

Committee	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report	Post-16 Education Informal Engagement
Date of meeting	4 February 2021
Relevant Officer	Debbie Jones Corporate Education Services Manager
Relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Post-16 Education has been identified as one of the main priorities in the Council's Plan 2018-23.
- 1.2** In January 2018, a report was submitted to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee noting the intention to undertake an assessment of the current provision, and noting the possibility that the findings of the assessment would form the basis for further discussions regarding the future pathway for post-16 provision in the county.
- 1.3** In addition, at its meeting on 12 June 2018, the Cabinet approved the principle of considering the current post-16 situation, ensuring that the Authority would not wish to miss the opportunity to strengthen the provision in Arfon, should there be a case to do so. To this end, a figure of £18m has been identified from Band B of the 21st Century Schools Programme.
- 1.4** As part of this work of looking at this field, *Iaith Cyf* was commissioned to undertake research on behalf of the Department, holding interviews with heads, focus groups with learners, and seeking the opinion of parents and learners through questionnaires, in order to enrich and validate the evidence base gathered from desktop research.
- 1.5** After considering the evidence and information gathered as part of the research, a report entitled "Overview of Post-16 Education" was created, which confirmed that there was a case for change. A copy of the report can be seen by clicking on the following this [link](#).
- 1.6** Consequently, on 10 March 2020, a report was submitted to the Gwynedd Council Cabinet seeking permission:
"... to hold discussions with stakeholders in order to consider the current provision and highlight the key considerations in order to co-identify the direction and opportunities to strengthen the post-16 education provision in Arfon. Afterwards, a further report will be submitted to the Cabinet in order to report back on the outcomes of the discussions."

2. VISION AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 In the appendix to this report, our vision for post-16 learners in Arfon is presented, namely:

1. *Ensure fairness in the choice of courses and provide flexible and sustainable high quality learning experiences that equip them as independent learners with the correct information and skills to progress.*

2. *Provide effective transition into post-16 education provision, and develop and maintain access to a broad range of appropriate pathways for the individual learner and ensuring that the post-16 provision evolves as the requirements of the learner change in future.*

2.2 In addition, in **appendix 1** a series of objectives are presented to realise the vision, namely:



3. THE INFORMAL ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

- 3.1** It had been intended to start the informal engagement process on Post-16 Education in Arfon at the end of March 2020. However, before the Cabinet decision came into force, the entire UK entered a lockdown on 20 March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the curriculum had been suspended and schools had been re-purposed to provide care for vulnerable children and children of key workers. As a result of responding to the pandemic, and its impact on our schools, at the time, it was not possible to proceed with the informal engagement process as intended.
- 3.2** When schools re-opened in September 2020, it was decided to recommence the process of holding the informal engagement on post-16 education in Arfon, accepting that it would be necessary to hold the process virtually, rather than face-to-face meetings.
- 3.3** The informal engagement took place for a period of six weeks between 10 November and 22 December 2020. The purpose of the engagement was to give stakeholders such as learners, parents, staff, governors and the wider community an opportunity to present observations and ideas regarding the post-16 education system in Arfon, within the context of the Council's vision and objectives.
- 3.4** As a part of the engagement process, the following background documents were published on the Council's website:
- Cabinet Report 10 March 2020
 - Overview of Post-16 Education (March 2020)
 - IAITH Cyf Report 'Assessment of the current post 16 education provision in Gwynedd' (April 2019)
 - October 2020 presentation.
 - Vision and Objectives
 - Response Form
- 3.5** In order to support the engagement, virtual meetings were held with learners, parents, staff and governors during the period to give them an opportunity to voice their opinions and ask any questions about the field. Six virtual sessions were held, and over 140 stakeholders attended.
- 3.6** Methods such as press releases, use of social media and e-mailing the schools and key stakeholders were used to raise awareness of the engagement process and the virtual sessions.
- 3.7** In addition, in order to encourage as much contribution to the conversation as possible, special virtual sessions were held to gather opinions and ideas from learners in Arfon about the type of post-16 education system that would satisfy the vision and their needs and that of their peers in the future. Four sessions were held

with learners before Christmas, and it is intended to hold further sessions in the coming weeks.

3.8 The table below outlines the engagement process held in its entirety:

The Informal Engagement Process	Timetable	Frequency and medium
Meeting of secondary heads in Arfon - update and outline the next steps and engagement timeframe	14 October 2020	One virtual meeting
Meeting of Elected Members in Arfon - update and outline the next steps and engagement timeframe	15 October 2020	One virtual meeting
Meeting of Secondary School Governing Bodies in Arfon - update and outline the next steps and engagement timeframe	w/c 19 October 2020	Six virtual meetings
Meeting of special school heads in Gwynedd - update and outline the next steps and engagement timeframe	11 November 2020	One virtual meeting
Meeting of Grŵp Llandrillo Menai representatives - update and outline the next steps and engagement timeframe	18 November 2020	One virtual meeting
Publish the informal engagement on post-16 education in Arfon on the Council's website	10 November 2020	Council website, press release, e-mail to stakeholders
Engagement Session for Governors	30 November + 9 December 2020	Two virtual meetings
Engagement Session for Staff	1 + 7 December 2020	Two virtual meetings
Engagement Session for parents, learners and any member of the public	2 + 8 December 2020	Two virtual meetings
Engagement Sessions with learners (two groups from each secondary school in Arfon + 1 group from GLIM)	December 2020 (to be completed in January)	13 virtual meetings

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 It is intended to submit a further report to the Cabinet in the near future in order to report on the findings of the engagement process and the next steps.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The members are asked to present any observations on the informal engagement process held on post-16 education.