

# **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Cabinet**  
**29<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

**DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION,  
LEISURE AND LIFELONG LEARNING  
ANDREW 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 publish a proposal to establish a new Welsh – medium primary school at St John’s Terrace, Neath Abbey, Neath, SA10 7ND
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 document (appendix E) and the Cabinet report of 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022 (appendix F)

## **Executive summary**

4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Modelling work on expanding Welsh- medium provision suggests that the Neath Abbey area is a good location for creating a new Welsh-medium school.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Consultation on this proposal took place from 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022 to 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

11. 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 will be published on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022

## **Background**

12. 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.
13. 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.
14. 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
15. 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

16. 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.
17. 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)**

18. 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

19. 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.
20. Modelling work on expanding Welsh- medium provision suggests that the Neath Abbey area is a good location for creating a new Welsh-medium school.
21. 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

22. 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

23. 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.
24. Abbey Primary School currently operates between three separate sites and the school has relocated to a brand new build single site school at Heol Penlan in the Longford area of Neath during April 2022.
25. 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.
26. 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.

27. An application to Welsh Government for grant funding to completely refurbish and modernise the building was unsuccessful, however it is intended that work will be undertaken to adapt the building to make it suitable for childcare and younger primary aged children. Work will include fully refurbishing the two toilet facilities in the main building (new toilets, hand basins, cubicles flooring etc.), remodelling classrooms to ensure that they are suitable for delivering the new curriculum, new flooring to the reception area and corridors and upgrading the school hall. A complete mechanical and electrical upgrade will be made in order to facilitate learning walls and digital equipment. External works including new fencing will also be completed. It is estimated that these works would cost approx. £200k and will be funded from the education capital maintenance budget.
28. 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.
29. 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.
30. 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.
31. 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?**

32. 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.

33. 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;

34. 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;

35. 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;

36. 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.

37. 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**

38. 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.
39. 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.

## **Consultation**

40. 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.

41. The consultation period ran from 25th January 2022 to 8th March 2022. The consultation document was made available by e-mail to consultees. It was also available on the Council's website. Hard copies were available on request.
42. Responses to the consultation were submitted by email, 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.

43. In total 47 responses were received

Online responses	44
Emails	3
Paper forms/letter	0

44. In total 28 consultees supported the proposal recognising the need for an additional Welsh-medium school in the area, the linguistic benefits to the community and the vision of making Welsh-medium education accessible to all.
45. 19 consultees raised concerns relating to the traffic management of the proposed site and age of the current building.
46. 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.
47. The Consultation Report contains details of comments received with officer responses and is attached as Appendix A.

### **Impact on Pupils and Parents**

48. 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.

49. 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.
50. 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.
51. 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**

52. 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.
53. 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**

54. 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.
55. 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.
56. 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**

57. An application for Welsh Government grant funding to completely refurbish and modernise the building was unsuccessful, however works will continue to adapt the building to make it suitable for childcare and younger primary aged children.
58. Work will include fully refurbishing the two toilet facilities in the main building (new toilets, hand basins, cubicles flooring etc.), remodelling the classrooms to ensure that they are suitable for delivering the new curriculum, new flooring to the reception area and corridors and upgrading the school hall. A complete mechanical and electrical upgrade will be made in order to facilitate learning walls and digital equipment. External works including new fencing will also be completed. It is estimated that these works will cost approx. £200k and will be funded from the education capital maintenance budget.

59. 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.
60. Revenue costs for the first three months of opening are estimated to be £107,086, which includes costs for a Headteacher from November 2022, to enable the necessary preparations to be made for the school to open for pupils in January 2023.
61. Revenue costs for the first full year of opening are estimated to be £319k, based on the current costs of teaching and support staff required to operate a starter school at the point of opening and the current running costs of the building plus an inflationary uplift.
62. Additional revenue costs associated with the opening of the new welsh medium starter school can be met from existing resources within the current financial year. Recurring revenue costs for future financial years will need to be factored into the work associated with the development of the medium term financial plan as there is currently no provision for opening of additional schools within the delegated schools budget quantum. As such the revenue costs for the new starter school represents a pressure on Council resources and additional funding will need to be secured to operate the school successfully.
63. Once the starter school is in operation the budget allocation for the school will come from the annual overall Schools Budget quantum. The school will receive an annual budget share allocation, using the same budget formula methodology as every other primary school within the authority. The school will need to operate within the financial constraints of its annual schools budget, the same as every other school.
64. 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.

65. 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**

66. An 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).
67. The IIA is attached as appendix C. 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. Members are asked to consider the same as part of any decision making.

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

68. 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.
69. 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.
70. 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.

71. 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.

### **Welsh Language Impact Assessment**

72. Overall the proposal is expected to have many positive impacts on the Welsh language. The proposal will support the council's 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 and will also provide the opportunity to increase the numbers of primary aged pupils accessing Welsh-medium provision within their immediate area.
73. The proposal should allow further growth in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn from their local areas at the same time as creating school places for a growing population in the Neath Abbey, Skewen and Crymlyn areas.
74. Additionally onsite childcare provision should 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.
75. To further improve the positive impacts the council will ensure that the new school, if approved, will be publicised to raise awareness with prospective parents, with the aim of ensuring that there is a growing Welsh speaking pupil population in the area.
76. Negative impacts on the language identified by consultees could occur if pupil numbers at in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn do not increase as expected. It is unlikely that overall pupil numbers in Neath Port Talbot would not increase with the introduction of a new school, however it is recognised that the current schools may need additional support to

ensure that the recent rise in pupil numbers continues. It will be necessary to ensure that additional support is provided and that these schools are also publicised in their local areas. Additional building work has already taken place at both schools to increase the capacity and to improve the learning environments.

77. Admission arrangements will need to ensure that new pupils are not 'swapping' between schools and that catchment areas are adhered to as much as possible while still allowing for parental choice. The proposal to open the starter school one year group at a time will prevent sudden destabilisation of the current schools as children who are already attending will not be able to move into the new school, as only nursery pupils will be able to apply.
78. The Welsh Language Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix B and members are requested to consider the same as part of decision making.

### **Valley Communities Impacts**

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

### **Workforce impacts**

80. 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.
81. 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.
82. 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**

83. 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.
84. 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.
85. 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**

86. A risk assessment has been carried out under the Council's Risk Management Policy 2018.
87. The potential risks associated with the proposal comprise the Council's reputation, educational standards, financial management, staff employment and service delivery.
88. 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
89. 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
90. 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.
91. The full risk assessment is attached to this report as appendix D.

## **Recommendation**

92. Having given due regard to the impact assessments in relation to equality, risk and Welsh language, and to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales 2015), together with the legal implications, it is recommended that,

(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 a new Welsh –medium primary school at St John’s Terrace, Neath Abbey, Neath, SA10 7ND

(b) The proposed date of implementation to be 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023.

(c) Notice of the proposal to be published on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022, 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**

93. 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 G. 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**

94. The decision is proposed for immediate implementation following consultation with the chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A: Consultation report

Appendix B: Welsh Language Impact Assessment

Appendix C: Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix D: Risk Assessment

Appendix E: Consultation Document

Appendix F: Cabinet Board report January 2022

Appendix G: Draft Statutory Notice

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