss of 10 subjects in the past few years and 16 potentially on the endangered list.
 - The current arrangements do not allow learners to access the full choice of subjects available and this creates an issue of equality of opportunity for learners across BCBC.
 - The internal offer across sixth forms in BCBC varies from 12 to 30+ subjects depending on the size of the sixth form.

- Current collaboration exists around the two common option blocks and the twilight offer at Bridgend College.
- Both of these have seen a reduction in the range of subjects being offered for collaboration although Further Maths has been added to the twilight provision.
- Options X and Y are timetabled for two afternoons per week each for both Year 12 and 13 across Monday to Thursday providing up to eight hours of contact over the two-week timetable.
- However, not all schools make all the subjects in these option blocks available to external students.
- The timetabling of these collaborative option blocks into four afternoons per week exerts a significant skew within the timetable and reduces flexibility for timetablers.
- In some schools, there is a policy of nine or ten hours of delivery rather than eight. This requirement imposes a further constraint on external students who then have to attend a third session on a Friday afternoon.
- This creates an additional cost to the visitor's home school which will have to cover the extra transport costs.
- It may also result in clashes with timetabled options back in the visiting students' 'home' school.
- There has been an overall reduction in daytime collaboration in recent years.
- The post-16 offer, from a student perspective, is still largely seen as their home-school offer plus some additional subjects through collaboration (ie it is not seen as an entitlement offer to all learners in Bridgend irrespective of their home base).
- Marketing and internal custom and practice processes tend to reinforce this – an institutional bias which is not unsurprising.
- The tighter fiscal environment and the loss of a clearly identifiable 14-19 grant has meant that schools individually bear the transport costs associated with collaboration and this means that any requests for transport are carefully scrutinised internally.
- Some subjects have become vulnerable where a single member of staff has the responsibility for delivery and the school is the only one to offer the subject. Illness or staff moving on/retiring can result in the removal of the subject from the offer whereas joint delivery between schools could help avoid such vulnerabilities.
- In the current subject option blocks there is a limited number of vocational programmes. Bridgend College, the local lead for vocational programmes, is currently not significantly engaged with daytime collaboration. Learners who would benefit from a mixed academic/vocational mix are not well served through the choices available to them nor with staff expertise and facilities. Generally, these learners are faced with a decision to follow a full-time vocational provision in college or an academic provision in sixth form with few vocational choices.

4.9 The local authority will commence work with schools in summer term 2018 in order to inform the planning and preparation work ahead of implementation in September 2019. Proposals to address these concerns are outlined below:

- The introduction of a common sixth form option structure for all schools which would be populated with the 50+ subjects available to all post-16 students.
- Bridgend College would be invited to offer a range of vocational courses in each of the option blocks.
- The option block scheduled for a Wednesday afternoon would contain opportunities for sport and other non-academic activities.
- The options would be placed into a common timetable with each option having up to three hours in the morning and two in the afternoon to allow for up to five hours delivery per week or ten per fortnight.
- Some schools may need to realign the timings of their school day in order to fit in with the common timetable arrangements.
- Schools will jointly and strategically plan the post-16 offer and will take into account standards, capacity within and across schools, the possibilities of joint delivery and movement of staff, facilities and the professional development of staff.
- A common online prospectus will be available and in time subject profiles may include subject combinations, grades, value-added data, destinations and case studies of students and their successful progression routes.
- To ensure an efficient delivery of the new arrangements a student transport infrastructure will be developed. This will incur additional costs. The current expenditure on post-16 transport by schools is around £61k. This compares with £110k when transport was funded from the 14-19 grant and an estimated £165k for the new arrangements. Discussions will be held with headteachers as to the use of funds drawn from the 14-19 grant, the post-16 funding allocation from Welsh Government and schools' delegated budgets.
- The existing twilight A level provision would be brought into daytime delivery reducing the length of the day for many students.
- All minority subjects will benefit from a county-wide approach to the strategic planning of the post-16 offer and through planned increase in joint delivery the survival of some of these subjects will be enhanced through reduced reliance on a single member of staff.

Blended and e-learning

4.10 The topic of e-learning was raised during the course of the individual post-16 reviews with each school. Earlier experiences of distance learning via video-conferencing across Bridgend have not been regarded as successful. However, with the development of online learning platforms and digital resources new approaches to 'blended learning' are being seen in a positive light. There are

examples across BCBC of this approach making a significant impact on standards. Plans will be developed to share and expand the use of blended learning in the delivery of post-16 provision.

- 4.11 A number of BCBC schools are making good use of Google Classrooms in developing blended learning. This product will be made available by Welsh Government to all schools in Wales during summer term 2018. Here in Bridgend, the Digital Champions Network has met recently and had an opportunity to hear how the college and some local schools have been working effectively with Google Classrooms.

Movement of staff between schools

- 4.12 Discussions have also been held with schools in relation to the movement of staff rather than students between schools. Some schools in BCBC have tried this approach and it has proved to be more complicated than moving students. The problems identified include:

- Staff missed registration periods and also pastoral sessions which therefore needed to be covered and they missed specific time with their tutor groups.
- Travel time had to be factored in for staff.
- There was still a cost for staff travel and for some staff the extra claims for mileage were potentially affecting their tax bracket.
- When staff travelled for afternoon sessions, it meant they missed or were late for staff meetings, parents' evenings and other meetings/activities.
- There were issues relating to staff welfare such as lunch eaten in the car and trying to rush back for fixtures.
- It was also pointed out that some staff don't drive or don't have their own car or have car sharing arrangements.
- Traffic issues were experienced which delayed staff on their journey between schools.

Welsh-medium provision

- 4.13 In considering Welsh-medium post-16 provision, YGG Llangynwyd would be expected to continue with its partnership arrangements with YGG Llanhari in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).
- YGG Llangynwyd and YGG Llanhari have adjusted the times of their school days and collaborated on timetable arrangements. There is an agreement on the sharing of student data across local authority borders via a basic version of the Common Transfer File.
 - YGG Llangynwyd continues to register students as 'guests' in line with practice across BCBC. YGG Llanhari registers visiting students as 'dual-registered' in line with Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) practice.

- Transport links between the two schools via taxis are established at a cost of approximately £14k per school. YGG Llanhari has bought a minibus to support the transport. This helps YGG Llangynwyd but is a significant expense for YGG Llanhari. The transport for Welsh-medium learners would be brought into any proposed plans that result from the work on transport infrastructure.
- Currently, there are up to 13 subjects included in the collaborative arrangements between the two schools.
- In the longer term, there may be an opportunity to offer post-16 provision to students from the new 11-16 Welsh-medium school, YGG Bro Dur in Neath Port Talbot.

Schools with a religious character (faith schools)

- 4.14 With respect to post-16 provision in faith schools, the intention is to secure the integration of Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School's timetable and options into the revised collaboration arrangements.
- Positive discussions have been held with both the school and the Archdiocese on this approach. Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School will also keep open the possibility of some post-16 collaboration with St. Joseph's Catholic High School in Neath Port Talbot.
 - It is noted that Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School has a good history of collaboration with local secondary schools.

Additional learning needs and special school provision

- 4.15 As identified in the previous post-16 report to Cabinet, a separate piece of work will be undertaken to produce a report on the transition and progression arrangements for students with additional learning needs.
- Individual detailed discussions will be held with the two special schools in Bridgend during summer term 2018. These meetings will be used to identify critical issues from the schools' perspective and these, together with additional research, will inform a subsidiary report on the specific aspect of ALN progression routes through 16-19 and beyond.
 - A significant amount of work has been going on across the region in preparation for the implementation of the ALN Reform Bill. The output from this research, funded by the Central South Consortium Innovation Fund, has now been concluded and will be fed into the Bridgend report on post-16 provision for students with ALN.
 - A further aspect that is being developed with reference to ALN is that of supported internships. Bridgend College is progressing within the national project and working with Elite to develop this pathway into employment for their students from age 19 plus. We will also be engaging with Elite and possibly other organisations in order to secure this type of pathway for leavers from our special schools. The scale and timing of this work will be detailed in the specific ALN post-16 report later this academic year.

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 The Post-16 Board Operational Board (Phase Two) took account of faith, gender and Welsh language aspects of provision when considering the range of concepts.
- 6.2 A further EIA impact screening assessment has been undertaken and is attached at Appendix 4.
- 6.3 A full EIA will be undertaken when the workstream moves to detailed consideration of options.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 In developing a transport infrastructure to support a revised model of collaboration, there will be a potential increase in the transport costs for post-16 provision of approximately £100k per year with an overall estimated cost of £165k.
- 7.2 This would be offset by savings resulting from the efficiencies made to delivery costs. An exercise based around the previous cluster collaboration model identified a reduction in teaching sets of between 8 and 13 with consequent savings of £80k to £130k. The full collaboration model would create further opportunities for efficiencies over a period of two to three years.
- 7.3 Consideration needs to be given to resourcing the costs of transport from the 14-19 grant element of the Education Improvement Grant, the post-16 funding allocation from Welsh Government, schools' delegated budgets and/or as a budget pressure to be submitted for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2019-2020 to 2022-2023, which will compete for limited resources against other Council pressures, and from the delivery of the efficiencies indicated at paragraph 7.2. At this time, the funding for the additional transport costs is not secured.
- 7.4 It is important to note that, depending on decisions made following consultation, the longer-term financial implications could be significant. Should any proposals require capital investment, the earliest opportunity to apply for funding would be 2024.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - give approval for a public consultation on the six concepts and preferred options for post-16 provision across BCBC (the consultation will be undertaken between June and December 2018);
 - note the proposed changes to the model of collaboration for post-16 provision across BCBC for implementation from September 2019;
 - note the feedback on e-learning and the intention to develop blended learning approaches in the delivery of post-16 education;
 - note the continued collaboration and partnership arrangements for Welsh-medium post-16 provision;

- note the support from the faith schools sector for improved collaboration and to maintain dialogue between Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School and St. Joseph's Catholic High School in Neath Port Talbot;
- note the feedback from schools to the movement of staff between educational settings;
- note that a further report on post-16 progression for learners with additional learning needs will be prepared during the summer term 2018; and
- note the ongoing developments in relation to the Penybont Sixth Form College.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Project Initiation Document

Appendix 2: Terms of Reference and representation on the Board

Appendix 3: Statements of Ambition

Appendix 4: Revised EIA Initial Screening

Background documents

None