

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

13 DECEMBER 2022

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

SCHOOL MODERNISATION

PORTHCAWL WELSH-MEDIUM SEEDLING SCHOOL AND CHILDCARE

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- detail the outcome of the options appraisal process for the delivery of a Welsh-medium seedling school and childcare provision for the Porthcawl area; and
- seek approval to consult on a proposal to establish a Welsh-medium seedling school and childcare provision for the Porthcawl area on land at the Porthcawl Primary School site.

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.

3. Background

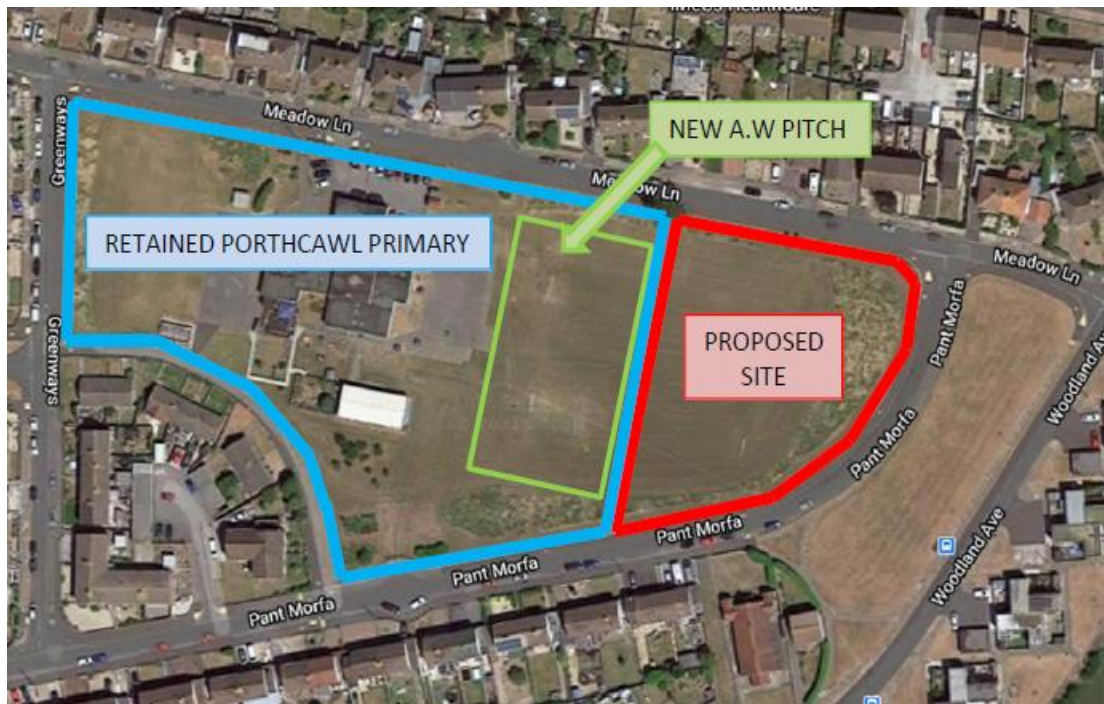
- 3.1 In March 2018, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance made available £30m across Wales for projects dedicated to supporting and growing the use of the Welsh language in education. This funding would assist the delivery of Welsh Government's ongoing commitment to achieve a million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- 3.2 Welsh Government advised that this funding was in addition to the existing allocation announced for Band B of the then 21st Century Schools and Education Programme (that is, the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme).
- 3.3 A childcare sufficiency audit of settings within Bridgend had identified gaps in this vital provision. These gaps, together with a lack of Welsh-medium childcare, resulted in a decision being taken to centre Bridgend's proposals on Welsh-medium sessional, child and wraparound care.
- 3.4 In determining the locations that would benefit from such provision, consideration was given to developing centres to support transition from Welsh-medium childcare provision to Welsh-medium primary education, thereby encouraging transition, and in turn, promoting and supporting Welsh-medium schools in key areas of the county borough.
- 3.5 Porthcawl was identified as one of the four key locations that would benefit from Welsh-medium childcare provision. It was considered that such facilities at these strategic locations would help support transition from childcare into Welsh-medium primary education.
- 3.6 A bid for funding was submitted to Welsh Government and in September 2018, the then Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning announced the successful outcome of the process, and Bridgend County Borough Council was awarded £2.6m capital grant for the four provisions (that is, at Bettws Ogmores Valley, Bridgend Town and Porthcawl). This was subsequently increased to £2.8m in March 2021 (as the pre-tender estimates received for both schemes indicated that the originally allocated budget was insufficient).

- 3.7 A Welsh-medium steering group, comprising of officers and key stakeholders was established to support the projects, develop business plans, and aid the future sustainability of provision post-construction.
- 3.8 Following a desktop appraisal of options for developing a Welsh-medium seedling school with co-located childcare in the Porthcawl area, a report was submitted to Cabinet in September 2021, and approval was received to submit an expression of interest to Welsh Government in respect of a second tranche of the Welsh-medium capital grant.
- 3.9 Welsh Government subsequently approved, in principle, the expression of interest.
- 3.10 The Welsh-medium capital grant commits Welsh Government to 100% of the seedling school scheme funding, but only upon their approval of the Business Justification Case. Funding for the childcare provision has already been approved (Bridgend County Borough Council was allocated £2.8m Welsh-medium capital grant by WG to deliver four Welsh-medium childcare projects in total across the county borough, one of which is for the Porthcawl area).
- 3.11 On 16 November 2022, Council gave permission for a capital budget for this scheme's design and survey costs (up to tender stage) to be included in the Council's capital programme (on the assumption that costs will be fully recovered once Welsh Government has approved the Business Justification Case).

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 The proposed seedling school is a 'starter class' with 30 full-time equivalent nursery places, and 30 reception places. It is proposed that the seedling provision will be operated and governed by Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sgêr, and pupils would transition to that school at Year 1 to conclude their primary education, that is until a Welsh-medium primary school is established in Porthcawl (on 21 January 2020, Cabinet gave 'approval in principle' to the development of a new Welsh-medium school to serve the Porthcawl area as part of a future band of the school modernisation programme - to be aligned to the development of the Porthcawl Regeneration scheme).
- 4.2 The proposed childcare provision is for 16 full-time (32 part-time) childcare places, together with 6 places for 0 to 2 provision offering full care from potentially birth to four years, with afterschool and holiday provision to offer full wrap-around care via the medium of Welsh. It is proposed that the childcare will be operated by a private provider.
- 4.3 Suitable development sites in the Porthcawl area are severely limited. However, desktop feasibility studies undertaken by local authority technical officers have identified land on the existing Porthcawl Primary School site as being suitable to accommodate both a seed school and childcare facility (see Appendix 1). An all-weather pitch would be provided at Porthcawl Primary School to compensate for the land utilised for the provision, as under the

School (Education Premises) Regulations 1999, the all-weather pitch can be treated as if it were twice its actual area. Currently it is estimated that the site area required for the seedling school would be 4870m² and the all-weather pitch would be 2840m². These areas are shown in the following illustration:



- 4.4 There is no requirement to consult on the proposal under the School Organisation Code (since it does not fall within any of the elements of school reorganisation that require the publication of proposals under the statutory process).
- 4.5 Notwithstanding the fact that there is no statutory requirement to consult on the proposal, the Education and Family Support Directorate wishes to undertake a (non-code) public consultation by means of the 'Consultations' section of the Council's website, to obtain stakeholder views. The outcome will subsequently be reported to Cabinet.
- 4.6 It is currently estimated that if the proposal progresses to completion, the new provision will open in January 2025.
- 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 initial Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh

language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

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

The 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 is 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 potential stakeholders including Cabinet, members, governors, 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 Council has already granted permission for a capital budget for the proposed seedling school's design and survey costs (up to tender stage) to be included in the Council's capital programme (on the assumption that costs will be fully recovered once Welsh Government has approved the Business Justification Case).

8.2 The Council already has £550k Welsh Government approval for the childcare capital element from the Welsh-medium childcare grant.

8.3 The Welsh-government funding streams for Welsh-medium capital grant and Welsh-medium childcare grant are exclusively for capital expenditure (there is no Welsh Government revenue funding). The delegated school budget for Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sgêr would be adjusted, through the funding formula, to account for the seedling provision. Any additional revenue running costs in respect of the new seedling school would be met from the schools' delegated

budget. All capital costs (including the proposed all-weather pitch) should be met from the capital grants allocated, however whether grant funding proves sufficient will depend on tender return prices).

8.4 The proposed consultation exercise costs would be negligible and would be funded from the existing School Modernisation revenue budget.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet gives permission to consult on a proposal to establish a Welsh-medium seedling school and childcare provision for the Porthcawl area on land at the Porthcawl Primary School site

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13 December 2022**

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Background documents: None

Appendix 1

Proposal for Welsh-medium seedling school and childcare in the Porthcawl area – shortlisted site options appraisal

Appendix 2

Proposal for Welsh-medium seedling school and childcare in the Porthcawl area – development site search long list