

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet
19th April 2023

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

MATTER FOR DECISION

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

STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN ENGLISH- MEDIUM 3-11 SCHOOL TO REPLACE ALLTWEN, GODRE'RGRAIG AND LLANGIWG PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Purpose of report

1. To seek approval to publish a proposal to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist Learning Support Centre (LSC) for 16 pupils with a statement of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwg Primary, all of which will be discontinued ¹on 31st August 2025.
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. The purpose of this report is therefore not to make a final decision of discontinuing Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary

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

and Llangiwg Primary, but to decide whether to progress to the stage of statutory publication.

3. This Cabinet report needs to be read in conjunction with the consultation report (appendix A), the consultation documents and the Cabinet report of 30th November 2022 along with the various appendices to this report.
4. A draft statutory notice is included at Appendix E .

Executive summary

5. The Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education. This will involve reviewing the number and type of schools the Council has in its area and assessing whether or not best use is being made of resources and facilities in order to ensure future provision is sustainable.
6. Neath Port Talbot 's 21st Century Schools Band B Strategic Outline Plan (in January 2022, Welsh Government renamed this programme to Sustainable Communities for Learning) included a proposal for a new build 3-16 middle school, however following informal discussions with stakeholders it was decided that the scheme should be amended.
7. It is proposed therefore to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist learning support centre, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwg Primary, all of which will close on 31st August 2025.
8. It is proposed that the new school will be built on land in Council ownership at Parc Ynysderw, Pontardawe and that it will form part of a learning, health and wellbeing community campus made up of Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe Leisure Centre. The campus will be further enhanced by the addition of a new build swimming pool on the site to complement the current health and wellbeing offer for pupils and the wider community.
9. The new build will be funded jointly from Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme capital grant monies and from the Council's prudential borrowing capacity. Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme capital grant funding has been approved in principle.

10. At its meeting of 30th November 2022 Cabinet approved consultation on a proposal to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist LSC, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwg Primary, all of which would be discontinued on 31st August 2025. Members will of course note the reasoning for commencing this consultation, which is included in the aforementioned papers of the 30th November 2022 and explained further below.
11. The consultation document invited views and opinions to be submitted in respect of the proposal. The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code requires the Council to consult on its proposal and to publish a consultation report summarising any issues raised by consultees, the Council's response to those issues and Estyn's view of the overall merit of the proposal. This report was published on 4th April 2023.

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 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.
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 Council's 21st Century Schools Band B (now Sustainable Communities for Learning) proposal submitted to Welsh Government included a project for a new build school in the Swansea Valley. The initial plans were to establish an 'English-medium, 'all-through' 3-16 school with capacity for 1284 pupils aged 11-16 and 750 pupils aged 3-11 (incl. Nursery), and would require the closure of Alltwen, Godre'rgraig, Llangiwg and Rhydyfro primary schools with education for the pupils being provided at a whole new (primary phase) build on the site of the existing Cwmtawe Comprehensive school'.
16. Informal consultation took place in March 2019 with local ward Members for the Swansea Valley area along with the AM and MP for Neath Constituency, headteachers and Chairs of Governors for all of the Neath Port Talbot schools in the area - Welsh and English-medium, primary and secondary.
17. Additional scoping work was undertaken, alongside a review of the number of pupils residing in the Swansea Valley area which made it necessary to reconsider the original planned scheme.
18. As a result of the informal consultation and the scoping review, the original scheme was amended to become a new build English-medium school for 630 full time and 140 part time nursery pupils aged 3-11 with a specialist learning support centre, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwg Primary.
19. On 20th October 2021, following a thorough consultation process in line with the Welsh Governments School Organisation Code 2018, the Council's Cabinet at that time approved the proposal to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist Learning Support Centre (LSC) for 16 pupils with a statement of special educational needs relating to Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwg Primary.
20. In January 2022, the Council received notification that the decision was to be challenged by a Welsh- medium education parents group. The challenge was brought on three grounds including that a Welsh Language Impact Assessment should have been consulted upon at the same time as the school consultation. The judgement was

received in October 2022 and the judge found in favour of the applicant on one of the three grounds.

21. Furthermore in June 2022 the new Rainbow Coalition administration at Neath Port Talbot Council indicated that it wished to review the decision taken in respect of the Swansea Valley school reorganisation proposal.

The Proposal

22. It is proposed to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist learning support centre, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwg primary, all of which will close on 31st August 2025.
23. It is proposed that the new school will be built on land in Council ownership at Parc Ynysderw, Pontardawe and that it will form part of learning, health and wellbeing community campus made up of Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe Leisure Centre. The campus will be further enhanced by the addition of a new build 25 metre, 6-lane swimming pool with additional learner pool on the site, to complement the current health and wellbeing offer for pupils and the wider community.
24. The new English-medium community primary school for boys and girls aged 3-11 years will accommodate 630 full-time pupils and 140 part-time (70 a.m./70 p.m.) nursery age pupils. It will be managed with one head teacher and one governing body and will have one budget allocation and one group of staff.
25. The new school will serve the combined catchment areas of Alltwen, Llangiwg and Godre'rgraig primary schools. Pupils from the three existing schools will automatically transfer to the new school subject to parental preference.
26. The new school will provide primary education for children aged 3-11 in a new build 21st century facility which will provide a stimulating teaching and learning environment in state of the art facilities .
27. Additionally the new school will provide support for pupils through the establishment of an LSC for 16 pupils with a statement of ASD. It will provide the opportunity for the proposed school to become a

community hub for the area, building on the work already being undertaken by other well established primary school LSCs.

28. The new build will be funded jointly from Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme capital grant monies and from the Council's prudential borrowing capacity.
29. The scheme will also include a new build 25 metre 6 lane swimming pool with additional learner pool, to further enhance the physical activity and wellbeing opportunities for pupils who currently attend Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwig primary schools and Cwmtawe Community School, as well as pupils attending nearby YGG Trebannws and YGG Pontardawe.
30. Furthermore, the facilities will provide sustainable opportunities for swimming curriculum development for potentially 2500 pupils aged 3-16 in the nearby communities. The swimming pool will complement the current school and community facilities on site to deliver a 21st century health and wellbeing offer for pupils aged 0-16 and for wider community use, making it a sustainable delivery model.
31. The combined new build school, specialist ASD provision and pool will form part of a learning, health and wellbeing community campus at the Parc Ynysderw site, complementing the existing Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe Leisure Centre provision. In locating the new build facilities close to Cwmtawe Community School the development will enable pupils and staff from both schools to benefit from increased partnership working, made easier due to their close proximity.

Consultation

32. 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.
33. Consultation on this proposal commenced on 5th December 2022 and closed on 7th February 2023. The consultation document was made available by e-mail to consultees, with the schools managing

distribution to their school communities. It was also available on the Council’s website. Hard copies were available on request.

- 34. A pupil version of the consultation document was also made available to schools to distribute as appropriate.
- 35. Responses to the consultation were submitted by email, post and via the Council’s online consultation portal. Details of how to respond were included in the consultation document and links to the online consultation portal were included on the website and on the Council’s social media channels.

Consultation meetings

- 36. During the consultation period, face-to-face meetings were held with staff, governors and parents to answer questions and clarify aspects of the proposal.
- 37. Meetings were held as follows

Table 1

	Alltwen	Godre’rgraig	Llangiwig
Pupils	Tuesday 17th January 1pm	Wednesday 18 th January 1pm	Monday 16th January 1 pm
Staff	Tuesday 10th January 3.30pm	Monday 9th January 3.30pm	Thursday 12th January 3.30pm
Governing Body	Tuesday 10th January 4.30pm	Monday 9th January 4.30pm	Thursday 12th January 4.30pm
Parents	Tuesday 17th January 2-4pm	Wednesday 18th January 2-4pm	Monday 16th January 2-4 pm

- 38. Two public meetings were also held, in person at Cwmtawe Community School on Monday 30th January, and online on Wednesday 1st February.
- 39. Meetings were also held with pupils of Alltwen, Godre’rgraig and Llangiwig primary schools to gather their views on the proposal. Notes of the comments made and officer responses given at the pupil meetings are included in the consultation report.
- 40. It should be recognised that the notes of the meetings reflect the officers’ understanding of the views expressed and, as such, may not wholly capture the substance of individual comments made and queries raised. In this respect and to support the consultation

process, at each meeting pupils were also reminded to submit their comments in writing if they so wished.

Consultation Responses

Online responses	482
Emails	114
Paper forms/letter	23
In total	619

41. Additionally Alltwen Primary School pupils completed consultation forms in school with their teachers, key stage 2 pupils completed individual forms and Foundation Phase pupils completed whole class responses, totalling 127 responses. 70 pupils from YGG Pontardawe pupils also completed individual consultation forms in school with staff.

42. Including these, the responses totalled 816:

Against the proposal	576
In support of the proposal	201
Unsure	39
Total	816

43. It should be noted that a number of the online responses submitted both for and against the proposal, were identical or similar in content. Online responders were not required to leave names or email addresses, so it is not possible to know whether responses were from separate individuals or from one person submitting a response repeatedly. It is also the case that some respondents submitted both an online response and an email response. It has not been possible to cross-reference every response but it would appear that those noted are relatively small in number and not significant enough to suggest that the overall outcome would be different, so all responses have been counted and included for member consideration. All points raised in the consultation responses are included in the report and are responded to accordingly.

44. 16 standard responses from different individuals were returned by email stating

I object to the proposal of the merging of Godre'rgraig, Llangwig and Alltwen primary schools on the Ynysderw playing fields. I feel it is not in the interest of the pupils, the community, the infrastructure or the welsh language. Please register this as my objection to the current consultation. I would prefer new funding applications to be submitted in which the 21st Century schools funding is used to ensure that Godre'graig School remains in the north of the valley to maintain English medium choice there and for Alltwen and Llangiwg to be enhanced and upgraded in their current locations.

45. Although a count of the responses is shown below, no particular weight is given to the number received as it is the views expressed and issues raised which informed the consultation report.

Table 2

Pupils	238	Prospective parents	46
Parents/Carers	201	Members of the Community	258
Staff	10	Others	36
Governors	12	Councillors	2

Additionally the following responses were also received.

Table 3

Governing Bodies x5 (Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary schools, YGG Trebannws and YGG Pontardawe)	RhAG
Pontardawe Town Council	Tŷ'r Gwrhyd
Community Councils x 2 (Cilybebyll and Ystalyfera)	Menter Iaith

ESTYN	MS Sioned Williams
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46. Copies of all written responses are made available to members on the Members Hub or for paper responses in the members' room at Port Talbot Civic Centre, prior to the meeting of the Council's Cabinet at which the proposal and consultation report will be considered.
47. Members are reminded that comments should be conscientiously considered in an open-minded approach, alongside the case put forward for publication of the proposal. In deciding whether to publish the proposal, Members must read and give due regard to the proposal as consulted upon and the comments received together with officer comments.
48. The consultation report has been made available to those required by the Code, including responders who requested a copy, with the latter being contacted by email advising of the link to the report on the Council's website.

Consultation – summary responses

49. A summary of the comments received in support of and against the proposal are noted below
50. In support of the proposal -
 - **Education** – purpose built facilities will improve standards and opportunities; less age groups in one class; opportunities to use the comprehensive school science and technology facilities; better access to sports facilities and more specialist teachers; new technology and modern facilities;
 - **Pupil wellbeing** – great opportunities for sport and outdoor activities; will enhance physical and mental wellbeing in the valley for generations to come; ASD pupils will have specialist teaching in purpose built facilities and this will make a massive difference to them; will provide a safe environment for children

- **ALN** - the inclusion of the LSC is welcomed; ALN pupils shouldn't have to travel long distances to access provision; purpose built facilities will be better for pupils;
- **Traffic** – current parking and access is problematic at (current) school and is dangerous for adults and children; traffic at Parc Ynysderw is a concern and must be addressed
- **Parc Ynysderw and Leisure Amenities** -availability of playing fields and leisure facilities on site would be beneficial for pupils; great facilities for the community
- **Community Impact** – better facilities for the community; provide an opportunity for the whole community to experience a much-needed new facility
- **Finance** – investment in these outdated buildings would be false economy; invest to give our children a fighting chance; proposal makes effective and efficient use of resources

51. Against the proposal -

- **Education** – the proposed new school would not be able to provide as good or better education than the current schools; new build facilities do not mean better standards;
- **Pupil wellbeing** – larger schools do not/cannot provide the same nurture and care as smaller schools; pupils would be negatively impacted by the proposal;
- **Size of school** – larger schools offer poorer educational standards and experiences for pupils; too many pupils in one school leads to lack of attention and larger classes with less staff; pupils are unlikely to make friends
- **ALN provision** – the provision is too small and doesn't account for the children already in the schools; more should be done to support pupils with ALN generally
- **Traffic management** – the proposal will create chaos around Parc Ynysderw; the situation is already very bad and this will make it worse
- **Transport** - This proposal prevents pupils walking to school and increases congestion and pollution; there are no suitable walking routes; it is not acceptable for pupils to travel on a bus; nursery pupils will be negatively impacted because they are not eligible for transport
- **Parc Ynysderw and Leisure Amenities** – the fields will be lost causing a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of users and community as whole; the pool should not be included in the proposal, this is about education not leisure;

- **Community impact** – removing the schools from their communities will have a negative impact; schools are the life of the community; there will be nowhere else for community events to take place;
- **Pupil numbers** – the pupil numbers don't make sense; the school is too big for the pupils in the current schools so another school will have to close;
- **Finance** – cost estimates for the new build school are out of date and are therefore misleading; the current schools can be refurbished or remodelled in order to provide 21st century learning environments and this would be a cheaper or more cost effective option than the proposed scheme; per pupil funding figures in the consultation document are based on notional pupil numbers not actuals so estimated efficiencies were misleading; backlog maintenance should be addressed – this is a cheaper option.
- **Impact on the Welsh language** – a new build English–medium school will be more attractive to parents and so pupil numbers in the current Welsh-medium schools will decrease; such a large school will negatively impact on the language in the Pontardawe area;

52. A number of alternative suggestions were also received; these, along with officer responses to the comments received, are summarised below. Members should also read the fuller responses set out in the consultation report.

Officer responses:

Quality and Standards of education

53. Quality of leadership is the most important factor to impact on raising standards in schools. However, a significant amount of research has been undertaken to demonstrate how new, well planned, purpose built facilities can have significant impacts on the educational experiences of pupils and staff leading to improvements in teaching and learning, and consequently to raised standards and improved pupil outcomes.

54. Estyn in their response to the consultation note that 'The proposals are likely to have a positive impact on provision for primary aged pupils in the area. New facilities will probably provide benefits for pupils' wellbeing and improve curriculum delivery. Additional provision through a learning support centre should benefit primary aged pupils with ASD. A new swimming pool is likely to enhance provision for health and wellbeing in the area.'

55. In recent years, a number of new schools have opened in Neath Port Talbot, to accommodate both primary and secondary pupils. Contrary to comments received during the consultation none of the new schools are 'failing', it is the case that Estyn inspections, local authority monitoring visits and reviews have found that the additional facilities available and improved conditions for teaching and learning have had a positive impact on pupils, parents, staff and the community.

Estyn reports are available online at
<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection-reports>

Pupil wellbeing

56. There is no reason to assume that this proposal would impact negatively on pupil wellbeing and no evidence has been provided to support this view in response to the consultation.
57. Estyn in their response to the consultation state 'It is noted that pupils will benefit from a stimulating teaching and learning environment in a state of the art building. This should impact positively on the self-esteem and wellbeing of pupils'

Size of school

58. There is no available evidence to suggest that the size of the pupil population in a school will impact negatively on standards or on the teaching and learning experience of pupils, and no evidence has been received in response to the consultation to support this view.
59. The Estyn report '**School Size and Education effectiveness**' December 2013, would suggest that in fact larger schools are better able to impact on standards –it states '*Curriculum provision is better in large schools*' – *this means larger schools can provide greater opportunities for teaching and learning.*' Full details including analysis of data gathered by Estyn is contained in the report.
60. Having a greater number of children of the same age group will provide more opportunities for socialisation, not less, and it is to be expected that much work will take place prior to the proposed new school opening to ensure that pupil friendships are maintained through the process.

Additional Learning Needs provision

61. Generally, comments received around the proposed provision of an LSC for 16 pupils with statements of ASD were positive and the additional places are welcomed.
62. Some comments stated that there are more than 16 pupils in the current schools with ALN so the provision of an LSC will not meet the needs of the current pupils. These comments misunderstand the proposal - the proposed LSC is not for pupils in the current schools but for pupils with more complex needs who require more specialist support than a mainstream school can provide.
63. It is often the case however that having an LSC enables specialist knowledge and experience to be shared across the school, meaning mainstream staff benefit from the expertise available and are able to adapt teaching methods to better meet the needs of ALN pupils in their mainstream classes.

Traffic Management

64. The issue of traffic in and around the Pontardawe area has been raised repeatedly during consultation and would appear to be one of the most frequent reasons for disagreeing with the proposal.
65. If progressed this proposal will be subject to the usual planning legislation. Every new school build in Neath Port Talbot is subject to rigorous highways and planning scrutiny before planning approval is granted and in many cases, as part of the scheme, significant work has led to improved traffic management and access arrangements in the area. These processes are well established and have been tried and tested over many years. It is expected that sufficient staff and visitor parking as well as parent and bus drop off areas will be a requirement of planning consent. These elements would be developed as part of the scheme and would seek to improve the current arrangements on the Parc Ynysderw site.
66. While it is recognised that traffic management on the Parc Ynysderw site is already problematic, there exists through this proposal the opportunity to improve the situation, through reconfiguration of the area within the site confines. This would be funded through the Councils 35% contribution to the £22 overall project funding.

Transport

67. Many comments have been received which state that this proposal prohibits pupils from walking to school. It should be noted however that based on data collected in 2022, both Alltwen and Llangiwg primaries already have a high percentage of pupils who travel to school by car or taxi, 65% of Alltwen Primary pupils and 70% of Llangiwg Primary pupils. The majority of Godre'rgraig pupils (70%) now travel by bus, as expected due to the increased distance to travel to the temporary site. However prior to moving to Parc Ynysderw the percentage of pupils travelling to school by car or taxi was 47%.
68. All schools in Neath Port Talbot are committed to encouraging walking and cycling to school where possible. For many of the primary aged pupils affected by this proposal the location of the new school on the site at Ynysderw remains within 2 miles travel distance for homes in the catchment area.
69. Suitable walking routes to Parc Ynysderw from Alltwen and Llangiwg catchment areas are in existence and have already been assessed.
70. Support with home to school travel will be made available in line with the Council's Home to School Travel 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.
71. Comments have been received which state that by not providing transport assistance for nursery pupils these children will be denied access to a nursery education, deemed to be particularly important in this case. Previous reorganisation schemes have also raised these concerns, however data indicates that pupils attending full time school in reception classes have also accessed nursery provision either at the school they currently attend or at another school. This has included schools where full time pupils have transport assistance, and includes schools in areas of high deprivation. It would therefore seem unlikely that this proposal would have a significant negative impact on nursery pupils.

Parc Ynysderw and Leisure Amenities

72. Many comments received relate to the Parc Ynysderw playing fields. It is important to note that there would be no loss of leisure amenities to the community as a result of this proposal – it is planned that the current playing fields would be reconfigured in an effort to ensure that

the number of fields would not be reduced, and the quality of the pitches would also be improved under this proposal.

73. It is expected that the scheme would include replacing the community changing rooms, which are in disrepair, and would relocate the children's play park on the site.
74. The proposal seeks to create a learning, health and wellbeing community campus at the Parc Ynysderw site, complementing the existing Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe Leisure Centre provision.
75. The proposal also provides an opportunity to provide a new build 25 metre, 6 lane swimming pool with additional learner pool to replace the existing Pontardawe Swimming Pool, funded under the same conditions as the new school. The primary purpose of the proposal is to provide new build educational facilities; however it is the case that this scheme provides the opportunity to also replace Pontardawe Pool through Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for learning grant funding, as part of the learning, health and wellbeing campus. Without this funding, if a community swimming pool is to remain in the area then alternative sources of funding would need to be found.

Community Impact

76. A community impact assessment has been undertaken, following the Schools Organisation Code guidelines, which has found that many community based activities and events are not reliant on the schools. Therefore, there should be no adverse effect on community activities or events if the schools were to close.
77. Additionally, it is not apparent why community activities that take place for children and young people outside of school hours and in other venues would not continue, or why children and young people who currently enjoy participating in them would not want to do so should they attend school elsewhere. Schools are open to pupils for 190 days of the year. Outside of the school day; that is, before and after school, weekends and during school holidays, pupils will be in the areas where they live and available to make use of local facilities.

Pupil Numbers

78. Concerns have been raised regarding the pupil numbers contained in the consultation document. The proposed new school will be built to

accommodate 630 full time and 140 part time pupils. These forecasted numbers determine the size of the building and the number of classrooms and additional rooms that will need to be included in the proposed new school. This information has been included in the Business Case submitted to Welsh Government to secure the funding to build the proposed new school and has been scrutinised and approved.

79. Over the last 10 years, the number of pupils in Swansea Valley schools has increased by over 160 extra pupils, and it is expected that these numbers will continue to rise as the population continues to grow. It is also the case that a significant number of new housing developments are planned for the area, which could potentially increase numbers further.
80. There is no intention to include any other school in the proposed scheme despite comments received that other schools are to be added at a later date. Any school reorganisation plan would be subject to exactly the same procedures as the current proposal. Current legislation does not permit the ad-hoc addition or removal of schools not already named in the consultation without commencing a new statutory process.

Alternative Options

81. The consultation document contained 15 options which had been considered prior to the consultation period and which had been subsequently discounted. The full range can be seen in the consultation document. Additional options have also been submitted by consultees.
82. Responses were received which state that the backlog maintenance of Alltwn and Llangiwig primary schools should be addressed instead of the new build proposal, and that this would provide appropriate enhanced and improved educational facilities for the future.
83. The Council has followed strict Welsh Government guidance and methodology in assessing condition grades, backlog maintenance and accessibility costs of the schools involved in this proposal thus ensuring a consistency of approach across Welsh schools, and the condition report for Pontardawe Swimming Pool was undertaken by an independent external consultant.

84. It is important to clarify that the backlog maintenance and accessibility costs derived from the condition reports are estimates. The backlog costs are for putting the existing buildings back into repair, and do not allow for improving or upgrading which would provide schools with enhanced facilities for teaching and learning.
85. Maintaining the three schools at their present sites is not considered to be the best use of resources as that would lead to cost inefficiency and would mean that the potential benefits afforded by a new build would not be realised.
86. A significant number of responses also state that Alltwen and Llangiwg should be renovated and refurbished to the standard of a new build 21st century school, including a detailed response from Llangiwg Primary Governing Body who have submitted an alternative proposal with the intention 'to offer the very best 21st century environment within the community'. The information provided is included in the consultation responses available for members to consider.
87. While it is clear that Llangiwg Primary's alternative proposal contains some elements of a 21st century new build school, more discussions between officers and the governors would be needed to properly understand and comment on the proposal fully, which time constraints do not allow for. However, should the current proposal being consulted upon not progress and a future stand-alone proposal for Llangiwg Primary is to be considered then it would be beneficial for that discussion to take place and the viability of the governors' proposal could be further analysed at that stage.
88. However in officers' opinion, early indications are that it would be extremely challenging to achieve a 21st Century School standard utilising the existing primary school building, even with extensive refurbishment and extensions as outlined by governors. It is also noted that their proposal relies on the acquisition of two parcels of land currently not in council ownership.
89. In relation to options referring to refurbishment of Alltwen and Llangiwg Primary schools it is important to note that Welsh Government have a strict business case process that must be satisfied in order to obtain Sustainable Communities for Learning grant funding, which includes scrutiny of the strategic, economic and financial case of any proposal. Welsh Government 'Sustainable

Communities for Learning Business Case Guidance' document provides further details <https://www.gov.wales/sustainable-communities-learning-business-case-guidance>

90. The guidance also contains detailed information regarding the additional aspects that need to be met to satisfy Welsh Government, including ensuring modern construction standards for acoustics, accessibility, recycled content with new builds now expected to achieve net carbon zero in operation standard and carbon reduction, and that the requirements of the biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty are met. Projects funded through Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme are also expected to optimise the use of infrastructure and resources, to deliver facilities that can be used by communities.
91. It is the case that both existing schools are compromised in terms of their building suitability for 21st Century teaching and learning, and fall short of many of the internal and external space standards and requirements as set out within Building Bulletin 99 that would ordinarily be expected in a brand new 21st Century school. The complexities of ensuring that a robust business case can be developed and approved, with the likely significant additional costs of creating three 21st century schools to the required standards, would be extremely challenging.
92. Options have also been considered which suggest alternative sites for a new school. Extensive desktop work has been undertaken on all identified potential sites across the area and all but two have been ruled out for a range of reasons, including being too small, at risk of flooding, previous mine workings, contaminated land and land of ecological value. Of the remaining two sites Parc Ynysderw is the preferable site and is the only site which will support the development of a learning, health and wellbeing campus.
93. Should this proposal not be approved then an alternative solution would need to be found for Godre'rgraig Primary. A number of responses focus on the possibility of a new school just for Godre'rgraig Primary pupils in or near to Godre'rgraig.
94. The only feasible site available is Gnoll Road. However as noted in the consultation document this site is a very difficult one to develop due to the site being identified as high risk area for coal workings, and partly within a flood zone (lower end).

95. Contamination of the land is also noted, so the site would require full investigation and standard conditions. The site is also noted to be outside settlement limits and in a prominent position in open countryside which could pose planning approval difficulties.
96. The location of the site leads to a challenging gradient, and bends close down the area of visibility, making the current access road unsafe and unsuitable; work to address this would need to take up significant amounts of land into the site to address TAN 18 requirements. There are also currently no suitable pedestrian footway links to the site.
97. In response to consultation comments, an independent feasibility study has been undertaken which details the type of work that would be needed to establish a new build, one form entry, primary school on the site. This provides more detail around the challenges of the site and identifies indicative costs as circa. £17m.

Financial impact

98. Following the submission of a detailed business case, Welsh Government 21st Century Schools Programme (now Sustainable Communities for Learning) capital grant funding has been approved subject to conditions.
99. The Council is required to meet 35% of the cost, with the remaining 65% funded by Welsh Government. The Council's contribution will be funded from efficiencies within the delegated schools budgets, and the reduction in running costs as a result of closing the three schools, detailed within the report. These cost efficiencies will enable the Council to prudentially borrow to fund its 35% element of the capital bill. The cost of the new build is estimated at c. £22,705,000 apportioned as per table 4 below.

Table 4

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

100. The approved funding has been awarded for the current proposal and any change to that proposal would require a new business case

to be submitted to Welsh Government. This has been confirmed in writing.

101. Consultation comments have been received which suggest that as costs have risen in the 2 years since the business case was approved, a new business case should now be submitted. This is not the case – the business case approval has been obtained and the £22.7m identified for the scheme is secure.
102. As with all schemes across Wales rising costs have meant that projects have had to be revisited, and decisions taken around either increasing the budget or reviewing the costs. Welsh Government are aware of the problems faced by local authorities in delivering schemes at the current time and have indicated that they are open to discussions around additional funding requirements. At the present time it is broadly anticipated that the additional costs needed to complete this project would be in the region of 25%-30% above the initial cost estimates (i.e. £29,555,552 – an estimated difference of £6,850,552).
103. Comments have also been received which suggest a better use of public money would be to address the backlog maintenance issues at the existing schools and swimming pool. Total backlog maintenance and accessibility costs for Alltwen and Llangiwg primary schools and the swimming pool amount to circa. £3.1m.
104. The Council currently spends circa £1.2m each year of its own capital funding to address maintenance needs on schools and there are many competing priorities each year. Given the current financial situation, it is not realistic to expect a huge influx or redistribution of finances in the foreseeable future.
105. With this in mind if the Council only addressed the notional £1.9m of Alltwen and Llangiwg primary school backlog maintenance costs then that alone would exhaust all of the capital resources currently allocated to cover repairs and backlog maintenance pressures across the whole of the school portfolio for almost three years.
106. Comments have also been received which express the notion that the current schools can be refurbished or remodelled in order to provide 21st century learning environments and that this would be a cheaper or more cost effective option than the proposed scheme.

107. Using Welsh Government standard 2024 where Heavy Refurbishment cost/m² = £2,851, it is possible to estimate notional costs.
108. Heavy Refurbishment Investment includes significant structural alterations and may also include the replacement of facades and roof finishes. The complete renewal of internal fittings, finishes, and Mechanical and Electrical systems. The building is typically unoccupied. Extension of economic life is approximately 15 - 30 years. Works include strip out of existing space, shell and core refurbishment including cosmetic upgrades. Replacement to raised floors, ceilings and new services.
109. Calculations have been carried out for Alltwen Primary based on a heavy refurbishment for the main teaching block, new build replacement for the existing demountable classrooms and an allowance for IT and Furniture Fittings and Equipment (FFE), based on pupils on roll at January 2022. Total notional/estimated costs are circa £4.1m.
110. Calculations for Llangiwg Primary, based on heavy refurbishment for main teaching block, new build nursery classroom on main site, and an allowance for IT and FFE based on pupils on roll at January 2022. Total notional/estimated costs are circa £3.2m.
111. Godre'rgraig Primary does not have a permanent building to be able to compare costs. Total notional costs therefore for both schools amount to circa. £7.3m for partial rebuild and refurbishment.
112. It should be noted however that -
- The calculations do not allow for any additional pupils, only pupils currently on roll. This is less than the current school capacities and less than would be desirable due to the number of catchment pupils attending other schools who can claim a place, i.e. both schools would need to be bigger than these calculations allow for.
 - No costs have been identified for the hire of temporary buildings to house pupils during any programming of works. Alltwen and Llangiwg primary pupils and staff would need to vacate for an extended period of time (possibly a full academic year). There are major financial and logistical implications associated with the hire of temporary accommodation and pupil transportation all of which would be "lost" money. It would also be necessary to identify a location for the pupils

to be relocated to as neither site could be developed with pupils in situ.

- The calculations do not allow for any transformational work to provide enhanced teaching and learning facilities, either indoors or outdoors, and so would effectively be providing more or less the same as currently exists.
- No account has been taken of Godre'rgraig Primary's need for a new build, which will need to be factored into the overall notional/estimated costs, or if not an option then even more additional space would be needed at the other schools to allow for Godre'rgraig Primary pupils to be dispersed.
- It should also be noted that there are many other schools in Neath Port Talbot in a similar or more urgent situation in relation to backlog maintenance, accessibility and the ability to successfully meet the demands of 21st century teaching and learning, and which therefore may be more of a priority than either Alltwen or Llangiwg primaries for this type of scheme.

113. Estimated costs for a new build primary in Godre'rgraig amount to circ. £17m due to the various challenge and constraints that exist in the area, as noted previously.

114. Overall, the notion of refurbishment or remodelling of the current schools, with or without a new build Godre'rgraig primary, does not represent better value for money than the current proposal; it would not deliver the expected benefits of the proposed new build school at Parc Ynysderw; it would not provide the additional enhanced facilities that would be provided on Parc Ynysderw (including direct access to playing fields, leisure facilities and the pool as well as improved opportunities for transition work with Cwmtawe Community School); it is likely that any such scheme would not attract funding for a new pool, and it would cause significantly more disruption to the individual schools over a longer period of time for ultimately a poorer educational offer than the proposed scheme.

115. Without Welsh Government funding, any alternative proposal that revolved around maintaining all three existing schools and the pool in their current locations would mean that the Council would have to meet 100% of any associated capital costs.

116. Comments have been received which state that per pupil funding calculations contained in the consultation document are misleading. To clarify - 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.
117. Most of the revenue budget allocation to Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary schools is generated by pupil numbers. Similarly, the new primary school's budget will be based mainly on the combined pupil roll. Efficiencies will be secured as the new school will have one head teacher and one management structure. Revenue savings will be re-invested in the education budget. In this regard, the proposal supports the Council's management of its education budget and promotes the more equitable distribution of funding across local schools.
118. Based on the funding delegated to schools in the 2022/2023 financial year, per pupil funding for Alltwen Primary school is £4,006 whilst for Llangiwg Primary school per pupil funding is £4,561 and for Godre'rgraig Primary school £ 4,206. This compares with the average for NPT primary schools at £4,272.
119. Based on a school of 770 pupils (700 F.T.E) the projected budget share for the proposed new school is estimated to be in 2022/23 = £2,556,487. Per pupil funding for the proposed new school would be approximately £3,652.
120. Based on a school for 397(FTE) –this would be the numbers on roll at the three schools at the time of calculations – the projected budget share for the proposed new school is estimated to be in 2022/23 = £1,567,819. Per pupil funding for the proposed new school would be £3,949.
121. Per Pupil Funding is calculated by the annual schools specific budget share divided by the full year effect of pupil numbers; larger schools can benefit from economies of scale meaning they can be more cost effective, and can be more flexible - the more pupils in a school, the more money will be available for the head teacher and governing body to be able to resource the school both with staff and physical resources.
122. Prior to the proposed new primary school opening on 1st September 2025 Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg primary schools will receive

their annual school budget shares for the 5/12^{ths} of the financial year 2024/2025. When the new school opens on 1st September 2025 it will receive a budget share based on the number of pupils on roll at that time.

123. The proposed new school will receive additional funding to manage the LSC provision for up to 16 pupils. Meeting the special needs education of pupils in local settings, i.e. within the County Borough, avoids having to secure expensive out-of-county provision. The cost of providing education outside the County Borough for pupils with specialist needs is high, and can amount to circa. £80k per pupil per year. This annually presents a significant demand on the Council's education budget.
124. Additional recurring revenue costs may be incurred; similarly there will be revenue efficiency savings associated with this proposal.
125. Additional transport costs are likely to be incurred should the proposal be implemented. Currently annual transport costs for Godre'rgraig Primary School amount to £101,245. It was agreed when Godre'rgraig Primary School moved from Graig Road to the temporary location at Parc Ynysderw that nursery pupils would be granted discretionary transport assistance, this cost is included in the above figure. In terms of additional pupils requiring transport as a change of school raises the number of pupils with entitlement for every minibus the average cost is £150 - £200 per day; alternatively for every coach the average cost is £220 - £260 per day. It is not yet known how many children will be entitled to transport.
126. Any capital receipt resulting from future sale of the current school or pool sites has not been included in the business case approved by Welsh Government for the proposal, although the Council has previously resolved to re-invest any monies received from the sale of school premises that become surplus to operational requirements as a result of its Strategic School Improvement Programme, into the Education budget.

Welsh language Impact

127. Whilst these proposals directly affect English-medium school provision, there is also a potential effect (that may be positive, negative or neutral) on Welsh-medium schools in the county, which has also been considered.

128. This is due not only to Welsh Government regulations on Education provision, but also considerations under a range of other statutory duties identified in this assessment, and in particular due to the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, further details of which are set out in Appendix B
129. The Welsh Language Standards that stem from the Measure require policy decisions of any kind to be assessed as to their effect on the Welsh language in the policy and/or geographic area in question. Those same policy-making standards apply to both Welsh Government and Neath Port Talbot County Council.
130. A council's policy framework is an interlinked set of documents, and in the same way, an impact assessment's contents are interlinked and cannot be regarded section by section in isolation, but as a cumulative whole. Even when driven by a primary policy or legislative requirement, other policies and legislative requirements have to be acknowledged and considered, even if they do not ultimately change the final decision that is made. Accordingly, members are required to consider all factors as part of decision making.
131. A Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIA) has been undertaken, and is included as Appendix B to this document. The WLIA recognises that there may be negative and positive impacts as a result of this proposal on the development of the Welsh language in the community and on Welsh-medium schools in the area.
132. The Council has considered the possible impacts of the proposal on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. Potential impacts are highlighted along with proposed actions to mitigate against possible negative impacts, as well as identifying additional steps to reinforce positive impacts.
133. Comments have been received which state that a new English-medium school will negatively impact on the Welsh-medium schools in the locality and that pupil numbers will drop in Welsh-medium schools.
134. The suggestion that the condition of the building and available facilities are a more important factor than the language medium of education when parents are choosing a school for their children is

debatable. Data reveals that new build English-medium schools in Neath Port Talbot which have opened in the last 10 years have had no significant impact on nearby Welsh-medium schools.

135. A number of comments have been received which specifically relate to the concern that the proposal will damage the development of the Welsh language in the area.
136. Mitigating actions that have been considered include establishing a local Swansea Valley working group to consider thematic issues e.g. marketing Welsh-medium education, community involvement and Welsh-language opportunities within the community. Further actions refer to close and effective engagement with Menter Iaith, Urdd and Tŷ'r Gwrhyd to provide opportunities to promote the benefits of the Welsh language within the community and ensuring provision and promotion of learning opportunities for non-Welsh speaking learners, parents / carers and grandparents or those who are hesitant in the language in order to raise their confidence and assist with their children's education.
137. Specific actions will be further supported by targets outlined in Neath Port Talbot's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, with specific reference to Outcome 5.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan

138. Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 requires Local Authorities to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). Neath Port Talbot's WESP details the plan to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools, both Welsh and English medium, and in the wider communities, and planning for future growth. The plan details how further development will be secured over the next 10 years, January 2022 - January 2032.
139. The 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 one million Welsh speakers by 2050.

140. The plan has been developed through close working with partners including Neath Port Talbot schools, Menter Iaith, RhAG, Muddiad Meithrin, Neath Port Talbot College, Academi Hywel Dda Swansea University, the Urdd and with Welsh Government.
141. The draft WESP was submitted to Welsh Government ministers following approval by full Council on 2nd February 2022. In May 2022, in line with Section 85(5)(a) of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 ("the 2013 Act"), Welsh Government consulted with officers regarding modifications to the plan. Following further discussions the majority of modifications were agreed and the WESP was amended. Formal approval of the WESP was then granted by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language in July 2022, and Council approval was granted on September 28th 2022.

Integrated Impact Assessment

142. An Integrated impact assessment, attached at appendix C, has been undertaken. The proposal would create a new build, 21st Century School for pupils which would enhance well-being, and would provide the conditions to improve standards. The addition of an LSC for primary aged ASD pupils would address the need for additional provision in Neath Port Talbot and would seek to improve opportunities for these pupils as well as provide training and development for mainstream staff in the proposed school and the wider area. The proposed new pool would complement current provision and enhance the health and wellbeing offer for pupils and the wider community.
143. The Socio-Economic Duty (Equality Act 2010) came into force on 31 March 2021. This duty requires councils, when taking strategic decisions such as setting priorities, to consider how their decisions might help to reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage. As relevant to the Public Sector Equality Duty under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010, the proposal can be seen to have positive impacts on Age and Disability and a neutral impact on all other protected characteristics. A new build 21st Century school would impact positively on pupils from all socio economic groups, due to the significantly improved facilities provided and would also positively impact on community cohesion, and social exclusion. An

explanation of the Public Sector Equality Duty can be found at paragraphs 19-31 of Appendix D.

144. With the implementation of mitigating actions the proposal should have at least a neutral impact on biodiversity.
145. The Wellbeing of Future generations has been considered and the proposal directly supports the Council's wellbeing objectives.
146. Members are reminded that in response to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 the Council has set four strategic objectives which contribute to the seven national well-being goals that the Welsh Government requires all public bodies in Wales to contribute to, in order to achieve 'the Wales we want'.
147. The Council's well-being objectives and the supporting improvement priorities are set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. This proposal directly supports wellbeing objective – 'to ensure all children get the best start in life' through the provision of a 21st century school for current and future generations of primary aged pupils. With the inclusion of a 16 place LSC for primary aged pupils with ASD in the proposal further support for the plan is evidenced, through ensuring that pupils with ALN are also given opportunities to benefit from new purpose built facilities.
148. Through creating facilities that can be used by the community the proposal also contributes to wellbeing objective – 'all communities are thriving and sustainable'.
149. To obtain Welsh Government approval of the business plan it has been essential to ensure that community benefits are fully explored and implemented throughout the construction phase. Part of this work will ensure that local businesses are used to supply labour and materials whenever feasible, local people will benefit from employment schemes and the local economy will benefit due to an increased number of people working in the area. This contributes to well-being objective 4 - 'Working with our partners we create the conditions for more secure, well paid and green work in the area and support local people into those jobs'

Workforce impacts

School staff

150. There are potential teaching and learning benefits for staff working at a large primary school, including greater opportunity for staff development and career progression through a broader range of experiences.

151. The proposal will mean changes that impact on the employment of school staff as the existing schools will close on 31st August 2025. Upon closure, all staff will cease to be employed at their respective schools. The new school will set a new staffing structure appropriate to its needs and budget.

152. A temporary governing body will be established before the opening of the primary school. The temporary governing body will have the responsibility of appointing a head teacher. Specifically in relation to the posts of head teacher and deputy head teacher, the Council's policy is for these to be advertised nationally. Once the head teacher has been appointed that person will, together with the temporary governing body, be responsible for determining the staffing structure for the new primary school.

153. The new primary school will open on 1st September 2025 and school staff will be employed by the new governing body for the primary school (albeit appointed by the temporary governing body).

Centrally employed staff

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

Staff support

155. As part of the process all school based staff will be supported by the relevant school policies and procedures, which will include full consultation. Previous experience has shown that some staff wish to secure employment in the new school but others take the opportunity to take on new challenges elsewhere. Employees identified at risk of redundancy will be given access to the Council's prior consideration register. The Council is committed to supporting staff at risk of compulsory redundancy and has secured the support and goodwill of the teacher associations/trade unions and governing bodies across

the Council, via an employers' pledge. The Council has a good track record for supporting staff in such situations.

Legal impacts

156. Members are referred to Appendix D, which sets out in detail the relevant legislation and legal implications relating to a decision on this proposal.

157. The proposal requires the establishment and discontinuation of schools. The School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (the Act) provides the legislative framework by which the Council may implement the proposal. The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, November 2018, made under Sections 38 and 39 of the Act, imposes on the Council requirements and guidelines on matters relating to school organisation, including consultation.

158. 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.

159. 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.

160. The management of staff affected by the proposal will follow the relevant school policy and procedure requirements.

161. The legislation referred to above is available using the electronic links in the section on background papers, below.

Risk management

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

163. The potential risks associated with the proposal comprise the Council's reputation, educational standards, financial management, staff employment and service delivery.

164. Potential risk areas in implementing the proposal include:

- resistance to change leading to lack of pupil, parent and staff support

- educational standards not maintained
- less effective support for pupil well-being in a new, amalgamated school
- increased home to school travel time for some pupils
- staff anxiety about job security and new management arrangements
- loss of school identity from closure of existing establishments
- forecasted pupil numbers do not materialise
- budget allocation insufficient to meet needs
- Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning capital
- Welsh language not developed further
- negative impact on the Welsh language
- discrimination against protected characteristics
- loss of community facilities
- increased governance and staff responsibilities

165. Additionally, should the proposal progress then the Council face the risk that forecasted pupil numbers do not materialise, leading to surplus places at the new school. There is also a risk that the additional Welsh Government funding required as a result of increased costs would not be available, meaning the full cost of the additional funding required would fall to the council.

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

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

167. The benefits of implementing the proposal will mitigate the effects of identified risks. A new school provides greater prospects for improving educational attainment for pupils. Estyn (Jan 2007) reported on the performance of schools before and after moving into new buildings, stating that ageing school buildings which are in a poor state of repair cannot meet modern teaching and learning needs. The report also states that inadequate buildings make improvements in standards more challenging and that in nearly all schools with new or refurbished buildings, pupils attainment and achievement have improved and in some cases the improvement has been significant.
168. Failure to implement the proposal could result in Swansea Valley pupils not receiving the benefits of a new school; it would mean that Welsh Government funding for this scheme would not be realised and any subsequent applications for an alternative proposal is not guaranteed.
169. Additionally, if the proposal is not implemented then Godre'rgraig Primary risks a further period of time in temporary buildings while a new solution is sought for the future of the school.

Valley Communities Impact

170. The proposal for a new build school is aimed specifically at pupils and the community in the Swansea Valley, with the ambition of impacting positively on educational standards through improved teaching and learning environments, as well as improving health and wellbeing through the creation of a Learning, Health and Well-being campus, to include the proposed new school and pool, Cwmtawe Community school and the existing sport and leisure facilities.
171. While comments have been received which express the view that the communities will be negatively impacted by the closure of the schools, it is the case that a new build facility for the Swansea Valley represents a substantial investment in the area, and provides opportunities for improving education and leisure facilities for children, young people and the wider community at the present time and for future generations.
172. It is the case that the proposal would mean the permanent loss of an English-medium school in the Godre'rgraig area, as under this proposal pupils would receive their education in the proposed new

build school at Parc Ynysderw in Pontardawe. However the school building located at Graig Road has closed for safety reasons unrelated to this proposal and should this proposal not progress then any future scheme is not guaranteed to provide a new build school for Godre'rgrraig pupils in their immediate local area.

Recommendation

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

(a) In line with Section 48 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, Members approve the statutory publication of a proposal to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a LSC, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgrraig Primary and Llangiwg Primary, all of which will be discontinued on 31st August 2025.

(b) The proposed date of implementation to be 1st September 2025.

(c) Notice of the proposal to be published on 25th April 2023, 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

174. This decision is necessary to comply with the formal consultation requirements imposed on the Council by the School Organisation Code.

175. Subject to the outcome of consultation, 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

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

Appendices

Appendix A: Consultation Report

Appendix B: Welsh Language Impact Assessment

Appendix C: Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix D: Legal Impacts

Appendix E: Draft Statutory notice

List of background papers

a. Cabinet Report: October 2017

<http://moderngov.npt.gov.uk/documents/s32731/CABINET%20report%20041017.pdf>

b. Strategic School Improvement Programme Principles Paper: September 2008

[https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20080924/Agenda/\\$CAB-240908-REP-EL-KN.doc.pdf](https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20080924/Agenda/$CAB-240908-REP-EL-KN.doc.pdf)

c. Cabinet report 30th November 2022

[Final Cab report 30.11.22.pdf \(npt.gov.uk\)](#)

d. Consultation Document

[Consultation Documents – Neath Port Talbot Council \(npt.gov.uk\)](#)

e. Welsh Government - School Organisation Code: November 2018

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/school-organisation-code-second-edition.pdf>

f. School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/1/pdfs/anaw_20130001_en.pdf

g. Well-being of Future generations (Wales) Act 2015

<https://gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-wales-act-2015-guidance>

h. Learner Travel (Wales) Measure: 2008 & the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance: 2014.

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2008/2/pdfs/mwa_20080002_en.pdf

<http://gov.wales/docs/det/publications/140616-ltqg-en.pdf>

i. Home to School Travel Policy: 2017

https://www.npt.gov.uk/media/4231/npt_home_to_school_travel_policy_2017.pdf?v=20170627002146

j. Corporate Plan 2022 -2027

[Corporate Plan 2022-27 - Recover, Reset, Renew \(npt.gov.uk\)](#)

k. Sustainable communities for learning Business Case Guidance

[Sustainable Communities for Learning: business case guidance | GOV.WALES](#)

l. Estyn

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/search>

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