

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **12 JUNE 2012**

REPORT BY: **DIRECTOR OF LIFELONG LEARNING**

SUBJECT: **SECONDARY SCHOOL – AREA REVIEWS**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present responses relating to the consultations for Secondary School area reviews held in March and April 2012.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The Flintshire School Modernisation Strategy provides a policy framework under which schools and communities can engage in discussions to help identify solutions to address demographic change and options for local educational change.

2.02 In the 2009 report on the strategic management of education in Flintshire, Estyn identified tackling school modernisation as a key recommendation. This recommendation was made again in the latest Estyn report on the quality of local authority education services in October 2011. In addition, Estyn has recently produced a national report identifying key issues relating to local authorities' responsibilities to manage the supply of school places.

2.03 The Flintshire School Modernisation Strategy contains a number of criteria for the review of schools including the percentage of surplus places. The three secondary schools having significant surplus places of over 25% are:

	No. of Surplus Places (PLASC Jan 2012)	% Surplus	Annual cost of surplus places £ (£510 per place)
Elfed High School, Buckley	393	38	200,430
Holywell High School	453	43	231,030
John Summers High School	181	32	92,310
Total	1027	37.7%	£523,770

Cost based on Estyn report 'How do Surplus Places affect the resources available for expenditure on improving outcomes for pupils?' (May 2012)

2.04 Initial consultations relating to options in the three areas were carried out in May and June 2011. In August 2011, the Council agreed to halt

the process and hold a series of workshops in the Autumn. All elected members of the Council, together with Parent and Diocesan representative members of the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to participate in workshops focused on:

- understanding and collective ownership of the options appraisal process;
- elected member involvement and support;
- validation of the information base behind the options;
- collective ownership of the consultation process;
- relations with partner organisations; and
- project timetable and resources.

2.05 In December 2011 the full County Council approved renewed consultation on a range of options in each area, which had been formulated by members of the Council in workshops.

2.06 The subsequent consultation process was a combination of:

- public meetings for parents and students both for individual schools and for schools consortia;
- private meetings for teachers and school based employees;
- private meetings for governing bodies;
- special in-school consultation events for students and pupils:
and
- an open invitation for responses through published documents, the Council website and the local media.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 Consultation meetings have been well attended and recognised by most school representatives as well conducted. The improved process has not attracted the criticism of the earlier consultations held in mid-2011 and the objective of restoring trust and confidence in the consultation process has been met.

3.02 The meetings have all been recorded and the database of preferences for the options set out in the consultation, and the qualitative comments which underpins the preferences of individuals, is being built up. All preferences and feedback received before the end of April have been included in the database ready for consideration by elected members from June 2012.

3.03 A separate consultation process for Children and Young People in the relevant schools has been undertaken by staff of the Children and Young People Partnership. The responses to this phase of consultation are also included in the document attached to this report. The large volume of responses to the Children and Young People consultation has meant that the process of collating and analysis is continuing, but will be completed shortly.

3.04 The latest full reports from consultation responses have been placed in the Members' Library. Additional correspondence and petitions that were received during the consultation period, and did not fit against the set criteria for the response forms are also located in the Members' Library. The combined responses identify issues and questions to be addressed in detail in the next phases of review work.

Summarised responses are as follows:

3.05 Buckley, Mynydd Isa and Mold

- There is local interest in exploring the options for the retention and development of Elfed High.
- There is local concern about the co-location of Westwood Primary with Elfed High.
- There is interest in transfer of the Westwood Centre and further development of Westwood Primary School to meet any future needs for primary provision within Buckley.
- There is some local interest in Buckley in reopening an option to amalgamate Elfed High and Argoed High School. Earlier consultation showed high levels of concern about such an approach in the Argoed High School community.
- None of these options have been approved in principle for funding via the 21st Century Schools programme.

3.06 Holywell

- There is strong local interest in exploring further the co-location and new build options for Holywell High School, Ysgol Perth y Terfyn and Ysgol y Fron.
- There remain local concerns about Holywell High School being designated as a 11-16 school. This option has been approved in principle for funding from the 21 Century School programme, as part of the local and national transformation of 14-19 education.

3.07 Queensferry, Shotton and Connah's Quay

- There is a high level of local concern about the option to amalgamate John Summers High and Connah's Quay High.
- There is local interest in exploring the options for a sixth form 'hub' in Connah's Quay.
- There is strong local interest for exploring further the development of John Summers High/Queensferry campus as an all-through 3-16 provision, but also a need for further work on developing how it would work.

3.08 The establishment of a Post -16 Hub at Connah's Quay has been approved in principle by the Welsh Government for funding from the 21st Century Schools Programme. Some of the important criteria in the initial approval of projects for Capital investment by the Welsh

Government include the transformation of post-16 education to improve learner opportunities and outcomes, and increase efficiencies through integration. Education and training providers are challenged to 'set aside traditional, narrow, institutional arrangements and plan provision collectively across a geographic area' (Transforming Education and Training provision in Wales September 2008).

3.09 Initial stages of consultation are intended to provide Members with information to assess whether criteria for issuing a statutory proposal for school organisational change are met. The criteria within local policy are the likelihood of securing:

- positive effect on the standard of education to be provided in the area, including provision for pupils with additional learning needs, delivery of the Foundation Phase and the 14-19 Transformation Programme Educational Impact);
- positive effect on having the right number and type of school places, for example meeting the levels of parental demand for particular types of provision (e.g. pre 16, post 16, Welsh and Faith);
- positive effect on accessibility to schools, particularly in rural areas and on the journey times to school (Sustainability);
- positive effect on compliance with equality legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and the Welsh Government's strategy for tackling child poverty (Equalities);
- positive effect on the Welsh language, its maintenance in the community and the extent to which proposals would enhance provision (Welsh Language);
- positive effect of additional community focused facilities or preserves existing community service provision offered by a school, together with the impact on the local community and on social cohesion (Community);
- positive impact towards achieving the County Council's agreed strategy for making all its school buildings fit for purpose and securing better use of buildings (Asset Management); and
- cost-effective proposals (e.g. has consideration been given to the extent of refurbishment or new build requirements and modular options) (Cost Effectiveness).

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That members receive the reports (in the Members' Library) relating to the consultation process.

4.02 That members commission a further report with regard to the next steps in each area review.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 Projects that have been put forward, and approved in principle by the

Welsh Government will need to be developed into a more detailed Outline Business Case, in accordance with the Five Case Business model which has been adopted by the Welsh Government as a standard means of submitting bids for capital funding for schools.

5.02 The Welsh Government will also require evidence of the affordability and commitment of the Council to meet the balance of 50% of the overall costs. Likely sources for this would be Prudential Borrowing, release of Capital Receipts, and the use of Revenue funding for the development of new ICT provision. Capacity to deliver a large programme in the agreed timescale would also be a requirement.

6.00 **ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**
None at this stage of consultation

7.00 **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**
None at this stage of consultation

8.00 **EQUALITIES IMPACT**
None at this stage of consultation

9.00 **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**
None at this stage of consultation

10.00 **CONSULTATION REQUIRED**
None at this stage of consultation

11.00 **CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**
Consultation is set out at Section 2.06.

12.00 **APPENDICES**
Report relating to the consultations with Parents, Governors and Staff of the affected schools – available from Member Library

Report relating to the consultation with Pupils and Young People in the affected schools – available from Member Library

Additional Responses – available from Member Library

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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