

REPORT TO THE CABINET

June 12th, 2018

Cabinet Member: Cllr Gareth Thomas

Subject: Band B Twenty First Century Schools Programme

Link Officers: Garem Jackson, Head of Education and Dafydd Gibbard, Senior Manager Property

The decision sought

1. Approve in principal initial priorities for Band B of the 21st Century Schools Programme.
 2. Wait for the result of the process for establishing the Council's Asset Management Plan before adopting a final programme.
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Opinion of the local member

Not a local matter

1.0 Initial phase of the Twenty First Century Schools Programme (Band A)

1.1 The Welsh Government Twenty First Century Schools Programme was established in 2013 with the aim of investing (based on a 50/50 partnership with LEAs) approximately £1.4bn in education buildings. The programme's principal aims were to:

- Reduce the number of buildings that are in a poor condition
- Provide the correct number of places for pupils in schools in the correct locations, reducing the unnecessary empty places
- Reduce building running costs in order to maximize the available resources to teach pupils
- Promote sustainability through reducing running costs, use of energy and carbon emissions

1.2 The initial phase (Band A) of the Government's Twenty First Century Schools Programme (Band A) ended at the end of the financial year 2017/18. Gwynedd Council secured £18M of grant funding from Band A with a further £18M of the Council's resources being designated to establish a full programme of £36M.

1.3 This investment has enabled us to complete the following schemes:

- New Hafon Lon special school and Hafod y Sêr respite care home, at Penrhyndeudraeth
- A Lifelong School at Bala including a new primary building, upgrade the secondary space, new library, new sports space and cinema/theatre provision.
- Upgrade and extend Ysgol O M Edwards, Llanuwchllyn
- New Glancegin Primary School, at Maesgeirchen, Bangor
- New Bro Llifon Primary School, Groeslon
- Upgrade and extend Dolgellau, Rhydymain and Llanelltyd sites as part of establishment of Bro Idris Lifelong School.

1.4 Band A has enabled Investment in our educational infrastructure on a scale not seen before. These plans has enabled us to move from 19 schools in buildings that had been identified as being in a satisfactory/poor/very poor condition, to 8 buildings in good condition. Gwynedd has completed all of the plans that had been identified in our Strategy Plan for 2013/14 up to 2017/18. Prior to that, the Council had been at the Vanguard on the Twenty First Century Schools Programme and had commenced on our Investment programme prior to that with New Schools at yr Hendre at Caernarfon and Craig y Deryn and Penybryn at Bro Dysynni. Total Investment in appropriate buildings for the 21stC exceeds £52M thus far this decade.

1.5 Subsequently, the Welsh Government has recognized Gwynedd as one of the most successful Authorities as regards completing thier Programme thus far and we take pride in being mentioned as an example of good practice in this field. Due to this trust in the Council's capacity to achieve, the Government has directed an additional allocation of £12M of Band A residual funding to Gwynedd to enable them to review the primary education provision in Bangor. This review is in preparation with proposals for a new School at y Garnedd and extension and up-grading of Ysgol y Faenol.

1.6 As the initial phase of the programme comes to an end, and as part of our preparation work to complete the next phase, a review has been held in order to establish whether our programme management arrangements were appropriate to proceed to the next phase of this ambitious programme. Some of the projects in this field are very complex that have to follow rigid statutory processes and require effective collaboration and communication with several stakeholders.

1.7 Two different teams have been involved with the individual plans in Band A, the Modernization Team in the Education Department and the Development Team in the Property Service, Environment Department.

1.8 The review's conclusion was that a single integrated team is required to manage and complete these schemes as all the tasks of options assessment, consultation, planning,

Construction and establishment of new schools form part of a composite plan, with a Project Leader and Project Manager clearly identified to be responsible for all individual schemes, from start to finish.

- 1.9 These are Education Schemes, and thus the Head of Education will be the Council's Twenty First Century Schools Programme Leader, setting a strategic direction and the expected outcomes from individual plans. So as to ensure that all these plans are fulfilled in a timely manner, that resources are prioritized across the Programme, and to maintain an overview of the new integrated team's day to day work, the Council's Senior Property Manager will fulfil the Programme Senior Supplier role for Band B.

2.0 Second phase of the Twenty First Century Schools Programme (Band B – 2019 until 2026)

- 2.1 The Government are now focussing on the second phase of the Twenty First Century Schools Programme (Band B), that will commence in April 2019. A request was received from the Government asking all Authorities to establish their priorities at short notice if we wish to ensure that funds will be allocated to us by the Government should we decide to proceed with specific matters.
- 2.2 When requesting this information, it was recognized by the Government that no LEA currently could have firmly established which schemes that they can complete over the next period and that no decisions would be in place to proceed with specific plans. They also recognized that LEA's could not commit to achieve these plans before considerably more detailed work was done on the technical aspects and the educational aspects attached to each plan. It would be very difficult for any LEA to commit to a contribution of 50% towards their programme so early in the process.
- 2.3 However, to enable the Government to financially plan for Band B, they needed to grasp what type of investment would be required to support the individual LEA's plans. There was a clear condition attached to the application noting that funding would not be available for individual priorities unless they were included as part of our Band B programme.
- 2.4 Although the Council has not made any firm commitment to fulfil these priorities, so as to ensure that we would miss the opportunity if it was the wish to complete capital schemes under this Programme over the next 7 years, the Education Department had to hold a prioritization exercise that led to establishing the possible following priorities.
- 2.5 **Improve secondary education resources in Bangor** - through using the residual funding from Band A, and completing a new primary school at Maesgeirchen, the Council will have ensured that the primary provision (except for the Catholic Church School – Our Lady's) is appropriate for the 21st Century. Following local consultation on the future of education in Bangor, there was a strongly held view that the secondary resources, especially at ysgol Tryfan, were not fit for purpose. The buildings at this school are of a very traditional nature

and now requires modifications or even re-construction on a large scale if it is to reach the expected standard for the 21stC. A similar situation existed at Ysgol Friars at the turn of the century and of course the new provision now there has meant a substantial difference in the Standard of resources on both sites.

2.6 Our Lady's School (Catholic Church School) – the buildings on this site are in very poor condition and our condition inspections have for many years recognized that to ensure improvement, a substantial investment is required. Even if investment was made, the site is in a location adjacent to a busy main road and railway it is a narrow site and unfit for purpose in the twenty first century. As the Catholic Church is responsible for these buildings, the Council would not be required to contribute towards the cost of a new resource. The Church can receive a contribution of 85% from the Government towards relocation costs and they wish to utilize this opportunity. Of course, Gwynedd pupils will attend the school and therefore any plan that would have an impact on them must be included within Gwynedd Council's list of priorities.

2.7 Post 16 Education – During the next term, an independent review will be undertaken of post-16 education provision in Gwynedd, with the focus on schools in Arfon, where post-16 pupils currently receive their education in the secondary schools rather than in a tertiary college provision as happens in the rest of the county. The independent review will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current provision and present recommendations for modelling the post-16 provision in the future. Without pre-empting any conclusions the independent review may come to, failing to include this project in the Council's outline list of priorities would result in losing the opportunity to achieve anything in this field for the young people in Arfon, should the independent review come to the conclusion that any changes would be beneficial to the young people of Arfon.

2.7 Improving primary provision in Cricieth – our condition inspections have recognized that the condition of this school's buildings is in category C – that several substantial defects in the Construction require attention within the next 5 years. A little over 5 years ago, there was expenditure on the school in order to try and extend the life of the buildings for a period. Sections of the buildings are of wooden construction and of poor quality. The effect of the temporary work is beginning to wear off and it is unlikely that the life of the building can be extended further than around another five years. Unless there is planning for a long-term solution, there is a high risk of having to deal with an emergency within the next 5 years.

2.8 Condition/suitability of individual sites – although we are aware that several future phases of the twenty first Century Schools programme will be implemented, some sites due to their geographical location, size or unique merits, are not likely to be suitable on their own for a scheme to make them appropriate for the twenty first century. So as to try and rectify such a situation, we have included an outline plan that will enable up-grading the condition and suitability of approximately 20-30 schools over the next seven years.

3. Funding the Council's contribution

- 3.1 We would like to include several other plans to improve schools resources over Band B phase. However, the Government will provide 50% funding towards the programme if our applications and detailed business cases are approved. Gwynedd Council will have to provide the 50% match funding.
- 3.2 Outline information on the individual plans is available at present and it is extremely difficult to estimate the likely costs of the above plans as we are far from establishing Building requirements, on which sites or for how many pupils. However, to enable the Government to forward plan, rough estimates had to be provided and based on the available information, it is estimated that the cost of completing all the plans would be approximately £52M. (Cost of Our Lady's not included as no Financial contribution will be required from Gwynedd Council).
- 3.3 The Council would have to commit approximately £26M of capital over the next seven years, if we proceed with all the possible plans.
- 3.4 The Council has of course a number of other demands on its scarce capital resources. We are currently gathering all the capital expenditure requirements across the Council's departments to prepare our Assets Management Plan for the next 10 years as our current plan terminates this year. It is therefore very timely that we consider our capacity to fulfil all the possible plans in Band B when weighing up against the other spending requirements.
- 3.5 The process of considering what is a priority as regards capital expenditure will have been completed by Christmas and we will then be in a situation to confirm if we wish to fund all the schemes in Band B or whether there are other higher priority demands, bearing in mind that there will be a limited capital amount available over the period in question.

View of the statutory officers

The Monitoring Officer:

The report notes that the Government's requirements means that we have to establish our initial priorities in order to protect the Council's position. The recommendations are appropriate in these circumstances.

Head of Finance:

It is clear from the report that the timing of the Welsh Government's request for information does not match the timetable for developing the Council's Asset Management Plan. That plan will be the opportunity to put estimates in place, and to prioritise all the Council's requirements for scarce capital resources.

The priorities that are outlined in the report are reasonable and are consistent with the understanding of the condition of existing buildings, and with the awareness of the need to develop assets where there will be future pressures. I therefore support the decision sought.

Annexes

None