

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Cabinet (Special)
20th November 2023**

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

MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED: All

STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME – PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE COUNCIL’S SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING CAPITAL FUNDING PROJECTS AND REVISE THE CAPITAL SPEND PROFILE

Purpose of report

1. To obtain Member permission to seek approval from Welsh Government to amend the Council’s original Band B Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) and to update Band C SOP.

Executive summary

2. The Councils Band B Strategic Outline programme (SOP) was approved by members in October 2017 and subsequently by Welsh Government. All projects have been completed in Band B apart from Coed Darcy and Swansea Valley.
3. In November 2022 members approved the submission of the Band C SOP to Welsh Government. This has been further developed since that time and is ready for submission, with some suggested amendments detailed within the report for member approval.
4. In order to amend or replace schemes that have been previously approved it is necessary to submit a variation request to Welsh Government outlining the proposed new or amended schemes for approval.

5. This report seeks approval to submit a variation request to amend the Band B SOP and to make changes to the member approved Band C SOP before submitting to Welsh Government.

Background

6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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
9. In 2022 Welsh Government renamed the 21st Century Schools Programme to Sustainable Communities for Learning and issued updated business case guidance, which can be read following the link <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-01/sustainable-communities-for-learning-business-case-guidance-2022.pdf>
10. The guidance outlines the processes needed to access Welsh Government funding for new build schools, along with guidance for changing approved schemes.
11. The Councils Band B Strategic Outline programme (SOP) was approved by members in October 2017 and subsequently

approved by Welsh Government. All projects have been completed in Band B apart from Coed Darcy and Swansea Valley.

12. In November 2022, members approved the submission of the Band C SOP to Welsh Government. This has been further developed since that time and is ready for submission, with some amendments.

Changes to Band B SOP

12. Band B originally consisted of five projects-

- a. **Cefn Saeson Comprehensive**

A new build English-medium school for 900 pupils aged 11-16 years to replace an existing secondary school assessed as building condition category grade D.

This project was completed and occupied in 2021. The overall cost was £29.3m.

- b. **Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera – Bro Dur**

New build replacement accommodation as part of the site transformation of the north campus at Ystalyfera. This work complements the new build facilities at the school funded by Band A.

This project was completed and occupied in 2022. The overall cost was £10m.

- c. **Abbey Primary School**

A new build English-medium school for 450 pupils (incl. Nursery) on a single site to replace the existing buildings located over 3 sites.

This project was completed and occupied in 2022. The overall cost was £11m.

- d. **Ysgol Newydd (Coed Darcy)**

A new build school for 450 pupils aged 3-11 (incl. Nursery) at Coed Darcy urban village. The language medium of the school is yet to be determined. This scheme is carried over from the initial Band A submission.

This project has not progressed and at the current time it is unlikely that it will be delivered within Band B timescales. It is doubtful that

Welsh Government would allow the project to be carried over again without a guarantee that the project is likely to be delivered.

e. Ysgol Newydd Swansea Valley

A new build English-medium school in the Pontardawe area to accommodate primary age pupils as part of an 'all-through', 3-16 development involving Cwmtawe Comprehensive and four existing primary schools.

This scheme was revised in 2019 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 Llangiwig Primary. The scheme also included a new build pool on the Parc Ynysderw site, to replace the aging Pontardawe Pool.

The project was planned to be delivered in 2024 at a cost of circa. £22.7m.

13. In April 2023, Cabinet determined not to progress the Ysgol Newydd Swansea Valley proposal. As a result of this decision, the £14.7m Welsh Government funding which had been approved for this scheme is potentially available for an alternative scheme, subject to Welsh Government approval and the submission of a three stage, five case business model.
14. In July 2019, Godre'rgraig Primary was relocated from Godre'rgraig to Parc Ynysderw, adjacent to Cwmtawe Community School after geological experts found there was a potential landslide risk to the school's playground.
15. Earth Science Partnership (ESP), the experts commissioned by Neath Port Talbot Council, reported a medium level risk from a quarry spoil tip near the school after the Council asked them to extend their extensive landslide risk investigation work carried out in nearby Panteg, Ystalyfera.
16. A further report in September 2021 has revealed that the quarry tip is moving and is now noted to be 'actively unstable' meaning that it would be unsafe for staff and pupils to return to the school.

17. In December 2022, the Council's Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Cabinet Board determined that Godre'rgraig Primary school building at Graig Road should be demolished.
18. It is therefore clear that a permanent solution must be found for Godre'rgraig primary School. As such it is proposed that a replacement scheme is submitted to Welsh Government for a new build replacement school for Godre'rgraig Primary School.
19. Additionally, in July 2019 members gave approval to submit a supplementary scheme to Welsh Government for funding within the Band B envelope, for a new build special school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). Work began on further developing the scheme, however further research suggested that the original scheme would need to be amended. Since the return to school after the pandemic it has become clear that the demand for specialist places has greatly increased and it is no longer felt that a special school for SEBD pupils alone is sufficient to meet the demand, and the scheme has subsequently been revised.
20. The revised scheme involves both current special schools phased over Band B and Band C– the first phase to increase the provision at Maes Y Coed special school through a new build extension, enabling additional pupils to be admitted and avoiding costly duplication of some of the specialist facilities already in use, e.g. the Cruyff Court and the pool, as well as avoiding potential costly out of county placements. Phase two would involve replacing Ysgol Hendrefelin with a new build school on a new site, yet to be determined.
21. The special school scheme has not yet been submitted to Welsh Government, however it is proposed to now include the first phase of the revised scheme with the variation request for the Band B envelope, with phase two proposed to be included in the Band C SOP submission.
22. Finally, it is proposed to include a request for funding for a complete refurbishment of the vacated ELRS building at Reginald Street, Velindre, Port Talbot, to create a new central hub provision which will offer a range of skills based learning and vocational opportunities for pupils across Neath Port Talbot. It is planned to

expand and enhance current internal provision and promote a wide range of subjects for a more cohesive vocational learning experience for young people.

Details of the proposed amendments

Band B Replacement Scheme – Godrergraig Primary School

23. It is proposed to submit a replacement scheme to provide a new build replacement Godre'rgraig Primary school, at Gnoll Road, Godre'rgraig.
24. It is proposed that the school would be a one form entry, English-medium school and would provide education for 210 full time and 30 part time nursery pupils from the current Godre'rgraig Primary catchment area.
25. The proposed pupil numbers of 210 full time and 30 part time nursery pupils would provide the school with one classroom space per year group, and officers believe that this is the smallest size school that should be considered.
26. Gnoll Road has been identified as the only potentially feasible site available for this proposal; however it is a challenging site with many unknown factors which following further investigation could significantly contribute to abnormal costs.
27. A Feasibility Study was commissioned to ascertain whether the site would be suitable for a new build school. The study notes 'The site specific abnormalities for this site are considerable and would likely add significant cost to the overall project'. The estimated costs amount to circa. £17m.

Band B Additional Scheme – Special School Phase 1

28. It is proposed to include a scheme to build an extension to Ysgol Maes Y Coed special school, creating a purpose built facility that will allow the school to increase the number of pupils and to benefit from the specialist facilities that already exist. It is anticipated that the school will increase capacity and provide for 40 additional pupil places.
29. The current school has reached its capacity and it is not possible to admit any more pupils without compromising the provision available. The new extension will allow the school to reorganise its

provision appropriately, relieving the pressure on planned places and ensuring that the Council is able to provide specialist education for pupils within the county borough.

30. An extension will also potentially allow new pupils use of the current specialist facilities including the pool and the Cruyff Court. It will also ensure that the good standard of education provided by the leadership and staff team at Maes Y Coed can continue and be extended, and that staff will be available to advise the project team and ensure the build is equipped with the necessary equipment and facilities needed to meet the complex needs of the children and young people who require a place there.
31. Changes to pupil numbers will require a statutory proposal and a full consultation where further details will be presented to members. The current approval to consult on increasing pupil numbers at the school will be paused while additional work is undertaken to ascertain more detail around the planned places that are to be provided and a new consultation will be progressed at that time subject to member approval.

Band B Additional Scheme –Skills Centre

32. This proposal seeks to create a central hub provision which will offer a range of skills based learning and vocational opportunities for pupils all across Neath Port Talbot. It is planned to expand and enhance current internal provision and promote a wide range of subjects for a more cohesive vocational learning experience for young people.
33. A strategy to show how this can be achieved, both in the short and longer term, is currently being developed, with stakeholder involvement, and will be shared with members when completed.
34. In the first instance it is proposed to undertake a complete refurbishment of the former ELRS building at Velindre, Port Talbot to create a base for co-ordinating the development of learning pathways as well as creating multiple vocational subject environment pods, to provide on the job training.
35. This will be the first step, along with creating onsite hubs at two secondary schools (made possible through the Community

Focused Schools grant funding), at delivering an enhanced curriculum offer for young people. Further work is expected to involve provisions at all secondary and middle schools, some of which will be provided in the Band C new build schemes and some through reorganising existing provision or by providing hubs through future grant funding streams.

Changes to Band C SOP

36. In November 2022 members approved the submission to Welsh Government of the Councils Band C SOP which comprises

a. Llangatwg Comprehensive c.£30m

A replacement 11-16 Secondary school for 850 places and new 16 place Learning Support Centre (LSC). Llangatwg Comprehensive is a building condition category C- with backlog maintenance and accessibility costs amounting to approximately £6.8m. The school has significant surplus capacity. It is proposed to construct the new school on the playing fields of the existing site. On completion, the existing buildings will be demolished to make way for new playing fields, ATP and hard play areas.

b. YGG Rhosafan c.£10.2m

A replacement 3-11 Primary school for 465 places (incl. 45 place Nursery) and 16 place LSC. YGG Rhosafan is a Welsh-medium primary school located in the Sandfields area of Port Talbot and is a building condition category C- with backlog maintenance and accessibility costs amounting to approximately £1.4m. The existing school is nearing capacity and pupil numbers are projected to increase. It is proposed to replace the school with a new build 21st Century school to accommodate increased numbers of Welsh-medium pupils in the area. The replacement school will be built on the playing fields of the existing site. On completion of the new build the existing building will be demolished to make way for new playing fields, MUGA and hard play areas.

c. Tywyn Primary c.£10.8

A replacement 3-11 Primary school for 465 places (incl. 45 place Nursery) and a 48 place LSC for pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). Tywyn primary school is located in the Sandfields area of Port Talbot and is a building condition category C- with backlog

maintenance and accessibility costs amounting to approximately £2.7m. It is proposed to replace the school and LSC with a new build 21st Century school. The replacement school will be built on the playing fields of the existing site. On completion of the new build the existing building will be demolished to make way for new playing fields, MUGA and hard play areas.

d. Ysgol Gymraeg Newydd Dwyrain c.£10.2m

A new Welsh-medium 3-11 Primary school for 465 places (incl 45 place Nursery) and 16 place LSC Total 481 places. A review of Welsh-medium provision has identified the need to establish a new school in the East of the County Borough. The new school will provide for 465 pupils (including a 45 place Nursery) and incorporate a 16 place LSC. There is a need to identify a suitable area of land of approximately 24,000m² along the A48 corridor between Port Talbot Town Centre and Margam.

e. St Joseph's RC School and Sixth Form Centre and St. Joseph's Catholic Junior School c.£45m

A new build 21st Century 7-18 Middle School for 1130 places and a 16 place LSC. St Joseph's RC School and Sixth Form Centre is condition category C- with backlog maintenance and accessibility costs amounting to approximately £7.5m. St. Joseph's Catholic Junior School building is condition category C with backlog maintenance and accessibility costs amounting to approximately £470K. The replacement school would be built on the playing fields of the existing sites. On completion of the new build the existing buildings will be demolished to make way for new playing fields, ATP, MUGA and hard play areas.

Details of the proposed amendment- Band C

37. It is proposed that the new build special school scheme that was approved by members in July 2019 is amended to provide a replacement school for Ysgol Hendrefelin special school and is included as part of the Band C SOP, which is ready to be submitted to Welsh Government for approval.
38. Ysgol Hendrefelin was established in January 2015 following the amalgamation of Ysgol Hendre Special School, Velindre Community School and Bryncoch Pupil Referral Unit. Ysgol

Hendrefelin is a maintained community special school based at three sites: Bryncoch, Neath and Theodore Road and Velindre, Port Talbot. It provides for pupils aged 3-16 who have been diagnosed with moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), long term and complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD).

39. It is proposed that the new build will accommodate all pupils on one site, with well-designed facilities to ensure that each of the separate needs can be catered for through clever design and the provision of modern facilities, both indoors and outside. It is anticipated that pupil numbers will remain the same or slightly increase, but it is possible that the current planned places noted above may change to accommodate the needs of pupils at the time of the build. All changes will require statutory processes including a full consultation.

Financial Impact - Affordability of the Proposals

40. In November 2020 WG approved a revised SOP increasing the overall Band B envelope to the current £80,500,000.
41. With an intervention rate of 65.00% Welsh Government investment and 35.00% NPT investment, the funding forecast at that time indicated Welsh Government funding of £43,680,000 and NPT £23,520,000. This was based on all projects within Band B being completed.
42. The removal of the proposed Swansea Valley primary school and pool from the Band B envelop has meant that the £14.7m of Welsh Government funding is no longer allocated to a specific project and is potentially available for replacement schemes, subject to Welsh Government approval and the submission of a three stage, five case business model.
43. The three schemes proposed for inclusion in Band B would see an overall investment of £36m, with the request for Welsh Government funding in total of £24.5m. The council contribution would be £11.5m. The breakdown of projects is as follows

Project	NPT Investment	WG Investment	Total Investment
---------	----------------	---------------	------------------

Godre'rgraig Primary	5.9m	11.1m	17m
ELRS Refurbishment	3.1m	5.9m	9m
*Ysgol Maes Y Coed extension	2.5m	7.5m	10m

** Welsh Government funding of 75% applicable to special school projects, 65% for all other projects*

44. A new build Ysgol Hendrefelin, for inclusion in Band C is estimated to cost circa £17m. The grant funding intervention rate would be 75% from Welsh Government with 25% council contribution, due to the increased intervention rate allowed for special school projects.
45. Band C schemes were approved in November 2022, and as part of the Band C SOP a new build YGG Rhosfan was included at an estimated cost of £10.2m. This build will now be 100% grant funded through the successful submission to the Sustainable Schools Challenge.
46. It is therefore proposed that YGG Rhosafan is no longer submitted as part of the Band C SOP for grant funding and that Ysgol Hendrefelin replacement scheme is included instead. This will result in an estimated increase of £6.8m to the overall programme.

Integrated Impact Assessment

47. 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, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. This is attached as Appendix A to this report.
48. The IIA concludes that the proposals contained in this report should provide improved facilities and educational opportunities for children and young people, as well as supporting the development of community facilities.
49. The IIA has identified positive impacts on age and on disability and neutral on all other protected characteristics. The proposal will improve the educational provision for children and young people, both mainstream and with ALN.

50. It is expected that individual schemes will impact positively on selected communities due to the provision of enhanced community facilities and the improved learning facilities available to children and young people.
51. It is expected that the proposed schemes would have a positive impact on Welsh as they are aimed at promoting the Welsh language and supporting pupils who want to access education through the medium of Welsh.
52. This proposal directly contributes to the Council's wellbeing objective of providing the best start in life.
53. A number of the proposed schemes will require statutory processes as outlined in Welsh Government School Organisation Code 2018, meaning that additional IIAs will be undertaken, specific to each scheme.
54. Welsh language impact assessments will also be required for each scheme to satisfy the requirements of the business cases.

Valley Communities Impacts

55. There are no negative impacts identified on the Valley Communities as a result of this report, as new build schools are expected to provide improved facilities and educational opportunities for children and young people, as well as supporting the development of community facilities. Potential impacts will be assessed for each scheme in greater detail should the proposals proceed.

Workforce Impacts

56. There are no implications on the workforce as a result of this report, however there could be impacts (negative and positive) on the workforce of particular schools should the proposal proceed. Potential impacts will be assessed for each scheme as they are developed, if approved.

Legal impacts

57. There are no legal impacts as a result of this report. However should the proposal progress then the School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (the Act) provides the legislative framework by which the Council may establish a new school in a

new location, to extend existing schools or to create new schools or educational establishments.

Risk management

58. A risk assessment has been carried out under the Council's Risk Management Policy 2018.
59. The potential risks associated with this report could threaten the Council's ability to successfully achieve its strategic goals and objectives
60. Failure to secure approval to write to Welsh Government to include the schemes outline above in Band B would prevent the schemes progressing.
61. If the schemes are not included in Band B then it would not be possible to submit a business case to Welsh Government for support with funding and without such funding it is unlikely that the Council could afford to build the proposed schemes.
62. Should approval be given for officers to write to Welsh Government to request permission to include the schemes in Band B, there is a risk that these would still not be progressed due to other pressures. A further risk assessment will be required should each proposal progress.

Consultation

63. There is no requirement for external consultation at this stage. However should approval be secured then as schemes are developed it may be necessary to undergo statutory processes which would involve full consultation with stakeholders.

Recommendation

64. It is recommended that officers be given permission to seek approval from Welsh Government to request a variation of the council's Band SOP to remove the Swansea Valley scheme and include a new build Godre'rgraig primary school, an extension to Maes Y Coed special school and the complete refurbishment of the former ELRS building in Port Talbot, and that the Council's Band C SOP is amended to include a replacement special school as detailed in this report.

Reasons for proposed decision

65. This decision is necessary to allow officers to progress to preparing business cases, should Welsh Government approve the amendments.

Implementation of the decision

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

Appendices

Appendix A Integrated Impact Assessment

List of background papers

- a. 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)
- b. Strategic School Improvement Capital Funding Programme Band B (2019-2024)

<https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=340&MID=7814#AI22607CBC>

- c. Strategic School Improvement Programme –Proposal To Amend The Council’s 21st Century Schools Capital Funding Programme Band B Projects To Include A Scheme For A New Special School
<https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/documents/s51808/ESC%20report%204%207%2019%20-%20band%20b.pdfk>

Strategic School Improvement Programme -Proposal To Establish An English- Medium 3-11 School To Replace Alltwn, Godre’rgraig And Llangiwg Primary Schools

<https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/documents/s87857/Final%20Cabinet%20Report%20April%202023.pdf>

- d. Strategic School Improvement Programme: Proposed Projects For The Council’s Next Phase Of Investment Under Welsh Government’s Sustainable Communities For Learning Programme

<https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/documents/s82694/Band%20C%20final%20report.pdf>

- e. Design Options for the Remediation of Cilmaengwyn Tip above Godre’r Graig Primary School

[Remediation Options Report Cilmaengwyn Tip above Godrer Graig Primary School - 24.11.22.pdf \(npt.gov.uk\)](https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/documents/s82694/Band%20C%20final%20report.pdf)