

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board

4th July 2019

REPORT OF HEAD OF TRANSFORMATION ANDREW THOMAS

MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED: All

STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME – PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE COUNCIL'S 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS CAPITAL FUDING PROGRAMME BAND B PROJECTS TO INCLUDE A SCHEME FOR A NEW SPECIAL SCHOOL

Purpose of report

1. To obtain Member approval to write to Welsh Government to amend the Council's original Band B Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) to include a new 7-16 special school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD)

Executive summary

2. Across Neath Port Talbot, schools and professionals are reporting a steady increase in the number of pupils requiring support with Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties (SEBD).
3. Additional provisions have been developed in both the primary and secondary sector in an effort to better support these pupils and to meet their needs.
4. The Council's original 21st Century Schools capital Funding Programme Band B submission contains 5 projects.
5. It is proposed to amend the Council's original Band B Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) to include a new 7-16 special

school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD).

Background

6. 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.
7. Implementing the Council's 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.
8. The Council has determined 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

9. It is proposed to amend the Council's original Band B Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) to include a new 7-16 special school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD)
10. The current Band B SOP consists of the following capital build proposals

a. Cefn Saeson Comprehensive

A new build English-medium school for 900 pupils aged 11-16 years to replace an existing secondary school assessed as building condition category grade D.

b. Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera – Bro Dur

New build replacement accommodation as part of the site transformation of the north campus at Ystalyfera. This work complements the new build facilities at the school funded by Band A.

c. Ysgol Newydd Swansea Valley

A new build English-medium school in the Pontardawe area to accommodate primary age pupils as part of an 'all-through', 3-16 development involving Cwmtawe Comprehensive and four existing primary schools.

d. Ysgol Newydd (Coed Darcy)

A new build school for 450 pupils aged 3-11 (incl. Nursery) at Coed Darcy urban village. The language medium of the school is yet to be determined. This scheme is carried over from the initial Band A submission.

e. Abbey Primary School

A new build English-medium school for 450 pupils (incl. Nursery) on a single site to replace the existing buildings located over 3 sites.

11. Investment in the projects within Band B will result in 4 new build schools replacing 7 existing builds. This will remove a further c£15m of backlog maintenance and accessibility costs. It will also complete the rebuild and reorganisation of the Welsh-medium secondary school estate, the latter confirming this Council's long term commitment to Welsh-medium education.
12. Projects in the Council's Band B programme address the poorest condition school buildings (building condition category grade D) whilst also seeking change to improve service delivery. They also address risks to business continuity, the potential impact of which in a large secondary school setting would be significant. There are many more schemes that need to be tackled with the support of future funding initiatives.
13. The Welsh Government has announced improved grant intervention rate funding for 21st Century School Band B projects from 50% to 65% and in relation to Special Schools that they will provide a grant at a 75% intervention rate. With this announcement from Welsh Government it would seem

appropriate to consider whether a new build special school could address some of the challenges currently being encountered and additionally enable Neath Port Talbot to plan to address particular aspects of ALN reform.

Current Provision

14. Across Neath Port Talbot, schools and professionals are reporting a steady increase in the number of pupils requiring support with Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and additional provisions have been developed in both the primary and secondary sector in an effort to better support these pupils and to meet their needs.
15. In recent years Members have given approval for the development of provisions for pupils with SEBD at Ysgol Hendrefelin (7 primary and 21 secondary planned places and 40 secondary assessment places), Cefn Saeson Comprehensive (16 assessment places), Awel Y Mor Primary (12 assessment places) and most recently at Crynallt Primary (14 planned places) and Coedffranc Primary (12 assessment places), but it has become apparent that further, more specialised support is required.
16. Data indicates that there has been an 83% (168 pupils) increase in pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a 46% (332 pupils) increase of pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties (SLCD) and 36% (234 pupils) increase of pupils displaying SEBD since 2012¹.
17. The increase in these particular needs in Neath Port Talbot pupils has contributed to the rise over four years of fixed term exclusions of 21% (115) in secondary, 66% (48) in special and 129% (111) in primary schools. During 2018/19 a rise in permanent exclusions at secondary age has been reported.
18. Neath Port Talbot has two special schools currently. Ysgol Maes Y Coed provides education for pupils aged 2 to 19 years with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and severe learning difficulties (SLD). Ysgol Maes Y Coed opened its doors to pupils in its current purpose built school in

¹ PLASC Jan2019

- September 2012. In 2013 an extension was added to the school and the number of pupils increased from 70 to 90.
19. Ysgol Hendrefelin was established in 2015 from the amalgamation of Ysgol Hendre and Velindre special schools, and Bryncoch Pupil Referral Unit. In 2016 the school was expanded to include a third campus at Theodore Road and its pupil roll increased to 180. Ysgol Hendrefelin now provides education for pupils aged 3-16 with a wide variety of additional learning needs including ASD, MLD, SLD, and SEBD, across its 3 sites in Neath and Port Talbot.
 20. With the increasing numbers of pupils requiring a place at Ysgol Hendrefelin because of their complex SEBD needs the school is under increasing pressure and the management of 3 separate sites is presenting a significant challenge to the leadership team.

Potential Future Provision

21. Should approval be secured then a scheme for a new build special school will be developed.
22. Initial planning indicates that the new build school will need to accommodate approx. 100 pupils aged 7 -16 years old with SEBD.
23. By providing 100 places the new school will alleviate pressures on Ysgol Hendrefelin as it is anticipated that the SEBD provision currently provided at Theodore Road and Velindre sites will be included in the new build, along with additional new spaces created to meet the anticipated future demand.
24. The new school will benefit from a bespoke design with the aim of meeting the complex needs of the pupils who will be allocated a place there. The design will be flexible to allow for both the national curriculum and alternative curriculum provision to be delivered,
25. Facilities could include
 - Bespoke areas for the differing age ranges and type of need
 - Base rooms for registration
 - Curriculum rooms for basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills
 - A range of rooms purposely designed to cater for the complex needs of the pupils, e.g. therapeutic rooms, chill-

out/quiet zones, play area, intervention rooms, work areas, family room, training room, etc.

- A range of skill based areas, e.g. D&T, cookery kitchen, science lab, sports hall (incl. fitness suite), art/photography, music studio, mechanics, animal welfare, etc.
- External facilities to include 3G area, MUGA, nature reserve, outdoor relaxation area, outdoor classroom, etc.
- Opportunities for educational respite and residential courses

26. Possible sites for a special school have yet to be identified but will need to be large enough to accommodate a building which will need to incorporate specialist teaching facilities suitable for delivering the Key Stage 2,3 and 4 curriculum as well as being able to offer pupils opportunities to experience an alternative curriculum depending on individual pupil needs.

Financial impact

27. The Welsh Government has announced improved grant intervention rate funding for 21st Century School Band B projects from 50% to 65%. This reduces the amount of match funding required to 35% and hence the cost of debt charges that are to be met by the Council.
28. The Forward Financial Plan incorporated a capital financing provision for Band B project investments of £800k. As a result of the increase in the grant intervention rate this reduces the cost of match funding the £67m investment for the 5 projects to £714k per annum.
29. The Welsh Government have also advised that in relation to Special Schools they will provide a grant at a 75% intervention rate. Therefore for a £15m investment in a new special school this will require an annual capital financing provision of £188k.
30. Members should note that this increases the total capital financing requirement to £901k and thus circa £101k more than current provision. However it is expected that there will be cost savings that will arise from amalgamations onto single school sites that should cover these or the majority of the increased financing cost requirements.

Integrated Impact Assessment

22. A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
23. The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment will be required if the proposal is progressed.
24. Should the proposal proceed it is likely to have an impact on pupils, staff and other potential users of the new school. It is likely that in some circumstances the impacts will be positive. The proposal may also impact on opportunities to use the Welsh language. It is unknown whether the proposal would impact on biodiversity. Further consideration of how the proposal embraces the sustainable development principle is needed.
25. Should the proposal proceed a full consultation will be undertaken where views of all stakeholders will be undertaken and greater information will be obtained which will further inform the full assessment.

Valley Communities Impacts

24. There are no implications on the Valley Communities as a result of this report. Potential impacts will be assessed should the proposal proceed.

Workforce Impacts

25. There are no implications on the workforce as a result of this report. Potential impacts will be assessed should the proposal proceed.

Legal impacts

26. There are no legal impacts as a result of this report. However should the proposal progress then the School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (the Act) provides the legislative framework by which the Council may establish a new school.

Risk management

27. A risk assessment has been carried out under the Council's Risk Management Policy 2018.

28. The potential risks associated with this report could threaten the Council's ability to successfully achieve its strategic goals and objectives
29. Failure to secure approval to write to Welsh Government to include a scheme for a new build special school in Band B would prevent the scheme progressing.
30. If the scheme is not included in Band B then it would not be possible to submit a business case to Welsh Government for support with funding and without such funding it is unlikely that the Council could afford to build the school.
31. Should approval be given for officers to write to Welsh Government to request permission to include the scheme in Band B, there is a risk that the scheme would still not be progressed due to other pressures. A further risk assessment will be required should the proposal progress.

Consultation

32. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item. However should approval be secured then the proposal will be subject to a full consultation exercise.

Recommendation

33. It is recommended that officers be given permission to write to Welsh Government to request that a scheme for a new build special school is included in Band B.

Reasons for proposed decision

34. This decision is necessary to progress the development and submission of an additional scheme in the Council's Band B SOP.

Implementation of the decision

35. The decision is proposed for call in after the three day call in period.

Appendices

Appendix A First stage Integrated Impact Assessment

List of background papers

a. 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)

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