

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board

19 January 2022

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, LEISURE AND LIFELONG LEARNING – A.THOMAS

MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED: Briton Ferry West, Coedffranc Central, Coedffranc North, Coedffranc West, Dyffryn, Neath North

STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NEW WELSH-MEDIUM PRIMARY SCHOOL IN NEATH ABBEY

Purpose of report

1. To obtain approval to consult on a proposal to establish a new Welsh –medium primary school at St John’s Terrace, Neath Abbey, Neath, SA10 7ND

Executive summary

2. Neath Port Talbot’s draft WESP 2022-32, is the cornerstone for the Council’s vision for increasing and improving the planning of the provision of Welsh medium education in Neath Port Talbot, to enable all learners to develop their Welsh language skills and to use the language confidently in everyday life.
3. The overarching ten year target in Neath Port Talbot is to increase the number of Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh from 16.8% (252 pupils) in 2020/21 (PLASC 2021) to 31% (460 pupils) by 2032.

4. In recent years pupil numbers in the Neath Abbey, Skewen and Crymlyn areas have risen with the result that both the English-medium schools in those areas and the Welsh-medium schools that admit pupils from those areas are facing accommodation pressures. New housing developments in Crymlyn and Coed Darcy in particular have contributed to the increase in pupil numbers, as well as increased numbers of families moving into the area.
5. Modelling work on expanding Welsh- medium provision suggests that the Neath Abbey area is a good location for creating a new Welsh-medium school.
6. This proposal would seek to establish a Welsh-medium starter primary school in premises previously occupied by Abbey Primary School at St John's Terrace, Neath Abbey, Neath, SA10 7ND which occupy a prominent position off the A4230 between Neath Abbey and Skewen.
7. The Council have recently submitted an expression of interest to Welsh Government for specific Welsh-medium capital funding to support an exciting project that aspires to refurbish, re-model, and adapt the existing buildings at the St John's Terrace site to establish a new Welsh-medium starter school including a 45 place nursery and a 12 place childcare setting.
8. It is proposed that a new Welsh-medium starter school would open for part time nursery pupils in January 2023 with the first cohort of full time reception pupils expected to attend the new school from September 2023.

Background

9. The Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education. Having the right schools in the right place and ensuring that they are fit for the 21st century learner is the challenge facing the Council. Achieving this will involve reviewing the number and type of schools

the Council has in its area and assessing whether or not best use is being made of resources and facilities.

10. 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.
11. The Council has determined to review its provision on the basis of:
 - educational standards
 - the need for places and the accessibility of schools
 - the quality and suitability of school accommodation
 - effective financial management
12. Neath Port Talbot currently has nine Welsh-medium primary schools, and one Welsh-medium middle (3-18) school over two sites, one at the north in Ystalyfera and one in the south in Sandfields/Baglan. Three of the nine primary schools are situated in the south of Neath Port Talbot – Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Rhos Afan in Sandfields, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd in Neath centre and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle’r Ynn in Briton Ferry. All three schools have seen an increase in pupil numbers and are facing accommodation pressures. The numbers of pupils choosing Welsh-medium in the south of the county borough has seen an increase year on year.

Table 1

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
YGG Castell-nedd	364	356	360	359	362	384	387	405	415	419	417
YGG Rhosafan	339	366	355	354	361	360	360	359	365	381	392
YGG Tyle’r Ynn	211	219	218	218	230	239	236	227	226	230	258
Total	914	941	933	931	953	983	983	991	1006	1030	1065

13. Welsh-medium education is an integral and essential part of the learning offer in Neath Port Talbot and all children should benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and understand their lives through the medium of Welsh. This principle is underpinned by ensuring universal access to this provision across the county borough. Neath Port Talbot Council recognises that language and culture are critical parts of an individual's identity and is committed to

promoting and celebrating Welsh language learning across all phases and sectors.

14. Neath Port Talbot's draft WESP 2022-32, is the cornerstone for the Council's vision for increasing and improving the planning of the provision of Welsh medium education in Neath Port Talbot, to enable all learners to develop their Welsh language skills and to use the language confidently in everyday life. It both complements and assists in facilitating the National vision for the Welsh language, to have 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050:

The year 2050: The Welsh language is thriving, the number of speakers has reached a million, and it is used in every aspect of life. Among those who do not speak Welsh there is goodwill and a sense of ownership towards the language and a recognition by all of its contribution to the culture, society, and economy of Wales. Our vision is to secure favourable circumstances throughout the country that support language acquisition and use of Welsh language skills. We want to see an increase in language transmission in the family, early introduction of Welsh to every child, an education system that provides Welsh language skills for all

Cymraeg 2050 – A million Welsh speakers (Welsh Government, 2017)

15. The overarching ten year target in Neath Port Talbot is to increase the number of Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh from 16.8% (252 pupils) in 2020/21 (PLASC 2021) to 31% (460 pupils) by 2032.

Current Situation

16. In recent years pupil numbers in the Neath Abbey, Skewen and Crymlyn areas have risen with the result that both the English-medium schools in those areas and the Welsh-medium schools that admit pupils from those areas are facing accommodation pressures. New housing developments in Crymlyn and Coed Darcy in particular have contributed to the increase in pupil numbers, as well as increased numbers of families moving into the area.

17. Modelling work on expanding Welsh- medium provision suggests that the Neath Abbey area is a good location for creating a new Welsh-medium school.
18. Currently, 125 pupils from Neath Abbey, Skewen, Llandarcy and Jersey Marine travel to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn to access Welsh-medium education, from nursery to year 6, shown below in tables 2 and 3. Approximately 50 pupils from Neath Port Talbot also attend Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon-las which is a Welsh-medium school in the City and County of Swansea, approximately 3.5 miles from the location of the proposed new school.

Table 2

English-medium School Catchment Areas	YGG Castell Nedd									
	N2	N1	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Abbey Primary School	1	4	5	0	3	2	1	3	6	25
Coedffranc Primary School	1	5	6	7	5	3	3	4	2	36
Crymlyn Primary School	0	0	1	3	3	2	2	1	2	14
Total	2	9	12	10	11	7	6	8	10	75

Table 3

English -medium School Catchment Areas	YGG Tyle'r Ynn									
	N2	N1	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Abbey Primary School	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
Coedffranc Primary School	0	5	3	8	3	3	4	6	7	39
Crymlyn Primary School	0	3	2	0	0	1	0	1	1	8
Total	0	9	5	8	3	6	4	8	8	50

19. It is anticipated therefore that locating a new Welsh-medium school in this area will alleviate the capacity issues in both Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn (nearly or at full capacity) and will further stimulate demand for Welsh-medium education provision in the area.

The proposal

20. This proposal would seek to establish a Welsh-medium starter primary school in premises previously occupied by Abbey Primary

School at St John's Terrace, Neath Abbey, Neath, SA10 7ND which occupy a prominent position off the A4230 between Neath Abbey and Skewen.

21. Abbey Primary School currently operates between three separate sites and the school is due to relocate to a brand new build single site school at Heol Penlan in the Longford area of Neath during March 2022.
22. The Council have recently submitted an expression of interest to Welsh Government for specific Welsh-medium capital funding to support an exciting project that aspires to refurbish, re-model, and adapt the existing buildings at the St John's Terrace site to establish a new Welsh-medium starter school including a 45 place nursery and a 12 place childcare setting.
23. A decision from Welsh Government on whether the expression of interest for capital grant funding is successful is expected early in 2022.
24. It is proposed that a new Welsh-medium starter school would open for part time nursery pupils in January 2023 with the first cohort of full time reception pupils expected to attend the new school from September 2023.
25. The new school would provide for up to 210 full-time primary age pupils and 45 part-time nursery age pupils by September 2029. This will deliver sufficient accommodation for the total combined forecasted pupil numbers, including potential growth in pupil population.
26. The admission arrangements will be in line with the Council's approved admission arrangements for primary schools. For the purpose of consultation, the proposed admission number for primary phase education is 30.
27. The proposed new Welsh-medium school will serve the combined catchment areas of Crymlyn, Coedffranc and Abbey primary schools, making it easier for parents to easily understand their Welsh-medium and English-medium choices, and is a change to the current situation where pupils in this area attend either Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd or Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn for Welsh-

medium education. Approximately 50 pupils from the Skewen area also attend Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon-las which is a Welsh-medium school in the City and County of Swansea, approximately 3.5 miles from the location of the proposed new school.

28. It is anticipated that the majority of pupils attending will live within a two mile radius of the proposed new school, ensuring that Welsh medium education is available within their local area. Current data indicates that of the 125 pupils who currently travel from the area to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn, 117 live within a 2 mile radius of the proposed new school site.
29. A starter school model is considered the most appropriate solution for new Welsh-medium schools. Whilst demand is growing for Welsh-medium education, opening the school immediately to all year groups could destabilise other schools across the authority and could adversely affect the ability to support effective provision.

- **What is a starter school?**

30. A starter school is a model that can be used when establishing a new school to allow the facilities and staff to be used efficiently while the school grows to its full potential. The school opens initially with only Nursery class, and a year group is then added each academic year until the first reception cohort reaches Year 6.
31. During the *first* year of the starter school opening, one mainstream class will be in operation as follows
 - A **nursery class** where up to **45 part-time** places will be offered over either a morning or afternoon session;
32. In the *second* year, the starter school will consist of:
 - A **nursery class** where up to **45 part-time** places will be offered over either a morning or afternoon session;
 - A **reception class** with a maximum of **30** places;
33. In the *third* year, the school will consist of:
 - A **nursery class** where up to **45 part-time** places will be offered over either a morning or afternoon session;

- **A reception class** with a maximum of **30** places;
 - **A Year 1 class** with a maximum of **30** places;
34. In the years following, each new reception year group will have a maximum of 30 places. Full capacity of the school will be realised in September 2029 when all year groups will operate under a one-form entry arrangement.
35. The table below shows an example of the starter model of growth for a one form-entry school.

Table 4

Available Places by Academic Year							
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Nursery (January)	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
Reception (September)	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Year 1		30	30	30	30	30	30
Year 2			30	30	30	30	30
Year 3				30	30	30	30
Year 4					30	30	30
Year 5						30	30
Year 6							30

- **What are the benefits of a starter school?**
 - The school capacity grows as demand increases;
 - Stable growth to support existing schools;
 - Reduces the possibility of mass movement of pupils from other schools;
 - Effectively manages class sizes to support staffing and the school budget;
 - Pupils living outside the school catchment area can still apply for a place at the school and if places are available may be successful.
- **What are the disadvantages of a starter school?**
 - Takes a number of years to deliver growth
 - Possible implications for siblings with changing catchments;
 - Possible implications for families moving to Neath Port Talbot with different aged children due to changing catchments;

Childcare provision

36. The proposal includes the intention to incorporate a new Welsh-medium childcare setting on the school site, to offer pre-school and

wraparound care for children through the medium of Welsh. This would increase the total childcare provision across Neath Port Talbot through the creation of 12 additional places and will have a positive impact on Welsh-medium education through stimulated demand.

37. The nearest Welsh-medium childcare provision is some distance away in Neath and a new setting in the proposed new school would ensure that families from the area are offered greater choice and flexibility, and will also support parents to opt for a Welsh medium school for their children, as well as helping to develop early Welsh language speaking and listening skills in preschool children.

Details of the Schools affected by this proposal

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd

38. Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd is a Welsh-medium community school serving boys and girls aged 3-11 years. It is situated in the town of Neath approx. 2 miles from the possible site of the proposed new school.

- **Pupil Numbers**

39. As at January 2021 there were 320 full-time and 97 part-time (nursery) pupils on roll. With the physical capacity to accommodate 340 full-time and 65 part-time (nursery) pupils per session, the school has a surplus capacity of 5.88% (20 full-time pupil places). Forecasts, based on current school admission trends, from January 2021 to January 2022 suggest a slight increase in pupil numbers.

Table 5

<i>Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd</i>				
		<i>Jan 2021</i>		<i>Jan 2022</i>
	School capacity	Actual Pupil Numbers	Surplus places	Projected Pupil Numbers
<i>Full-time</i>	340	320	20 (5.88%)	331
<i>Part-time (Nursery)</i>	65 (per Session)	97 (total of both current sessions)	33 (25.38%)	86

The table below shows pupil numbers over a 5 year period:

Table 6

<i>Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd</i>						
<i>School Census Jan 2017 – 2021 + Sept. '22 roll</i>						
<i>Year</i>	17	18	19	20	21	Sept.22

<i>Pupil numbers</i>	387	405	415	419	417	404
<i>Full Time</i>	331	339	337	336	320	350
<i>Part Time</i>	56	66	78	83	97	54

Notes:

- Capacity: Taken from 20-21 Capacities
- Actual Pupil numbers: Taken from PLASC Report 2021

- **Quality and standards in education**

40. Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd was last inspected in March 2016 and Estyn reported that it was a school with good and excellent features, awarding good judgements in the 3 inspection areas. Past judgements from the school National Categorisation System placed the school in the green support category which recognises it as an effective school which has secured good levels of learner outcomes in key performance indicators.

- **Standards**

41. Since 2020, Welsh Government do not expect returns for all statutory data collections that would have been due to take place before the school summer holidays as a result of the Covid pandemic. This includes National Data Collection (NDC) 2020 data collection and Welsh National Tests (WNT) 2020 data collection.

- **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning**

42. Wellbeing and attitudes to learning of pupils was judged to be 'good' in the recent Estyn report (March 2016) which states: 'There is a strong sense of belonging to a happy and friendly community across the school.'

Attendance has been consistent, with current data showing a percentage of 94.6% for 2019 (pre Covid data), where nearly all pupils are punctual and their parents understand the importance of regular attendance at school.

- **Teaching and Learning**

43. Estyn, in 2016, report that across Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd 'The quality of teaching is consistently good across the school, with a few elements of excellence'.

The Estyn report states that 'Teachers question probingly in order to develop previous knowledge and extend pupils' understanding' and 'have a sound understanding of the Literacy and Numeracy

Framework and they introduce new information and skills clearly, and model high standards of language.'

- ***Care, Support and Guidance***

44. Estyn also reported that care, support and guidance were good, noting that the Headteacher has established effective arrangements to support pupils' health and wellbeing. This has improved pupils' wellbeing very effectively.

Estyn also report that there is a wide range of valuable provision to meet the needs of pupils who have additional needs.

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd has skilled teaching assistants providing high quality care and support to ensure that pupils with a range of additional needs integrate seamlessly into the daily life of the school, this led Estyn to report that, 'An effective team of teaching assistants supports the work well'.

- ***Leadership and Management***

45. In 2016, Estyn judged Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd's leadership and management to be good with excellent elements, reporting that: 'The headteacher has a clear vision which is based on developing each pupil as a whole individual '.

The most recent Estyn inspection report can be viewed at:

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection-reports>

- ***Quality of accommodation***

46. The most recent assessment of building condition of YGG Castell Nedd reports that the original main building is in relatively good condition considering its age whilst other more recently added areas including the kitchen, dining hall, two storey teaching block require limited works. The site is largely compliant with accessibility legislation although some works are still required.
47. Overall the site was graded B for condition and B for accessibility with backlog maintenance and accessibility costs being assessed at circa. £391K.
48. Continued investment at the school since the date of the last condition assessment, including the very recent installation of a brand new large modular classroom funded from Welsh

Government's Class Size Reduction Grant is expected to result in an improved situation when the assessment is next updated.

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn

49. Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn is a Welsh-medium community school serving boys and girls aged 3-11 years. It is situated in the town of Briton Ferry approx. 3.5 miles from the possible site of the proposed new school.

Pupil Numbers

50. As at January 2021 there were 200 full-time and 56 part-time (nursery) pupils on roll. With the physical capacity to accommodate 236 full-time and 34 part-time (nursery) pupils per session, the school has a surplus capacity of 15.25% (36 full-time pupil places). Forecasts, based on current school admission trends, from January 2021 to January 2022 suggest an increase in pupil numbers.

Table 7

<i>Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn</i>				
		<i>Jan 2021</i>		<i>Jan 2022</i>
	School capacity	Actual Pupil Numbers	Surplus places	Projected Pupil Numbers
<i>Full-time</i>	236	200	36 (15.25%)	208
<i>Part-time (Nursery)</i>	34 (per session)	56 (Total of both sessions)	12 (17.65%)	50

The table below shows pupil numbers over a 5 year period:

Table 8

<i>Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn</i>						
<i>School Census Jan 2017 – 2021 + Sept. '22 roll</i>						
<i>Year</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Sept.22</i>
<i>Pupil numbers</i>	236	227	226	230	256	257
<i>Full Time</i>	193	190	182	179	200	226
<i>Part Time</i>	43	37	44	51	56	31

Notes:

- Capacity: Taken from 20-21 Capacities
- Actual Pupil numbers: Taken from PLASC Report 2021

- **Quality and standards in education**

51. Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn was last inspected in May 2017 and Estyn reported that it was a school with adequate and good features, awarding adequate judgements in the 3 inspection areas.

Past judgements from the school National Categorisation System placed the school in the yellow support category in 2019-20 which recognises it as an effective school which has secured good levels of learner outcomes in key performance indicators.

- **Standards**

52. Since 2020, Welsh Government do not expect returns for all statutory data collections that would have been due to take place before the school summer holidays as a result of the Covid pandemic. This includes National Data Collection (NDC) 2020 data collection and Welsh National Tests (WNT) 2020 data collection.

- **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning**

53. Wellbeing and attitudes to learning of pupils was judged to be 'good' in the recent Estyn report (May 2017) which states: 'nearly all pupils' standards of wellbeing are consistently good within the school's caring and familial community.'

Attendance has been consistent, with current data showing a percentage of 96.2% for 2019 (pre Covid data), where nearly all pupils are punctual and their parents understand the importance of regular attendance at school.

- **Teaching and Learning**

54. Estyn, in 2017 report that across Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn 'Nearly all teachers provide interesting tasks that stimulate most pupils' interest successfully. They use appropriate teaching methods across the school, which meet the needs of most pupils suitably'.

The Estyn report states that teachers 'offer useful oral feedback to pupils in many lessons and question purposefully to reinforce learning and to develop pupils' thinking skills appropriately.'

- **Care, Support and Guidance**

55. Estyn also reported that care, support and guidance were good, noting that 'The school is a caring community in which pupils feel safe'. It also notes that 'The headteacher has a clear vision that is based on the care, support, wellbeing and satisfaction of pupils and staff'.

Estyn also report that the school has effective arrangements to address the requirements of pupils with additional learning needs.

- **Leadership and Management**

56. In 2017, Estyn judged Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn's leadership and management to be adequate with good features.

The most recent Estyn inspection report can be viewed at:

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection-reports>

- **Quality of accommodation**

57. The most recent assessment of building condition of YGG Tyle'r Ynn reports that the building is in fair condition and has received moderate investment over recent years including an extension comprising classrooms, toilets and staffroom. The site is largely compliant with accessibility legislation although some works are still required.
58. Overall the site was graded C- for condition and B for accessibility with backlog maintenance and accessibility costs being assessed at circa. £886K. The site is largely compliant with accessibility legislation although some works were still required.
59. Whilst issues were identified in a number of areas including car park, internal floor coverings, decoration as well as heating and lighting installations, many of these will have been addressed with the recent completion of a significant investment funded through the Council and Welsh Government's Welsh-medium Capital Grant that has also resulted in the delivery of a brand new nursery and community room.
60. The recently completed works mentioned above are expected to result in an improved situation when the condition assessment is next updated.

Other schools potentially affected by the proposal

61. **Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur, South Campus**, Seaway Parade, Port Talbot, SA12 7EQ, will be indirectly affected by the proposal. This school is not a subject of the proposal, however the number of pupils expected to progress to Year 7 admission for this school will be greater from September 2030 than the current admission number. The south campus currently has the capacity for 650 11-16 year old pupils who transition into the school from the current three Welsh-medium primary school in the south and is anticipated to reach full capacity by 2028. Further consideration will

therefore be needed to ensure sufficient capacity within the Welsh-medium secondary phase in the near future.

62. **Abbey Primary School, St John’s Terrace, Neath Abbey, SA10 7ND,**
Coedffranc Primary School, Stanley Road, Skewen, SA10 6LP
Crymlyn Primary School, School Road, Jersey Marine, SA10 6JJ

These schools could also be indirectly affected by the proposal, as the proposed new starter school will be the Welsh-medium primary school for the three catchment areas. Coedffranc Primary school is also within close proximity to the proposed new school. There is therefore a possibility that the number of applications for nursery and reception places at the three English- medium primary schools will be reduced as a result of the starter Welsh-medium school.

63. However the starter model of growth is expected to minimise the likelihood and impact of this risk by limiting the availability of additional pupil places in older year groups. It is also the case that the three schools are over or nearing their capacity, each one demonstrating consistent increased pupil numbers in the last 5 years (table 9) and pupil numbers continue to grow in the area. Therefore it is anticipated that there will be little impact in the early years of the school opening.

Table 9

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Abbey Primary	389	405	425	440	455
Coedffranc Primary	385	392	396	400	418
Crymlyn Primary	59	56	70	87	113

64. **Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon-las, Heol Walters, Llansamlet, Swansea SA7 9RW** could also be potentially affected by this proposal. Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon-las is a Welsh-medium school in the City and County of Swansea, approximately 3.5 miles from the location of the proposed new school. Currently 50 pupils from Neath Port Talbot attend there and potentially live within the proposed catchment area of the new starter school. There is therefore a possibility that in the future pupil numbers at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon-las might be affected if parents living in Neath Port Talbot opt to send their children to the new school instead of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon-las in the future. However it is likely that for many pupils living on the borders between Swansea and Neath Port Talbot, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon-las would be

nearer than the proposed new school, and would therefore likely remain as the first Welsh-medium school of choice for pupils in that area.

Impact on Pupils and Parents

65. The proposed new school will offer the opportunity for pupils to access Welsh-medium education in their immediate area rather than travelling to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd or Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn. It is anticipated that this will prove to be attractive to many parents in the area and that interest in the Welsh language will therefore grow.
66. The additional benefit of an onsite childcare provision will also support parents and may help and encourage those who do not speak Welsh to opt for a Welsh medium school for their children, as well as helping to develop early Welsh language speaking and listening skills in preschool children.
67. Parents of children who currently attend Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn from the Neath Abbey and surrounding areas will not be affected by this proposal as their children will remain in their current schools. Younger siblings (preschool or nursery age) will be able to access the proposed new school and parents/carers will be encouraged to take advantage of the more local provision.
68. Pupils and parents from Neath centre, Briton Ferry and surrounding areas will also benefit from the proposal as Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn will, should this proposal be approved, have capacity to admit more pupils from their immediate areas and will be able to avoid the possibility of catchment pupils being refused a place at their nearest suitable school.

Impact on Governors

69. A temporary governing body will be established prior to the opening of the proposed new school. The temporary governing body will take important decisions about the new school including the appointment of a head teacher, agreeing a staffing structure and adopting operating procedures and agreeing a name for the school. The temporary governing body will also resolve other issues including

school uniform which, in line with good practice, will be determined following consultation with parents and if possible with pupils.

70. The temporary governing body is expected to include existing governors from Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn with the aim of ensuring good working relationships between the three schools, and to ensure that the good practice currently evidenced in the two schools is shared and developed into the new school.

Impact on travel Arrangements

71. It is anticipated that the majority of pupils attending will live within a two mile radius of the proposed new school, ensuring that Welsh medium education is available within their immediate local area. Current data indicates that of the 125 pupils who currently travel from the area to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn, 117 live within a 2 mile radius of the proposed new school site.
72. Support with home to school travel will be made available in line with the Council's Home to School Transport policy. This means that primary school aged pupils living 2 miles or more from their nearest suitable or designated school will be considered for transport assistance.
73. Under the School Travel Plan requirements, all schools, together with the Council's Road Safety Team, are committed to:
 - improving road safety within the local community
 - raising awareness about travel issues
 - encouraging walking, cycling and public transport for the school journey where applicable
 - encouraging independent travel where applicable.

Financial Impact

74. Applications for grant funding have been submitted to assist with additional capital and revenue costs for identified projects through the 21st century schools programme, including this proposal.
75. Based on Welsh Government's standardised costs for a "medium" refurbishment, an initial budget calculation of up to £2.43M has been

identified for necessary works to refurbish, re-model, and adapt the existing Abbey Primary junior site buildings to establish the proposed new school and childcare provision.

76. Additional revenue costs for two years for the proposed starter school are estimated at £652,651, based on the current costs of teaching and support staff required to operate a starter school at the point of opening. Two year revenue costs for the new childcare setting have been estimated at £16,000, based on similar provision within Neath Port Talbot, and an application for an additional revenue support grant has been submitted along with the Welsh medium grant funding bid.
77. 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.
78. Most of the revenue budget allocation to schools is generated by pupil numbers. Therefore the proposed new school budget will be based mainly on the pupil roll, and as the pupil numbers grow the budget will also increase. Based on a school of 210 full time pupils and 45 part time nursery places the projected budget share for the proposed new school is estimated to be approx. £957k when the school is fully occupied.
79. Transport costs are unlikely to be affected by this proposal as while it is expected that pupils attending the proposed new school will no longer require transport, the current buses will still be required to transport pupils to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn from other areas, although it is possible that smaller vehicles could be used, or routes could be combined so less vehicles are needed.

Integrated Impact Assessment

80. A first stage Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) 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, and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 the Environment (Wales) Act 2016).

81. The first stage screening assessment is attached as appendix A. This indicates that the proposal is likely to have an impact on pupils, staff and other potential users of the new school. The proposal may also impact on opportunities to use the Welsh language.
82. Members should note that work on the IIA is an ongoing process and following full consultation where views of all stakeholders will be gathered, greater information will be available which will further help to inform the full assessment.
83. A fully completed IIA will be put before members prior to any final decision being taken on whether or not the proposal is to be implemented. The impact on different protected groups, together with the three equality needs to which members must have regard will be set out in the IIA.
84. As part of the IIA the impact on the proposal on people's opportunities to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English will also be fully assessed.
85. As this proposal relates to the establishment of a Welsh-medium school, the School Organisation Code specifies that a Welsh Language Impact Assessment must be undertaken, and this will also be developed through the consultation process for presentation to Members before the final decision is taken on whether the proposal should be implemented.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and impact on Welsh Language

86. Welsh-medium education is an integral and essential part of the learning offer in Neath Port Talbot. We believe that all children should benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and shape their lives through the medium of Welsh. The local authority underpins this principle by committing to enabling all learners to benefit from its universal access to this provision.
87. Our statutory education system also has a vital role to play in increasing the number of Welsh speakers as highlighted by Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy. In order to achieve our goals, we must significantly increase the number of school learners who have the opportunity to develop Welsh-language skills in all settings and thus use it in their everyday lives.

88. Welsh Government have set a target for Neath Port Talbot to increase the number of learners accessing Welsh-medium education of between 17% and 27% over a 10 year period. This target is based on increasing the number of Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh from 16.8% (252 pupils) in 2020/21 (PLASC 2021) to 31% (460 pupils) by 2032.
89. In order to reach our target of an increase of 208 pupils by the end of the 10 year plan, we will aim to establish 3 new Welsh-medium schools within Neath Port Talbot. The first of the 3 schools is the subject of this proposal, a new single form entry starter school in Neath Abbey area subject to member approval and compliance with the extant criteria of the Schools' Organisation Code.

Valley Communities Impacts

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

Workforce impacts

91. This proposal seeks to establish a new Welsh-medium school and as such any workforce impacts are positive, as new teaching and support staff would be required for the new school.
92. There is a risk that pupil numbers at existing schools that could be affected by this proposal could reduce, leading to possible job losses. This is not anticipated in the early years of the school opening as numbers in the catchment areas have demonstrated significant growth which is predicted to continue. However if this was to be the case then staff from the Welsh-medium schools or who have the appropriate Welsh language skills in the English-medium schools could transfer to the new school, where additional staff would be needed.
93. The draft Welsh in Education Plan outlines the need for additional staff with appropriate Welsh language skills across Neath Port Talbot in future years and how training and development needs will be identified and addressed. It is expected that staff in the current English-medium schools in this area may wish to develop Welsh language skills in the future enabling them to also transfer to the new school if they should wish to do so and if the pupil numbers grow as expected.

Legal impacts

94. The School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (the Act) provides the legislative framework by which the Council may implement a proposal. The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, November 2018, made under Sections 38 and 39 of the Act, imposes on the Council requirements and guidelines on matters relating to school organisation. The Council's procedures are in line with legislative requirements.
95. 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, 2017.
96. 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.

Risk Management Impacts

97. A risk assessment has been carried out under the Council's Risk Management Policy 2018.
98. The potential risks associated with the proposal comprise the Council's reputation, educational standards, financial management, staff employment and service delivery.
99. Potential risk areas in implementing the proposal include:
 - forecasted pupil numbers do not materialise
 - the demand for Welsh-medium places is not as high as expected
 - current Welsh-medium schools pupil numbers reduce
 - increased staff anxiety in current schools affected by the proposal
 - resistance to change leading to lack of pupil, parent and staff support
 - educational standards not maintained
 - 21st Century School capital funding opportunity not realised
 - the development of Welsh in the early years is not realised due to no available, suitable site for a childcare provision
 - budget allocation insufficient to meet needs

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

- progress towards the Welsh in Education Plan targets of increasing the number of Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh to 31% (460 pupils) by 2032
- increasing the numbers of primary aged pupils accessing Welsh-medium provision within their immediate area
- allowing further growth in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn from their local areas
- creating school places for a growing population in the Neath Abbey, Skewen and Crymlyn areas
- avoiding increased transport costs as a result of having to transport children across Neath Port Talbot to access suitable provision due to nearest suitable schools being full
- onsite childcare provision to support parents and encourage those who do not speak Welsh to opt for a Welsh medium school for their children, helping to develop early Welsh language speaking and listening skills in preschool children

101. The benefits of implementing the proposal will mitigate the effects of identified risks. A new Welsh-medium school in Neath Abbey will ensure progress towards the targets of increased numbers of pupils taught through the medium of Welsh as outlined in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, and will enable existing Welsh-medium schools to continue to grow and flourish with pupils from their local areas.

102. The full risk assessment is attached to this report as appendix B.

Consultation

103. This school organisation proposal is being brought forward under the Council's Strategic School Improvement Programme. Formal consultation is required in line with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, November 2018, which specifies the procedures to be followed, including the content of the consultation document and those to be consulted.

104. Subject to approval, it is intended to consult on this proposal between 25th January and 8th March 2022 - see timeframe below. Responses

to the consultation will be reported to Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet board for consideration by Members in June 2022.

105. If, following consideration of the responses, members decide to progress the proposal then a 28 day period will follow for the submission of objections.

Publication of consultation document	25 th January 2022
Period for submitting responses	25 th January 2022- 8 th March 2022
Consultation report published	June 2022
Proposed implementation date	9 th January 2023

106. Information on the proposal and the consultation document will be available on line on the Council's website and also on the websites of the affected schools. Hard copies will also be available on request.

107. All consultees, as directed by the Code will be sent the Consultation document via email. The Council's social media channels will also contain information on how to access the consultation document.

108. Consultation responses can also be submitted using the Consultation Portal on the Council's web page, or by email to SSIP@npt.gov.uk , or in writing.

109. Due to the ongoing public health situation there will be no face-to-face consultation events arranged for this consultation. Questions concerning the proposal can be submitted to SSIP@npt.gov.uk .

Recommendation

110. Having given due regard to the impact assessments in relation to equality, risk, community usage and Welsh language, and to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales 2015), together with the legal implications, it is recommended that, in line with Section 48 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, Members approve consultation on the proposal to establish a new Welsh –medium primary school at St John's Terrace, Neath Abbey, Neath, SA10 7ND

111. If approved the proposed date of implementation to be 9th January 2023

Reasons for proposed decision

112. This decision is necessary to comply with the consultation requirements imposed upon the council by Section 84 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the WESP (Wales) Regulations 2019.

Implementation of the decision

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

Appendices

Appendix A: Integrated Impact Assessment First Stage

Appendix B: Risk Assessment

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