

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

20 NOVEMBER 2018

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON POTENTIAL CONCEPTS FOR POST-16 PROVISION ACROSS BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 In April 2018 Cabinet gave approval for a public consultation on the future development of post-16 education across Bridgend County Borough ('the County'). This report provides Cabinet with the Post-16 Consultation Paper and sets out the proposed approaches for consultation together with an initial Equalities Impact Assessment and Wellbeing of Future Generations Assessment.

2. Connection to corporate improvement objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate priority/priorities:
- Supporting a successful economy – taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.
 - Smarter use of resources – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

3. Background

- 3.1 This paper is the third report to Cabinet in relation to the review of post-16 education provision across the County. The earlier papers were submitted on 31 October 2017 and 24 April 2018.
- 3.2 On 24 April 2018 Cabinet gave approval for a public consultation on six concepts of post-16 educational provision. These concepts are:
- **Concept 1** The retention of sixth forms in all schools - the current position (ie a distributed tertiary model based on collaboration, but with further development in order to improve the delivery of this concept)
 - **Concept 2** The closure of all sixth forms and the development of a local authority maintained sixth-form centre(s)
 - **Concept 3** The closure of all sixth forms and the development of a further education (FE) college governed sixth-form centre(s)

- **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

4. Current situation/proposal

4.1 The consultation paper on concepts for post-16 educational provision across the County has now been prepared and is attached as Appendix A. Included as appendices in the report are an initial Equalities Impact Assessment and a Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act Assessment. The six concepts are listed in paragraph 3.2 and of these Concepts 4 and 5 were the Cabinet's preferred options after the April 2018 Cabinet report.

4.2 **Preferred concepts:** Concepts 4 and 5 provide a bridge between Concepts 1 and 2 and are currently the Cabinet's preferred options from among the six concepts being considered. The rationale for this stated preference is as follows:

- When the Post-16 Board ('the Board') ran a scoring analysis against the key ambitions, Concepts 4 and 5 were the two that the Board agreed were most likely to meet these; this was subsequently supported by Cabinet.
- It is understood that for a significant number of people the school based sixth form is an attractive option. However, as the consultation paper indicates there are challenges to be faced in trying to maintain sixth forms in all the Council's secondary schools. Concepts 4 and 5 provide options to keep at least some school-based sixth forms open whilst merging others into sixth-form centres either under Council control (Concept 4) or FE control (Concept 5).
- These two concepts respond to the "one size does not fit all" statement that has been voiced by local members, Welsh Government and the Cabinet Secretary for Education. There are a number of factors that will be taken into account when considering actual options and these include the geography of the County, travel and transport issues, the current and predicted capacity of secondary schools, the scale of the curriculum offer, capital financial resources and standards of achievement

4.3 The preferred concepts are intended to deliver on the ambitions established by learners and stakeholders in the first phase of the review of post-16 education. These are summarised thus:

- High-quality teaching and learning that enables them to secure strong performance and high standards of achievement in examinations
- A broad curriculum offer underpinned by excellent impartial careers advice and guidance
- Positive relationships with staff who are inspirational with students and experts in their work

- First-class support for learners whether in a personal capacity or through the facilities available to support their studies
- A good range of extra-curricular activity and have access to work experience

4.4 At the heart of the review into post-16 education is the ambition to develop a skilled and well-educated workforce by providing outstanding 16-18 education – ‘Supporting a successful economy’. These young people will provide the skilled adults employers are seeking and will underpin the growth of employment opportunities, the economy and wealth in the local economy. The preferred changes are predicated on the efficient use of resources by creating economies of scale in the educational provision.

4.5 The consultation paper provides a range of contextual information relating to post-16 provision including:

- The numbers of learners in school sixth forms
- The effect of size of sixth form on finances, curriculum breadth, learner choice and standards achieved
- Projections on the future capacity of secondary schools in the County
- Financial constraints arising from the Welsh Government post-16 planning and funding system
- A description of the current provision across the County
- Examples of post-16 arrangements from across Wales to illustrate the six concepts
- An outline of each concept together with a list of suggested advantages and concerns

4.6 It is proposed that the public consultation will run from 26 November 2018 to 22 February 2019.

4.7 The intention is to provide a number of ways in which the public can engage with the consultation. These will include:

- Bilingual surveys available online in both adult and young person’s versions
- Welsh and English paper surveys available upon request
- Interactive workshops organised in schools for pupils and parents – the schedule will be published when the consultation goes live

4.8 A report on the outcomes of the consultation will be provided to Cabinet in April 2019.

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 (EIA)

6.1 An EIA impact screening assessment has been undertaken and is included as appendix J in the consultation paper which is Appendix A attached to this report.

6.2 A full EIA will be undertaken when the workstream moves to detailed consideration of options.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 Now, and in the short and mid-term, the financial pressures in the education system are a challenge to the viability of small sixth forms and the range of subjects that are available to learners 16-18.

7.2 The Cabinet's preferred concepts for the future of post-16 provision in the County are aimed at providing choice in post-16 settings, maintaining the breadth of subject choice, improving facilities and enhancing the standards of performance.

7.3 Through these developments the Council is striving to meet the ambitions of learners and support them to become high skilled members of the workforce in Wales. This will enable them to access employment and thereby have incomes that allow them to lead fulfilling lives.

7.4 Through all stages of the review of post-16 provision there has been close engagement with a range of stakeholders including the young people in schools and college. This has meant that the voice of learners has been clearly articulated in the design of future provision. Learners will continue to be engaged in any future consultation activity.

7.5 Further detail can be found in the accompanying Wellbeing Impact Assessment as appendix K in the consultation paper which is Appendix A attached to this report.

8. Financial implications

8.1 Funding for sixth-form provision in BCBC is provided by Welsh Government as a single post-16 grant allocation each year. There is a core allocation based mainly on learner numbers, with additional allocations to take into account learner deprivation and Welsh-medium education. Total funding for 2018-19 is £5,829,430, of which over 97% is distributed to secondary schools. In the last three financial years the core grant has been reduced by £672,427 as a result of the combined effects of lower learner numbers and reductions by Welsh Government to the central post-16 grant for schools.

8.2 The consultation report references the financial pressures being faced by the Council, its secondary schools and Bridgend College. The need to use limited resources efficiently will be discussed along with providing good value for money. No detail on potential capital costs will be provided although the challenge of obtaining capital investment in times of austerity will be covered.

8.3 One area presented in the consultation paper is post-16 transport costs. The pressure on this discretionary expenditure by the Council will vary between the different concepts. In some concepts the efficiencies gained can be used to offset transport costs whereas in others this may not be possible thus there is a varying degree of risk in relation to this particular budget pressure.

8.4 Should Cabinet decide after April 2019 to prepare specific option appraisals on post-16 provision then detailed financial models will be incorporated into those option appraisals at the appropriate time.

9. Recommendation

9.1 The Cabinet is recommended to:

- To give approval to the consultation paper on six concepts for the future of post-16 education across Bridgend County Borough

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Background documents:

Appendix A - Consultation paper on 'The potential re-organisation of post-16 provision across Bridgend County Borough Council – consideration of concepts'

Cabinet paper on the review of post-16, 31 October 2017

Cabinet paper on the review of post-16 education provision, 24 April 2018

Scrutiny paper on the concepts for post-16 education included in the public consultation, 16 October 2018