REPORT OF HEAD OF TRANSFORMATION
ANDREW THOMAS

MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED: All

STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME – PROPOSAL TO RECONFIGURE SECONDARY PHASE WELSH-MEDIUM EDUCATION BY MAKING SUITABLE PROVISION IN BOTH THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH OF THE COUNTY BOROUGH WITH PROVISION IN THE NORTH DELIVERING BOTH PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PHASE EDUCATION

Purpose of report

1. To obtain Cabinet determination to implement the proposal to reconfigure secondary phase Welsh-medium education by making suitable provision in both the north and the south of the County Borough with provision in the north delivering providing both primary and secondary phase education.

Executive summary

2. The Council, as the local authority for the area, has a statutory responsibility for the planning of school provision.

3. Following consideration of a report of 9th July 2015 the Council’s Cabinet gave approval to publish by way of statutory notice it’s proposal to establish a school providing Welsh medium education in the north of the County Borough for ages 3-18 and in the south of the County Borough for ages 11-16.
4. For pupils in the areas served by YG Ystalyfera and YGG Y Wern this means that, when the proposal is implemented, they will receive their education at a newly established ‘all-through’ Welsh-medium school providing for ages 3-18 at a north campus (based at the existing YG Ystalyfera site) and ages 11-16 at a south campus (based at the existing Sandfields Comprehensive and Traethmelyn Primary school site).

5. The establishment of an ‘all-through’ school over two campuses is an innovative approach to teaching and learning. The new school will provide a framework for raising levels of attainment, remove significant excess capacity, address backlog maintenance/accessibility costs and secure the long term provision of Welsh-medium education across the County Borough.

6. The Council will be working with the governing body to secure the employment of staff from the existing schools and with the trade unions to secure, as needs arise, alternative employment for staff. The Council has a proven track record for supporting staff in such situations.

7. Having considered the objections, it is the opinion of officers that the case for the change remains strong and that the concerns can be addressed with strategic management and leadership on the part of the school and the Council. It is recommended, therefore, that the proposal be implemented without modification.

8. Cabinet determination is sought to implement this proposal. The intended date for implementation is 1st September 2017.

**Background**

9. The Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education. Having the right schools in the right place and ensuring that they are fit for the 21st century learner is the challenge facing the Council. Achieving this will involve reviewing the number and type of schools the Council has in its area and assessing whether or not best use is being made of resources and facilities. The Council is also responsible for actively promoting access to Welsh-language education.
10. Implementing the Strategic School Improvement Programme (SSIP) involves reviewing existing provision and determining the number and type of schools needed to deliver education effectively and efficiently across the County Borough. It will most likely lead to substantial change involving opening new schools, closing existing schools, merging or amalgamating schools, federating schools and promoting new initiatives that support collaborative working between schools.

11. The Council has decided to review its provision on the basis of:

- educational standards
- the need for places and the accessibility of schools
- the quality and suitability of school accommodation
- effective financial management

**The Proposal**

12. It is proposed to reconfigure secondary Welsh-medium education by making suitable provision in both the north and the south of the County Borough with provision in the north delivering both primary and secondary phase education.

13. If approved, the proposal will take effect on the 1st September 2017 with YG Ystalyfera and YGG Y Wern closing on 31st August 2017.

**Consultation**

14. This school organisation proposal is being brought forward under the Council's Strategic School Improvement Programme. Formal consultation is required in line with the Welsh Government’s School Organisation Code, July 2013, which specifies the procedures to be followed, including the content of a consultation document and those to be consulted.

15. Following consideration of a report of 30th July 2014, the Council's Cabinet gave approval to consult on a proposal to establish a school providing Welsh-medium education in the north of the County Borough for ages 3-18 and in the south of the County Borough for ages 11-16.

Statutory notice

17. At the Cabinet meeting of the 9th July 2015, the outcome of consultation was considered. Concerns raised by those objecting to the proposal did not on balance present a convincing argument suggesting modification or abandonment of the proposal. As such the case for the proposal remained strong and Members approved the statutory publication of the proposal.

18. To this effect a statutory notice was published on 9th September 2015 allowing the required 28 day period for submitting objections, which ran until 6th October 2015.

19. The statutory notice is available using the electronic link in the section on background papers listed below.

Consideration of objections to the proposal

20. The objections together with officer responses to those objections are summarised in the Objection Report attached as appendix A.

21. Members are reminded that objections must be conscientiously considered in an open minded approach, alongside the case put forward for implementation of the proposal. In this respect there is an expectation that Members will have read and given due regard to the consultation document, the consultation report, the statutory notice and the comments and objections received together with officer comments.

22. The points raised in objection to the proposal reflect those considered and responded to during consultation. Each of the issues is specifically addressed in the objection report to which Members are referred.

23. Having considered the objections, it is the opinion of officers that the case for the change remains strong and that the concerns can be addressed with strategic management and leadership on the part of the school and the Council. It is recommended, therefore, that the proposal be implemented without modification.
Financial Impact

- **3-18 school (north & south campuses) costs**

24. Table 1 below shows the potential financial effect of the proposal represented as an illustrative budget for the 3 – 18 school. This is based on current budget data including staffing costs, again rolled forward five financial years. An allowance has been included to support the additional cost of managing the school over split sites (north and south campuses). This information was reported in the consultation document and subsequent Cabinet report of 9th July 2013.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projected</th>
<th>Financial Year 2017/18 (Sep–Mar) £k</th>
<th>Financial Year 2018/19 £k</th>
<th>Financial Year 2019/20 £k</th>
<th>Financial Year 2020/21 £k</th>
<th>Financial Year 2021/22 £k</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Status Quo</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YGG Wern (3-11)</td>
<td>£309</td>
<td>£545</td>
<td>£545</td>
<td>£542</td>
<td>£542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YG Ystalyfera (11-16)</td>
<td>£2,068</td>
<td>£3,703</td>
<td>£3,906</td>
<td>£4,108</td>
<td>£4,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YG Ystalyfera (Post 16)</td>
<td>£376</td>
<td>£644</td>
<td>£644</td>
<td>£644</td>
<td>£644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>£2,753</td>
<td>£4,892</td>
<td>£5,095</td>
<td>£5,294</td>
<td>£5,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. 3-18 (north &amp; south campuses)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New school (3-11 phase)</td>
<td>£309</td>
<td>£545</td>
<td>£545</td>
<td>£542</td>
<td>£542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New school (11-16 phase) inc. allowance for north &amp; south campuses</td>
<td>£2,195</td>
<td>£3,921</td>
<td>£4,124</td>
<td>£4,326</td>
<td>£4,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New school (Post 16)</td>
<td>£376</td>
<td>£644</td>
<td>£644</td>
<td>£644</td>
<td>£644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>£2,880</td>
<td>£5,110</td>
<td>£5,313</td>
<td>£5,512</td>
<td>£5,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost difference between A &amp; B</strong></td>
<td>+£127</td>
<td>+£218</td>
<td>+£218</td>
<td>+£218</td>
<td>+£218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NB:** The figures in the table above are notional as annual budget allocations are dependent on the Council’s revenue support grant allocation; the amount of money set aside for schools (the individual schools budget); and the formula for allocating that money to individual schools.
25. On the basis of notional budget allocations, the full year impact of the proposal results in an additional annual investment of £215k.

26. As set out in the consultation document, capital funding of approx. £17.5m has been allocated for new build and improvements to the north campus. This includes remodelling to accommodate primary phase education currently delivered at YGG Y Wern.

27. In respect of the south campus, the long-term intention is to replace the existing buildings on the vacated Sandfields Comprehensive/Traethmelyn Primary site with a new build school as capital funds become available. Until then, £4.5m of investment is earmarked for initial remodelling work. This is an increase in the original amount allocated.

28. As was noted in the consultation report, the south campus is currently a functioning school site where primary and secondary age pupils have access to the full range of curriculum subjects, including access to specialist facilities such as technology and science equipment. Remodelling will enhance existing provision.

29. The remodelling has been budgeted for in the Council’s 21st Century Schools Programme Band A capital funding with a new build school submission envisaged for future 21st Century School funding Bands.

30. The school site at YGG Y Wern is owned by the Council. When vacated any future use will be considered within the context of the Council’s corporate asset management process. If the site or part of the site is sold the monies raised will be reinvested into the general education budget.

**Equality impact assessment**

31. An equality impact assessment has been carried out and found that there is no adverse effect on any particular group and the process has checks and monitoring in place.

32. The new school will be inclusive for pupils, staff and governors from all protected groups.

33. In terms of accessibility, whereas the new build at the north campus will be accessibility compliant, there will be some existing
areas that are not. Similarly this will be the case at the south campus. However, any pupil with a disability will be assessed on an individual basis and relevant modifications, adaptations or reasonable adjustments made where applicable. This applies to all forms of disability as Council related policies and equalities legislation apply to any individual with a disability whether a pupil, staff member, governor or school visitor. Assessment on an individual basis for pupils will include arrangements for home to school transport.

34. On implementation of the proposal, pupils of YGG Y Wern and Ystalyfera will automatically transfer to the new 3 – 18 school unless their parents choose to make alternative arrangements for their education.

35. The full and updated equality impact assessment is attached to this report as appendix B.

Workforce impacts

– School employed staff

36. The process of establishing an ‘all through’ 3-18 school as set out in this proposal requires both YGG Y Wern and YG Ystalyfera to close in order that the new school can be opened in their place. This will mean existing staff contracts will need to be terminated and the management of change process will apply. The new school will need specialist staff with skills in delivering Welsh medium education and as such there will be employment opportunities as a result of this proposal.

37. The posts of head teacher and deputy head teacher are subject to separate rules regarding advertisement. The Council’s policy is for these to be advertised nationally.

38. A temporary governing body will be established before the opening of the new school. The temporary governing body will have the responsibility of appointing a head teacher and deputy head teacher. The head teacher together with the temporary governing body will oversee the staffing structure for the new school.

– Centrally employed staff
39. As this proposal requires the closure of YGG Y Wern and YG Ystalyfera, existing contracts of centrally employed staff will need to be reviewed. There should be employment opportunities for staff at the proposed new school. Additionally, there is considered to be sufficient flexibility and job opportunities within the centrally delivered catering and cleaning services so as to minimise the likelihood of staff redundancy.

– Staff Support

40. The Council is committed to supporting staff at risk of compulsory redundancy and has secured the support and goodwill of the teacher associations/trade unions and governing bodies across the Council, via an employers’ pledge. Identifying staff at risk and prioritising their re-deployment is central to the Council success in this area and the Council has a proven track record for supporting staff in such situations.

Legal impacts

41. The proposal requires the establishment and discontinuation of schools. The School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 provides the legislative framework by which the Council may implement the proposal. The Welsh Government’s School Organisation Code, July 2013, made under Sections 38 and 39 of the Act, imposes on the Council requirements and guidelines on matters relating to school organisation.

42. Pupil travel arrangements will be in line with the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008; the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014; and the Council’s Home to School Travel Policy.

43. Revenue funding will be in line with the requirements of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998; the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010; and the Council’s approved formula for funding schools.

44. The management of staff affected by the proposal will follow the relevant school policies and procedures.
45. The legislation referred to above is available using the electronic links in the section on background papers, below.

Risk management

46. A risk assessment has been carried out under the Council’s Risk Management Policy 2015 and is attached to this report as appendix C.

47. Potential risk areas in implementing the proposal include:

- educational standards in Welsh-medium education are not maintained
- difficult transition arrangements
- lack of parental/public support for Welsh-medium education
- potential for teaching and learning opportunities not maximised
- management and leadership difficulties across two campuses
- forecasted pupil numbers do not materialise
- numbers accessing Welsh-medium education do not increase as growth is not stimulated
- budget allocation insufficient to meet needs

48. Failing to implement the proposal will result in a range of teaching/learning and financial benefits not being fully realised, particularly in relation to:

- providing a stimulating and innovative ‘all through’ Welsh-medium teaching and learning environment that will impact positively on the self-esteem and well-being of all pupils and staff in the north and south of the County Borough
- improving the bilingual learning outcomes for all pupils across the ability range
- reducing the number of surplus pupil places and improving the school building environment in Welsh-medium education in the north of the County Borough
- achieving efficiencies (economic and environmental) by having the right school in the right place
- ensuring the school is a fully integrated community school providing access to its bilingual learning resources and therefore promoting community cohesion
- increasing the percentage of Y6 pupils in Welsh-medium primary schools who continue to study through the medium of
Welsh in the secondary sector

- increasing demand for and access to Welsh-medium education

49. The establishment of an ‘all-through’ school supporting 3-18 Welsh-medium education in the north and 11-16 Welsh-medium education in the south is an innovative approach to teaching and learning that will mitigate the risks identified with this proposal. The new school will raise levels of attainment, remove significant excess capacity, address backlog maintenance and accessibility costs, promote cross border collaborative working with Powys and secure the long term provision of Welsh-medium education across the County Borough.

**Community impact assessment**

50. A community impact assessment has been undertaken and is attached to this report as appendix D.

51. The community impact assessment recognised the importance of both YGG Y Wern and YG Ystalyfera in providing a venue for school based events, extra-curricular activity and community use. All existing school/community facilities and activities related to the school in this proposal are to be retained. Establishing the south campus will provide an opportunity to retain community usage which would otherwise have been lost through the closure of Sandfields Comprehensive/Traethmelyn Primary school.

**Welsh language impact assessment**

52. A Welsh language impact assessment has been carried out in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government’s School Organisation Code and is attached to this report as appendix E.

53. The Council recognises that language and culture are essential parts of an individual’s identity and is committed to promoting and celebrating the Welsh language and culture in a pro-active and inclusive way.

54. The assessment concluded that implementing the proposal should result in a positive impact on Welsh language development and access to Welsh-medium education. It will also consolidate Welsh-medium education in the County Borough by creating a viable and sustainable provision.
Recommendation

55. Having given due regard to the equality impact assessment, the risk assessment, the community impact assessment and the Welsh language impact assessment, it is recommended that, in line with Section 53 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, Members determine to implementation of the proposal to reconfigure secondary phase Welsh-medium education by making suitable provision in both the north and the south of the County Borough with provision in the north delivering both primary and secondary phase education.

56. The proposed date of implementation is 1st September 2017.

Reasons for proposed decision

57. This decision is necessary to comply with the legislative requirements to facilitate the implementation of the proposal which will enable the Council to meet its duty to secure efficient education in its area, including supporting, promoting and sustaining Welsh language education. The proposal will assist the Council in promoting high educational standards and the fulfillment of every child’s potential.

Implementation of the decision

58. The decision is proposed for implementation after the 3-day call-in period.

Appendices

Appendix A: Objection Report
Appendix B: Equality impact assessment
Appendix C: Risk assessment
Appendix D: Community Impact Assessment
Appendix E: Welsh Language Impact Assessment

List of background papers

a. Statutory Notice

c. Consultation Document
   http://www.npt.gov.uk/pdf/WelshMedium3to18ConsultationDocEnglish.pdf

d. Consultation Report
   http://www.npt.gov.uk/pdf/REPORTConsultationResponsesWelshMedium.pdf

e. Cabinet Report: July 2014


g. Welsh Government - School Organisation Code: July 2013

h. School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013


j. Formula Funding review, Cabinet Report: June 2011
   https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20110615/Agenda/$CAB-150611-REP-EL.pdf

k. Home to School Travel Policy: 2014

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