

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 28 September 2023

LOCATION: Online / Chamber, Penmorfa

TITLE: The Post-16 Education provision in schools

PURPOSE OF REPORT: For decision

REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION: For decision

BACKGROUND:

At the Cabinet meeting held virtually on 11 January 2022, it was agreed that it would be timely to undertake a review of the post-16 provision in Ceredigion.

The aim of the review was to provide an analysis and appraisal of the current post-16 provision in Ceredigion and identify sustainable options for the future, along with their potential advantages and disadvantages.

The aim of the review was to:

- create a set of agreed principles that were learner-centric
- offer a range of accessible and sustainable options whilst ensuring that the voices of the learners, governors, parents, headteachers and Local Authority officers are an integral part of the process
- ensure that full consideration has been given to the findings and recommendations of Estyn's national reviews and the background to Welsh Government's current policy, including the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act
- consider rurality and the implications for carbon footprints.

There was also a wider context to this review, namely:

- Welsh Government's decision to establish the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) which will be responsible for the strategy, funding, and oversight of the further education sector, including colleges and the sixth forms in schools.
- Estyn's Thematic Report regarding Post-16 Partnerships (January 2021).
- The opportunities available through the Mid Wales Growth Deal, the Economic Strategy, and the Regional Partnership Board with regards to the needs and skills of

the workforce for the future and the central role of the Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) in the collection and analysis of information.

- The need to ensure a broad and quality vocational offer, along with a wider offering of A-Level subjects, which allows learners to pursue different combinations of subjects and to specialise in their interests, regardless of where they live in the county.
- Estyn Report – A review of the current 16-19 curriculum in Wales (October 2022).

It was agreed that a set of “agreed principles which were learner centric” should be created, to ensure that the voices of learners, governors, parents and headteachers are an integral part of the report.

6 principles were created -

- 1) The needs of the learner should be prioritised over any organisational needs.
- 2) The generally high standards in Ceredigion schools should be maintained and improved.
- 3) There should be more fairness and equal opportunities for all learners across the county in terms of the offer, advice and guidance, pastoral care and wellbeing, travel requirements, learning pattern and access to support. This includes ensuring bespoke and specialist support for pupils with additional learning needs ensuring a continuum of education for them in the absence of a special school in the county.
- 4) The Welsh-medium offer should be improved to be at least consistent with the English-medium offer to increase the number of Welsh speakers in Ceredigion and to contribute to a bilingual workforce and community.
- 5) Access to a wide range of quality academic and vocational courses should be ensured, increasing the number of vocational courses currently available for pupils in all parts of the county.
- 6) The governance of the post-16 provision should promote the above principles, consider the strategic quality improvement processes, ensure that expenditure is kept as much as possible within the post-16 budget and allow decisions to be made that consider environmental sustainability and carbon footprint.

A key part of the review included gathering the views of a broad group of stakeholders. Surveys were sent to key groups, namely learners, parents / carers, teachers and employers, and a total of 1,306 responses were received from these individuals. In addition, interviews were conducted with representatives from educational providers, the local authority and other partners.

The responses were analysed and placed under six main themes -

- Wide choice
- Language
- Location
- Connections with the world of work
- Collaboration between schools or the establishment of centres of excellence
- Teachers and good, unbiased advice

The next step was to consider the current situation, i.e, the number of pupils, the financial situation, the range of subjects available to the learners etc, and to produce options to consider that look at the advantages and disadvantages in the context of the principles.

In short, the review asks for views regarding four possible options:

Option 1: Maintain the Current Situation

Option 2: Develop the Current Situation

Post-16 provision would continue on the 6 existing sites. The 6 current Governing Boards would continue with their current roles in terms of governance up to 16 but agree with the Local Authority to form a Strategic Board which would manage the Authority’s post-16 budget, ensure suitable arrangements for joint planning of the curriculum and then commission the provision from the schools, e-sgol and other partners.

Option 3: Provision in some schools

This option would be a development of Option 2 above. It would mean closing the post-16 provision at one or more sites. Then, as in Option 2, those Governing Boards would continue with their current roles in terms of governance up until the age of 16 and agree with the Local Authority to form a Strategic Board that would manage the Authority’s post-16 budget, ensure suitable arrangements for joint planning of the curriculum and then commissioning the provision from the schools, e-sgol and other partners. The Board would also be responsible for monitoring the quality of the provision and make recommendations to the Local Authority and the providers for improvement.

Option 4: One Centre

This option would offer a more far-reaching change. It would mean closing the current post-16 provision and establishing a Centre of Excellence, involving a range of partners, at one or more suitable geographical sites. A Governing Body independent of the schools would be responsible for the funding and the curriculum and would appoint a small number of core staff to steer and manage the work.

WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If not, please state why
 Not applicable at present

Summary:
Long term:
Collaboration:
Involvement:
Prevention:
Integration:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Note the contents of the report – ‘A REVIEW OF THE POST-16 PROVISION IN CEREDIGION’.**
2. **Undertake a Feasibility Study to give detailed consideration to Option 2 and Option 4 in the Review.**

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **The Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note the contents of the report.**
2. **Further consider the advantages and disadvantages of Option 2 and Option 4 in the context of the six principles.**

Contact Name: Elen James & Clive Williams
Designation: Corporate Lead Officer: Lifelong Learning & Corporate Lead Officer: Schools
Date of Report: 10 September 2023
Acronyms: None