

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

18th January 2017

REPORT OF HEAD OF TRANSFORMATION ANDREW THOMAS

MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED: All

STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A SECONDARY EDUCATION NURTURE CENTRE AT CEFN SAESON COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Purpose of report

1. To obtain Cabinet approval to publish a proposal to establish a Secondary Education Nurture Centre (SENC) at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School

Executive summary

2. The Council is responsible for ensuring suitable provision is made for pupils with special educational needs/additional learning needs.
3. The proposal seeks to establish a nurture centre for the assessment of pupils externalising their needs and who are finding difficulty in maintaining their mainstream school placements.
4. The proposal will complement the specialist assessment provision available at Ysgol Hendrefelin by contributing to the delivery of a more flexible approach to providing for the special educational needs/additional learning needs of pupils.

5. Consultation has been undertaken and issues raised are fully addressed in the consultation response and in the body of this report.
6. It is the opinion of officers that there is nothing to suggest the proposal should be reconsidered. As such, Cabinet approval is sought to publish a proposal to this effect, with the intended date of implementation of 27th February 2017.

Background

7. 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. This will include ensuring suitable provision and support for those pupils with additional learning needs.
8. 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. It will also involve re-organising education provision to ensure pupils gain access to and benefit from the specialist support, skills and expertise available within the County Borough.
9. 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
10. The Council provides for the pupils of Neath Port Talbot who require specialist support for their educational needs at two

community special schools and at learning support/ inclusion centres attached to community primary/secondary schools.

11. Cefn Saeson Comprehensive school, Cimla, Neath, is a maintained community school for boys and girls age 11-16. As at January 2017 the school had 658 pupils on roll. With a capacity to accommodate 924 pupils the school has significant surplus places. In addition, the school currently hosts a small learning support provision for pupils with visual impairment.

The Proposal

12. It is proposed to establish a Secondary Education Nurture Centre (SENC) for the assessment of pupils externalising their needs and whose mainstream school placements are proving problematic.
13. The SENC will provide a period of assessment for up to 16 secondary age pupils. Specialist staff will identify barriers to learning, create bespoke packages of support and plan for successful reintegration into mainstream school settings.
14. It will be managed by the school and be under the school's governance. However, it will be a provision recognised by the Council as reserved for pupils with ALN/SEN and although it is in a mainstream school the pupils who are admitted to the SENC are in addition to the admission number of the school. Admission to the SENC will be via a special admission panel of the Council and all placement decisions will be predicated on the expectation of pupils securing a successful return to their base school.

Consultation

9. 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 the consultation document and those to be consulted.
10. Cabinet at their meeting of 26th October 2016 approved consultation on this proposal, which commenced on 31st October 2016 with comments invited until 12th January 2017. For Members' consideration, a consultation report summarising the

comments of consultees together with responses to those issues is attached to this report as appendix A.

11. Members are reminded that comments should 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 proposal as consulted upon and the comments received together with officer comments.
12. Consultation meetings have been held with Governors and pupils of Cefn Saeson. The process for gathering pupil views followed the guidance issued by Welsh Government on consultation with children and young people, taking into account the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child(UNCRC) in particular article 12: 'Your right to say what you think should happen and be listened to' and Article 13: 'Your right to have information'.
13. Responses received at the meetings were positive and favourable to the proposal, with respondents raising issues that focussed principally on the provision available and how inclusion could be effectively managed to benefit both pupils attending the SENC and pupils at Cefn Saeson.
14. The range of matters that concerned stakeholders are set out in the consultation report together with officer responses.
15. Two written responses were received, one from Estyn and the other from an individual respondent. Issues raised are addressed in the consultation report, attached as appendix A.
16. Written consultation responses are available for Member perusal in the Members' rooms at Port Talbot and Neath Civic Centres.
15. It is the opinion of officers that there are no significant issues arising from the consultation that suggests the proposal should be reconsidered. A Secondary Education Nurture Centre (SENC) at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School should be established in the spring term 2017.

Estyn response

It is Estyn's opinion that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards of education in the area. Fuller commentary is set out in the consultation report (appendix A)

Financial impact

16. The school will receive additional funding to manage the SENC for up to 16 pupils.
17. Meeting the special needs education of pupils in local settings, i.e. within the County Borough, avoids having to secure expensive out-of-county provision. The cost of providing education outside the County Borough for pupils with specialist needs is high, and can amount to circa. £80k per pupil per year. This annually presents a significant demand on the Council's education budget.
18. The SENC will be resourced by two specialist teachers and two teaching assistants with the appropriate skills set to support the assessment process. The staffing costs amount to circa. £180k.
19. Self-contained accommodation will be developed in surplus accommodation at the school. There will be a one-off capital cost for the refurbishment/conversion work.
20. The proposal does not anticipate significant additional cost burden resulting from increased transport costs as this will be readily offset against potential home education/out-of-county placement expenses consequent upon the status quo position.
21. There are no capital receipts or recurrent costs savings directly related to this proposal other than savings from potential home education/out-of-county placement costs.

Equality impact assessment

22. 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 to ensure that any unmet need is identified and any potential adverse effect is fully evaluated and impact mitigated.
23. The proposal does not intend to make any change to the school category as a mainstream English-medium secondary school. The proposal seeks to establish a Secondary Education Nurture Centre

(SENC) for the assessment of pupils aged 11-16 who are displaying externalised needs and who are finding difficulty in maintaining their mainstream school placement.

24. The proposal will have a positive effect on the staffing complement of the school as an increase in pupil numbers by the establishment of a Secondary Education Nurture Centre will require additional members of staff with specialist skills to support pupils at the SENC.
25. The full equality impact assessment is attached to this report as appendix B.

Impact on pupils and parents

26. The proposed new provision will increase the opportunity for pupils to access specialist staff in order to have their needs assessed and to acquire the skills and understanding to manage their individual needs.
27. The SENC will provide for secondary age pupils from across the County Borough.
28. Pupils will be dually registered, remaining on roll at their base school to where they will return under a planned re-integration programme.

Workforce impacts

29. The position of staff currently employed at the school will not be adversely affected by this proposal. In fact, the increased number of pupils secures staff employment by creating additional employment opportunities by way of an increased staffing complement.
30. Additional 4 staff posts have been identified for the SENC. These will comprise 2 x teachers with specialist knowledge and skills and 2 x teaching assistants. The skills and expertise that these additional staff members will bring to the SENC will be available to be utilised for the benefit of the wider, mainstream school community.

Legal impacts

31. The proposal will establish ALN/SEN provision in a mainstream school where the pupils admitted are in addition to the admission

number for the school and where the provision is recognised by the Council as reserved for pupils with ALN/SEN. As such, this constitutes a regulated alteration requiring the statutory publication of the proposal. The School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (the Act) provides the legislative framework by which the Council may implement a 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. The Council's procedures are in line with legislative requirements.

32. 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.
33. 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
34. The management of staff affected by the proposal will follow the relevant school policy and procedure requirements.
35. The legislation referred to above is available using the electronic link in the section on background papers, below.

Risk management

36. A risk assessment has been carried out under the Council's Risk Management Policy 2015.
37. Potential risk areas in implementing the proposal include:
 - educational outcomes for pupils are not improved
 - integration at SENC is unsuccessful
 - re-integration to base school is unsuccessful
38. Failing to implement the proposal will result in a range of teaching/learning and financial benefits not being fully realised, particularly in relation to:
 - opportunities for a pupils to access specialist staff and support

- more pupils being educated in mainstream schools
 - more efficient and effective use of resources, and savings from economies of scale
 - host school indirectly benefits from specialist staff on site
 - staff with greater opportunity for curriculum development and career opportunities through broader experience and enhanced continuing professional development options
39. Given that the proposal builds on the experience, skills and expertise that currently exist at a school; the specialist support at the SENC and the application of specific 'entry' and 'exit' criteria, the potential effects of identified risks will be mitigated by implementation of the proposal.
40. The full risk assessment is attached to this report as Appendix C.

Impact on community usage

41. The proposal should have no adverse impact on community usage as there is no closure or reduction in community facilities involved with this proposal. The SENC will occupy accommodation surplus to the school's requirements and will be a self-contained provision within the school having no impact on the school's operation regarding community usage.

Welsh Language Impact assessment

42. Cefn Saeson Comprehensive is categorised as an English-medium school where Welsh is taught as a second language in accordance with the National Curriculum. Provision at the SENC will reflect provision at the school. The Council is satisfied that the provision for Welsh language education at the SENC will be comparable with the provision currently offered at the pupils' base English-medium school. The SENC will accommodate those pupils who speak Welsh as their first language or whose base school is a Welsh-medium school as there will be available Welsh speaking members of staff.

Recommendation

Having given due regard to the impact assessments in relation to equality, risk, community usage and Welsh language, it is recommended that, in line with Section 48 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, Members approve the statutory publication of a proposal to establish a Secondary Education Nurture Centre at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School.

43. The proposed date of implementation to be 27th February 2017.
44. Notice of the proposal to be published on 19th January 2017, allowing 28 days for receipt of objections.

Reasons for proposed decision

45. This decision is necessary to comply with the formal publication requirements imposed on the Council by the School Organisation Code and associated legislation. A draft statutory notice is attached as appendix D. Implementation of the proposal will enable the Council to promote high educational standards and the fulfilment of every child's potential. It will also enable the council to meet its duty to secure efficient education in its area.

Implementation of the decision

46. The decision is proposed for immediate implementation.

Appendices

Appendix A: Consultation report
Appendix B: Equality impact assessment
Appendix C: Risk assessment
Appendix D: Draft Statutory Notice

List of background papers

- a. Cabinet Report: October 2016
<https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/documents/s24990/SENC%20Cabinet%20report%20261016.pdf>
- b. Consultation Document
<https://www.npt.gov.uk/pdf/CONSULTATIONDOCUMENTCefnSaesonSENC.pdf>
- c. Cabinet report: July 2016
<https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/documents/s23235/A%20Cabinet%20report%20200716%203.pdf>
- d. Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Board report: December 2015
<https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/documents/s18823/CYPEB%20EOTAS%20Dec%202015.pdf>
- e. Home to School Travel Policy: 2014
http://www.npt.gov.uk/pdf/Home_to_school_transport_policy_2014.pdf

- f. Learner Travel (Wales) Measure: 2008 & the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance: 2014.
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2008/2/pdfs/mwa_20080002_en.pdf
<http://gov.wales/docs/det/publications/140616-ltog-en.pdf>
- g. Welsh Government - School Organisation Code: July 2013
<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130719-school-organisation-codes-en.pdf>
- h. School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/1/pdfs/anaw_20130001_en.pdf
- i. Strategic School Improvement Programme Principles Paper: September 2008
[https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20080924/Agenda/\\$CAB-240908-REP-EL-KN.doc.pdf](https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20080924/Agenda/$CAB-240908-REP-EL-KN.doc.pdf)
- j. Estyn
<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/search>

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