

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

18 JANUARY 2022

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

SCHOOL MODERNISATION PROGRAMME – BRIDGEND NORTH EAST

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to commence a statutory consultation process to make a regulated alteration to enlarge Ysgol Gymraeg (YG) Bro Ogwr to a 2.5 form entry (FE) school, with a 90-place full time equivalent nursery plus an 8-place observation and assessment class on land off Ffordd Cadfan. The proposal would come into effect from the beginning of the autumn term 2025.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** - taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Band B Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) was submitted to Welsh Government (WG) in July 2017. In October 2017 Cabinet was presented with a report detailing the outcome of the Band B review and gave approval to discontinue the original Band B schemes identified in the November 2010 Cabinet report, and approved the revised SOP.
- 3.2 On 6 December 2017, the WG Department for Education gave 'approval in principle' for Bridgend's second wave of investment, which at that stage had an estimated programme envelope cost of £68.2m. Further costs were to be determined, and these would be associated with additional infrastructure capacity.

- 3.3 In January 2018, Council approved in principle the financial commitment required for Band B of the School Modernisation Programme, subject to sufficient resources being identified and allocated to meet the match funding commitment.
- 3.4 In January 2020, Cabinet was presented with the outcome of the extensive options appraisal relating to each of the approved projects.
- 3.5 In July 2020, Ministerial approval was received in respect of the Strategic Outline Business Case.
- 3.6 Cabinet approval was received to progress an on-site feasibility at Brackla Hill in respect of the preferred education option for the Bridgend North East scheme (ie 2.5-FE YG Bro Ogwr on the Brackla Hill site), the outcome of which was reported to Cabinet on 9 February 2021.
- 3.7 Having considered the technical complexities and potential costs associated with the development of the school at Brackla Hill, Cabinet determined to discount that site from any future consideration in respect of YG Bro Ogwr and gave approval for officers to consider alternative options for the replacement school.
- 3.8 Of the three alternative sites that were considered, the privately owned site at Ffordd Cadfan (considered previously as part of the options appraisal process and cost prohibitive at that time), was regarded as the most suitable for the replacement school in terms of its size, and geographical location within the catchment area.
- 3.9 The Council's Strategic Asset Management and Investment Manager revisited this option with the landowner who confirmed they were willing to sell the site.
- 3.10 A cost differential exercise in respect of developing a school at the formerly discounted Brackla Hill site compared with developing the land off Ffordd Cadfan was undertaken as a benchmark exercise, and it proved that progressing a scheme at the latter location would be more economical and cost effective.
- 3.11 WG approval was sought for the land acquisition at Ffordd Cadfan to be treated as an 'abnormal' in this particular instance, and approval sought for the land purchase to be funded through the Band B programme. This approach was accepted in principle by WG.
- 3.12 Officers were unable to confirm at what point these funds would be available and therefore Council approval was received in December 2020 to include the acquisition costs in the capital programme in order to secure the purchase initially.
- 3.13 In November 2021, Cabinet received a joint report from the Director of Education and Family Support and the Director of Communities, which detailed the outcome of a feasibility study in respect of the land off Ffordd Cadfan and

confirmed the site's suitability for development. At the same meeting Cabinet approval was received to proceed with the acquisition of the site.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 Contracts for the purchase of the site have been exchanged. Therefore, the acquisition is now legally binding. It is important to note that should a proposal to relocate the school to that site not proceed, there would be limited financial risk based upon the likely future onward sales value (as detailed within the December 2020 Council report).
- 4.2 The WG Outline Business Case has received Ministerial approval.
- 4.3 Initially, in determining the size of school required, officers had identified the need for 75 nursery places. However, it is recognised that there is a need for an additional 15 full-time equivalent nursery places to be provided for the rising 3s. Also, officers have confirmed the need for an 8-place Welsh-medium observation and assessment class to be provided as part of this proposal.
- 4.4 In order to enlarge Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr (ie proposed 2.5 FE, 90-place full time equivalent nursery places plus an 8-place observation and assessment class), the School Organisation Code requires that a consultation exercise with the school governing body, staff, parents, pupils and interested parties is undertaken. This is the first step in the statutory process. If carried through to completion, it is currently anticipated that this proposal will come into effect at the beginning of the autumn term 2025. The consultation document will set out the implications of the proposal.
- 4.5 Following this period of consultation, a further report on the outcome of the consultation would be submitted to Cabinet to consider the result of that process. Cabinet would then need to decide whether to authorise the publication of a statutory notice. If such a notice were issued, it would invite formal objections during the statutory 28-day period.
- 4.6 This proposal is intrinsically linked to a potential alternative use of the residual YG Bro Ogwr school building for English-medium provision. However, the statutory process in respect of the replacement YG Bro Ogwr must conclude prior to any proposal being taken forward in this regard.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

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

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken which established that the proposal is unlikely to negatively impact on any protected group. There have been positive impacts identified, including Welsh language, gender and

age. As there have been no negative impacts identified, it will not be necessary to undertake a full equalities impact assessment.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment provides a comprehensive summary of the outcomes expected from the implementation of the service.

Long-term	Supports the statutory duty to provide sufficient pupil places and promote the Welsh language.
Prevention	The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are a sufficient supply of school places, and this scheme will safeguard the Council's position in terms of any potential legal challenge in this regard.
Integration	Should the proposal proceed in the future, construction will be competitively tendered, via a mini competition through the South East and Mid Wales Collaborative Construction Framework (SEWSCAP3) or potential future iterations of the framework. This will potentially provide opportunities for local companies to engage with the main contractor for inclusion in their supply chain, via 'Meet the Buyer' events. This would support economic activity in the area. Community benefits will be maximised.
Collaboration	The local authority would work effectively with schools, Estyn and with the Central South Consortium, health, community councils and many internal and external partners to ensure that the building would meet the short-term and future needs of the users and the community, which it will serve.
Involvement	This scheme was subject to a long list of options, which included education and site. These were systematically evaluated and have been reduced from a long list to a short list to confirm the preferred option. Further work involves the engagement of all potential stakeholders including Cabinet, members, governors, staff, pupils, community, internal and external partners which will include third sector organisations, during the consultation exercise. There would be a full public consultation process undertaken, according to the WG School Organisation Code, should Cabinet determine to proceed with the proposal.

It is considered that there will be a positive impact upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 In December 2018, Council approved a programme envelope of £71.3m, covering Band B new school builds of £68.2m and potential highways works of £3.1m (the cost of highway works will have to be met in full by the local authority, as there is no match funding from WG). Following subsequent amendments to the capital programme, the current position is that there are budgets of £49.504m for works and £3.4m for infrastructure within the capital programme, with the remaining schemes funded via the revenue funded Mutual Investment Model (MIM).
- 8.2 £12.6m has been allocated in the capital programme for this project and the WG intervention rate is 65%. The additional 15 FTE places for rising 3s would need to be funded from BCBC capital and would form part of the total project costs. Contractor inflation and the impact of Covid-19 and 'Brexit' may have a detrimental impact on the scheme costs. However, this would be monitored and reviewed regularly throughout the course of the project. Any revenue implications resulting as a consequence of moving sites will not be known until the scheme is developed further. Any changes to the total cost of the scheme or council contributions will be reported back to cabinet and council as appropriate.
- 8.3 The cost of the feasibility study has been funded from the Band B revenue feasibility funding allocation.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 Cabinet is recommended to give approval to commence a statutory consultation process to make a regulated alteration to enlarge YG Bro Ogwr to a 2.5-FE school, with a 90-place full time equivalent nursery plus an 8-place observation and assessment class on land off Ffordd Cadfan. The proposal would come into effect from the beginning of the autumn term 2025.

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Background documents None