

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

15 MARCH 2016

INFORMATION REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION AND TRANSFORMATION

BRIDGEND COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP WORKING

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members of the Cabinet regarding the latest developments relating to the Council's partnership working with Bridgend College.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 This report relates to the Corporate Improvement Plan priority "Working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement."

3. Background

- 3.1 The broad background position was outlined to Cabinet in the July 2013 report on "Post 16 Transformation update" (Appendix A). Since that report there have been further discussions with Welsh Government and Bridgend College on transformation issues, continued development of cluster working among schools, the introduction of value-added systems to sharpen the view on quality of provision and a shift in grant funding with greater emphasis on the role of the Central South Consortium.
- 3.2 Welsh Government has been supportive of the discussions held between Bridgend College and BCBC. In 2015 possible future directions for the organisation of Post 16 provision were examined and discussed with the *Schools Organisation Strategic Group*, Secondary Headteachers and Bridgend College. There was strong recognition for increasing collaboration between schools and the college and the need to seek, in the future, a blend of 6th form and tertiary provision across the Borough. It was recognised that any such proposals would need to integrate with the wider School Organisation discussions in Bridgend.
- 3.3 As part of on-going discussions the issue of capital requirements to meet any potential future Post 16 re-organisation has been raised. Any substantive proposals will need to link into the Borough's 21st Century School proposals and the ability of Bridgend College to raise capital from the sale of land at some of its sites.
- 3.4 Secondary schools in Bridgend continue to collaborate and are continually reviewing the range of subjects on offer and the number that can be shared through partnership and cluster activity. Particularly strong links have been developing between the Welsh medium schools of Ysgol Llangynwyd in Bridgend and Ysgol Llanhari in RCT in order to provide a broad and viable curriculum offer. Both schools are developing good vocational links with Bridgend College. The twilight 'A' level provision offered to Bridgend schools by the College continues to be

popular with more students participating in this form of collaboration than in day time shared courses.

- 3.5 From 2014 Bridgend has subscribed to the Alps value-added quality system. This system covers all A level and BTEC Level 3 teaching in 6th forms and Bridgend College. Alps allows schools, the college, teachers and students to set aspirational targets for their studies and to review the outputs against comparative results across England and Wales. Alps has been welcomed by Headteachers and the College Principal and it provides a much more detailed analysis of quality than current Welsh Government measures. A recent detailed report based on this new data is attached to this report. (Appendix B).
- 3.6 There has been a significant change to Welsh Government Grant funding in recent years. The 14-19 grant has been significantly reduced and is now directed toward the Central South Consortium where it has been subsumed into the Education Improvement Grant with the majority of the grant being delegated directly to schools. Over the last two years Post 16 activity has been ineligible within the 14-19 grant. The impact for Bridgend has been a reduction in support for Post 16 transport costs with the burden increasingly falling on to school budgets. Bridgend College has continued to meet the transport costs of the twilight provision. The schools and the college have continued to work together on 14-16 issues especially the "School Plus" vocational provision aimed at supporting disengaging learners in Year 11 and maintaining the downward reduction in those young people not engaged in education, employment or training.
- 3.7 From 2014 the Welsh Government introduced a new Post 16 Planning and Funding regime. The funding mechanism is no longer related to qualifications but is based on Learning Programmes. These represent the total volume of learning undertaken by a student, for example, a 3 A level plus Welsh Bac. Programme. In this new system Welsh Government funds the local authority (LA) which then determines the allocation of funds to schools. This has opened up a fresh and more flexible approach to planning between the LA, school 6th forms and the College which is closer to a commissioning model of engagement. Through this the LA is able to more precisely discuss collaborative arrangements and the quality of delivery (using Alps data) and align into this work a number of LA responsibilities under the Learning & Skills Measure, The Youth Engagement & Progression Framework and the Youth Guarantee. It also allows all partners to plan more holistically to meet the reductions in grant and the changing Welsh Government priorities especially within the Further Education sector.
- 3.8 Bridgend continues to meet the demands of the Welsh Government's Learning & Skills Measure at key stage 4 and Post 16. The KS4 offer has been reduced to 25 subjects at Level 2 of which 3 should be vocational subjects. At Post 16 the requirement remains an offer of 30 subjects at Level 3 of which 5 should be vocational. The 5 vocational courses should be drawn from at least 3 of the 5 domains of learning and must include one from the area of Science & Technology.

4. Current situation

- 4.1 Bridgend is continuing to develop its plans for Post 16 rationalisation. This work will take account of the small size of some 6th forms, the reduced offer available to students in these centres, the quality of provision, the practicalities of day time

partnership and twilight provision and the reduction in grant funding (£171,274 reduction in 2016-17).

- 4.2 A *Working Group* has been established and with officer support it will prepare a range of options that will be presented to Cabinet as a basis for future consultation on Post 16 delivery across Bridgend. The ability among partners to generate capital for future Post 16 facilities will also be considered. Welsh Government has been invited to be party to these discussions and plans.
- 4.3 Through its commissioning role with 6th forms the LA will continue to review and adjust partnership / cluster arrangements across Bridgend. In this context Bridgend College and Pencoed Comprehensive are seeking to work more closely together on Year 12 provision from September 2016. Both parties are seeking to maximise the effective use of budgets, staffing and campus arrangements to provide a high quality breadth of curriculum provision. Where appropriate, other schools with smaller 6th forms will be encouraged to take advantage of these new arrangements.
- 4.4 Due to the significant uptake of twilight provision by learners the LA is investigating with the college and 6th forms the possibility of introducing a second twilight option on two further evenings. This may involve delivery by school staff as well as those at the college and will require negotiations with Heads, staff and staff organisations.
- 4.5 The LA will continue to work with its partners in the College, schools, Careers Wales and its own Youth Support Services to ensure the implementation of the Welsh Government's Youth Guarantee and support all young people into positive destinations at age 16, 17 or 18. This will entail providing high quality and up to date careers advice and guidance and making sure that, across all partner settings, there is a curriculum / training / employment offer suitable to meet the needs of all learners emerging from Year 11. Part of this work will focus on improving the dialogue between schools, their learners and the college with respect to the provision available at Post 16 transition. Also, through data sharing protocols, improvements will be made to the flow and range of communications that underpin successful learner transfer from school to college.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There is no impact on the Council's policy framework or procedures rules at this time.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 All on-going work in relation to post 16 developments will be monitored to ensure that the outcomes and impact of future models of working contribute positively to the Council's duty to promote equality.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 All Post 16 funding is now routed through either the LA or the College as their respective Post 16 allocations from Welsh Government. For the LA there is greater flexibility with its Post 16 partners which can be exercised through its commissioning role.

7.2 The Bridgend Post 16 grant has been reduced by £171,274 for 2016-17, a reduction of 2.63%. Further reductions are expected over the next two years. Post 16 stakeholders, faced with continuing financial constraints, will need to generate flexible solutions to meet the needs of learners in a more demanding fiscal climate.

8. Recommendation

8.1 That Cabinet members note the progress made to-date in relation to the on-going review of Post 16 rationalisation and prepare to receive additional reports and information throughout the process leading up to a paper in October 2016 that will recommend a range of solutions for Consultation.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Post 16 Transformation update

Appendix B: Bridgend Performance at Key Stage 5