

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1

12 MARCH 2018

### REPORT OF THE INTERIM CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

#### SCHOOL MODERNISATION

#### 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 of:
- the initial outcomes of Band A schemes, including lessons learnt; and
  - the development of the Strategic Outline Programme for Band B of the School Modernisation Programme.

#### 2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report relates to the Corporate Improvement Plan priority:
- Smarter use of resources

#### 3. Background

- 3.1 The School Modernisation Programme was established to deliver on a number of objectives including:
- developing first-class learning environments;
  - locating the right number of schools, of a viable size, in the best places to serve their communities;
  - making schools an integral part of the life and learning of their communities;
  - reducing surplus places and achieve best value for money; and
  - making schools more efficient and sustainable.
- 3.2 The Council's Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) for Band A was submitted to Welsh Government in 2011. Following the necessary approvals, Band A schemes were developed to deliver the programme from 2014 to 2019. These schemes have been progressed and are at various stages.
- 3.3 The SOP for Band B was submitted to Welsh Government in July 2017 and approval in principle was received in December for the programme envelope of £68.2m. Subsequently in January 2018, Council gave approval in principle for the financial commitment required for Band B, subject to sufficient resources being identified and allocated to meet the match funding commitment and to incorporate the finance required for Band B into the capital programme.

#### 4. Current position

## Band A

- 4.1 Band A projects are at various stages, the following table sets out the current position and the completion dates for each scheme:

Scheme	Progress	Completion
Bryncethin Campus - Ysgol Bryn Castell and The Bridge Alternative Provision	Complete	June 2015
Coety Primary School	Complete	November 2015
Héronsbridge Special School - Mezzanine	Complete	November 2017
Brynmenyn Primary School	Complete	February 2018
Garw Valley South Phase 1- Betws Primary School	Complete	December 2017
Garw Valley South Phase 2- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwm Garw	In progress	January 2019
Pencoed Primary School	In progress	July 2018

- 4.2 As can be seen from the above table, Band A schemes have either very recently completed or are due to complete by 2019. Consequently, a cohort of pupils has yet to move through any of the Band A facilities. Outcome measures, many of which require analysis over an extended time-frame, are collected and reported to the School Modernisation Board on an annual basis. The Board is chaired by the Interim Director, Education and Family Support and membership comprises of Heads of Service, Education and Early Help, Corporate Landlord and Neighbourhood Services, and senior officers from Education, Planning, Property, Legal and Finance.
- 4.3 Band A of the School Modernisation Programme has been effective in that it has:
- provided an additional supply of suitable school places in Bridgend;
  - removed a number of schools with category C building condition ie poor – exhibiting major defects and/or not operating as intended, and replaced one school damaged in-part by a fire in 2012;
  - provided buildings which are suitable for 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning; and
  - a bi-product of the programme is the delivery of community benefits (ie apprenticeships, employment and work experience opportunities for school pupils within Bridgend).

## Lessons learnt

- 4.4 Lessons learnt workshops are held approximately 12 months after each scheme completion. A key lesson from Band A is that early consultation is required with Highways and Transportation officers to help inform the choice of site. Also, discussion must take place throughout the scheme development stage. Consequently, Highways and Transportation officers are formally invited onto project teams for Band B schemes, are involved at the very outset and will

contribute to the options appraisal process, feasibility studies and help inform the final design.

- 4.5 Welsh Government funding profiles result in timescales/milestones which are critical for school modernisation projects. This aspect, together with the legalities around school organisation proposals, if not complied with can put the Council at risk of a number of issues, including the loss of Welsh Government funding. There are many factors which can impact on the timing of schemes including the availability of resources. Resource requirement/availability needs to be identified at an early stage so that consideration can be given to procuring external resource in order to meet timescales. This is an important lesson learnt as delays were caused on certain schemes within Band A due to resourcing issues. However, in all instances, officers were able to manage the issue and ensure the project was/is delivered within the timescale. Resource is now a standard agenda item for all programme and project team meetings.
- 4.6 In addition, it is recognised that considerable participation is required from headteachers/schools in terms of scheme development. Headteacher involvement includes attending meetings with the project team, designers, contractors and consultation meetings with pupils, staff, governors and the community. In order to support standards at schools affected and assist with benefits realisation, additional financial support has been identified as being required for schools. Funding is now being allocated for the transitional process so that head teachers can safeguard against impact on standards. Headteachers lead their staff in respect of the move from one establishment to another with the vast majority of decants undertaken during term time. The complexity of the process is risk assessed to establish whether pupils are able to be taught in their existing accommodation whilst the decant process is underway, or whether alternative arrangements need to be made eg activity sessions held in a nearby establishment, school closed for a short period of time.
- 4.7 Each project has a financial allocation for furniture, equipment and IT. For Band A schemes, the allocation was deemed to be part of the overall project cost. As schemes have developed over time, construction costs have increased, which has impacted on, and reduced furniture, equipment and IT budgets. This lesson learnt from Band A has been recognised by Welsh Government. Consequently, for Band B, furniture, equipment and IT will be funded on a rate per pupil.
- 4.8 Another lesson learnt from previous schemes is the need to ensure that there is a robust strategy around the delivery of IT. Headteachers now submit business cases identifying the intended IT strategy for the school, listing the IT equipment and infrastructure requirements. Education and IT officers now meet with headteachers to evaluate their approach, offer challenge and ensure the strategy presents value for money.
- 4.9 Recent Welsh Government advice to authorities is such that Band B schemes will include a set funding allocation per m<sup>2</sup> above damp-proof course, with inflation calculated on an annual basis in April each year, using the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) all-in tender index. This is a stepped change from Band A funding allocations, which were fixed at the outset of the programme.

- 4.10 In addition where the authority has determined that new provision will be delivered via a design and build process, there must be a monitoring/reviewing process of plans and specifications undertaken, in order safeguard the Council's interest. This is currently being considered by officers.

### **Band B**

- 4.11 The Strategic Outline Programme priorities for Band B of the Programme were developed by the school modernisation work stream of the Strategic Review into the Development and Rationalisation of the Curriculum and Estate Provision of Primary, Secondary and Post-16 Education. Workstream membership included officer representation from Education, Planning, Property, Legal, Finance, the Built Environment and headteachers representing the primary, secondary and special schools plus representation from Bridgend College.
- 4.12 The school modernisation workstream considered data which they determined should be used to assist in prioritising the future investment in schools. The data considered included suitability, condition, maintenance backlog, projections of pupil population, housing developments identified within the Local Development Plan (LDP) and the supply of pupil places.
- 4.13 The provision of a sufficient supply of pupil places to meet demand was considered to be the highest priority for the Council. Band B recommendations were primarily based on the projected pupil population (which included pupils from housing developments with planning permission), plus pupils from those developments included in the LDP but without planning permission. Planners gave advice with regards to the LDP and confirmed the likelihood of developments coming forward during the period. The proposed priorities were identified as:

#### **4.14 Bridgend South East area**

Additional planned housing identified through the LDP affecting Bridgend and the south-east region of the county borough will result in an increased number of places being required.

#### **4.15 Primary school provision in the Bryntirion area**

In 2006, Council adopted policy to create all-through, 3-11 provision and the school modernisation programme has been structured to support this approach. It is considered that there remains a need to fulfil the aims of the 2006 policy. Therefore, consideration was given to creating all-through primary provision for the Bryntirion area. However, it noted that Cefn Glas Infants, Bryntirion Infants and Llangewydd Junior Schools are currently operating successfully.

#### **4.16 Primary school provision in the Bridgend North East area**

It was clear from the pupil projections and planned housing that there is a need to increase the number of school places to meet demand arising from current housing developments, including the planned Brackla North East development, which is located in an area adjacent to Brackla Industrial Estate, and on plan, falls within the Coety Primary School catchment area. Additional provision presents an opportunity to potentially address the number of Welsh-medium education places serving the area and increase provision for English-medium education.

#### **4.17 Primary school provision in the Valleys Gateway area**

Brynmenyn Primary School has recently opened for pupils and will initially only be partly occupied. Based on the LDP, the projected pupil numbers for the area will be higher than the number of places available. However, Welsh Government will not support creating additional places in schools for housing developments that are yet to come online; schools individual funding is primarily pupil led, therefore should places remain unfilled the formula allocation would be less than anticipated. Funding is based on estimated pupil numbers, but should places remain unfilled then this funding would be clawed back by the Council.

#### **4.18 Special school provision in the Bridgend area**

With the unprecedented increase in demand for places for pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) over recent years, evidence suggests that this issue will be a growing trend. Many placements each year are allocated to early years pupils, who, due to the complex nature of their needs, are unable to access any other mainstream or specialist provision, other than a special school. In addition, places available for each year are predicated upon the number of leavers as there is insufficient capacity available. There is currently a serious overcrowding and demand issue within the Heronsbridge Special School and fit for purpose facilities are required that can meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils.

#### **4.19 Welsh-medium primary provision in the Bridgend West area**

The project team responsible for developing a strategy for the delivery of Welsh-medium education to 2030 has recommended that there is a need to increase Welsh-medium provision in the county borough. This will help deliver on the Welsh Government's national programme to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language and support the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). (Under Part 4 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, there is a statutory duty placed on authorities to develop a WESP). A Welsh education survey, completed by prospective parents, indicated that there is demand for additional primary provision in the Bridgend West area. The project team has advised that the provision should be suitably located (ie within the area of demand) and large enough so that more children can access a Welsh-medium education. Additional Welsh-medium primary places will take a number of years to filter through to secondary level. The provision of places at YGG Llangynwyd is reviewed on an annual basis and will be further considered upon completion of the review into post-16 education.

#### **4.20 English-medium primary provision in Bridgend West area**

A replacement English-medium primary school which will result in the removal of a condition C building (ie poor - exhibiting major defects and/or not operating as intended). There would, as a result, be a removal of the backlog in maintenance.

#### **4.21 Primary provision in the Kenfig Hill area**

The purpose of including Mynydd Cynffig Primary School within Band A was to fulfil the 2006 policy of creating all-through primary schools. This has been achieved in part for Mynydd Cynffig Primary School by amalgamating the former infant and junior schools. However, this has resulted in a split-site school which is on either

side of a busy main road. Consultation with the community regarding the proposal to relocate the primary school to the comprehensive school site met with significant representation together with a counter proposal. However, it was considered important that the needs of the split-site school are not lost and therefore continuing to progress a replacement school is considered necessary. Further option appraisal and feasibility work will be undertaken within the Band B timeframe for future delivery.

#### 4.22 Post-16 review

Currently, there are a significant number of surplus places in the secondary school sector. This position will improve with increased pupil numbers arising from planned housing coming through the system. However, some areas of the county borough are more problematic than others and there is a projected increased demand due to planned housing developments which will impact heavily on secondary places in future years. The issues facing these schools in terms of the impact on places may be improved, depending on the outcome of the work undertaken by the post-16 review.

#### 4.23 Future reviews

It is anticipated that following Band B, there will be two further bands of Welsh Government's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Education Programme, which may see the programme completing in 2034. In order to help inform future bands of the programme, it is considered essential to undertake a review of provision within the Llynfi Valley and Porthcawl areas during the Band B period; this will help inform the future strategy for delivering education in these areas. Also, following the outcome of the post-16 review, it will be necessary to undertake a review of secondary school catchment areas to ensure there are sufficient places available to accommodate pupil yield from areas of growth. Given the outcome could impact on adjacent secondary schools, a decision on how the catchment area assessment is progressed will be determined following the post-16 review. The assessment will consider school intakes, stability of provision and potential savings in respect of learner travel. Conversely, it will also consider potential disadvantages possibly against established practice and parental choice.

#### 4.24 Risks

Several risks and issues are associated with not progressing certain schemes within the Band B timeframe. Although certain risks have been set out in the following table, the highest risk in progressing the schemes associated with the demand for places is the uncertainty of those developments identified within the LDP and those housing schemes being progressed in a timely manner. Table 1 below illustrates some of the key risks associated with not progressing the proposals outlined in this report.

**Table 1 Key risks with not progressing schemes**

Scheme	Risk
Bridgend South	Insufficient pupil places to serve the Pencoed and Parc Afon Ewenni areas if all planned housing identified within the Local

East	Development Plan is progressed.
Bryntirion area	Unfulfilled 2006 Council policy. Shortfall of primary school places within the area.
Bridgend North East	Insufficient pupil places to serve housing developments currently allocated to the Coety Primary School catchment area. Opportunity lost to create additional Welsh-medium provision.
Valleys Gateway Area	Insufficient pupil places available in the area should all housing identified within the LDP come online.
Bridgend Special School	Insufficient pupil places to meet increasing significant demand for places. Overcrowding issues remain unresolved.
Bridgend West Welsh and English-medium	No expansion of Welsh-medium provision to serve an area of demand. Building conditions continue to deteriorate. Lost opportunity to remove backlog in maintenance.
Kenfig Hill area	School remains located on split site. Potential income from a capital receipt not realised. Opportunity to make revenue savings through rationalisation of sites.

4.25 It was acknowledged that the Council's limited resources will not be able to deliver on all the schemes identified within this report. However, as there was a need to ensure a sufficient supply of school places then the priority should be around demand for places in growth areas. The following projects were considered the priority Band B schemes:

- Bridgend North East;
- Bridgend South East;
- Bridgend Special School;
- Bridgend West – Welsh-medium; and
- Bridgend West – English-medium.

4.26 Those areas identified within this report but not prioritised for Band B will be closely monitored in terms of the supply and demand of places, and if necessary, re-prioritised during the period, via the Welsh Government official business case process.

## **5. Effect upon Policy Framework and procedure rules**

5.1 There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 Although an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out for the overall programme, it has been considered timely to review and refresh the EIA. An initial screening has therefore been undertaken for Band B. Once schemes have been sufficiently developed, they will be subject to a separate EIA, as the detail will vary between projects. Equality reports on all proposals will be referred to as part of the individual Cabinet reports on each individual scheme.

## **7. Financial implications**

7.1 The overall programme envelope for Band B is estimated to be in the region of £68.2m, of which approximately £43.2m is anticipated to be capital funded, the balance proposed to be funded through the Welsh Government Mutual Investment Model (MIM). The Welsh Government capital grant intervention rate is set at 50% for this second wave of investment, with the caveat that only the approved cost on an elemental basis will secure this rate – any abnormalities or ‘additional’ design features will require 100% Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) funding.

7.2 In order to receive this funding, the Council will need to submit detailed business cases for each project including details of how the match funding (circa £22.8m) required from the Council will be provided.

7.3 The following projects have been included in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Band B Programme Budget within the Council’s capital programme, but will only be confirmed once Welsh Government approve the final business cases and sufficient funding has been generated:

- Bridgend North East;
- Bridgend South East;
- Bridgend West – Welsh-medium; and
- Bridgend West – English-medium.

7.4 It is anticipated that section 106 contributions for education places will be available from certain housing developments identified within the LDP together with capital receipts from the sale of sites through a potential rationalisation process which will assist in supporting the Council’s 50% contribution to schemes.

7.5 The Bridgend Special School scheme which is being progressed via the Mutual Investment Model could benefit from a 75% Welsh Government intervention rate. However, this will require revenue match funding from the authority of around £750k per annum over a 25-year period. This is not currently built into the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

7.6 A feasibility budget of £111,366 has been secured for 2017-2018 and £75k for 2018-2019 in order to commence progressing Band B schemes.

## **8. Recommendation**

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- notes the content of this report in relation to school modernisation; and



- considers and agrees any recommendations the Committee may wish to make consistent with its challenge and support role in light of the report.

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### **Background documents**

Cabinet Report 2 November 2010: THE SCHOOL MODERNISATION PROGRAMME OVERVIEW AND BRIDGEND'S 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SCHOOLS' STRATEGIC OUTLINE PROGRAMME SUBMISSION TO WELSH ASSEMBLY

Cabinet Report 1 September 2015: STRATEGIC REVIEW INTO THE DEVELOPMENT AND RATIONALISATION OF THE CURRICULUM AND ESTATE PROVISION OF PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND POST 16 EDUCATION

Cabinet Report 3 October 2017: School Modernisation – Band B (2019-2024)

Cabinet Report 30 January 2018: School Modernisation – Band B

Council Report 31 January 2018: School Modernisation – Band B