

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet
16th June 2021

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, LEISURE AND LIFELONG LEARNING ANDREW THOMAS

MATTER FOR DECISION

**WARDS AFFECTED: Alltwen, Godre'rgraig, Pontardawe, Rhos
Trebanos, Ystalyfera,**

STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN ENGLISH- MEDIUM 3-11 SCHOOL TO REPLACE ALLTWEN, GODRE'RGRAIG AND LLANGIWG PRIMARY SCHOOLS ALL OF WHICH WILL BE DISCONTINUED 31ST AUGUST 2024

Purpose of report

1. To obtain Cabinet approval to publish a proposal to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist Learning Support Centre (LSC) for 16 pupils with a statement of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwg Primary, all of which will be discontinued ¹on 31st August 2024.
2. Publication of the proposal provides a 28 day period for the submission of objections. Following the period for submitting objections, Cabinet will need to meet to consider objections received before taking a decision as to whether or not the proposal should be implemented.
3. This Cabinet report needs to be read in conjunction with the consultation report (appendix A), the consultation documents (appendix B) and the Cabinet report of 20th October 2021 (appendix C)

¹Discontinued is the term used in the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, section 40, to mean permanent closure of a school or schools

Executive summary

4. The Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education. 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 in order to ensure future provision is sustainable.
5. Neath Port Talbot 's 21st Century Schools Band B Strategic Outline Plan included a proposal for a new build 3-16 middle school for the area, however following informal discussions with stakeholders it was decided that the scheme should be amended.
6. It is proposed therefore to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist LSC, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwig Primary, all of which would close on 31st August 2024. It is proposed that the new school will be built on land in Council ownership at Parc Ynysderw, Pontardawe and that it will form part of learning, health and wellbeing community campus made up of Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe Leisure Centre. The campus will be further enhanced by the addition of a new build 25 metre, 6 lane swimming pool with additional learner pool on the site to complement the current health and wellbeing offer for pupils and the wider community.
7. The new build will be funded jointly from Welsh Government 21st Century School Programme capital grant monies and from the Council's prudential borrowing capacity. Welsh Government 21st Century Schools Programme capital grant funding has been approved, in principle.
8. At its meeting of 20th October 2020 Cabinet approved consultation on a proposal to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist LSC, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwig Primary, all of which would be discontinued on 31st August 2024.
9. The consultation document invited views and opinions to be submitted in respect of the proposal. The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code requires the Council to consult on its proposal and to publish a consultation report summarising any issues raised by consultees, the Council's response to those issues and Estyn's view of the overall merit of the proposal. This report was published on 28th May 2021.

Background

10. 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.
11. 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.
12. Following consideration of the **Strategic School Improvement Programme Principles Paper: September 2008**, attached as appendix J , the Council 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

13. It is proposed to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist LSC, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwig Primary, all of which would be discontinued on 31st August 2024.
14. It is proposed that the new school will be built on land in Council ownership at Parc Ynysderw, Pontardawe and that it will form part of learning, health and wellbeing community campus made up of Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe Leisure Centre. The campus would be further enhanced by the addition of a new build 25 metre, 6 lane swimming pool with additional learner pool on the site, to complement

the current health and wellbeing offer for pupils and the wider community. Matters concerning the proposed new swimming pool will be subject to a separate report to be considered by Members.

15. The new English-medium community primary school for boys and girls aged 3-11 years will accommodate 630 full-time pupils and 140 part-time (70 a.m./70 p.m.) nursery age pupils. It will be managed with one head teacher and one governing body and will have one budget allocation and one group of staff.
16. The new school will serve the combined catchment areas of Alltwen, Llangiwig and Godre'rgraig Primary schools. Pupils from the three existing schools will automatically transfer to the new school subject to parental preference.
17. The new school will provide primary education for children aged 3-11 in a new build 21st century facility which will provide a stimulating teaching and learning environment in state of the art facilities .
18. Additionally the new school will provide support for pupils through the establishment of an LSC for 16 pupils with a statement of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The LSC will also provide the opportunity to become a community hub for the area, building on the work already being undertaken by other well established primary school LSCs.
19. The new build will be funded jointly from Welsh Government 21st century School Programme capital grant monies and from the Council's prudential borrowing capacity.
20. The scheme is planned to include a new build 25 metre 6 lane swimming pool with additional learner pool, to further enhance the physical activity and wellbeing opportunities for pupils who currently attend Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig primary schools and Cwmtawe Community School, as well as pupils attending nearby YGG Trebannws and YGG Pontardawe.
21. Furthermore the facilities will provide sustainable opportunities for swimming curriculum development for potentially 2500 pupils aged 3-16 in the nearby communities. The swimming pool will complement the current school and community facilities on site to deliver a 21st century health and wellbeing offer for pupils aged 3-16 and for wider community use.

22. The combined new build School, specialist ASD provision and pool will form part of a learning, health and wellbeing community campus at the Parc Ynysderw site, complementing the existing Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe Leisure Centre provision. In locating the new build facilities close to Cwmtawe Community School the development will enable pupils and staff from both schools to benefit from increased partnership working, made easier due to their close proximity.

Consultation

23. This school reorganisation 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, November 2018, which specifies the procedures to be followed, including the content of the consultation document, those to be consulted and timeframes.
24. Consultation on this proposal commenced on 3rd November 2020 with comments invited until 19th January 2021. The consultation document was made available by e-mail to consultees, with the schools managing distribution to their school communities. It was also available on the Council's website. Hard copies were available on request.
25. A pupil version of the consultation document was also made available to the schools to distribute as appropriate.
26. Responses to the consultation were submitted by email, post and via the Council's online consultation portal. Details of how to respond were included in the consultation document and links to the online consultation portal were included on the website and on the Council's social media channels.
27. During the consultation period Welsh Government imposed both local and national lockdown periods due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Restrictions meant that it was not possible to hold face to face meetings during consultation, however in every other respect the consultation proceeded as expected despite imposed restrictions. The consultation period was extended from 6 weeks to 11 weeks to allow consultees additional time to consider the proposal and submit comments. Additionally officers were available to answer queries by email and telephone should consultees require more information to enable them to respond to the consultation, and a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section

was also added to the Council's website to address more general queries on the proposal.

Pupil Consultation meetings

28. During the consultation period and before schools moved to online learning on 15th December 2020, face to face meetings were held with pupils of Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg primary schools to gather their views on the proposal. Arrangements allowing the meetings to take place were managed by the schools, in line with Welsh Government's Operational guidance for schools and settings

Meetings were held as follows

| | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| Alltwen | 2nd December 2020 |
| Llangiwg | 3rd December 2020 |
| Godre'rgraig | 4th December 2020 |

29. Pupils at all three schools gave their views on their current schools and voiced concerns over moving to a new school. It should be recognised that the notes of the meetings reflect the officers' understanding of the views expressed and, as such, may not wholly capture the substance of individual comments made and queries raised. In this respect and to support the consultation process, at each meeting pupils were also reminded to submit their comments in writing if they so wished.

Consultation Responses

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Online responses | 161, of which 14 support the proposal |
| Emails | 26, 1 in support |
| Paper forms/letter | 47, 6 in support |
| Online petition | 413 signatures, |

In total 234 responses (not counting petition)

31. The petition is headed '
We, the People of Pontardawe, Alltwen, Llangiwg, Cilmaengwyn, Godre'rgraig and Ystalyfera, strongly disagree with the proposal to build a new, large 3-11 school at Parc Ynysderw. We are strongly against the plan to close Godre'rgraig, Alltwen and Llangiwg Primary Schools. We petition the SSIP to invest in our existing schools, and to preserve the many benefits of our children's small smaller school environment rather than spend millions of pound of public money investing in an unwanted and unnecessary new build school. The location chosen

discriminates against the communities in the north of the Swansea Valley. Village schools are the centre point and lifeblood of our communities. Children need to feel important members of a small community. This will be lost in the enormity of a school environment serving more than 700 pupils. Important safeguarding opportunities will be missed. We do not believe that our communities' children will benefit from this development.

In addition, Parc Ynysderw cannot support the additional traffic this will create in an already congested area. Our children's lives will be put at risk. There have already been incidents in which Cwmtawe children have been knocked down. The consultation is flawed and should be reviewed because it does not contain accurate information about all of the relative costs involved.

32. The petition is signed by 413 individuals from a wide geographical area, some from outside the UK, all of who oppose the proposal. 50 respondents also made a comments on the proposal, which are considered within the consultation report.

33. A count of the responses is shown below.

Table 1

| | | | |
|----------------|-----|--------------------------|----|
| Pupils | 0 | Pupils' relatives | 4 |
| Parents/Carers | 118 | Members of the Community | 61 |
| Staff | 8 | Others | 24 |
| Governors | 2 | Unspecified | 6 |

34. Additionally the following responses were also received.

Table 2

| | |
|---|--|
| Governing Bodies x3 (tween Primary School, YGG Trebannws and YGG Pontardawe) | Trade Unions x 1 |
| Pontardawe Town Council | Councillor Chris Jones Town Councillor Andrew Nicholson |
| Community Councils x 2 (Cilybebyll and Ystalyfera) | Jeremy Miles Member for the Senedd of Neath Dr David Lloyd Member for the Senedd South Wales West |
| ESTYN | |

35. A report on the consultation document has also been submitted by a member of the community. The report comprises of 3 parts, the first pointing out the perceived flaws in the consultation document, the second suggesting alternative options and the third the results of a survey which has asked various questions broadly relating to the proposal and to schools more generally.
36. Prior to the commencement of the formal consultation period queries were received from local Councillors and Tegwch.
37. Additionally officers received a request from Members to undertake further investigations into the feasibility of retaining a school in the Godre'rgraig/Ystalyfera community. This has been undertaken and details are contained in the Consultation report pg. 49 and 50.
38. The consultation period ended on January 19th 2021. Further to this correspondence has been received which raises additional queries and concerns relating on the whole to matters around the reasons for the relocation of Godre'rgraig Primary school from its Graig Road site. For clarity, these queries and concerns are responded to in the section below relating to Godre'rgraig Primary School, Graig Road site.
39. Copies of all written responses have been made available to Members prior to the meeting of the Council's Cabinet at which the proposal and consultation report will be considered.
40. Members are reminded that comments should be conscientiously considered in an open minded approach, alongside the case put forward for publication of the proposal. In deciding whether to publish the proposal, Members must read and give due regard to the proposal as consulted upon and the comments received together with officer comments.
41. The consultation report has been made available to those required by the Code, including responders who requested a copy, with the latter being contacted by email advising of the link to the report on the Council's website.

Consultation – summary response

42. Comments received relating to the proposal include broadly relating to the following

- Education including quality of education, pupil wellbeing, size of school, staffing, and Additional Learning Needs,
- Proposed site and traffic management
- Transport and travel,
- Wider community including leisure amenities, childcare, the impact on Welsh language development and the impact on other schools
- Consultation process
- Well-being of Future Generations
- Backlog maintenance
- Finance and pupil numbers
- Godre'rgraig Primary school, Graig Road site
- Alternative options

43. A summary of officer responses is set out under each of these headings. Members should also read the fuller responses set out in the consultation report.

– ***Education, pupil wellbeing, size of school, staffing and Additional Learning Needs***

44. Comments received relate to the quality of education and the concerns that this could not be improved in a larger school, that pupil well-being would suffer and that places for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) in the new school would be insufficient to accommodate pupils currently in the schools which the proposed new school would replace.
45. The proposed new school will build on and develop the progress made by the existing individual schools, and there is no reason to believe that standards would be negatively impacted by this proposal. Estyn in their response to the proposal state that ‘this proposal is likely to at the least maintain the present provision for English medium primary education in the area’.
46. There is no reason to assume that pupil well-being would suffer because of a move to the proposed new school or by the size of the school. It is noted that the current schools provide good levels of care and support, and there is nothing to suggest that the new school won't at least offer the same.
47. Informal interviews conducted with members of the school communities within Neath Port Talbot where schools have amalgamated or where pupils have moved from a closed small school to a larger school have shown that pupils adapt to their new environments very quickly, that they

make new friends and that their educational progress is not negatively affected.

48. All schools are expected to manage pupils with ALN within their mainstream classes, it is only the pupils with higher level needs who are allocated a place in a specialist facility. Each LSC in Neath Port Talbot provides education for children with ALN from a variety of other schools, it is not the case that only children from the school where the LSC is located will attend. The LSC will be managed by the school and be under the school's governance. However it will be a facility recognised by the Council as reserved for pupils with ALN/SEN and pupils admitted to the proposed LSC would be in addition to the admission number of the school. Children attending the proposed new school will not automatically be allocated a place at the LSC even if they have statement of SEN. Admission to the provision would be via a special admission panel of the Council and specific entry and exit criteria will apply, as detailed in the policy document 'Entry/Exit Criteria for Specialist Provision Catering for Communication and Interaction Difficulties- B: Autism Spectrum Disorders'.
49. Additional commentary relating to education can be found on pages 19-25 of the Consultation Report (appendix A)

– Proposed site and traffic management

50. Concerns have been raised relating to the proposed site of the new school and the possibility of increased traffic in the area.
51. The proposal relates to establishing a new school. Should the proposal be approved it will be a pre-requisite of gaining planning consent that traffic management and safe routes for pupils and parents are thoroughly addressed.
52. Every new school build in Neath Port Talbot is subject to rigorous highways and planning scrutiny before planning approval is granted and in many cases, as part of the scheme, significant work has led to improved traffic management and access arrangements in the area. These processes are well established and have been tried and tested over many years. It is expected that sufficient staff and visitor parking as well as parent and bus drop off areas will be a requirement of planning consent. These elements would be developed as part of the scheme and would seek to improve the current arrangements on the Parc Ynysderw site.

53. Additional commentary relating to the proposed site and traffic management can be found on pages 26 of the Consultation Report (appendix A)

– ***Transport and Travel***

54. Comments have been received which suggest that pupils will struggle to attend the proposed new school due to its location. It is also stated that there are no safe walking routes and that nursery pupils will be deprived of the chance of early education.

55. All schools in Neath Port Talbot are committed to encouraging walking and cycling to school where possible. For many of the primary aged pupils the proposed location of the new school on the site at Ynysderw remains within 2 miles travel distance for homes in the catchment area.

56. An estimate of the numbers of pupils who live further than 2 miles away from the proposed new school site at Parc Ynysderw, based on the numbers and addresses of the pupils currently in the three schools suggests that approximately 176 pupils could potentially be eligible for assistance with transport, which removes the need for parents to transport pupils to school by car. Support with home to school travel will be made available in line with the Council's Home to School Travel policy. Home to school journey times from within the catchment area fall within reasonable limits for primary age pupils. The School Organisation Code states that local authorities should consider 'the nature of journeys to alternative provision and resulting journey times for pupils including SEN pupils; in particular whether primary school pupils will have one-way journeys in excess of 45 minutes'. Journey times for pupils living within the catchment area of the proposed new school are estimated to be no more than 20 minutes. drive

57. The remaining pupils live on routes that have been assessed as safe, although these routes will be reassessed should the proposal progress and when details of the pupils who will be attending the new school are known. At that time the Neath Port Talbot Road Safety Officers will be available to assist and support schools, parents and pupils in planning safe routes in line with Welsh Government Learner Travel Guidance.

58. It is accepted that where some schools are further away than the 2 mile travel distance for primary aged pupils, there is a likelihood that travel assistance will need to be considered. When considering pupil travel, reference must always be made to guidance under the Learner Travel Measure, which refers to mileage and stipulates that pupils of primary

age are entitled to home to school travel assistance if they reside 2 or more miles away from their nearest suitable education provision or where there is no suitable walking route.

59. Nursery education is classified as non-statutory provision under the Welsh Government's Learner Travel Measure. The Council's current Home to School Travel policy reflects this and there is no entitlement to transport assistance for nursery children. In some circumstances and where opportunities present, under temporary discretionary arrangements, parents of nursery age pupils are able to request the use of a vacant seat on a vehicle which travels along a relevant route and which is suitable for nursery aged pupils.
60. These arrangements will be available to parents of nursery aged pupils travelling to the new school and are no less favourable than those applying to other parents of nursery age children across the County Borough.
61. Comments have also been received which query whether extra transport will be provided so that pupils will be able to access breakfast club and extra-curricular provision
62. Extra transport for pupils to access breakfast club and after school activities will not be provided. Breakfast Club has been successfully operated at all three of the current schools, promoting the Welsh Government aim of giving all children a flying start through encouraging healthy eating and social interaction. Should the proposal be implemented then it will be the Headteacher and Governing Body's decision to provide a breakfast club. Officer support in the form of identifying good practice elsewhere or facilitating discussions with relevant parties, will be provided to the school to enable them to address any difficulties arising from pupils arriving on school transport not being able to access the provision – for example they may wish to consider a later start to breakfast club so all transported pupils are able to participate.
63. Arrangements for extra-curricular activities are not an uncommon challenge for schools that have pupils attending from outside the immediate area. There are a range of solutions found by other schools that include: arrangements with transport companies, arranging activities at lunchtime or other times during the school day or facilitating car shares with parents.

64. Additional commentary relating to transport and travel can be found on pages 27-29 of the Consultation Report (appendix A)

– ***Wider Community***

65. Concerns have been raised by consultees that the new school will damage the communities of Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg through the closure of the local schools situated there. There is no evidence to suggest that by attending school outside of the village children and young people will no longer 'belong' to the community where they live. The Community Impact Assessment (CIA) highlights the fact that many community based activities and events are not reliant on the existing schools and so these activities could continue. Schools are open to pupils for 190 days of the year. Outside of the school day; that is, before and after school, weekends and during school holidays, pupils will be in the areas where they live and available to make use of local facilities.
66. Children and young people do not only mix socially through their schooling, as many will attend local after school groups or be part of wider community events. There is no reason why this wouldn't continue to be an important part of their lives should the proposal progress. Following reviews of school reorganisation in other areas of the county borough it has been the case that community interaction has not ended and that pupils continue to take part in community events.
67. Additional commentary relating to the wider community can be found on pages 32-34 of the Consultation Report (Appendix A)
68. Consultation on the proposed new pool is not a requirement of the School Organisation Code, however as it is part of the overall proposal to create a health and well-being community campus it has been considered appropriate to include information about it in the consultation document. Further details on the construction of the proposed pool will form part of the planning process should this proposal progress. It should be noted however that the funding for the pool and the school has been secured as part of the 21st Century schools capital grant as one scheme. If the proposal for the new school is not approved then the funding for a new pool will also not be available.
69. Pontardawe Swimming Pool was built in 1974. The latest condition survey from August 2014 indicated that while the building was in reasonable condition, the core building services have exceeded their

recommended anticipated lifecycle. Backlog maintenance costs for the current pool are estimated at £1,221,783.

70. It is anticipated that the proposed new pool will be housed in a new build adjoining the current leisure centre, meaning that some remodelling of the leisure centre will be required. However current facilities, including the bowls hall will not be affected or lost as a result of this proposal.
71. Additional commentary relating to leisure amenities can be found on pages 34-35 of the Consultation Report (Appendix A)
72. Comments have been received regarding childcare provision, and concerns raised that parents will not be able to access wraparound provision as there is no facility planned within the proposed new school. As a result of considering the current sufficiency of childcare within and around the catchment area of the proposed new build primary at Parc Ynysderw, the need for a childcare setting within the school was dismissed due to the fact that the area is already well served with childcare provision, with a number of settings offering full day and sessional care, and approximately 8 childminders with the capacity to take 65 children, all within reasonable distance of the proposed school site. It is expected that existing childcare provisions could easily adapt their transportation of children plans to enable children from the new school location to access/continue to access their provision. It was also felt that should the proposed new school include extra childcare provision then the required tender for any new childcare services within schools would unsettle and disrupt the successful and established childcare in place in and around the area.
73. Additional commentary relating to childcare can be found on pages 35-36 of the Consultation Report (appendix A)
74. A Welsh Language Impact Assessment (appendix E) has been carried out by an independent consultant which recognises that while this proposal relates to the establishment of an English-medium school there may be direct or indirect impacts on the development of the Welsh language in the area.
75. The impact assessment states 'A common theme in the consultation comments was that a new English-medium school would negatively impact on the Welsh-medium schools in the locality. However, data/evidence held by the Council indicates that new build English-

medium schools in Neath Port Talbot, that have opened in the last 10 years, have had no significant impact on nearby Welsh-medium schools which suggests there is low if any impact on Welsh Medium schools in the locality with the proposal.'

76. Additional commentary relating to the impact on Welsh language development can be found on page 36 of the Consultation report (appendix A).
77. Comments have been received which state that this proposal will negatively impact on other schools, both English and Welsh- medium.
78. It is the case that English-medium schools Rhos Primary and Rhydyfro Primary could have been considered for inclusion in this proposal, however both were ruled out for reasons including building condition and additional new build housing developments.
79. It has also been stated that a new build school in the Parc Ynysderw area will attract pupils who would otherwise have attended local Welsh-medium schools. Previous new build English-medium school projects in Neath Port Talbot have not shown that this has been the case and data gathered on pupil numbers across the local authority demonstrate that in fact Welsh-medium pupil numbers have actually increased in areas where new build English-medium schools have been established.
80. Additional commentary relating to possible impacts on other schools can be found on pages 30-32 of the Consultation Report (appendix A)

– ***Consultation process***

81. Comments have been received which express the view that this consultation process has not provided consultees with sufficient information to enable an intelligent consideration and response, and that it is an unlawful process in that it has not followed proper policies and procedures, and has not complied with fairness and equality rules. This consultation has followed the procedures set down by the Welsh Government under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and School Organisation Code.
82. Throughout the consultation period the consultation document and associated papers were available on the Council's website located on the Council's Strategic School Improvement Programme webpage.

83. Responses to the consultation were submitted by email, post and via the Councils online consultation portal. Details of how to respond were included in the consultation document and links to the online consultation portal were included on the website and on the Council's social media channels.
84. During the consultation period Welsh Government imposed both local and national lockdown periods due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Restrictions meant that it was not possible to hold face to face meetings during consultation, however in every other respect the consultation proceeded as expected despite imposed restrictions. The Code specifies that there is no requirement to hold consultation meetings. Meetings are not a substitute for written responses – where meetings have been held in the past attendees have still been urged to respond in writing to the consultation, as notes taken at meetings do not constitute formal responses.
85. The consultation period was extended from 6 weeks to 11 weeks to allow consultees additional time to consider the proposal and submit comments. Additionally officers were available to answer queries by email and telephone should consultees require more information to enable them to respond to the consultation, and a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section was also added to the Council's website to address more general queries on the proposal.
86. Despite Covid 19 this consultation has been conducted following Welsh Government guidelines and has adhered fully to the Code. In some aspects this consultation process has given consultees greater opportunities to engage as the option to respond online has not been used previously.
87. Comments have been received which assert that the Council has considered only the preferred option. This is not the case, a range of options were presented in the consultation document, giving sufficient reasons to allow consultees to give intelligent consideration and response.
88. It is recognised the consultation process should be undertaken when proposals are still at a formative stage. This is the case with this consultation as the Council will conscientiously take into account the responses before finalising its decision.

89. Additional commentary relating to the consultation process can be found on pages 37-39 of the Consultation Report (appendix A)

– ***Well-being of Future Generations***

90. It has been stated that this proposal is in breach of the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, specifically in relation to the impact of school closures on the local communities. It is not clear why this is considered to be the case. Neath Port Talbot Council produces a corporate plan which includes well-being objectives. The three well-being objectives enable the Council to maximise its contribution to the seven well-being goals that Welsh Ministers have set for the whole of Wales in their Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The first of the three objectives specifically relates to children and young people - 'To improve the well-being of children and young people', and the plan sets out in detail how this objective contributes to the seven well-being goals. It is the view of officers that this proposal can enable the Council to meet many aspects of this objective including through providing 21st century teaching and learning experiences, supporting the implementation of new statutory duties to benefit pupils with ALN and to increase the opportunities for pupils to participate in activities that promote health and well-being.

91. It is believed that a new 21st century school will greatly enhance teaching and learning experiences, which in turn can positively impact on pupil outcomes. The increased skills and knowledge will provide greater life chances for pupils, enabling them to become as adults more prosperous, more resilient and more equal. By providing access to improved facilities and by broadening social and cultural experiences the proposal contributes to healthier individuals and more cohesive communities.

92. Commentary relating to the Well-being of Future Generations can be found on page 39 of the Consultation Report (appendix A)

– ***Backlog maintenance***

93. The Council has followed strict WG guidance and methodology in assessing condition grades, backlog maintenance and accessibility costs of the schools involved in this proposal thus ensuring a consistency of approach across Welsh schools, and the condition report for Pontardawe Swimming Pool was undertaken by an independent external consultant.

94. It is important to clarify that the backlog maintenance and accessibility costs derived from the condition reports are estimates. The backlog costs are for putting the existing buildings back into repair, and don't allow for improving or upgrading which would provide schools with better facilities for teaching and learning.
95. Maintaining the three schools at their present sites is not considered to be the best use of resources or facilities as that would lead to cost inefficiency and would mean that the potential benefits afforded by a new build would not be realised.
96. Additional commentary relating to backlog maintenance can be found on pages 29-30 of the Consultation Report (appendix A)

– ***Finance and Pupil Numbers***

97. This proposal is being brought forward for consultation based on the four principles of the Strategic School Improvement Programme, as stated in the consultation document. It is the case that one of the four principles of the SSIP programme is the need for effective financial management and this proposal will result in revenue efficiency savings which will be re-invested in the education budget. In this regard, the proposal supports the Council's effective management of its education budget.
98. Additional commentary relating to finance can be found on pages 37 of the Consultation Report (appendix A)
99. Concerns have been raised regarding the pupil numbers contained in the consultation document. The proposed new school will be built to accommodate 630 full time and 140 part time pupils. These forecasted numbers determine the size of the building and the number of classrooms and additional rooms that will need to be included in the proposed new school. This information has been included in the Business Case submitted to Welsh Government to secure the funding to build the proposed new school and has been scrutinised and approved.
100. The document contains actual pupil numbers in the three schools, a five year forecast of the combined pupil numbers in the schools and a prediction of the pupil numbers which the new build school size is based upon.
101. Over the last 10 years the number of pupils in Swansea Valley schools has increased by over 160 extra pupils, and it is expected that these

numbers will continue to rise as the population continues to grow. It is also the case that a significant number of new housing developments are planned for the area which could potentially increase numbers further.

102. There is no intention to include any other school in the proposed scheme despite comments received that other schools are to be added at a later date. Any school reorganisation plan would be subject to exactly the same procedures as the current proposal. Current legislation does not permit the ad-hoc addition or removal of schools not already named in the consultation without commencing a new statutory process.
103. Additional commentary relating to pupil numbers can be found on pages 39-42 of the Consultation Report (appendix A).

– ***Godre’rgraig Primary school and the Graig Road site***

104. Numerous consultees have made reference to Godre’rgraig Primary School’s temporary relocation from Graig Road, Godre’rgraig to land adjacent to Cwmtawe Community School. Some consultees said that information about the reasons for the relocation have not been included in the consultation document and that this information was needed to allow for informed responses.
105. Further comments suggest that the relocation of the school to the temporary site due to concerns about the quarry spoil tip above the school was a deliberate act to facilitate permanent closure.
106. Officers believe these criticisms to be incorrect. Before considering them the background is set out.

Background

107. The background is that this school reorganisation proposal is being brought forward under the Council’s Strategic School Improvement Programme principles and aims, as noted in para.13 above and not directly as result of the report on the quarry spoil. Permission to develop a scheme for a new 21st Century school in the Swansea Valley was approved by Members in their Cabinet meeting of 4th October 2017 and Godre’rgraig Primary was included in this scheme at that time.
108. The process of developing a scheme from the initial outline plan to a proposal which is considered suitable to bring forward for consultation is complex and will involve exploring many configurations before

embarking on the one which officers consider to be the best option. The proposal is then tested through a rigorous consultation process, which follows the requirements set out in the School Organisation Code and recognises the fact that the consultation process should be undertaken when proposals are still at a formative stage.

109. As to the quarry spoil issue, in May 2019 a desktop survey was commissioned to gather further information on the condition of the mountain above the school, due to previous concerns relating to a landslide at Panteg situated just a little way north of the school.
110. Results from this work identified a risk to the mountain above the school and further urgent investigations were commissioned. In July 2019 the subsequent report identified a medium level risk and as a result the school staff and pupils were temporarily relocated from Graig Road, Godre'rgrraig to Parc Ynysderw, Pontardawe. (For clarity this relocation was not a school closure – no school can be closed without the necessary statutory processes being undertaken, as is clearly explained in the School Organisation Code, November 2013 and revised Code 2018.)
111. It is important to note that this consultation is not about whether Godre'rgrraig Primary should remain in its temporary location, or whether remedial works should be undertaken to allow for a return, but instead is about a proposal to establish a new 3-11 English –medium primary school in new build premises to replace three existing primary schools, of which Godre'rgrraig Primary is one. Whether the location of the school remained at Graig Road, Godre'rgrraig or in its temporary location at Parc Ynysderw the current consultation would still be undertaken in the same way and the principles for embarking on consultation would remain unchanged.
112. The consultation document clearly outlines the reasons for the proposal; the expected benefits that a new school, along with the creation of a health and wellbeing community campus, can deliver are as applicable to pupils of Godre'rgrraig as for pupils of Alltwen and Llangiwig. Specifically the proposed new school will create more favourable conditions for teaching and learning. It will have spacious, light and airy classrooms, with access to a range of high quality and appropriate spaces for social interaction
113. The new buildings will facilitate easier delivery of the new curriculum for Wales, and will provide greater opportunities for an inclusive, skill based approach to teaching and learning.

114. With a new school comes more choices and improved opportunities because there is more space and better facilities. The 2015 report, 'Clever Classrooms', found that well designed schools can significantly boost children's academic performance in reading, writing and maths.
115. The new school will ensure that pupils have adaptable ICT facilities, suitable for learning in the 21st century. Mobile technology will be integrated with a sound pedagogical base to provide pupils with enhanced learning experiences, equipping them with the key skills and motivation needed to raise standards.
116. The proposal which has been consulted upon therefore is in the opinion of officers considered to be the best option for all of the schools, including for pupils currently attending Godre'rgraig Primary.
117. At this point in time it is correct to say that Godre'rgraig Primary school staff and pupils cannot return to their original location. The most recent report on the quarry spoil tip investigation above the school has found that the medium level risk remains, and it is therefore deemed unsafe for pupils and staff to return to the site at the current time. A feasibility study to investigate design options and produce budget estimates for works associated with the remediation has been commissioned. However, even if mitigation work is possible and staff and pupils are able to safely return to the Graig Road site, the case remains that substantial work to address both backlog maintenance issues and remodelling to deliver 21st century school provision for the future will still be required. A new purpose built school with state of the art facilities will provide better opportunities for teaching and learning than the Graig Road site, even if remodelling of the buildings is affordable and achievable within the confines of the site. Should further studies indicate that it is safe for pupils to return, either with mitigation measures put in place or for other reasons, then the stated benefits of including the school in this proposal would not change.
118. However the issue of the risk to the school community through the quarry spoil is an additional factor to be considered, as should further feasibility studies identify that the risks remain then the pupils will need to be educated in a permanent location elsewhere, giving a further reason for the school to be included in this proposal from an early stage, allowing opportunity for better planning and stakeholder involvement in the proposed new school.

119. The consultation period ended on January 19th 2021. Further to this correspondence has been received which raises additional queries and concerns relating on the whole to matters around the reasons for the relocation of Godre'rgraig Primary school from its Graig Road site. Against that background, the criticism referred to at paragraph 103-104 are now considered.

120. Some consultees said that insufficient information was given about the Godre'rgraig site and the quarry spoil risk. This was mentioned in the consultation document (page 8), as follows:-

"In July 2019 Godre'rgraig Primary was relocated temporarily from Godre'rgraig to Parc Ynysderw, adjacent to Cwmtawe Community School after geological experts found there was a potential landslide risk to the school's playground.

Earth Science Partnership (ESP), the experts commissioned by Neath Port Talbot Council, reported a medium level risk from a quarry spoil tip near the school after the Council asked them to extend their extensive landslide risk investigation work carried out in nearby Panteg, Ystalyfera.

Further work reported in 2020 has revealed that the risk remains and that it would be unsafe for staff and pupils to return to the school. The new build school provides the opportunity for Godre'rgraig Primary pupils to be permanently relocated and to benefit from the 21st century facilities provided."

32. This was sufficient information to provide in the consultation. As stated, the issue in the consultation was not about the temporary siting of Godre'rgraig Primary School, and whether and how it might be feasible to return to the Graig Road site. It was about the proposal for a new 3-11 primary school to replace three primary schools, including Godgre'rgraig. The merits of that proposal exist independently of the issue of the Graig Road site.

121. Godre'rgraig Primary School is a part of this proposal because its inclusion meets the recognised principles of the Strategic School Improvement Programme. However the issue of the risk to the school community through the quarry spoil is an additional factor to be considered, as should further feasibility studies identify that the risks remain then the pupils will need to be educated in a permanent location elsewhere, giving a further reason for the school to be included in this

proposal from an early stage, allowing opportunity for better planning and stakeholder involvement in the proposed new school.

122. Some consultees also said that the location chosen for the temporary siting of Godre'rgraig primary School means that the proposal for the new 3-11 primary school would inevitably progress, or that it was a deliberate act to ensure that Godre'rgraig Primary School would be discontinued and the new 3-11 primary school would be approved. This is not correct.
123. The location of the temporary school buildings at Parc Ynysderw was selected after a long list of suggestions had been drawn up, moving to a shortlist of 4 possible locations which then were further investigated for suitability. The criteria for selection included proximity to the Graig Road site, linkages to services and facilities, and importantly expediency and speed of delivery, given the aim to deliver a suitable operational facility in time for the start of school term in September 2019.
124. The option chosen after careful consideration, was both available for immediate use, capable of accommodating the development at short notice, and suitable in terms of highway and pedestrian access, ensuring the pupils and staff could be accommodated safely, with minimal disruption. The site also benefitted from linkages with the existing school at this site, such as catering/ dining, and outdoor facilities.
125. It was also the case that Godre'rgraig Pupils transfer to Cwmtawe Community School in Year 7 and strong links already existed between the two schools. This was seen as apposite for the staff, pupils and for parents, many of whom were already familiar with the location and the school itself, and so would ease the transition from Graig Road to the new location.
126. It should be noted that to date no decision has been made on any matter other than to allow a consultation to take place on the scheme that officers believe is the best option for pupils in the three current schools. The Consultation report will be considered by Members before any further decision is taken on this proposal and if Members determine that this proposal is not the best option then they will recommend that the proposal is either amended or stopped completely. The decision will be taken with the knowledge that the results of the consultation must be conscientiously considered and that the stringent requirements of the School Standards Code 2018 in respect of school reorganisation proposals have been meticulously adhered to.

127. Last, since the closure of the consultation period on January 19th 2021, the Council has received a number of items of correspondence raising additional queries and concerns about the reasons for the relocation of Godre'rgraig Primary School from its Graig Road site. This arose from the fact that on 5th March 2021, a recording was placed on social media by a local campaign group opposed to the reorganisation proposal. The recording is an extract of a meeting of the Pontardawe' Labour Group. The former Leader of Council (Cllr Rob Jones), Cllr Jones discussed a number of matters surrounding school reorganisation and his comments include "If I had my way, all schools would be 3-16".
128. Resulting correspondence has suggested that this mean that he prejudged the proposal for the 3-11 primary school at Pontardawe. It is not clear why this is stated, since the proposal is not for a school from 3-16. However, as a precautionary measure, Cllr Jones has taken no further part in decision making in relation to the proposal.
129. Additional commentary relating to Godre'rgraig Primary School and the Graig Road site can be found on pages 42-43 of the Consultation Report (appendix A).

– ***Alternative options***

130. Consultees have responded with alternative suggestions which are responded to in the Consultation Report pages 44- 52(attached as appendix A)

Impact on special needs education provision

131. There are no specialist units for children with statements of special educational needs at either of the three schools, i.e. provision recognised by the Council as reserved for pupils with SEN. Pupils with additional learning needs, including children with statements of special educational needs, are supported in a mainstream setting with appropriate funding for this purpose. The new school will continue to offer this level of support.
132. Data analysis suggests that a number of pupils within the Swansea Valley travel to gain additional learning support in specialist units elsewhere within Neath Port Talbot. The data also shows increasing demand for specialist support at primary age for pupils in NPT with ASD.

133. Pupils attending the proposed LSC provision within the new school will benefit from being taught by specialist staff, experienced in working with pupils with ASD needs. There is also the possibility that mainstream pupils with ASD could also benefit from the expertise available as the specialist knowledge and skills-set of the staff employed to work at the proposed LSC will be available to share with mainstream staff and, as such, will indirectly benefit SEN provision at the new school.

134. It is also envisaged that the LSC provision will be able to provide support and training for other mainstream primary schools across Neath Port Talbot, building skills, competencies, expertise and capacity of all staff working with children with ASD.

Financial impact

135. The cost of the new build is estimated at c. £22,705,000 apportioned as per table 6 below.

Table 3

| Project | NPT Investment | WG Investment | Total Investment |
|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| Ysgol Newydd Swansea Valley | 7,946,750 | 14,758,250 | 22,705,000 |

136. Welsh Government 21st Century Schools Programme capital grant funding has been approved

137. Combined backlog maintenance and accessibility costs for the existing schools amounts to circa. £2m which would be removed by this proposal along with the ongoing need to fund the associated costs of Godre'rgraig Primary School's current off-site hired/leased accommodation. Additionally backlog maintenance costs for the current pool amounting to £1,221,783 would also be removed by this proposal.

138. Revenue funding for schools is distributed on an annual basis by means of an approved formula. This ensures school budget shares are allocated on a simple, objective and measurable basis.

139. Most of the revenue budget allocation to Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary schools is generated by pupil numbers. Similarly, the new primary school's budget will be based mainly on the combined pupil roll. Savings will occur as the new school will have one head teacher and one management structure. Revenue savings will be re-invested in

the education budget. In this regard, the proposal supports the Council's effective management of its education budget and promotes the more equitable distribution of funding across local schools.

140. The proposed new school will receive additional funding to manage the LSC provision for up to 16 pupils. 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.
141. Additional recurring revenue costs associated with this proposal such as potential additional transport costs may be incurred. Similarly there will be revenue efficiency savings associated with this proposal.
142. Based on the funding delegated to schools in the 2020/2021 financial year, per pupil funding for Alltwen Primary school is £3,685 whilst for Llangiwig Primary school per pupil funding is £3,965 and for Godre'rgraig Primary school £3,886. This compares with the average for NPT primary schools at £3,941.
143. Prior to the new primary school opening on 1st September 2024 Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig primary schools will receive their annual school budget shares for the 5/12^{ths} of the financial year 2023/2024. When the new school opens on 1st September 2024 it will receive a budget share based on the number of pupils on roll at that time.

Integrated Impact Assessment

144. An Integrated impact assessment, attached at appendix D, has been undertaken. The proposal would create a new build, 21st Century School for pupils which would enhance well-being, and would provide the conditions to improve standards. The addition of an LSC for primary aged ASD pupils would address the need for additional provision in Neath Port Talbot and would seek to improve opportunities for these pupils as well as provide training and development for mainstream staff in the proposed school and the wider area. The proposed new pool would complement current provision and enhance the health and wellbeing offer for pupils and the wider community.
145. The proposal can be seen to have positive impacts on Age and Disability and a neutral impact on all other protected characteristics. A new build

21st Century school would impact positively on pupils from all socio economic groups, due to the significantly improved facilities provided and would also positively impact on community cohesion, and social exclusion.

146. With the implementation of mitigating actions the proposal should have at least a neutral impact on the Welsh language and biodiversity.
147. The Wellbeing of Future generations has been considered and the proposal directly supports the Council's wellbeing objectives.
148. Members are reminded that in response to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 the Council has set three strategic objectives which contribute to the seven national well-being goals that the Welsh Government requires all public bodies in Wales to contribute to, in order to achieve 'the Wales we want'.
149. The Council's well-being objectives and the supporting improvement priorities are set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. This proposal directly supports wellbeing objective 1 – 'to improve the wellbeing of children and young people' through the provision of a 21st century school for current and future generations of primary aged pupils.
150. Through creating facilities that can be used by the community the proposal also supports wellbeing objective 2 – 'to improve the wellbeing of all adults who live in the county borough'.
151. Wellbeing objective 3 'to develop the local economy and environment so that the well-being of people can be improved' is also directly relevant to this proposal. To obtain WG approval of the business plan involves ensuring that community benefits are fully explored and implemented throughout the construction phase. Part of this work will ensure that local businesses are used to supply labour and materials whenever feasible, local people will benefit from employment schemes and the local economy will benefit due to an increased number of people working in the area.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan

152. 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. The Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) details how it

intends to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools.

153. WESP objective ' To ensure that second language provision across all schools provides pupils with the skills and ability to become confident and sustained speakers of Welsh and that the provision develops a meaningful relationship between the language and the learner' is of particular relevance to this proposal.
154. Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg primary schools teach Welsh as a second language and this will also be the case for the new school. Standards of Welsh in the three current schools are good; it is expected that the good practice that already exists would transfer to the proposed new school. Currently 25% of staff across the three schools are fluent or fairly fluent Welsh speakers. By combining the three schools Welsh language provision could be improved as there could be greater impact on having a more concentrated group of Welsh speakers able to support pupil and staff language development skills through the medium of Welsh.
155. The Swansea Valley area is a linguistically significant area as it contains the highest number and percentages of Welsh speakers in Neath Port Talbot, and is amongst the highest in Wales as a whole.
156. Primary education through the medium of Welsh is available at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pontardawe and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Trebannws. Additionally Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera –Bro Dur, which is approximately 5 miles from the proposed site, provides all through 3-19 education through the medium of Welsh.
157. Significant investment has taken place at Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera – Bro Dur through projects in both Band A (circ. £17.5m) and Band B (circ. £9m) of the 21st Century Schools Capital Funding Programme.
158. In addition funding of £1.6m has been secured to improve provision at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pontardawe, including extended and enhanced childcare and Foundation Phase facilities. Work is expected to be completed in 2021.
159. A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been undertaken by an independent consultant. This has concluded that the proposal will have a positive impact on people's opportunities to use the Welsh language and a neutral impact on treating the Welsh and English languages equally.

The Welsh Language Impact Assessment is included as Appendix E to this document.

Workforce impacts

– School staff

160. The proposal will mean changes that impact on the employment of school staff as the existing schools will be discontinued on 31st August 2024. Upon closure all staff will cease to be employed at their respective schools. The new school will set a new staffing structure appropriate to its needs and budget.
161. A temporary governing body will be established before the opening of the new primary school. The temporary governing body will have the responsibility of appointing a head teacher. Specifically in relation to the posts of head teacher and deputy head teacher, the Council's policy is for these to be advertised nationally. Once the head teacher has been appointed that person will, together with the temporary governing body, be responsible for determining the staffing structure for the new primary school.
162. The new primary school will open on 1st September 2024 and school staff will be employed by the new governing body for the primary school (albeit appointed by the temporary governing body).
163. There are potential teaching and learning benefits for staff working at a large primary school, including greater opportunity for staff development and career progression through a broader range of experiences.

– Centrally employed staff

164. Although this proposal rationalises provision across the three schools, there will be employment opportunities at the new school for centrally employed catering and cleaning staff.

– Staff support

165. As part of the process all school based staff will be supported by the relevant school policies and procedures which will include full consultation. Previous experience has shown that some staff wish to secure employment in the new school but others take the opportunity to take on new challenges elsewhere. Employees identified at risk of redundancy will be given access to the Council's prior consideration register. 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. The Council has a good track record for supporting staff in such situations.

Legal impacts

166. Members are referred to appendix F which sets out in detail the relevant legislation and legal implications relating to a decision on this proposal.
167. The proposal requires the establishment and discontinuation of schools. The School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (the Act) provides the legislative framework by which the Council may implement the proposal. The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, November 2018, made under Sections 38 and 39 of the Act, imposes on the Council requirements and guidelines on matters relating to school organisation, including consultation.
168. 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.
169. 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.
170. The management of staff affected by the proposal will follow the relevant school policy and procedure requirements.
171. The legislation referred to above is available using the electronic links in the section on background papers, below.

Community Impact assessment

172. A Community Impact Assessment (CIA) has been undertaken for the purpose of providing information on the impact of the proposal on the local community's access to facilities and services currently available at the three schools. It has been prepared in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code. The CIA has been prepared using a range of sources and evidence, including discussion with various partner organisations in the Swansea Valley and the

schools and provides further information all of which enables decision makers to have a fuller understanding of the possible consequences on communities as a result of school closure.

173. The Community Impact Assessment recognises the importance of Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary School in providing a venue for school based events, extracurricular activity and community use. Following evaluation, it has been demonstrated that under this proposal the existing interaction between the community and the pupils is either retained, preserved, relocated or enhanced as appropriate with no adverse effect or loss of amenity to the wider community. It is recommended that the community use developed over an extended period should not be lost for example Pontardawe Library and Yr Hwb already work with all three schools and there is no reason why this couldn't continue, or even be enhanced under this proposal as working with one school management team should prove to be easier than working with three separate management teams. .
174. There is general perceived apprehension about the proposal to establish the new 21st Century 3-11, English- medium school at Parc Ynysderw. There is a view that the proposal may be detrimental or damaging to the three communities under review.
175. Should this proposal be implemented then the proposed new school with its additional facilities will be available for use by all the communities in its extended catchment area. Additionally the proposal includes the provision of a new build 25 metre, 6 lane swimming pool with additional learner pool on the site to complement current provision and enhance the health and wellbeing offer for pupils and the wider community.
176. Whereas the need to understand and mitigate the impact of a school reorganisation proposal on a community is a right and proper consideration, the Code states that in determining school organisation proposals the Council should place the interest of learners above all others.
177. The community impact assessment is attached to this report as appendix H.

Fields in Trust

178. The Council hold freehold title to the land required for the proposed new school and swimming pool part of which is leased to Parc Ynysderw Sports Association.

179. The Sports Association has agreed to enter into an Option agreement allowing for the surrender of the land required and consent for the drainage improvement works to the retained underutilised pitch if and when the proposal proceeds, legal formalities for which should be completed shortly.
180. The Council's title to the land is subject to a deed of dedication in favour of the National Playing Fields Association (as the duly appointed Trustees of the King George V Foundation) so the prior approval of the Fields in Trust is required for the proposal. Fields in Trust have advised the Council that it is happy to consider releasing the land required and positive discussions are ongoing to agree the location and extent of replacement land to be provided in exchange in line with its aims and objectives. It is anticipated that the Council will submit its formal application shortly and it is hoped that formal approval will be forthcoming as soon as possible
181. Funding for drainage works, if required, has been identified within the budget for the proposed new build school and pool, along with enhancing the children's playground adjacent to the leisure centre, which may also be affected by the proposed works, to ensure no loss of amenities in the area. The trustees are in full agreement with the proposal. The playing fields at Parc Ynysderw are one of 471 King George Fields established as a memorial to King George V.

Risk management

182. A risk assessment has been carried out under the Council's Risk Management Policy 2018.
183. The potential risks associated with the proposal comprise the Council's reputation, educational standards, financial management, staff employment and service delivery.
184. Potential risk areas in implementing the proposal include:
- resistance to change leading to lack of pupil, parent and staff support
 - educational standards not maintained
 - less effective support for pupil well-being in a larger school and in a different location
 - increased home to school travel time for some pupils
 - staff anxiety about job security and new management arrangements
 - loss of school identity from closure of existing establishments

- forecasted pupil numbers do not materialise
- budget allocation insufficient to meet needs
- Welsh language not developed further
- discrimination against protected characteristics
- loss of community facilities
- increased governance and staff responsibilities

185. Failing to implement the proposal will result in the following teaching / learning and financial benefits not being fully realised, particularly in relation to:

- providing a stimulating and innovative teaching and learning environment that will impact positively on the self-esteem and well-being of all pupils and staff
- providing additional purpose built facility for pupils aged 3-11 with Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- pupils accessing a wider range of staff expertise
- opportunities for wider peer group interaction
- staff having greater opportunity for curriculum development and career opportunities through broader experience and enhanced continuing professional development options
- a more efficient and effective use of resources, and savings from economies of scale
- reducing the number of surplus pupil places and improving the school building environment
- creating a learning and recreational campus promoting community cohesion

186. The benefits of implementing the proposal outweigh the effects of identified risks. A new school provides greater prospects for improving educational attainment for pupils. Estyn (Jan 2007) reported on the performance of schools before and after moving into new buildings, stating that ageing school buildings which are in a poor state of repair cannot meet modern teaching and learning needs. The report also states that inadequate buildings make improvements in standards more challenging and that in nearly all schools with new or refurbished buildings, pupils attainment and achievement have improved and in some cases the improvement has been significant.

187. The full risk assessment is attached to this report as appendix G.

Recommendation

188. It is recommended that giving due regard to the responses to consultation, the integrated impact assessment and the impact assessments in relation to equality, risk, community usage, and the information referred to in this report and the appendices.

(a) In line with Section 48 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, Members approve the statutory publication of a proposal to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a LSC, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwg Primary, all of which will be discontinued on 31st August 2024.

(b) The proposed date of implementation to be 1st September 2024.

(c) Notice of the proposal to be published on 17th June 2021, allowing 28 days for receipt of objections and a report be brought back to members following the outcome of this period for final determination by members.

Reasons for proposed decision

189. This decision is necessary to comply with the formal publication requirements of the School Organisation Code and associated legislation. A draft statutory notice is attached as appendix I. 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

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

Appendices

Appendix A: Consultation report

Appendix B: Consultation document

Appendix C: Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board report

Appendix D: Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix E: Welsh language impact assessment

Appendix F: Legal implications
Appendix G: Risk assessment
Appendix H: Community impact assessment
Appendix I: Draft statutory notice
Appendix J: Principles Paper September 2008

List of background papers

- a. Cabinet Report:
<http://moderngov.npt.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=158&Mid=7426&Ver=4>
- b. 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)
- c. Welsh Government - School Organisation Code: November 2018
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/school-organisation-code-second-edition.pdf>
- d. School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/1/pdfs/anaw_20130001_en.pdf
- e. Well-being of Future generations (Wales) Act 2015
<https://gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-wales-act-2015-guidance>
- 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-ltogg-en.pdf>
- g. Home to School Travel Policy: 2017
https://www.npt.gov.uk/media/4231/npt_home_to_school_travel_policy_2017.pdf?v=20170627002146
- h. Corporate Plan 2019-2022
<https://www.npt.gov.uk/media/11925/2019-20-corporate-plan-eng-3.pdf?v=20190920114145>
- i. Estyn
<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/search>

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