

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board

14 October 2021

**DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION,
LEISURE AND LIFELONG LEARNING
- ANDREW THOMAS**

MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED: All

STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME: PROPOSED PROJECTS FOR THE COUNCIL'S INCREASING WELSH MEDIUM PROVISION CAPITAL GRANT SUBMISSION 2021

Purpose of report

1. To obtain approval to submit an expression of interest application to Welsh Government for Increasing Welsh Medium Provision Capital Grant funding (2022 – 2026).

Executive summary

2. In 2019 Welsh Government awarded Neath Port Talbot £3.4m of Welsh Medium Education Capital Grant and Capital Funding of Early Years Provision, to develop 3 projects aimed at increasing Welsh medium childcare provision and foundation phase pupil places in schools
3. On 11 March 2021 an additional £30 million was announced by Welsh Government to develop Welsh medium education. The funding is a second tranche of investment from the Welsh Medium Capital Grant, established in 2018 to support capital projects dedicated to supporting and growing the use of the Welsh language in education.

4. The grant funding will support investments that facilitate growth in Welsh medium education and use of the Welsh language. The grant funding is aimed specifically at projects that will demonstrably contribute to meeting the Welsh Government's aim of one million Welsh speakers by 2050. Welsh Government are providing 100% funding for the Capital Grant.
5. Approval is sought for officers to submit an expression of interest application to Welsh Government Officials with the aim of increasing and enhancing Welsh-medium provision within the county borough.

Background

6. In 2019 Welsh Government awarded Neath Port Talbot £3.4m of Welsh Medium Education Capital Grant and Capital Funding of Early Years Provision to develop 3 projects aimed at increasing Welsh medium childcare provision and foundation phase pupil places in schools.
7. At Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwmllynfell £640k was awarded to provide 1 extra classroom space and a childcare setting, with the aim of increasing the capacity of the school, improve Foundation Phase provision and provide space to develop pre-school Welsh-medium provision.
8. The scheme aimed to prevent drift to other schools in neighbouring authorities, strengthening the development of Welsh language in the area and impacting positively on the Council's Band B proposal at YG Ystalyfera – Bro Dur (north campus) by increasing the number of children from the area choosing secondary education through the medium of Welsh.
9. The project has been successfully completed and both the new classroom and childcare provision are ready for use.

10. At Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn £1.14m of funding was awarded which enabled the provision of 2 extra classroom spaces and a new Welsh medium childcare provision.
11. The aim of this project was to create a more attractive and stimulating learning environment with high quality welsh medium childcare on site. In the longer term it was anticipated that this would ease accommodation pressures in the area, with demand for Welsh medium pupil places increasing year on year.
12. The project has been successfully completed and is a very welcome and timely addition to the school. Pupil numbers have already shown an increase with both nursery and reception classes full in September 2021.
13. The third and most challenging project initially involved creating 3 extra classroom and childcare provision at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pontardawe. This project was awarded £1.6m grant funding.
14. Following more detailed discussion with the school the scheme was amended. At the schools request the current childcare provision and nursery/reception classes were relocated within the school to allow for work to take place without interruption, which necessitated remodelling 2 classrooms, providing extra toilet facilities and outdoor play area, converting the staffroom and office to provide childcare facilities and converting a reception area for storage.
15. The completed scheme will provide remodelled and extended childcare and nursery facilities along with 2 new build FP classrooms, a new entrance way, staffroom, meeting room and office and additional play areas, fencing and pathways, along with medium refurbishment of the hall.
16. The scheme has suffered from a number of setbacks, including some delays due to Covid19. In July 2021 the contractor working on the scheme went into receivership and all works on site were stopped. Following weeks of negotiation a new company is expected to take over

the project and it is now expected that the school and childcare will be able to occupy the new facilities by the end of the year, with further works taking place on the grounds and outdoor facilities in the spring term.

17. On 11 March 2021 an additional £30 million was announced by Welsh Government to develop Welsh medium education. The funding is a second tranche of investment from the Welsh Medium Capital Grant, established in 2018 to support capital projects dedicated to supporting and growing the use of the Welsh language in education.
18. The key criteria is that any proposals must demonstrably contribute to meeting the Welsh Government's aim of one million Welsh speakers by 2050.
19. As in the first tranche of investment the capital funding will be allocated at a 100% rate. If the total value of the bids received exceeds the funding available, they will be prioritised according to those which provide the most support for the Cymraeg 2050 target.
20. Any bids which meet the criteria but which are not prioritised for funding on this occasion may be considered in future if further funding becomes available.

Grant Information

21. The grant funding will support investments that facilitate growth in Welsh medium education and use of the Welsh language. The grant funding is aimed specifically at projects that will demonstrably contribute to meeting the Welsh Government's aim of one million Welsh speakers by 2050. This national ambition includes projects which:
 - provide additional Welsh medium provision;
 - move schools along the linguistic continuum;
 - help to attract pupils to the Welsh medium sector e.g. Welsh medium childcare or nursery provision;

- improve transition rates within Welsh medium sector e.g. between pre-school facilities and Foundation Phase provision, also between primary and secondary provision;
 - support retention or sustainability of Welsh medium provision e.g. latecomer centres/Welsh language immersion; and,
 - provide infrastructure support such as video conferencing facilities or other technologies.
22. The funding cannot be used to support projects already planned for Band B of the 21st Century Schools and Education programme. The proposals, will therefore, need to be new capital developments (or extensions/additions to existing provision) which will be in addition to the Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) for Band B.
23. Welsh Government are providing 100% funding for the Capital Grant. The budget for the Welsh Medium Grant is fixed and prioritisation of projects will take place should applications for funding exceed the resources available. The key criteria for assessing, and if necessary, prioritising projects will be as follows:
- Increased Welsh Medium places;
 - Ability to deliver proposal within the timeframe.
 - Sustainability of provision.
 - Cost per additional place
 - Sustainability of build
 - Alignment with WESP targets
 - Alignment with WG targets
 - How the investment will support the Welsh Government's decarbonisation commitments, including net zero carbon schools.
24. Following the assessment process the successful projects will go on to the next business case stage. A Business Justification Case (BJC) will be completed for projects with a value of over £1m. With projects with a value of less than £1m, a basic Business Case will be required.
25. During this second tranche of investment, applications will also be considered for potential revenue funding (of up to 2 years) to support

the capital projects, however, this is yet to be confirmed and will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Proposed projects

New build Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Rhosafan

26. This scheme was submitted in the in the first round of grant funding, but was unsuccessful. A new build four classroom extension with childcare provision has recently been created, with capital grant funding received through a successful bid for Welsh Government Infant Class Size grant, which recognised the accommodation pressures being faced by the school due to increased pupil numbers.
27. As noted previously schemes that were unsuccessful in the first round can be resubmitted. The resubmitted scheme would seek to build a new 420 place primary +90 place nursery school and could cost in the region of £8m based on Welsh Government's benchmark construction costs and Building Bulletin 99: building framework for primary school projects. Actual costs will be dependent on the agreed final scope of works and prevailing market conditions.
28. The scheme would seek to provide room for the anticipated growth in the Welsh-medium primary sector in the south of the county borough. Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Rhos Afan currently has 314 full time and 78 part time nursery pupils on roll (2021 PLASC). With the completion of YG Ystalyfera- Bro Dur (South), primary numbers have risen in the south with all three Welsh-medium schools now experiencing significant accommodation pressures.
29. With the addition of the recently completed new extension (funded through the Welsh Government Infant Class Size capital grant) Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Rhosafan has gained some 'breathing space' but if Foundation Phase numbers continue to grow then the school will need to expand further.

Starter School provision at Skewen

30. As noted previously WM pupil numbers in the south are rising year on year. Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn cannot accommodate any extra pupils in nursery or reception, classes at both schools are already full. Modelling work on expanding WM provision suggests that the Skewen area is a good location for creating a new WM school. 123 pupils in both schools currently attend from the catchment areas of Abbey, Coedffranc and Crymlyn – the largest numbers outside of the local area of each school.
31. This scheme would see the current Abbey Primary School junior site refurbished and adapted to accommodate a new Welsh-medium starter school and Welsh-medium childcare provision. Abbey Primary pupils and staff are due to move into a new 21st century school building in May 2022, ideally this new Welsh-medium starter school provision would open in September 2022 to avoid leaving the vacated building empty for a lengthy period of time. This would allow nursery and reception aged children in the Skewen area to access Welsh-medium education in their local area.
32. The starter school could transition into the proposed new build school planned as part of a Section 106 planning agreement at Coed Darcy, however to date there has been no confirmation from developers of when the new build will be delivered, and clearly the school will not open in time to alleviate the current pressures in the area due to increased pupil numbers.
33. Based on Welsh Government's standardised costs for a "medium" refurbishment, an initial budget calculation of up to £1.8M has been identified for necessary works with the cost of an additional childcare setting being estimated in the region of £500k. Actual costs will of course be dependent on the agreed final scope of works and prevailing market conditions.
34. Statutory processes are necessary to establish a new school. While a detailed proposal is yet to be developed it is expected that the proposal

would see nursery and reception pupils occupying the school (ideally in September 2022) with additional year groups being added year on year until the school is either full or Coed Darcy new build is available, in which case it is probable that the school will then transfer to that site.

35. Additional revenue costs for the proposed school would be needed; it is anticipated that approx. £300k in the first year will be required to staff and operate the school. An application for this additional revenue funding (for 2 years) will be submitted along with the capital grant funding bid.
36. It is anticipated that all pupils would be within walking distance of the new school with some exceptions for pupils from the Coed Darcy/Crymlyn area. This will be explored further should the application be successful.

Remodelling of Additional Learning Needs Provision at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Trebannws

37. Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Trebannws is situated in the Swansea Valley and currently has 84 full-time and (18 part-time nursery) pupils on roll. The school also has a Learning Support Centre (LSC) with places for 8 pupils
38. The LSC supports pupils with statements of Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and is currently accessed mainly by pupils from the English -medium sector.
39. This scheme involves improvement works to the school to facilitate the development of a new Welsh-medium LSC. Additionally it would seek to create a new Welsh-medium childcare provision and improved foundation phase facilities
40. Based on Welsh Government's standardised costs for a "medium" refurbishment, an initial budget calculation of up to £1.5M has been identified for necessary works. Actual costs will be dependent on the agreed final scope of works and prevailing market conditions.

41. Statutory processes are required to establish a new LSC provision. A detailed proposal is yet to be fully developed but it is expected that the establishment of the proposed new LSC will be a gradual process, ensuring steady transition from an English-medium provision, to a bilingual provision and eventually to a fully Welsh-medium provision.
42. The proposed scheme will ensure that the buildings are fit for purpose and will be able to facilitate good teaching and learning opportunities to meet the needs of the children who will eventually be placed there.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan

43. The above proposals contribute towards the Neath Port Talbot Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032 (WESP) which sets a clear strategic direction for the development of Welsh medium education and provision within the local authority. It includes strategic aims, objectives and targets for the various phases in education and training in Wales, and emphasises the importance of improving effective planning for Welsh-medium education. The above proposals directly impact the targets and aims set out in Outcome 1, 2 and 6 and will contribute towards achieving all other targets set out in the WESP.
44. The proposals will also play a critical role in achieving the targets set out in the Neath Port Talbot Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and will directly impact Strategic Priority 1 by significantly increasing the number of young people educated through the medium of Welsh or bilingually, in order to create more Welsh speakers.

Financial Impact

45. Successful bids will be 100% funded by the Welsh Government Capital Grant.
46. The combined total of capital funding to be requested is estimated to be £11.3m for the three proposed schemes.

47. Additional revenue costs will be incurred if a new starter school is to be established. It is estimated that this will amount to £300k per annum and an application for this additional revenue funding (for 2 years) will be submitted along with the capital grant funding bid.
48. All schemes will involve statutory processes, requiring further Cabinet board reports, with consultation and objection periods. Should the grant funding applications be successful then more detailed work will be undertaken on each scheme and Member approval sought before any commitment to creating the additional provision is made.

Integrated Impact Assessment

49. A first stage integrated 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.
50. The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required. A summary is included below.
51. This report seeks approval to submit a bid for grant funding. The submission outlines possible schemes for consideration and following the application a decision will be made on which schemes will be successful. Further details will then be required by Welsh Government in order to make a final decision on whether to award grant funding or not.
52. If an award is made for any or all of the proposed projects then more detailed work on each of the successful schemes will be needed. It may be necessary to undergo statutory processes which will be more specific to the individual scheme and which will require member approval. At this point further screening for possible impacts will be needed

Valley Communities Impacts

53. There are no impacts on valley communities as result of this report.

Workforce impacts

54. There are no workforce impacts as a result of this report. Successful applications that require statutory processes will undergo further assessment and any impact will be reported to Members as part of the process.

Legal impacts

55. Welsh Government's Welsh Medium Capital Grant Funding is granted subject to specific conditions.

56. Where required statutory processes will be undertaken in line with the School Organisation Code 2018.

57. Procurement of contractors will be in line with the South West Wales Regional Contractors Framework.

Risk Management Impacts

58. Failure to submit an expression of interest will mean that the opportunity to benefit from the grant funding will be lost. This will have a detrimental effect on the Council's plans to develop the Welsh language and risk failure in achieving the aims of the WESP.

Consultation

59. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item. Successful applications that require statutory processes will be subject to external consultation in line with the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018.

Recommendation

60. It is recommended that Members approve the submission of an expression of interest application to Welsh Government for Increasing Welsh Medium Provision Capital Grant funding (2022 – 2026).

Reasons for proposed decision

61. This decision is necessary to ensure that the Council has the opportunity to benefit from the available Welsh- medium capital grant funding to increase and enhance Welsh-medium provision in the county borough.

Implementation of the decision

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

Appendices

Appendix A: First Stage Integrated Impact Assessment

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