

CABINET
REPORT OF HEAD OF TRANSFORMATION
ANDREW THOMAS

9 JULY 2015

SECTION A – MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

**STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME – PROPOSAL
TO RECONFIGURE THE COUNCIL’S 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS
CAPITAL FUNDING PROGRAMME BAND A PROJECTS**

Purpose of Report

To obtain Cabinet approval to develop an alternative, replacement scheme for inclusion in Band A of the Council’s 21st Century Schools programme of capital funded projects and to submit a proposal to the Welsh Government for grant funding approval.

Background

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, including language provision, the Council has in its area and assessing whether or not best use is being made of resources and facilities.

Implementing the Strategic School Improvement Programme 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 and facilitate the delivery of education under alternative management and leadership arrangements.

The Council has decided to review its provision on the basis of:

- a. educational standards

- b. the need for places and the accessibility of schools
- c. the quality and suitability of school accommodation
- d. effective financial management.

Band A of the Council's 21st Century Schools capital funding programme comprises 7 projects. Deliverability of one of these, the 3-16 Faith school project, is highly problematic within the Band A timeframe. If the Council is to maximise the grant funding opportunity and prudential borrowing capability supporting Band A then an alternative, replacement project will need to be developed and Welsh Government capital funding secured.

The Proposal

It is proposed to reconfigure the Council's 21st Century Schools capital funding programme of Band A projects by substituting the Faith school scheme (comprising the three St Joseph's schools, Port Talbot) with an alternative, replacement project addressing condition grade D building stock in the secondary sector.

21st Century schools, Band A

The Council's current Band A proposals consists of the following capital build projects:

	Band A Projects
1	Ysgol Newydd (Bae Baglan), Baglan Moors: 3-16 all-through school with an integral Learning Support Centre
2	Awel Y Môr, Sandfields: 3-11 primary school with an integral Inclusion Unit
3	Welsh-medium school, Ystalyfera: north and south campuses (all-through, 3-18 provision at north campus)
4	Welsh-medium school, Sandfields: north and south campuses (11-16 provision at south campus)
5	Ysgol Newydd (Briton Ferry): 3-11 primary school
6	Faith school, Port Talbot
7	Coed Darcy, Llandarcy: 3-11 primary school

Band A covers the funding period 2014 – 2019 and the programme of projects is intended to address issues associated with significant surplus capacity and the high backlog maintenance costs of ageing and deteriorating school buildings that do not meet relevant legislative and recommended standards.

Delivering the Programme would realise an investment in the Council's school estate of over £100m, of which the Welsh Government's contribution amounts

to £46.5m with the remainder being secured by the Council through its prudential borrowing facility.

Surveys of the Council's schools have been undertaken and the condition of school buildings and their sites assessed. Schools assessed as condition grade D are a prominent component of the Council's Band A grant funding submission. As a programme of investment, the 21st Century Schools initiative seeks to maximise the educational facilities in schools thus promoting high quality teaching and learning by addressing the inefficiencies of the school estate. In determining submissions, the Welsh Government assesses the extent to which projects in Band A are tackling the greatest resource inefficiencies in terms of:

- the poorest condition of the estate; and
- surplus capacity.

Running efficiencies (e.g. reduction in running costs, backlog maintenance, etc.) are also included in the assessment exercise.

Reconfiguring Band A programme of projects

The proposal to establish a Faith school to replace St Joseph's Catholic School and 6th Form Centre, St Joseph's Junior school and St Joseph's Infant school has been developed, at the Council's expense, to Strategic Outline Case (SOC) level. Two preferred options were submitted for consideration, a 3-16 Faith school and a 3-18 Faith school. Welsh Government approval has been given to proceed to Outline Business Case (OBC) stage where only one preferred option would be acceptable and where evidence of affordability is a mandatory requirement.

On the basis of assessed affordability and the availability of alternative post 16 provision at Neath Port Talbot College, the Council's preferred option is the establishment of a 3-16 school. This would, of course, result in the closure of the 6th Form and Members will, no doubt, be aware of the campaign to retain post 16 provision at St. Joseph's Catholic School and 6th Form Centre.

Capital costs for Faith school projects are apportioned accordingly: 85% Welsh Government grant funding and 15 % Trustees' contribution. The Welsh Government has identified its 85% funding envelope but the Trustees have been unable to commit to their 15% contribution as indicated in the Diocese of Menevia's letter to the Welsh Government, dated 27th April 2015. With the issue of affordability remaining unresolved, the project's development is effectively brought to a halt. The funding shortfall is a matter of ongoing discussion between the Diocesan Authority and the Welsh Government.

With this barrier to progress, an opportunity to address poor building stock could be lost to the Council, a situation acknowledged by the Welsh Government. It is proposed, therefore, to substitute the Faith school scheme with an alternative project. This will require Welsh Government approval as the allocation of Band A grant funding would need to be revisited.

The alternative, replacement project.

Although Band B funding of the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Programme has yet to be announced, prospective schemes have been identified from within the Council's school portfolio. Of these, addressing building condition issues at Dyffryn School (the lower school building is categorised as condition grade D) is held as a priority. As such, this is the project that is proposed as an alternative, replacement for the Faith school scheme which will be withdrawn from the Council's Band A programme. The need to address building condition at Dyffryn School is also recognised by the Welsh Government which has written to the Council requesting details of its capital programme plans for this school (appendix A).

Recommendation

That Members approve the withdrawal of the Faith school scheme from Band A of the Council's 21st Century Schools capital funding programme, to be substituted with an alternative, replacement project comprising new build at Dyffryn School, Margam, Port Talbot, and that officers be authorised to develop a submission for Welsh Government funding approval.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

The decision is required to progress the development and submission of an alternative, replacement scheme for the Faith school project which will, as a result, be withdrawn from the Band A programme.

List of Background Papers

The following background papers are relevant to this proposal:

- 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. Cabinet Report: June 2012

[https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20120625/Agenda/\\$CAB-250612-REP-EL.doc.pdf](https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20120625/Agenda/$CAB-250612-REP-EL.doc.pdf)

- c. Welsh Government - School Organisation Code: July 2013
<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130719-school-organisation-codes-en.pdf>
- d. School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/1/pdfs/anaw_20130001_en.pdf

Officer Contact

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COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME – PROPOSAL TO RECONFIGURE THE COUNCIL’S 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS CAPITAL FUNDING PROGRAMME BAND A PROJECTS

(a) Implementation of Decision

The decision is proposed for implementation after the 3-day call-in period

(b) Sustainability Appraisal

Community Plan Impacts

Economic Prosperity	-	positive
Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning	-	positive
Better Health & Well Being	-	positive
Environment & Transport	-	no impact
Crime & Disorder	-	positive

Other Impacts

Welsh Language	-	positive
Sustainable Development	-	positive
Equalities	-	positive
Social Inclusion	-	positive

(c) Consultation

This proposal is not subject to consultation at this stage.

Ysgolion yr 21ain Ganrif 21st Century Schools

Yr Adran Addysg a Sgiliau
Department for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Mr Steven Phillips
Chief Executive
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Civic Centre
Port Talbot
SA13 1PJ

1 July 2015

Dear Steve

Dyffryn School

As you know, one of the aims of the first wave of the 21st Century Schools and Education programme is to significantly reduce or eradicate the number of condition D schools across Wales. The Public Accounts Committee has noted the need to eradicate category D schools and it remains one of the key priorities for the programme hence the monitoring of those schools in the worst condition.

In our Capital Investment Panel meetings, DfES Directors deliberate the merits of projects and receive monthly updates on the progress to reduce the number of condition D schools. Officials also report to the Minister on progress towards eradicating Category D schools.

The National Schools Condition Survey in 2011 identified Dyffryn School as category D and now remains one of the few schools remaining in this condition. However, it is not included in your first wave of investment.

Any Category D school with no planned remedial action does raise concerns. I would be grateful if you could let me know what your plans are for this school in the longer term. Specifically we would like to know whether you intend to improve the condition of the school or if you will be exploring other options.

I would be more than happy to meet with you to discuss the matters raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catrin Jones', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Catrin Jones
Head of Reorganisation/21st Century Schools Programme