Flintshire County Council

School Modernisation

Update to Strategy 2014

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Introduction

Flintshire County Council has a responsibility to review and modernise all school provision, to make sure that we are providing the best possible opportunities for learners, so that they can achieve their full potential.

The Council needs to ensure there are a sufficient number of school places, of the right type, in the right locations. This is not straightforward in that there are a large number of surplus school places in some areas of the County, whilst other areas don't have enough places to meet the local demand. In other areas, school populations are sustained by children and young people from outside the local area through parental preference. The need to maintain a large number of ageing school buildings and the supporting infrastructure is unsustainable. Therefore, we need to review our school provision to:

- ensure our education provision is both high quality and sustainable;
- improve the quality of school buildings and facilities; and
- provide the right number of school places, of the right type, in the right locations.

The task involves:

- forecasting pupil numbers;
- managing the supply of school places;
- managing demand through admissions and appeals procedures;
- ensuring that a framework is in place to secure improvement through school organisational change;
- being prepared to take difficult decisions; and
- monitoring and evaluating the impact of decisions.

We review and modernise the way education is delivered through a rolling programme of area reviews. We review schools on an area by area basis, to make sure that when we make changes to school organisation, we take into account any potential impact on other schools nearby.

When we carry out an area review, we always consult with children, young people, parents and carers connected with schools in that area. This is so that they can have their say and be involved in decisions made about our local schools.

The outcomes of an area review can include merging of existing schools through a combination of school federations, merging on one preferred site or the building of new area schools and the closure of schools that are no longer fit for purpose. Achieving this can require substantial capital investment, in conjunction with the Welsh Government, to improve our school infrastructure and ensure that school buildings are suitable and provide an effective legacy for future generations.

Section 1: Change and Modernisation

Overall, the outcomes being achieved by Flintshire learners compare well to other Authorities in Wales and continue to improve. There have also been some impressive examples of modernising education in Flintshire in recent years, which have proven to deliver improved opportunities and outcomes for learners. Examples include:

- all through primary provision across Flintshire (including nursery class provision); and
- new primary schools in Connah's Quay and Shotton;
- new primary and secondary specialist schools in Flint.

There are further exciting major capital investments in children and young people's education planned for implementation by 2016.

However, there is also a pressing case for renewing the programme of School Modernisation. Key issues for the Council include:

- continuing to raise educational standards;
- creating the conditions for school leaders to succeed;
- ensuring that school buildings are attractive learning and working environments;
- reducing the number of surplus places and the inequity of variation in cost per pupil; and
- providing resilience against falling revenue funding.

Key Drivers for Schools Modernisation

- **Educational improvement**
- **Resilient School Leadership**
- **Suitable Buildings**
- **Unfilled places**
- **Diminishing Resources**

Educational Improvement

Our aim is that children and young people in Flintshire will develop essential life skills, a strong desire for lifelong learning and be very well prepared for the world of work. All children and young people will be supported to progress through the different stages of their education. Every child and young person will be entitled to a learning programme that will be personalised to make the most of his or her abilities. Children and young people will learn in an exciting and innovative range of styles and settings. These will include vocational, enterprise, voluntary, spiritual, cultural and sporting learning experiences. School organisation will provide opportunities for Welsh and English medium provision, and also faith provision.

Flintshire County Council is committed to continuing to raise standards, with key tasks including securing:

- high expectations and a clear focus on improving teaching, learning and attainment in all school communities;
- all resources available to schools being focused on improving outcomes for children and young people in a context of annual budget pressures;
- a consistent approach to the collection, analysis and use of assessment information, including tracking systems, to target support and interventions; and
- continued commitment to the development of school staff.

Resilient Leadership

Successful schools have strong leadership at all levels. The challenges associated with leading and managing a school have increased substantially during recent years and the expectations are continuing to increase. The leadership expectations on headteachers in ensuring teaching and learning is of the highest quality, evaluating and raising standards, developing robust self-evaluation procedures and ensuring the continuous professional development of staff, are substantial. At the same time, the number of applicants for headship posts is declining, particularly in our smallest schools.

Schools should be structured so that they are large enough for schools to have a headteacher without substantial regular teaching commitments. This would give the headteacher the necessary time to undertake the key leadership role within the school or federation. Schools also need to be sufficiently resilient in size to ensure suitable leadership development opportunities in individual schools to enable effective succession planning.

Suitable Buildings

Estyn (the education inspectorate in Wales) note that “improvements in the quality of buildings have a very beneficial effect on the quality of teaching and morale of staff which has a positive effect on pupil performance.”

The challenge for the Council is to provide the right number of places in the right locations. In responding to this challenge, the Council needs to make the best educational provision for its area, taking into account current provision, community issues, demographic factors, the conditions of schools buildings, surplus places and the quality of the teaching and learning environment.

When reviewing school buildings and premises, the Council will take into account statutory requirements and relevant building bulletin guidance. When reorganisation is linked to capital investment through Welsh Government’s (WG) 21 Century Schools programme, relevant WG criteria will be applied.

The Council is committed to ensuring that school buildings will meet 21st century expectations, are fit for purpose and are a community resource.

There are serious shortcomings in the current suitability of a number of buildings, including pressing health and safety issues that question the long term viability of some of our existing schools.

The current backlog of repairs and maintenance remains high at £25.6m. School organisational change remains the key tool available to Councils to address such deficits.

Our modernisation programme needs to deliver high quality environments that inspire users to learn. In new school buildings and refurbishments we will endeavour to deliver:

- buildings and grounds that are welcoming to both the school and the community whilst providing adequate security;
- internal learning spaces (classrooms and other areas) that are well proportioned, fit for purpose and meet the needs of the curriculum;
- flexible design to allow for short-term changes of layout and use, and for long-term expansion or contraction;
- good environmental conditions throughout, including optimum levels of natural light and ventilation for different activities;
- well-designed external spaces offering a variety of different settings for leisure, learning and sport;
- a sustainable approach to design, construction and environmental servicing;

- good use of the site, balancing the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles and facilitating community access to facilities; and
- Maximising the use of new technologies to support effective learning and efficient administration and management.

National Asset Management Guidance

The Welsh Government set a target that all public bodies in Wales should have Asset Management Plans (AMPs) in place. The aim was to achieve better value for money from capital assets. Local authorities in Wales hold four main types of assets valued at over £8.8 billion (2001 estimates) namely:

- land and buildings, of which schools form a high percentage of the portfolio;
- administrative offices and vehicle depots;
- non-operational property, i.e. surplus property awaiting sale, assets under construction, commercial and industrial property; and
- infrastructure assets, principally roads.

Considerable investment is needed to maintain these assets and a significant (and growing) maintenance backlog has been identified. Asset Management guidance from CLAW (Consortium of Local Authorities in Wales) makes the following Statements: **"**At best operational property can facilitate effective service delivery. At worst it can consume staff and financial resources and actively hinder service delivery. The main practical ways in which the operational estate can adversely affect service delivery are as follows**:**

a) Operating from too many buildings

b) Under-spending on planned maintenance

c) Operating from inefficient property

d) Under-investment in appropriate buildings/facilities

The review process should therefore identify:

a) Surplus property

b) Maintenance backlog and level of severity

c) Suitability and variation in blueprint requirements from actual need

d) Investment requirements/available capital receipts.

Flintshire Schools - Asset Management Statistics

School's condition is graded using the following national asset management guidance criteria:-

Grade A - Good. Performing as intended and operating efficiently

Grade B - Satisfactory. Performing as intended but exhibiting minor deterioration

Grade C - Poor. Exhibiting major defects and/ or not operating as intended

Grade D - Bad. Life expired and/or serious risk of imminent failure.

Flintshire Schools - Condition Category (Sept 2014)

Category	Percentage %
A	28
B	60
C	9
D	3

A school's suitability is graded using the following national asset management guidance criteria:

A **Good.** Facilities suitable for teaching, learning and well-being in schools.

B **Satisfactory.** Performing as intended but does not support the Curriculum in some areas.

C **Poor.** Teaching methods inhibited/adverse impact on school organisation.

D **Bad**. Buildings seriously inhibit the staff's ability to deliver the curriculum

Flintshire Schools - Suitability Category (Sept 2014)

Category	Percentage %
A	36
B	49
C	11
D	4

Unfilled Places in Schools

Estyn carried out research on how surplus places affect the resources available for expenditure on improving outcomes for pupils; their report was published in May 2012. Estyn reported that the removal of surplus places in some schools may cost far more than the revenue savings achieved by their removal. In other cases, they found that removal of a 'surplus' school generated far more savings than the removal of the surplus places within it. Estyn noted that school closures and amalgamations secured the largest savings for re–investment to raise standards but noted that such schemes often need financial investment and political commitment. Estyn also emphasised that it was important for local authorities to use data effectively so as to maximise efficient deployment of their assets.

The review into the costs of administering education in Wales recommended that Local Authorities should aim to retain no more than 10% surplus places overall and the Welsh Government accepted this recommendation. However, to date no local authority has achieved and sustained this recommended level of surplus places across primary and secondary schools.

This led to the Welsh Minister for Education and Skills, in Autumn 2012, writing to all Local Authorities asking them to provide him with a strategy to reduce unfilled places to 15% by January 2015. In January 2013, there were some 4,000 surplus places in Flintshire schools (15.4 per cent of the total) distributed across primary and secondary schools.

Using Welsh Audit Office (WAO) Criteria our schools are categorised as follows:-

A less than 10% unfilled places or 3% over capacity

B 10-25% unfilled places or 5 -10% over capacity

C more than 10% over capacity

D more than 25% unfilled places or

D small schools with fewer than 90 places and more than 25% and 30 surplus places

Flintshire Schools - Unfilled Places Category (Sept 2014)

Category	Percentage %
A	36
B	37
C	3
D	24

Diminishing Resources

The percentage of surplus places in Flintshire schools continues to remain above the Welsh Government target of 10%.

Since funding for schools is largely driven by pupil numbers, surplus capacity means a disproportionate amount of funding is spent on infrastructure (such as buildings) and the “fixed costs” of running a school (such as leadership and administration).

This funding could be better used to ensure that pupil teacher ratios are minimised to make a direct difference to learners. As public service funding reduces over forthcoming years the case for reprioritisation and change becomes even more compelling.

Section 2: School Organisational Models and Policies

One model of schools across the County would not be appropriate due to varying population density, patterns of parental preference and transport implications. Primary provision needs to be relatively close to family homes, whilst greater size and scale is needed to deliver the funding to support the breadth of curriculum young people need in secondary schools.

All Flintshire schools are part of cross-phase clusters involving at least one secondary school and partner primary schools. The cluster schools work together to secure high quality and consistent learning opportunities across all schools within the area. They share expertise in school leadership, inclusion, teaching and learning, including supporting Professional Learning Communities. They share resources, training and business support services. Whether primary and secondary provision is located on a single site or in a range of locations schools are committed to effective learning opportunities and pathways for all in their local area.

Flintshire schools should be developing operating models in line with the Hill review and the national model for school Improvement. National strategy envisages clusters increasingly working in arrangements similar to formal federal school arrangements with individual school governing bodies agreeing to establish a joint committee with agreed delegated powers and options for a limited pooled budget. Schools working in this way are increasingly aligned on governance, management, leadership development, curriculum delivery, staffing and inclusion issues.

Federation

The federation of schools is a legal process which enables schools to work together through a formal structured process by sharing a governing body that will make decisions in the best interest of all the schools, staff and pupils in that federation.

The term federation is often used to describe many forms of collaboration between schools. The Statutory process of federation is often referred to as “hard federation.” An informal, non-statutory arrangement between schools is often called “soft federation” or collaboration, where schools have made a commitment to work together through some form of joint governance.

The Welsh Government have brought in new regulations around federation of maintained schools in Wales. The Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014 which came into force on 22 May 2014 gives effect to Council’s powers to federate schools. (School governors already have powers to federate by choice under provisions introduced in 2010). These powers have now been consolidated into the 2014 Regulations:

http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/140522-guidance-on-federation-of-schools-en.pdf

In the context of Schools modernisation, the Council has not progressed federal arrangements in schools, as under the old regulations the Local Authority did not have the powers to do so.

Advantages of Federal Arrangements

Educational Standards

A survey undertaken by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) in September 2011 on the impact of federated schools in England found improvements were evident in the three key areas of teaching and learning, behaviour and pupil achievement

A copy of the report can be accessed at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/leadership-of-more-one-school

Three main reasons were given for federating. Some schools had been approached by a Council to help a struggling school; others were small schools in danger of closure or unable to recruit high quality staff; and others were seeking to strengthen the overall education of pupils in their communities.

Federations set up to improve the capacity of small schools were successful in broadening and enriching the curriculum and care, guidance and support for pupils. These also resulted in better achievement for groups of pupils such as the vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

In good federations, leaders made the most of increased resources and opportunities for professional development and used these to achieve their priorities. Crucially, training and development were carefully tailored to meet the needs of the school.

Sharing these strengths, through a federation, can bring benefits to learners across a number of schools. A school's strengths can come in many forms, including leadership, staff, resources, expertise and facilities. By working together, through federation and other partnership arrangements, schools can:

- raise their standards, for example, by shared training and working practices, encouraging their staff to support each other and developing integrated curriculum and pastoral policies;
- offer pupils a wider range of opportunities, for example, by holding joint activities or sharing facilities or teachers that might be difficult to sustain individually;
- develop a range of extended services and activities for pupils and the wider community;
- improve their leadership and management, for example, through shared headship; and
- maximise the sharing of resources, taking advantage of economies of scale.

Recruitment

The National Association of Head teachers (NAHT) Annual Report 2011 stated that some 36% of primary, 19% of secondary and 39% of special school head teacher posts were reported unfilled after an advertisement this year, Last year the percentages were 34% of primary, 19% of secondary and 43% of special schools. This suggests that all sectors are still experiencing considerable difficulty in filling their posts.

As in recent years, a significant proportion of head teacher vacancies are the result of a retirement (65% of primary, 61% of secondary and 82% of secondary school vacancies). More head teachers are still retiring before the age of 60.

Small schools are another group who appear to face above average challenges when seeking a new head teacher.

Federal arrangements may assist in areas where Head teacher appointments are difficult or challenging.

Disadvantages of Federal Arrangements

Federal arrangements in schools often fail to meet a number of the key drivers of school modernisation. Key issues include:

- **Suitable Buildings** – The 21st Century programme funding arrangements from WG rely on rationalisation of school estate to generate revenue saving to enable access prudential borrowing. Additionally in some cases sale of surplus estate, will also generate capital receipts both are used to find the Local Authority's 50% contribution to the programme. Federal arrangements will not rationalise the estate, therefore the revenue saving will be either nil or limited to small potential savings in the school allocations and only if formula allocations and/ or structures can be changed.

- **Unfilled Places** - As Federal arrangements do not rationalise school estate, reducing unfilled places is limited to mothballing areas of schools, this may or may not be achievable in individual schools for operational, practicable or building related reasons

- **Diminishing Resources** – Federal arrangements do not support large revenue savings, instead small potential savings in the school allocations could potentially be achievable through the formula allocations if staffing structures were changed. The building related costs would remain as they are currently.

Modernisation Models

Modernisation of schools may involve:

- continuing existing schools;
- merging of existing schools through a combination of school federations or merging onto one preferred site, or multiple sites;
- developing new area schools;
- co-locating primary and secondary schools on the same campus as the first stage in the move to 3-16/18 area provision;
- developing all through schools; and
- closure of schools that are no longer fit for purpose or needed as part of the network of provision.

Primary Provision

The 2010 school organisation policy in Flintshire would trigger a review of individual schools:

- where they have 25% or more surplus places; or
- if the school entered special measures.

Whilst the Council would still commission a review of local provision where there were quality concerns as a school entered special measures or where there are more than 25% surplus places, the situation in terms of other school organisation criteria has changed since 2010.

The drivers for change identified in the introduction are real. The level of resources available to support small or undersubscribed schools is diminishing rapidly. There is a need to ensure that all schools and school sites are able to provide children with the widest possible opportunities.

The Welsh Government has recently defined a small school as being one with 91 pupils or fewer. Estyn has identified the educational challenges faced by small schools or sites (Estyn – Small Primary Schools in Wales, 2003) as:

- teaching mixed age classes containing more than 2 or 3 age groups;
- the restricted size of peer groups and sufficiency of challenge;
- limited opportunities for social interaction;
- difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff;
- excessive burdens on staff; and
- increased expertise required to support pupils with special educational needs.

More positively, schools across Flintshire and across Wales are working more collaboratively in school to school collaborative arrangements. Locally, Flintshire County Council considers that resilient primary school reorganisation is that which can directly address the challenges faced in school organisation.

Resilient and sustainable primary school organisation would enable:

- a headteacher with a minimum 40% time commitment to leadership and management. This commitment will increase in relation to the size of the school. All schools need sufficient leadership capacity and there are inefficiencies from using headteachers as highly paid classroom teachers;
- increased benefit to pupils from peer interaction;
- increased social opportunities for pupils through the pursuit of a wider range of activities; enhancing children's ability to forge relationships and celebrate diversity;
- a maximum class size of 30 in Foundation Phase;
- reduced mixed Key Stage classes;
- increased options for class organisation within schools;
- staff expertise as teachers are allowed to lead a single subject across the school, thereby gaining more focus on and depth in the delivery of a subject;
- increased opportunities for professional development among staff, providing opportunity to develop strengths and expertise in wider areas, including numerous non-core subjects.
- improved recruitment and retention of staff;

- opportunity for excellent learning and working facilities;
- a range of community focused services;
- better learning and working environments and no mobile classrooms;
- economies of scale for full time administrative and business support services;
- fair and sufficient funding per pupil to enable pupils to reach their full potential, while making the best use of resources.

Future primary school provision will endeavour to follow one of the County Council's recommended models described below. The models are:

a) 1 form entry or more – primary school providing a minimum of 210 full-time places or more (approximately 30 pupils per year group) and with no more than 25% surplus places. Other models of at least one form of entry, for example, 1.5, 2, 2.5 or 3 forms of entry are also efficient and effective.

b) Schools with less than 1 form of entry, but with more than 0.5 forms of entry providing at least 105 full-time places (approximately 15 pupils per year group) where needed, may be considered for the formation of a federated school or an area school. Area schools would be formed in accordance with the Council's preferred operating model at (a) above.

Where the school is incapable of sustaining sufficient pupil numbers or an area review determines that a school is to be closed, statutory proposals need to be published in order to close any primary school, including those within a federation. Statutory notices would not be required when closing a specific site within a primary school.

Secondary Provision

The Council wants all mainstream secondary provision to provide the best possible learning environments for children and young people, whilst providing the widest possible range of curriculum opportunities. The 2010 policy established the principle that there should be a review of provision:

- where there are more than 25% surplus places or less than four forms of entry (600 pupils) at 11-16 and less than 120 students at post 16;
- the Council would still commission a review of local provision where there were quality concerns if, for example, a school entered special measures.

It also remains the case that it is not feasible for a school of less than around four forms of entry to sustain sufficient curriculum breadth and quality to meet learners' entitlements. Nor is it feasible for a secondary school with fewer than around 600

pupils to sustain the facilities described in the Welsh Government's vision for 21st Century Schools.

The Council therefore accepts that the minimum size for any new secondary school will be a four form entry school providing 600 11-16 places. This is unchanged from the policy set out in 2010.

Funding for provision of post-16 education is provided through Welsh Government grant, which is diminishing each year creating significant increasing pressure on small sixth forms. Small sixth forms can lead to limited student interaction which diminishes the effectiveness of learning (Transforming Education & Training in Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, 2008).

In order to safeguard the right of learners to access a broad and high quality range of learning opportunities (and in line with the Welsh Government's 'Transformation Policy') the Council will review post 16 provision in any secondary school where the number of pupils within the 6th form falls below 150 for three years in succession. Any review will consider whether the school should become an 11-16 or 3-16 (where the site allows) school.

The Council has already published plans to create a new Sixth Form Centre in North Flintshire in partnership with Coleg Cambria and local schools. This policy is consistent with this development and other local developments.

Trigger Points

As stated previously in the document, the key drivers for change contained within this strategy which trigger review are as follows:-

- **Educational improvement**
- **Resilient School Leadership**
- **Suitable Buildings**
- **Unfilled places**
- **Diminishing Resources**

It is prudent to further identify the characteristics of any change in school circumstance that would 'trigger' an immediate review of a school's position, regardless of its allotted place in the Implementation Plan.

The 'trigger' points are identified within the key drivers as:

Educational Improvement

- Where school standards fall below appropriate levels and there is significant concern raised by GwE and/or the Local Authority.
- Where a school enters a formal category of concern within the Estyn Inspection cycle

Resilient School Leadership

- Where there is significant concern raised by GwE and/or the Local Authority.
- Where there are Headteacher recruitment issues.

Suitable Buildings

- Where there is a significant Health and Safety concern.
- Where the building is categorised as category D in condition and/or suitability as recorded on the Council's asset management system.
- Where a school has multiple sites and or multiple mobile classrooms

Unfilled places

- Where school unfilled places rise significantly [fail LA and WG drivers]
- Where a school has not reached 25% unfilled places but unfilled places have exceeded 10% for three successive years.

Diminishing Resources

- Where the local school doesn't serve the local population.

Section 3: Underpinning Policies

Admissions

Flintshire County Council's Admissions Policy enables parents, carers and students to express their preference for admission to a school of their choice. If places are available admission can be secured. If there are more applications than places at an individual school prioritisation criteria are applied, with scope for an independent appeal if the decision is not accepted by a family. Admission arrangements for schools are either the responsibility of the County Council (Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools) or the Governing Body (Foundation and Voluntary Aided Schools).

http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/PDFFiles/Lifelong-Learning/Schools/School-Admissions/Guide-to-Education-Services-2015.pdf

Transport

Flintshire County Council's Transport Policy offers free transport in accordance with statutory provision to pupils who live over two miles (primary) or 3 miles (secondary) from their nearest appropriate school, and to pupils who cannot walk to school because of special educational or medical needs, a disability or where the route is considered to be "hazardous". Free transport is also currently provided under current policy to the nearest Welsh medium school, for post 16 learners to specific sites only, to denominational schools where admission to the school is on denominational grounds and subject to providing evidence of adherence to the faith of the school and to learners whose parents receive Income Support or Working Tax Credit and reside more than 2.5 miles from their nearest appropriate school.

http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/PDFFiles/Lifelong-Learning/Schools/School-Transport/Transport-Eligibility-Criteria-.pdf

Maintaining and Sustaining the Welsh Language

Flintshire County Council's Welsh Education Strategic Plan 2014-2017 states that Flintshire County Council will:-

- endeavour to **increase** the number of fluent Welsh speakers within its boundaries, with the aim of creating an increasingly bilingual county and country; and

- support, expand and promote Welsh-medium education within the whole community, increasing the number and percentage of pupils receiving Welsh-medium education in compliance with the Welsh Government's Welsh-Medium Education Strategy of developing learners who are fully bilingual (i.e. fluent in both English and Welsh).

http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Schools/Welsh-in-Education-Strategic-Plan-2014-2017.aspx

Inclusion & Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Flintshire County Council's Inclusion Strategy recognises that all schools are likely to have some children on roll who have Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Every school or area review therefore has an implication for ALN provision, whether in terms of access to the curriculum or physical access to school premises.

School modernisation provides the opportunity to consider the most effective ways of ensuring that appropriate ALN support is provided for pupils. This may be in mainstream schools, in specialist resource bases attached to mainstream schools, or where appropriate, in Flintshire's recently modernised special schools. The modernisation of Flintshire's special schools, in itself, provides opportunities for new ways of configuring outreach provision to sustain young people in local educational provision.

Individual school and local area reviews should consider strategies to deliver:

- appropriate provision and smooth transitions for children with ALN;
- appropriate access for people with disabilities and also to enable inclusion of children with ALN;
- improving attendance and behaviour, together with reducing bullying; and
- delivering improved achievement for those who are at risk or vulnerable to exclusion.

http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/PDFFiles/Lifelong-Learning/Schools/Children--Young-People-with-ALN/Policy-Framework-for-Children--Young-People-with-Additional-Learning-Needs-(SEN)-April-2007.pdf

Voluntary Aided Schools

Voluntary Aided schools are maintained jointly by the County Council and either the Church in Wales or the Roman Catholic Church. These school buildings belong to the Diocese and we are therefore unable to instigate structural change to these buildings. Aided schools also have access to separate capital funding streams directly through the Welsh Government. Flintshire County Council will continue to work in partnership with the Diocesan Authorities to ensure that Aided schools are appropriately located and fit for purpose.

ICT in Schools

Flintshire County Council will encourage schools to continue to transform learning and teaching, by ensuring that:

- we embrace the way technology is evolving and recognise how children and young people use technology;
- we ensure that teachers and learners have safe, reliable and seamless access to ICT in the classroom, promoting inclusion;
- all teaching and learning spaces (where practicable) are digitally enabled;
- all schools should have regular and reliable broadband connectivity of an appropriate bandwidth, which is regularly monitored and reviewed in light of emerging uses;
- we have efficient administrative and information management systems which support teaching and learning; and
- learners should have access to learning inside and out of school supporting collaboration with one another, their teachers and the broader learning community.

Community Schools

Schools are often the centre of a community but are sometimes under used in the evenings, on weekends and in the holidays. Flintshire County Council encourages schools to play an important and pivotal role in the community. Schools not only provide education for learners and create a community spirit amongst parents and carers, but they also have the opportunity and often the facilities to reach out to the whole community. In practice this means not only using schools for after school clubs for children and young people, but also as a possible base for additional services such as childcare, early years education, health, social services, libraries and community/ family education activities.

Work undertaken by the WLGA showed that a key factor in a successful school is a close relationship with the wider community. Involvement with the community improves the achievement and motivation of a school and benefits the pupils in that school.

Welsh Government 21st Century Schools Capital Investment Programme

Flintshire's approach to school modernisation can only be delivered by working in partnership with communities and the Welsh Government to secure investment in change. School modernisation options will drive an investment strategy that will address the needs of the schools.

The 21st Century schools Programme was introduced to replace the annual School Building Improvement Grant (SBIG) programme. Previously, Councils received an annual SBIG allocation to improve school stock. However, the amount of funding available limited strategic thinking and restricted them to smaller projects. The Welsh Government's 21st Century School Building Programme supports strategic planning by local authorities in order to provide new or improved school buildings, while reducing surplus places.

This is evident in Flintshire Band A, with a £64m school investment programme planned between 2014 and 2017.

The Welsh Government has indicated that they intend to roll out Band B of the programme from 2019. It is expected that WG will provide further information in the next twelve months on securing the next phase of the investment.

Flintshire County Council will develop its strategies to ensure that we are maximising the potential investment opportunities that may be available via Welsh Government funding.

Welsh Government funding criteria for 21st Century schools will only potentially fund modernisation projects; refurbishment or maintenance projects are not eligible for grant via this programme.

Section 4: Process

The Council consults with parents, school governors and staff and other relevant stakeholders prior to making proposals for any school modernisation change.

The consultation process will involve the completion and presentation of impact assessments around; community, transport, buildings, equalities and language and will of course involve the financial appraisal. During those meetings with Key stakeholders, they will be asked to express their views.

The responses from each formal consultation process will be presented to the County Council's Cabinet, along with the impact assessment, options appraisal and officer recommendations. Cabinet will then decide on how to progress and implement for an area/individual school.

Operationally, the implementation of the programme will be overseen by the Education Modernisation Board and will be managed in accordance with Flintshire's Project Management Framework (aligned with Prince2). Consequently project work will be structurally and technically consistent but tailored depending on the level of review.

Statutory proposals for changes to school provision will only be started following Cabinet agreement.

The new School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 makes Local Authorities responsible (rather than the Welsh Ministers prior to October 2013) for the determination of most statutory school organisation proposals that receive objections. Such provisions apply to any proposals published on or after 1st October 2013 that consider the establishment, discontinuance or otherwise significantly alter schools.

The Council does this in line with the Welsh Government's statutory School Organisation Code

http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/130719-school-organisation-codes-en.pdf

In making a decision the Council's Cabinet will consider the following principles and desired outcomes:

- ensuring high quality learning pathways for all our learners from 3 to 19;
- ensuring that the impact of any transition point is minimised;
- giving all learners the opportunity to attend their nearest appropriate school where they can access the full range of facilities;

- ensuring all children have access to facilities that allow the delivery of a full range of educational opportunities, including high quality teaching and learning environments, play areas, staff areas, security and ICT facilities;
- reducing the number of unfilled places in schools in accord with Welsh Government guidelines, with no more than 10% unfilled across the network of schools;
- supporting the development of leadership capacity across schools in order to have a self-improving and sustainable schools system where there is a shared commitment to excellence;
- removing the need for mixed key stage classes and reducing the number of classes with more than two age groups;
- co-locating (where practicable) primary and secondary school provision, with community learning, culture and leisure facilities on the same campus; and
- securing value for money and effective use of resources.

Governance arrangements

Structural change often involves a legal change to governing body arrangements with temporary governing bodies needing to be set up and constituted. These would run alongside the existing governing bodies. Officers from the Authority will assist governing bodies in this process.

Support for teaching and support staff

As part of the programme the HR team will be able to advise and support headteachers and school staff in relation to workforce issues arising from the implementation arrangements agreed by the Council.

Section 5: Implementation

A separate implementation plan will be produced giving outline dates and areas to review.

In terms of framing timelines the anticipated sequential timelines typically are as follows:

- Area review - 6 months
- Cabinet approvals
- Statutory proposals - 9-12 months (If considered by the Council)
- Cabinet approvals
- Construction Work (if applicable)

Times will vary from school to school and area to area dependent on the complexity and circumstance. The minimum time to implement re-organisation would be 9-12 months with other areas taking between 12-18 months to implementation (not inclusive of construction periods where applicable

The Council's programme will be designed to link and to complement the 21st Century funding programme streams and bands, in order to maximise investment potential.

Given the above process, this will inevitably lead to the Council consulting in areas before it is able to secure funding via the Welsh Government through its programme. Funding is only fully secured at Full Business case (FBC) stage.

Financing the Programme

The speed of implementation of any School Modernisation Programme is subject to the availability of resources. While it may be a clear aim to implement the programme, it may not be possible to do this in the planned timescale if funding is unavailable.

It is important to note that new schools will not be possible in all areas. For those areas which are not included in the 21st Century Schools Programme a pragmatic, more creative approach needs to be taken to address uneconomic use of school accommodation. This can be achieved in a number of ways including:

- at minimal cost i.e. designation of one school as an area school and closure of schools in surrounding area *(children from closing schools move to a school which is fit for purpose and has unfilled places)*

- being wholly self-financed by the Local Authority

- obtaining 21st Century Schools Programme capital funding and providing the 50% match funding

Renewed cluster School Modernisation Options are being developed in order to identify revenue savings through the School Funding Formula alongside the Investment Strategy which will deliver organisational change.

Each individual school proposal and area review will need a full financial appraisal identifying revenue savings, cost pressures and any programme of capital investment.

Methods of funding the Authority's allocation

(Subject to appropriate approvals)

- Enhanced capital allocations

- Generation of capital receipts (asset disposal)

- Development of self-funding or part funding opportunities (through prudential borrowing).

There is no immediate expectation that any significant additional funding source will be available, but opportunities to identify and secure such funding will be actively sought in line with asset management and rationalisation strategies.