

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

16 APRIL 2019

REPORT BY THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

FEEDBACK ON THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON POTENTIAL CONCEPTS FOR POST-16 PROVISION ACROSS BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHASE 4 OF THE REVIEW

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide detailed feedback to Cabinet on the public consultation undertaken between 7 December 2018 and 13 March 2019 on the six concepts being considered in the review of post-16 education provision across the County Borough of Bridgend.
- 1.2 In addition, this report puts forward recommendations for Phase 4 of the review of post-16 education provision.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 The report links to the following improvement priorities in the Corporate Plan:
 - **Supporting a successful economy** - we will take 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 fourth report to Cabinet in relation to the review of post-16 education provision across the County Borough. The earlier papers were submitted on 31 October 2017, 24 April 2018 and 20 November 2018.
- 3.2 Following the Cabinet meeting on 20 November 2018, a public consultation was held to ascertain the views of the public on the six concepts for post-16 provision that have been considered by the Review Boards and Cabinet. These 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 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 further education sector

3.3 The full report on the public consultation can be found at Appendix A and the main outcomes are discussed in sections 3.4 to 3.9.

3.4 The consultation activities consisted of:

- an online survey;
- workshop sessions which engaged with over 2000 learners in secondary schools across key stage 3, key stage 4 and post-16;
- public meeting community engagement sessions with parents, staff and governors in all secondary schools;
- public meeting community engagement sessions for parents of primary school-aged pupils; and
- community engagement meetings with staff, student ambassadors and the governors of Bridgend College.

3.5 The participation/response rates are described as 'robust' and detailed in section 4 of Appendix 1 - Post-16 Concepts consultation. The consultation included:

- 322 survey responses (mostly consisting of 59% parents, 26% staff, 5% governors and 4% students);
- 2030 learners engaged in workshops; and
- 239 parents, 293 staff and 56 governors attended engagement sessions with a good cross section of the county borough's social demographic.

Thus, in the sections that follow the survey results are predominantly the voice of parents and staff while the workshops provide the voice of the learners.

3.6 Statements of ambition

3.6.1 69% of those who responded in the survey agreed with the ambitions set out in the consultation paper.

3.6.2 Additional comments were contributed and made reference to access to support, careers advice, mentors and local education.

3.6.3 The most popular ambitions from the learners' workshops were:

- high quality teaching and learning;
- great examination results;
- expert teachers; and
- wide range of subjects.

3.6.4 Additional comments from the workshops focused on ease of travel, quality of food and pastoral support.

3.7 The curriculum offer

3.7.1 From the survey, 86% supported a wide range of subjects and 84% supported the entitlement to progress key stage 4 subjects into post-16; 69% supported equity of resources regardless of size of teaching group.

3.7.2 In the learner workshops, 86% supported access to a wide range of subjects and 91% the entitlement to subject progression post-16; 83% supported equity of resources regardless of size of teaching group.

3.7.3 With regard to blended learning (structured on-line distance learning), 64% of the survey indicated positive or neutral responses (45% positive, 19% neutral) compared with 70% in the learner workshops (30% positive, 40% neutral).

3.7.4 The survey indicated 52% support for daytime collaboration, 38% for a mix of daytime and twilight collaboration and only 5% for twilight collaboration only; twilight was seen to interfere with learners' other responsibilities/leisure time while a mix was seen as positive in order to provide choice to suit individuals; it was noted that collaboration provided a wider subject choice.

3.7.5 In the learner workshops the support for daytime collaboration was 81% and 19% for twilight. Advantages of daytime collaboration were seen as more subject choice and having free time after school. The concerns against collaboration were related to travel and timetable clashes. The need for an early lunch was noted as both a positive and a negative.

3.7.6 From the learner workshops, twilight collaboration was positive for subject choice, more free time in the day and that it did not disrupt the school day. The fact transport was provided was positive but the need to travel was also a strong concern. Other concerns included the lack of personal time after school and tiring, long days.

3.8 Travel

- 3.8.1 This aspect of post-16 provision is a recurring theme in many responses to the consultation. The survey produced a 54% disagreement with the idea of A level learners travelling for provision which is quite at odds with the expectations for vocational learners across Bridgend. However, the responses from the learner workshops showed a more balanced approach on the lines of a normal distribution.
- 3.8.2 Respondents to the survey have indicated travel as a concern in all of the six concepts. Some have related this to time and distance, lack of public service transport and cost for either the local authority or individuals. The fact that travel may affect some learners more than others was noted. There were comments focused on the need to provide effective transport.
- 3.8.3 In the learner workshops, 'ease of travel' was referenced as an additional statement of ambition. Having transport provided was a positive in daytime collaboration but four times as many groups identified this as a concern. The same was true of comments on twilight collaboration but with the concerns being only twice the number of positives.
- 3.8.4 When considering the concepts learners ranked 'no travelling issues' as the third most popular advantage for retaining sixth forms but travel was ranked as the either the first or second most popular concern for all the other concepts.

3.9 Consideration of the concepts

- 3.9.1 The results from the online survey and learner workshops indicate a strong preference for the retention of sixth forms in all schools – Concept 1.
- 3.9.2 From the learners' workshops aspects of familiarity with staff, systems and surroundings and fewer transport issues were noted as the critical advantages. The concerns were primarily focused on the more limited subject choice and the costs of this type of provision/lack of resources.
- 3.9.3 Although Concept 1 is the most popular choice from the survey, the top three advantages and concerns are at odds with the concept itself and are more applicable to other concepts. For example, 'curriculum breadth is retained with minority subjects becoming more viable' is a feature of larger centres rather than a mix of smaller sixth forms. It is therefore difficult to interpret these rankings. However, from the additional points recorded in the survey, familiar environments and teacher/learner relationships are picked out as positives and travel issues and expense (of maintaining all sixth forms) were the main concerns.

Concept 1

Source	From the survey	From the workshops
Advantages	<p>Curriculum breadth is retained in the level 3 offer and minority subjects become more viable *</p> <p>Teaching staff will specialise in post-16 delivery potentially producing higher standards of performance **</p> <p>Creates an opportunity to invest in tailored facilities for 16-18 education provision ***</p> <p>Known environment/ accessibility</p> <p>Teacher pupil parent relationship /support</p>	<p>Familiar teachers (good relationships) *</p> <p>Familiar surroundings **</p> <p>No travelling issues ***</p> <p>Familiar system</p> <p>Keep friendship groups</p> <p>Sixth-formers help around school and act as role models</p> <p>More personal support</p> <p>Easier transition</p>
Concerns	<p>Bringing all post-16 learners into one or two centres would require an increase in travel arrangements and potentially higher discretionary post-16 transport costs for the council although the cost may be offset by greater efficiency of delivery costs due to larger teaching groups *</p> <p>Increased travel may be a more marked disadvantage for some learners **</p> <p>If the teaching staff are recruited directly to the new centre(s) there may be a detrimental effect on the teaching force deployed in the 11-16 schools and certainly an unsettling period of recruitment and appointment ***</p> <p>Travel issues</p> <p>Expense</p>	<p>Less subject choice *</p> <p>Costs **</p> <p>Limited/lack of resources ***</p> <p>Doesn't promote independence</p>

* ** *** denote top three issues

3.9.4 The consultation paper indicated that a suitable size for a sixth form was upwards of 250 learners. When asked in the survey if the Council should develop sixth forms of this size, 49% disagreed compared to 33% who agreed with the idea.

3.9.5 In the survey, 64% disagreed with the Cabinet's preferred choice of Concepts 4 and 5 instead favouring the retention of sixth forms. However, of these two concepts 49% would prefer Concept 4, 18% would prefer Concept 5, with 33% indicating no

preference. In the reasons provided there was 3:1 support in favour of centres run by the local authority compared to Bridgend College.

3.9.6 Concepts 2 and 3 provide for the establishment of sixth-form centres. The key issues arising from the survey and workshops are compared below:

Concepts 2 and 3

Source	From the survey	From the workshops
Advantages	<p>Wide choice of subjects *</p> <p>Specialist post-16 staff **</p> <p>Investment in facilities ***</p> <p>Ability to combine vocational and academic provision in a further education-based centre</p>	<p>More subject choice *</p> <p>Meet new people **</p> <p>Focus on sixth form ***</p> <p>Specialist post-16 staff</p> <p>Better facilities</p> <p>Equal for all</p> <p>Promote independence</p>
Concerns	<p>Travel – costs *and some learners may be more disadvantaged than others **</p> <p>Detrimental impact on staffing in 11 to 16 schools ***</p> <p>Redundancy/loss of high-quality staff</p> <p>Locations for centres</p> <p>Loss of senior students as positive role models</p> <p>Level of pastoral support</p>	<p>Travel issues *</p> <p>Cost to set up **</p> <p>Unfamiliar teachers and surroundings ***</p> <p>Less one-to-one support</p> <p>Anxiety</p> <p>Larger classes</p> <p>Lose sixth-form community/opportunities</p>

* ** *** denote top three issues

3.9.7 Concepts 4 and 5 provide for a mixed model of sixth forms with one or more sixth-form centres. The key issues arising from the survey and workshops are compared below:

Concepts 4 and 5

Source	From the survey	From the workshops
Advantages	<p>Retaining sixth forms is important to community aspirations *</p> <p>Provides more choice for learners and parents (where the centre is further education-based) **</p> <p>Maintaining link between sixth form and rest of school (role models) ***</p> <p>Sixth forms add to overall ethos of school</p>	<p>Give people a choice *</p> <p>More subject choice **</p> <p>Meet new people ***</p> <p>Use existing resources/facilities</p> <p>More opportunities</p> <p>Less travel issues</p>
Concerns	<p>Potential impact on schools not having a sixth form (surplus places, demand for places, staffing) *</p> <p>Leakage of learners to schools with a sixth form **</p> <p>Travel - some learners may be more disadvantaged than others ***</p> <p>Loss of senior students as positive role models</p>	<p>Not equal for all schools/learners *</p> <p>Travel issues **</p> <p>Costs a lot of money ***</p> <p>It's confusing for learners</p>

* ** *** denote top three issues

3.9.8 Concept 6 provides for a full tertiary model of post-16 provision. The key issues arising from the survey and workshops are compared below:

Concept 6

Source	From the survey	From the workshops
Advantages	<p>Ability to maintain curriculum breadth *</p> <p>Equality of offer to all learners **</p> <p>Allow schools to focus more on the outcomes of key stage 4 ***</p>	<p>More subject choice *</p> <p>Meet new people **</p> <p>Better facilities ***</p> <p>Promotes independence</p> <p>Specialised teachers</p> <p>Focus on sixth form students</p>
Concerns	<p>Reduces the choice for learners and parents *</p> <p>Travel - some learners may be more</p>	<p>Travel issues *</p> <p>Overcrowding **</p> <p>Costs lots of money ***</p>

	disadvantaged than others **	Less one-to-one support
	Detrimental impact on staffing in 11-16 schools***	Larger classes

* ** *** denote top three issues

3.9.9 In the engagement sessions with **parents and carers**, a wide range of issues were raised as outlined in section 9 of the consultation report. The top three issues were related to travel provision, the funding/location of sixth-form centres and the importance of the sixth-form community as role models.

3.9.10 In the engagement sessions with **staff**, the top three issues raised were ‘who will decide which sixth forms go?’, the potential loss of staff from schools/redundancies and concern over pastoral support. The next two issues in this list mirrored issues from parents and carers namely travel provision and sixth-form students as role models.

3.9.11 In the engagement sessions with **governors**, the top three issues were funding, potential loss of staff from schools and an expressed preference to retain sixth forms. Travel issues and the question of, ‘Who will decide which sixth forms go?’ were also frequently mentioned.

3.9.12 Two activities were run with the Bridgend College student focus group. The first concerned the statements of ambition. The most popular ambitions chosen by the focus group were:

- everyone makes progress;
- high quality teaching and learning;
- strong personal support; and
- expert teachers.

3.9.13 The focus group ranked Concepts 1 (retain sixth forms) and 5 (mixed with further education-based centre) as their preferred options.

3.9.14 The focus group was invited to provide additional comments and travel issues (including cost) and lack of advice in school on routes outside the sixth form were the most frequently raised items.

3.9.15 A member of the focus group provided additional information from a travel survey that had been conducted with students. There was useful data on the proportion of students having free bus passes and the implications if free transport was withdrawn – see section 12.1.4 in the consultation report for further details.

3.9.16 The engagement session with the governors of Bridgend College generated discussion over a wide range of topics detailed in section 12.2 of the consultation report. There was a stress on developing a post-16 system that was in the interest of learners. The governors reported on the high standards achieved by Bridgend College and how the college was committed and ready to play its full part in any revised system that might be implemented. There were positive comments

regarding collaboration and partnership with schools and the local authority including the Penybont Sixth Form College development with Pencoed Comprehensive School.

3.9.17 In the engagement session with the staff of Bridgend College a number of issues were raised as detailed in section 12.3 of the consultation report. The key issues put forward mirrored those raised by the governors of the college as indicated in section 3.8.16 above.

4. Current situation/proposal

4.1 The public consultation has revealed strong support for the retention of sixth forms in secondary schools. The Council's preferred concepts, 4 and 5, were the next most popular with Concept 4, sixth form centre being run by the local authority, being preferred to a further education college-run centre, Concept 5.

4.2 However, there is a tension between the public preferred choice of concepts and some of the aspirations they have expressed through the consultation. These include the desire for breadth of subject choice in the curriculum, the entitlement for subject progression from key stage 4 to post-16 and equality of resourcing for all subjects. The ability to deliver on these is more difficult across nine sixth forms compared to the mixed model concepts consisting of good sized sixth forms alongside sixth-form centre(s). The potential for providing some economies of scale would create a more advantageous situation to deliver more effectively on the aspirations described.

4.3 The least popular concepts include the three that would result in all secondary schools changing designation from 11-18 to 11-16, namely Concepts 2, 3 and 6. Furthermore they will require a higher level of capital investment and potentially a longer timescale to implement, possibly significantly beyond 2025 into Band C of Welsh Government's 21st Century School Modernisation Programme (which has yet to be announced by Welsh Government). None of these concepts offer a sixth-form option which was the most widely supported feature in the public consultation.

4.4 On the evidence presented through the earlier Cabinet papers and from the public consultation it would seem appropriate to pursue further the concepts 1, 4 and 5. All of these contain some form of sixth-form option and include the Council's preferred options, but they would need to demonstrate long term sustainability and viability. Concepts 4 and 5 will also require capital investment and as outlined in section 4.3 this may result in a longer timescale to implement.

4.5 A recommendation will be made to reduce the number of concepts under consideration from six to three. The three concepts proposed to be taken forward are Concepts 1, 4 and 5.

4.6 Concept 1 would involve taking forward the nine sixth forms but improving the efficiency and effectiveness of provision. The same would be true for Concepts 4 and 5 but in addition the various permutations that these options could offer would need to be explored in detail.

4.7 In considering detailed options for the future arising out of Concepts 1, 4 and 5, particular regard would need to be given to the issues raised in previous reports to Cabinet and through the public consultation. Notably, these include how:

- they support the 'statements of ambition' as outlined in the public consultation paper;
- they would maintain curriculum breadth/subject choice;
- subject progression would be supported from key stage 4;
- equitable provision of resources to subjects would be achieved;
- high quality teaching and learning would be ensured;
- high standards and good examination results would be achieved;
- they would ensure the provision of expert staff;
- improved/effective collaboration could be achieved;
- the range of travel issues raised might best be resolved;
- any changes to sixth-form provision would be determined and what criteria that would be used in the process; and
- they would measure up to any of the issues raised in the School Organisation Code.

4.8 It is proposed that two workstreams are taken forward from the consultation. In both cases, a full analysis against the items listed in 4.7 and other critical issues arising from the consultation or in earlier Cabinet papers would be fully explored within the context of detailed option proposals.

4.8.1 Workstream 1 – The development of mixed provision models of sixth forms and sixth-form centre(s) which will include specific consideration of the Penybont Sixth Form College partnership development between Pencoed Comprehensive School and Bridgend College alongside other options and governance models.

4.8.2 Workstream 2 - The retention of sixth forms in all secondary schools.

4.9 The other aspect of provision that would benefit from further exploration is that of blended learning. This method of delivery has the potential to reduce the movement of learners under collaborative arrangements, expand the sphere of influence of expert teachers and provide a more cost effective solution to preserving minority subjects in the curriculum offer. Welsh Government is supporting new initiatives in this area which should be explored further. The survey and workshop responses to this approach were covered in section 3.7.3.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

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

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An equality impact screening assessment has been undertaken and is included as Appendix B.

6.2 A full equality impact assessment will be undertaken when the workstream moves to detailed consideration of options in Phase 4.

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

7.1 A Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 assessment has been completed and is detailed in Appendix C. A summary of the implications from the assessment relating to the five ways of working is as follows:

Long term	In the short term, Bridgend County Borough Council and its secondary schools are faced with financial pressures. With reduced funding it is becoming difficult to maintain financially viable sixth forms in all our schools. The review of post-16 provision and the public consultation addresses this issue but also sets out to protect the long-term interest of learners 16 to 18 by ensuring, among other features, curriculum breadth, high standards, value for money and enhanced facilities.
Prevention	Bridgend County Borough Council's preferred option prior to the public consultation on post-16 provision was to retain a few sixth forms and merge others into larger centres. This would allow for economies of scale, ensure no more subjects are lost and re-instate others, provide value for money and a boost to standards. This in turn will support two of the Council's key corporate objectives – 'supporting a successful economy' and 'smarter use of resources'.
Integration	Post-16 provision engages, educates and upskills young people to create a well-qualified workforce for the future benefiting both the nation and the individual. The initial preferred concepts will strengthen the social ties within the larger sixth-form settings and through the larger units will have environmental benefits. The opportunities for a wider range of cultural activities and exchanges will also be exploited.
Collaboration	As part of this change programme, Bridgend County Borough Council has already engaged with over 2000 learners and staff in schools and college to inform the ambitions of the project. We have worked with 2030 young people in the consultation phase as well as a range of educational stakeholders and parents in order to shape the future provision of post-16 education in ways that will be of maximum benefit to young people and thereby their wellbeing.
Involvement	As indicated above the project has already engaged every secondary school council in workshops to determine the principles for 16-18 education. In turn, they ran workshops with students in their own schools. Over 1500 learners aged 16 to 18 and 500 staff in schools and Bridgend College responded to a survey on the current state of 16-18 provision which informed the process of considering concepts for the future. Moving forward to the public consultation on post-16 provision, Bridgend County Borough Council engaged with 2030 learners and a wider audience through the online survey and direct contact. Open engagement sessions were held with parents, staff and governors. The outcomes from these activities are summarized in section 3 of the Cabinet paper and in Appendix A the full report on the public consultation.

8. Financial implications

8.1 Funding for sixth-form provision in Bridgend County Borough Council 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 2018-2019 was £5,829,430, of which over 97% was distributed to secondary schools. The funding for 2019-2020 is £5,750,256 of which 98% will be distributed to secondary schools. In the last four financial years, the core grant has been reduced by £751,601 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. During the consultation the need to use limited resources efficiently was discussed along with providing good value for money. No detail on potential capital costs was provided although the challenge of obtaining capital investment in times of austerity was covered.
- 8.3 One area presented in the consultation paper was 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. The continuation or potential loss of this support for learners was a significant concern raised throughout the consultation. As free post-16 transport is a discretionary expenditure it will be coming under scrutiny as an area where the Council could make savings in the future as the pressure to save on costs in the overall Council budget continues. Information on this will continue to be fed into any on-going review of post-16 education provision.
- 8.4 Should Cabinet decide to move forward with the specific option appraisals on post-16 provision then detailed financial models will be incorporated into those option appraisals at the appropriate time.

9. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 9.1 note the contents of the report on the public consultation;
- 9.2 give approval for a detailed option analysis, as Phase 4 of the post-16 review, of Concepts 1, 4 and 5 under two workstreams:
- the development of a mixed sixth form and sixth-form centre provision; and
 - the retention and further development of sixth-form provision in all mainstream secondary schools.
- and
- 9.3 as part of the detailed option analysis, further explore how blended learning could support both workstreams.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Consultation report

Appendix B - Equality impact screening assessment

Appendix C - Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 assessment

Background papers

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

Cabinet paper on the review of post-16, 20 November 2018