

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO CABINET

18 OCTOBER 2022

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

#### SCHOOL MODERNISATION

#### BRIDGEND WEST – MODIFICATION OF ENGLISH-MEDIUM SCHOOL OPENING DATE

#### 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval to approve Option A (indicative delivery programme) as the preferred programme for delivery of the schools and to modify the planned opening date of the new Bridgend West English-medium school to September 2024.

#### 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 of 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 deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

- 2.2 On 3 March 2015, Cabinet approval was received for the Council to adopt revised principles as a framework for school organisation in Bridgend. Five key principles were set out to inform the organisation and modernisation of our schools. These are:

- commitment to high standards and excellence in provision;
- equality of opportunity, so that all pupils can access quality learning opportunities, regardless of which school they attend;
- inclusive schools, which cater for the learning needs of all their pupils;

- community-focused schools, where the school actively engages with its local community; and
  - value for money.
- 2.3 The Policy and Planning Framework sets out 17 areas where these principles should be applied in practice.
- 2.4 The principles which are particularly relevant in the context of Band B are:
- the size of primary schools (to ensure that “all Bridgend’s primary schools are large enough to make the full range of necessary provision”); and
  - value for money, efficiency and effectiveness (“narrowing the gap between the most and the least expensive provision currently”).

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 As Cabinet will be aware, the Band B Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) was submitted to Welsh Government in July 2017, for which Cabinet approval was subsequently sought in October. Cabinet was presented with a report detailing the outcome of the Band B review and the revised SOP submission and gave approval to discontinue the original Band B schemes identified in the November 2010 Cabinet report, and approved the revised following Band B schemes:
- Bridgend North East (primary)
  - Bridgend South East (primary)
  - Bridgend West – Welsh-medium (primary)
  - Bridgend West – English-medium (primary)
  - Bridgend Special School
- 3.2 On 6 December 2017, Welsh Government gave ‘approval in principle’ for Bridgend’s second wave of investment, which at that stage had an estimated programme envelope cost of £68.2m. Since then a number of amendments have been made to the capital budget, including to adjust for schemes now to be funded via the revenue-funded Mutual Investment Model (MIM) scheme. The latest adjustments to the capital budget were approved by Council on 20 July 2022, resulting in a revised capital programme budget for Band B of the School Modernisation Programme of £64.966m overall. Further costs, which are yet to be determined, may be required and these would be associated with additional infrastructure capacity.
- 3.3 In July 2018, the School Modernisation Programme Board and Cabinet/Corporate Management Board (CCMB) undertook a gateway review of a longlist of education and site options in relation to each of the proposed

schemes. Officers subsequently undertook a desktop evaluation of the resulting Bridgend West site shortlist.

- 3.4 School Modernisation Programme Board, at its meeting of 17 May 2019, considered the available education and site options in respect of the schemes proposed for the Bridgend West area. The School Modernisation Programme Board determined to recommend to CCMB the following:
- progression of detailed feasibility studies of the Valleys to Coast Marlas Estate site;
  - progression of detailed feasibility studies of the Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sgêr/Cornelly Children's Integrated Centre/Corneli Primary site; and
  - preferred education options of provision of a new-build, English-medium school on 'a' site (suitable for Afon y Felin and Corneli Primary Schools combined) and provision of a new build Welsh-medium school on 'a' site.
- 3.5 CCMB subsequently determined, at its meeting of 28 May 2019, the preferred way forward for Bridgend West area Band B schemes:
- progression of detailed feasibility studies of the Valleys to Coast Marlas Estate site;
  - progression of detailed feasibility studies of the Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sgêr/Cornelly Children's Integrated Centre/Corneli Primary site;
  - preferred education options of provision of a new-build, two form entry English-medium school on 'a' site (ie Marlas Estate site - suitable for Afon y Felin and Corneli Primary Schools combined) and provision of a new-build, two form entry Welsh-medium school on 'a' site (Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sgêr/Cornelly Children's Integrated Centre/Corneli Primary site - suitable for an enlarged Ysgol y Ferch o'r 'Sgêr); and
  - Band B Bridgend West schemes to be progressed as MIM schemes.
- 3.6 Welsh Government, in November 2020, agreed BCBC's Strategic Outline Case (SOC) submission in respect of the proposal.
- 3.7 The necessary School Organisation Code statutory processes have been completed and Cabinet determined, on 22 June 2021, to proceed with the Bridgend West proposal as originally published (ie discontinue Corneli Primary School, Greenfield Terrace, North Cornelly, CF33 4LW and Afon Y Felin Primary School, Heol Y Parc, North Cornelly, CF33 4PA and establish a new English-medium primary community school to be maintained by Bridgend County Borough Council on land off Gibbons Way at Plas Morlais, with effect from 1 September 2023, and to make a regulated alteration to Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sgêr in the form of an enlargement with effect from 2 September 2024).

- 3.8 Heads of terms in respect of the land swap required for the scheme have been agreed with Valleys to Coast.
- 3.9 On 14 September 2021 Cabinet approved the submission of the Stage 1 MIM 'New Project Request' to Welsh Government.

#### 4. Current situation/proposal

##### Mutual Investment Model

- 4.1 In November 2021, while drafting the 'New Project Request' documentation, Gleeds (the Welsh Government-appointed project management company for all MIM schemes) revisited the indicative construction programme originally provided by them at the time of the local authority's SOC submission to Welsh Government and the statutory consultation process under the School Organisation Code.
- 4.2 Since that time, Gleeds has revisited the programme. Their revised indicative programme is attached (Appendix 1) which details two alternate options for the delivery of the new schools.:

##### Option A

Construction of both schools simultaneously. Works would commence May/June 2023 and the school buildings be ready for occupation by September 2024. The remainder of the works (which would include the removal of the asbestos, demolition of the existing buildings and construction of the external pitches to the Corneli site) would then be completed by June 2025.

##### Option B

As per the original proposal to sequence the works. This would see the Marlas site (English-medium school) ready for occupation from September 2024 but the replacement Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sgêr (Corneli site) not being operational until April/May 2026.

- 4.3 Gleeds provided updated financial output models in respect of the revised scheme options (full financial output models are enclosed at Appendix 2). In summary, the revenue funded Annual Service Charge for the two options, to cover the cost of construction, maintenance and financing the project, based on current prices are as follows:

NPR Scenario	Marlas ASC (£'000s)	Corneli ASC (£'000s)	Total ASC (£,000s)	Welsh Government contribution (@ 81% IR) (£,000s)	BCBC contribution (£'000s)
Option A	1,203	864	2,068	1,675	393

Option B	1,203	885	2,088	1,691	397
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- 4.4 BCBC’s capital contribution towards fixed furniture and equipment, and ICT, based on current prices, would be circa £920k each for the two schemes, in addition to stage 1 design costs which are also treated as a one-off capital contribution, match funded at 65% by Welsh Government – this remains the same for both options A and B.
- 4.5 Given that the revised programme dates now differ significantly from those originally supplied and subsequently published in the statutory notice (the effective date of the English-medium school reorganisation in said notice being 1 September 2023 and the regulated alteration to Ysgol y Ferch o’r Sgêr in the form of an enlargement taking effect from 2 September 2024), Cabinet will need to consider the options as detailed in paragraph 4.2 of this report, and determine to modify the implementation date, as required by the School Organisation Code 2018.
- 4.6 The legislation allows an implementation date to be delayed by three years if the implementation of the proposals on that date or those dates would be unreasonably difficult, or that circumstances have so altered since the proposals were approved under section 50 or 51 or determined under section 53, that implementation of the proposals on that date or those dates would be inappropriate. In this case, Gleeds (who are the Welsh Government-appointed project management company for all MIM schemes) have provided the revised programmes because implementation of the proposals on the originally published dates would be unreasonably difficult.
- 4.7 The governing bodies of the directly affected schools (Afon Y Felin Primary School, Corneli Primary School and Ysgol y Ferch o’r Sgêr) have been consulted regarding the modification of the implementation date of the English-medium school reorganisation to September 2024 and the responses received are supportive (Appendix 3).
- 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 was carried out as part of the consultation stage and was published as part of the consultation document. The assessment concluded that the proposal is unlikely to impact disproportionately on any protected group. Having reviewed responses to the consultation, the conclusion remains valid.
- 7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications**
- 7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 has been considered in formulating the proposal and the assessment was published in the consultation report.

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	Councils have a statutory duty to ensure there are a sufficient supply of school places, and these schemes will safeguard the Council's position in terms of any potential legal challenge in this regard.
Integration	Providing sufficient places ensures that the curriculum can be delivered and meets social, environmental and cultural objectives.
Collaboration	The local authority works effectively with schools, Estyn and with the Central South Consortium, health, community councils and many internal and external partners to ensure that the building meets the short-term and future needs of the users and the community which it will serve.
Involvement	This area of 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.

It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

## **8. Financial implications**

- 8.1 If the proposal does go ahead and is implemented, then the cost of the new schools will be funded via an annual charge to the revenue budget, over a 25-year period, which will need to be built into the MTFs as a budget pressure. Early estimates are that total additional revenue costs (including the annual service charge) could be in the region of £500k per annum, but this will be determined as the scheme progresses. The cost is based on a Welsh Government intervention rate for MIM schemes of 81%, with the local authority funding 19% of the annual costs, plus 35% of any up-front capital investment for stage 1 design, ICT, and furniture and equipment. A capital report was considered by Council on 20 July 2022 which increased the capital budget for Band B of the School Modernisation Programme overall and to fund additional capital costs for the MIM scheme. Consequently, the early estimate revenue cost figure detailed above is likely to change as the scheme develops.

- 8.2 The running costs of the new schools would be met from within the Delegated Schools' Budget as is currently the case. It is too early to say whether there will be efficiency savings or additional costs from the proposed new schools, and future reports to Cabinet will outline the financial implications, as they are known, in more detail.
- 8.3 In December 2020, Council approved the inclusion of the land purchase costs related to the Band B Programme within the Capital Programme. This included the land transactions at Plas Morlais, Glan-yr-Afon and Afon-Y-Felin. In addition to the purchase costs there will be an overall acquisition legal fee cost in the region of £50k and Land Transaction Tax to be payable for each acquisition. It is anticipated that these fees will be funded via approved budgets already included within the capital programme. However, should additional funds be required a further request to Council will be made for inclusion within the Capital Programme as soon as possible.
- 8.4 The potential capital receipts were included within the December 2020 Cabinet and Council reports. The only difference currently is that Valleys to Coast has agreed to pay an additional £5k for Glan-yr-Afon based on the option deposit amount being lowered in exchange.

## **9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- approves Option A as the preferred programme for delivery of the schools; and
  - modifies the planned opening date of the new Bridgend West English-medium school to September 2024.

**Lindsay Harvey**  
**CORPORATE DIRECTOR - EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT**  
**19 July 2022**

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## **Background documents**

Where appropriate, relevant papers are in the public domain