

EXECUTIVE BOARD
20th JUNE 2016

MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME (MEP)
BIENNIAL REVIEW

Purpose:

To consider the biennial review of the MEP and to approve an updated prioritised programme for school rationalisation and investment.

RECOMMENDATIONS / KEY DECISIONS REQUIRED:

Executive Board approves the updated Modernising Education Programme (MEP).

REASONS:

To confirm the Modernising Education Programme and to establish a clear strategy for bids for capital funding to the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Programme.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee consulted: YES

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 23rd May 2016:

The Committee UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the updated Modernising Education Programme and capital programme be endorsed for consideration by the Executive Board.

Council Decision Required: NO

Executive Board Member Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Gareth Jones (Education & Children)

Directorate: Education & Children	Designations:	Tel Nos. / E-Mail Addresses:
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY EXECUTIVE BOARD 20th JUNE 2016

MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME (MEP) BIENNIAL REVIEW

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Executive Board most recently approved an updated Modernising Education Programme (MEP) on the 1st December 2014 as part of an annual review of progress.
- 1.2 The County Council resolved in 2010 that the MEP “*be reviewed and revised in the future every two years or otherwise as required to ensure consistency with the timeframe of the national 21st Century Schools Programme*”. Furthermore, it has been a central feature of the MEP since its inception that it needs to retain flexibility at its core to ensure that the programme remains current and responsive to changes in the education policy framework and the needs of constantly developing society and communities.
- 1.3 This report provides a further update on the status of the MEP and an opportunity to review the forward programme in line with the decision to do this strategically every two years or so.

2. Progress to Date in the Delivery of the MEP

- 2.1 The MEP is by now well-established and widely acknowledged for its strategic vision and direction and the considerable progress that has been achieved to date.
- 2.2 By the end of the March 2016 the following investment successes have been delivered:
 - £234 million (approximately) of investment in the modernisation of school premises.
 - New secondary school premises for Queen Elizabeth High School and Ysgol Bro Dinefwr and significant investment in the extension and modernisation of the premises of Ysgol Dyffyn Aman.
 - Substantial completion of major investment at Ysgol Maes y Gwendraeth, with final completion due by September 2016.
 - Completion of a major extension and the refurbishment of existing accommodation at Ysgol y Strade as part of the strategy to meet increasing demand for Welsh medium education in the Llanelli area.
 - Completion of elements of the Llanelli Vocational Village network through investment at a number of secondary schools.

- New primary school premises for Ysgol Y Bedol, Ysgol Bro Brynach, Ysgol Y Bryn, Ysgol Bryn Teg, Ysgol Brynsierfel, Ysgol Peniel, Ysgol y Felin, Ysgol Gymraeg Ffwrnes, Burry Port Primary School and Ysgol Carreg Hirfaen.
- Major refurbishment and extension projects completed at Johnstown School, Model School, Ysgol Brynsaron, Ysgol Llannon, Ysgol Nantgaredig, Ysgol Maes Y Morfa, Halfway, Swiss Valley, Tycroes and Ysgol Y Dderwen;
- Integrated children's centres created at Llwynhendy and within Ysgol Maes Y Morfa and Ysgol Y Felin (Felinfoel);
- Accommodation extensions and improvements at 13 other primary schools;

2.3 Furthermore, significant progress has been achieved in the rationalisation of the schools network, improving its educational and resource efficiency, including the following notable achievements:

- The removal of 5301 surplus places (3149 primary and 2152 secondary) through the proactive reconfiguration of provision.
- The formal federation of Bryngwyn and Glanymor schools under a single governing body and with one executive head teacher. This is the first federation of secondary schools in this way in Wales and is proving to be a considerable success, drawing notional recognition.

3. National 21st Century Schools Programme

3.1 Preparations for the national 21st Century Schools Programme commenced in 2010 through an invitation by the Welsh Government to local authorities to submit strategic outline plans for the modernisation of their whole schools estate, placed within four bands for investment, in order of priority according to most urgent need.

3.2 WG set out three key aims for the national programme, which have subsequently been revised, being to achieve:

- improved learning environments for children with better educational outcomes;
- greater economy through better use of resources to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the education estate;
- a more sustainable education system reducing the recurrent cost and carbon footprint.

3.3 The Welsh Government required local authorities to prioritise projects that would remove the greatest number of surplus places and address school buildings in the poorest condition.

3.4 School development projects under the 21st Century Schools Programme are funded equally by the Welsh Government and the County Council, subject to proposals being approved by the Welsh Government through a rigorous business case process.

3.5 The Band A programme was initially established to commence in April 2014 and extend for 6 years to 2020 but the Welsh Government subsequently announced its intention to bring forward the target date for the completion of Band A to 2019.

3.6 Through the initial submission process Carmarthenshire County Council's Band A

programme was approved at a value of £86.7 million (funded 50% by grant from WG and 50% from the Council's own resources). Welsh Government requires this funding to be spent by 2019.

4. Mission of the MEP

- 4.1 The mission of the Modernising Education Programme (MEP) is to transform the network of nursery, primary, secondary and special schools serving the county into a strategically and operationally effective resource that meets current and future need for school education, at all times pursuing improvements in educational outcomes and the well-being of our children and young people.
- 4.2 This will require the rationalisation of the schools network and investment in the development and improvement of school buildings, infrastructure and spaces, so that schools are appropriately located, designed, constructed or adapted to foster the sustainable development of the people and communities of Carmarthenshire.

5 Strategic Objectives of the MEP

- 5.1 The following strategic objectives have been established for the MEP and will continue to direct its future delivery:
- To develop a schools network that is educationally effective, resource efficient and sustainable for the long term.
 - To develop a pattern of provision within which every learning setting is capable of facilitating a high quality education to all of its learners, either as an individual institution or as part of a federation or collaboration with other settings or providers.
 - To create school environments that allow every child within every school to access a curriculum and experience teaching that motivates them to achieve their full potential, whilst also facilitating a programme of extra-curricular activities that stimulate their physical and emotional well-being.
 - To develop infrastructure at all schools that is equipped for learning in the 21st century, facilitating the realisation of core objectives for raising educational standards and sustaining them at high levels of performance.
 - To deliver a strategic approach to capital investment, integrated with a programme for the rationalisation of provision across the schools network to effectively match supply with demand.
 - To rebuild, remodel, refurbish or modernise all school settings that are to be retained for the long-term, so that they conform as closely as practicable with adopted design standards.
 - To contribute to the achievement of wider policy objectives, for example, community regeneration and renewal, healthy lifestyles, etc, through the development of appropriate enabling infrastructure.
 - To improve the efficiency and educational viability of the schools sector by

reducing the number of empty places to a reasonable level, whilst facilitating wherever practicable the expression of parental preference, responding effectively to demographic change.

- To develop infrastructure at schools that is fully accessible to all persons and enables all learners to access a high quality education, irrespective of individual needs.
- To develop individual and collaborative school solutions that contribute to a county-wide single comprehensive education system.

6 Educational Guiding Principles

6.1 The transformation of the schools network will be founded upon the principles, that every school will as a minimum:

- Have sustainable leadership, with leaders who are free to lead and manage, with no head teacher having a permanent teaching commitment.
- Have no more than 2 year groups per teaching class.
- Not have teaching classes that span the key stages of the curriculum, e.g. the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2.
- Have sufficient pupil numbers to sustain the above structural arrangements.
- Be financially viable under the Local Management of Schools (LMS) funding framework and able to operate for the long-term without a budget deficit.
- Have outdoor teaching facilities as required for the Foundation Phase and to support other areas of learning and physical well-being.
- Be fully inclusive and accessible for all.
- Be equipped with modern facilities to support digital learning.

7 Criteria for Investment and Prioritisation

7.1 Every school in Carmarthenshire has been evaluated against a set of evidence based criteria, which allow an assessment of the school's operational viability to be made and decisions taken on the relative investment need at all schools. This allows the Authority to **objectively** determine a programme for the strategic review of the schools network and investment in the modernisation of the schools estate in a manner that is transparent and demonstrably fair.

7.2 Long-established criteria, developed and adopted locally through consultation with representative head teachers, have been agreed and adopted as appropriate indicators of viability and investment need. They were formally adopted in 2008 and have directed the structure of the MEP since that time.

Viability Assessment

7.3 The criteria for assessing the viability of a school are:

- **Pupil Numbers:** the number of pupils attending the school, with the least numbers of pupils being a key indicator for review.

- **Pupil Numbers Trends:** the pattern of pupil numbers at the school over previous years, with a significantly changing roll being a key indicator for review.
- **Pupil Numbers Forecasts:** an assessment of estimated pupil numbers expected to attend the school from within the designated catchment area over the coming five years, with a forecast decline or increase being a key indicator for review.
- **Spare Places:** the number of empty places at the school and the prognosis for the future, informed by the factors above, with more than 25% of places unfilled being a key indicator for review.
- **Financial Viability:** the present and predicted financial position of the school under the Local Management of Schools (LMS) funding regime.
- **School Buildings Condition:** the state of the school's physical assets and the cost of bringing their condition up to an acceptable standard.
- **School Premises Suitability:** the appropriateness of the school's buildings and campus to support the effective delivery of the modern curriculum (e.g. the Foundation Phase).

7.4 Having been assessed against each of the criteria above each school is been placed in one of seven categories, along a continuum of viability, to confirm the prognosis for that school looking forward:

- retain the school - investment to modernise the school's facilities is complete (or is in progress or is committed);
- retain the school and invest to modernise the school's existing buildings and facilities (this may involve some element of expansion of the facilities) or new building;
- review with a view to formal federation, investment may be required depending on local circumstances;
- create a new primary school to replace existing separate junior and infants schools – invest to provide new premises or to modernise existing premises as appropriate to local circumstances;
- continue to maintain the school subject to pupil numbers not declining significantly from their present levels and the school remaining viable – invest to modernise the school's existing premises where appropriate;
- review the future provision of education in the area served by the present school in the context of a possible strategic reconfiguration across a wider area to promote the more sustainable delivery of education for the long term – invest to deliver the chosen solution;
- review the future provision of education in the area served by the current school, which is not considered to be viable in its present form.

7.5 A copy of a summary of the viability assessment is attached at Appendix 1. This forms the basis for the identification of modernisation projects and rationalisation proposals within the overall programme.

Investment Prioritisation

- 7.6 The prioritisation of capital investment in the modernisation of school premises is founded upon consideration of a combination of the following criteria:
- **Strategic Need - Access to Education:** investment will be prioritised towards improving the sufficiency of the schools estate, at locations where the provision of additional space or the refurbishment of existing space is essential in order to accommodate pupil needs generated by the rationalisation of other schools or where demand for places is increasing naturally through demographic change or linguistic preference, and is consistent with the established schools admissions policy and legislation.
 - **Improving Educational Outcomes:** investment will be prioritised towards projects where infrastructure improvements or developments are critical to creating opportunities for improvement in educational outcomes, e.g. to facilitate the rationalisation of provision to create viable and sustainable schools.
 - **Efficiency:** investment will be prioritised towards projects that enhance the overall resource efficiency of the schools estate, especially projects that achieve the greatest reduction in the number of surplus places.
 - **Welsh Language Development:** investment will be prioritised towards projects that promote the expansion of Welsh medium education or the development of bilingual education, in support of the objectives set out in the County Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.
 - **Infrastructure:** investment will be prioritised to projects that can secure the greatest progress towards the objective of having high quality premises for the greatest number of learners, addressing deficiencies in the suitability of school premises, supporting the effective delivery of the curriculum, resolving concerns regarding premises condition and eliminating health and safety risks.
 - **Opportunity:** investment will be prioritised to maximise opportunities to attract additional funding; to take advantage of school leadership changes where this is consistent with the vision of the MEP; or to deal with any extraordinary circumstances that may arise, e.g. the catastrophic loss or damage of school premises.
- 7.7 Officers have maintained a close dialogue with officials at the Welsh Government in connection with the structure of the programme and in particular the level of flexibility available to amend the programme to meet changing demands. WG officials have confirmed that it is possible to amend the projects within the Band A programme within the overall allocated funding envelope of £86.7 million.
- 7.8 Following a reassessment of projects in line with the criteria above a refreshed future investment programme has been drawn up, shown in Appendix 2.
- 7.9 The order for the delivery of projects reflects the outcome of the strategic re-assessment and has regard to the practicalities of delivery. The forward programme continues the general approach of the past but with some significant changes in the

short to medium term. As work considering the feasibility and options appraisal of projects has progressed it has become apparent that a couple of the major school rationalisation and investment projects have experienced challenges that could not previously have been foreseen. This is particularly true of the schemes in Ammanford and Llandeilo. These projects have to varying degrees experienced challenges relating to their scale and complexity, involving factors such as demographic pressures (related to changing pupil numbers), the availability of suitably located land of sufficient scale, aspirations to support wider regeneration objectives, etc. Furthermore, challenges such as the complexity and timescale of school reorganisation statutory procedures, the demands of Welsh Government business case approval processes have increased burdens on limited professional capacity. As a consequence of these mostly external factors it is not now possible to deliver these two major projects according to the timeline planned a couple of years ago and it is now necessary to re-profile their delivery programme.

7.10 As noted earlier there is a requirement from the Welsh Government that the funding approved for the delivery of the Band A programme be expended within the designated timeframe, which has been accelerated to 2019. For this to be achieved it is necessary to review the structure of the remainder of the programme and bring forward alternative projects for earlier delivery.

7.11 The reassessment of projects has identified that it is possible to accelerate investment in:

- a major strategic project to provide new premises for Ysgol Gymraeg Dewi Sant along with extended and modernised premises for Penygaer Primary School within a single integrated strategic scheme;
- a project to provide a new school for the Gorslas area in response to a dramatic increase in the demand for places at Ysgol Gorslas predominantly as a result of housing developments in the area;
- extension and modernisation of Laugharne Primary School, which will support rationalisation across a wider geographic area.

7.12 Also, urgent space pressures have arisen at Ysgol y Ddwylan and a modest project to address these has been introduced into the programme. Various other adjustments have been made to reflect amended timings for the delivery of other projects according to the prevailing and predicted circumstances. These include the need to accelerate investment to improve accommodation for the PRU (which was recently criticised by Estyn during inspection) and at Ysgol Rhydygors to address shortcomings in the residential accommodation in particular.

7.13 It is important to emphasise that given the complex nature of the investment programme it is inevitable that the detail of the programme will change as time passes as it is impossible to predict several years ahead with any certainty, noting that society and communities continue to change and develop. The MEP remains a successful and robust strategic investment and transformation programme and with the amendments noted above this success is set to continue for many years to come.

7.14 A revised five year capital programme is attached at Appendix 3.

8 Recommendation	
8.1 The Executive Board approves the updated Modernising Education Programme and capital programme.	
DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?	YES - Appendices

IMPLICATIONS

<p>I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report.</p> <p>Signed: Robert Sully Director of Education and Children’s Services</p>						
Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

<p>1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities</p> <p>The proposals set within the report are in line with published policy and strategic direction of the authority.</p>
<p>2. Legal</p> <p>The County Council’s constitution provides that responsibility for the Modernising Education Programme is an executive function.</p> <p>Statutory procedures will need to be completed to institute constitutional change in the structure of schools where the rationalisation of provision is proposed.</p> <p>Planning permission will need to be secured for the development of the infrastructure projects proposed.</p> <p>Building regulations approval will need to be secured for premises developments and modernisation.</p>

3. Finance

The 21st Century Schools Programme has major financial implications for the County Council. The current estimate of the cost of the remaining investment to make all schools in Carmarthenshire to be retained for the long-term fit for purpose for the 21st Century is £290 million (from 2016/17). This is a planning figure and is certain to change over time as the detailed requirements of individual projects are developed. The planning figures do not include any allowance for inflation.

The delivery of the MEP to date has been made possible by the establishment of an innovative funding strategy for capital investment which has drawn upon and integrated a variety of funding sources:

- Welsh Government Grants.
- Capital Receipts – generated though the disposal of operationally redundant school assets. County Council has resolved that all receipts generated through the sale of former school premises are ring-fenced for reinvestment in the school modernisation programme.
- Prudential Borrowing – serviced by contributions from revenue generated though efficiency gains arising from the rationalisation of the schools network and through an adjustment in the delegated schools budget.
- General Capital – contributions from the Council's general capital allocation.
- S106 Agreements – contributions from developers of residential properties.

The Council has effectively exhausted its capacity to generate any further prudential borrowing from the operational schools budget as it has already done much in this area and there is now little scope for further revenue contributions. For example, education spend is by now slightly below the Indicative Budget Assessment (IBA) and with the prognosis for revenue budgets in future years there is unlikely to be further potential in this area. Further revenue gain to be secured by the continuing rationalisation of the schools network may be required to offset the effects of expected budget reductions in future years.

The overall expenditure for the 21st Century Schools programme Band A has been agreed at £86.7m with 50% of the funding provided by WG. WG has extended the Local Government Borrowing Initiative to the programme, allowing it to bring forward additional funding for its element of the programme and bringing forward the timeframe for completion of Band A to 2019.

The County Council's capital programme spans a period of five years, from 2016/2017 to 2020/2021. The programme, therefore, already makes provision for the delivery of the early stages of the Band B of the national 21st Century School programme within a continuous strategic investment plan. At this time the future expenditure profile assumes similar funding conditions for Band B as for Band A, i.e. projects joint funded equally by the Welsh Government and the County Council.

The level of County Council funding will need to be formalised each year through the annual budget setting process. It is inevitable that estimate of capital need will change in the future as the detailed requirements for individual projects are progressed through the stages of development.

4. ICT

The use of ICT is of critical importance to the management and delivery of education in order to facilitate and implement the breadth of curricular choice necessary for all learners. The provision of new, adapted, or refurbished buildings will provide the opportunity for ICT to be integrated into modern infrastructure which is extremely reliable and easy to use. The aspirations are to develop real and virtual workspaces which help to make effective, personalised learning a reality for all students; enable teachers and other professionals to focus on their core tasks and be more effective; and provide parents and carers with easy access to information about learners' achievements and progress. Also it will facilitate access to high quality learning materials in a wide range of settings through as wide a range of end-user devices as possible.

5 Risk Management Issues

Risk management will be fundamental to the effective delivery of the school modernisation programme and its individual projects. Projects will be managed in line with recognised best practice for the construction sector, including the use of risk registers at all stages of planning and delivery.

6. Staffing Implications

Proposals for the transformation of school structures will inevitably have significant staffing implications requiring workforce re-modelling. Specific issues cannot be forecast with accuracy at this early stage and issues will be dealt with and reported as individual projects or groups of projects develop in accordance with established human resource policies.

7. Physical Assets

Proposals for the transformation and modernisation of the schools network will have significant implications for the schools estate. This will involve the creation of new school premises and the refurbishment of some existing school premises. It will also result in some existing operational assets becoming redundant. When this situation arises assets will be managed in accordance with established policies and in the context of the Council's match funding for the programme being partly met from anticipated capital receipts from the sale of surplus assets.

Investment in new facilities will have regard to partnership working and will foster the co-location of services, including those managed by partner organisations, where practical and beneficial.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below:

Signed: Robert Sully Director of Education and Children's Services

1. Local Member(s)

A seminar on provisional proposals for the MEP Biennial Review was held for elected members on the 5th October 2015.

Local Members will be consulted on individual school reorganisation proposals as they are taken forward.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 14th April 2016

2. Community / Town Council

Town and Community Councils have not been consulted at this stage as this is a strategic matter for the County Council.

Town and Community Councils will be consulted on individual school reorganisation proposals as they are taken forward.

3. Relevant Partners

Key partner organisations, including the Church in Wales, Roman Catholic Church and Coleg Sir Gar, are consulted on proposals that affect them.

Head Teachers and Chairs of school governing bodies have been consulted through regional briefing sessions and seminars.

Schools affected will be fully consulted on individual school reorganisation proposals as they are taken forward.

4. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

Not applicable at this stage as this is a strategic matter.

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW:

Title of Document	File Ref No	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
21 st Century Schools Website		www.21stcenturyschools.org

21 st Century Schools: Information Document (May 2010)	MEP	www.wales.gsi.gov.uk
21 st Century Schools: Information Document (May 2010) - Summary	MEP	www.wales.gsi.gov.uk
21 st Century Schools Strategic Outline Programme Template	MEP	www.wales.gsi.gov.uk
Modernising Education Programme (May 2005)	MEP	Department for Education and Children Building 2, Parc Dewi, Carmarthen.