

Report



Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Part 1

Date: 25 June 2019

Subject **School Reorganisation Proposal – Establishment of a new Welsh-medium Primary School and the relocation of Pillgwenlly Primary School**

Purpose To seek approval to move to formal consultation on a school reorganisation proposal “to establish a new two-form entry Welsh-medium primary school in Newport from September 2020 and as a result to relocate Pillgwenlly Primary School from its current site to the new school on the Whiteheads development from January 2022”

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Ward All

Summary This report references the requirement to move to formal consultation on the proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium primary school in Newport and as a result, to relocate Pillgwenlly Primary School to the new school planned to be built on the Whiteheads development.

Newport’s Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), which was formally approved by Welsh Government in the autumn 2018, includes a commitment to expand Welsh-medium primary provision by 50% across the city. This commitment is achievable following approval of a Welsh Government capital funding bid of £5.8 million. The project will assist in meeting Welsh Government’s charter of achieving 1 million Welsh speakers across Wales by 2050.

There is now a requirement to move to the formal consultation stage of the statutory consultation process. The formal consultation pack will include further information regarding the proposal to enable all consultees and stakeholders to be fully informed of the proposals for the new school.

Proposal **To move to a period of formal consultation on a school reorganisation proposal to establish a new two-form entry Welsh-medium primary school in Newport from September 2020 and as a result to relocate Pillgwenlly Primary School from its current site to the school on the Whiteheads development from January 2022.**

Action by Chief Education Officer

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Corporate Management Team
- Education Senior Management Team
- Senior HR Business Partner

- Senior Finance Business Partner
- Acting Headteacher and Chair of Governors, Pillgwenlly Primary School

Signed

Background

Newport currently has three Welsh-medium primary schools, each providing education for pupils between 3 and 11 years. Two of the three schools are now operating at 90% of total available capacity and, as at April 2019, there are only three (equivalent to 2.7%) places available across the Reception year group.

Welsh Government approved Newport's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) in 2018. Newport's WESP includes a commitment to expand primary provision across the City so that the proportion of seven-year-old pupils taught through the medium of Welsh is increased from 3.9% to 5% by 2022/23. The establishment of a fourth Welsh-medium primary school will assist in reaching these objectives and will support Welsh Government's charter of achieving 1 million Welsh speakers across Wales by 2050.

It is proposed that this new school will be established from September 2020, initially as a seedling provision for Nursery and Reception pupils only, at the currently vacant former Caerleon Lodge Hill Infant School. The school will subsequently transfer to a permanent location, at the current site of Pillgwenlly Primary School, from September 2022.

Pillgwenlly Primary is a community maintained English-medium school, with a published admission number of 78. The total capacity for pupils of statutory school age is 546. There is also a 56-place nursery class able to accommodate a maximum of 112 children over either a morning or afternoon session and a 10 place Learning Resource Base (LRB).

The school is extremely popular and all year groups are fully subscribed. A waiting list is in operation for all year groups. The demand for pupil places in the area is expected to increase following the new housing developments in the Pillgwenlly and Maesglas areas. Pupil forecast pressures have been identified in the area and for this reason the Council initially explored expansion of the school in the 21st Century Schools Band B programme. There is, however, insufficient space within the current site to expand the school any further, as any additional buildings would replace outdoor play areas.

Notwithstanding this, a new school build is planned for the nearby Whiteheads development, on a piece of land that will be suitable for the creation of a 3-form entry school (90 places per year group). This land will be transferred to the Education Service as part of the Council's section 106 planning agreement with the developer, with the build project being funded via the 21st Century Schools Band B programme. It is proposed that on completion of this project, the current Pillgwenlly Primary School will relocate to the new building in January 2022, thereby enabling the school to expand as originally planned. The vacant building will subsequently be fully refurbished, before the new Welsh-medium Primary School is able to relocate to this permanent site.

Newport City Council has successfully submitted a bid to Welsh Government for funding to undertake this project via the *Welsh Medium Capital Grant*. The funding supports the proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium Primary School and will be used to make improvements to the temporary seedling facility and to the existing Pillgwenlly Primary School buildings. Ultimately, the project will deliver a new 2-form entry Welsh-medium Primary School with nursery and Special Education Needs (SEN) facilities.

Overall, the proposal will provide an additional 430 Welsh-medium primary pupil places (including Learning Resource Base) plus 48 part-time nursery places. The full capacity of the school will be realised over several years, as the school will grow under a seedling model, similar to that used to successfully establish Ysgol Gymraeg Ifor Hael and Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Teyrnnon.

Formal Consultation Process

The school reorganisation proposal will be undertaken in accordance with the guidance outlined in the Welsh Government statutory School Organisation Code. The formal consultation stage enables all consultees and stakeholders, in particular prospective pupils and their families, to find out more about the proposal. There will be an opportunity for drop-in events and a facility for comments and feedback to be shared. The proposal will be **"to establish a new Welsh-medium primary school and to relocate Pillgwenlly Primary School"**.

The formal consultation will take place during the summer term of 2019 and last for a period of 42 days. Following the end of this period, a consultation report will be prepared and will be published on the Council website. This consultation report will also be considered by the Cabinet Member for Education & Skills when taking the decision on whether to move to the next stage in the process which is the publication of a statutory notice. If there are no objections to the statutory notice, the Cabinet Member for Education & Skills will be asked to take the final decision on establishment of the new school. If there are any objections, the case will be referred to full Cabinet acting as the Local Determination Panel.

Once a final decision is taken, a temporary governing body will be established who will decide on a name for the new school and take forward recruitment of a Headteacher and other key staff as per the agreed staffing structure to enable the seedling school to open in September 2020. Alongside this, officers will also work with the Acting Headteacher and Governing Body of Pillgwenlly Primary School to consider the design detail of the new school on the Whiteheads development.

What is a “seedling school”?

A seedling model allows the school staff and facilities to be used efficiently whilst the school grows to its full potential. Under this arrangement, the school would open initially with only a Nursery and Reception class, and a year group is then added each academic year until the first reception cohort reaches Year 6.

The seedling model is considered the most appropriate solution for new Welsh-medium schools. Whilst demand is growing for Welsh-medium education, opening the school immediately to all year groups could destabilise other schools across the city and could adversely affect the ability to support effective immersion provision.

Benefits of a seedling school include:

- The school capacity is able to grow as demand increases;
- Stable growth mechanism to support existing schools;
- Reduced possibility of mass movement of pupils from other schools;
- Effective management of class sizes to support staffing and the school budget;
- Pupils living outside the school catchment area can still apply for a place at the school and may be successful.

There are some disadvantages however, namely that:

- It will takes a number of years to deliver growth;
- There are possible implications for siblings with changing catchments;
- There are possible implications for families moving to Newport with different aged children due to changing catchments;

Newport City Council has a history of successfully opening new schools under a seedling arrangement, and this was the basis for establishing Ysgol Gymraeg Ifor Hael, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Teyrnnon and, most recently, Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed.

Financial Summary

The Council has successfully submitted a bid to Welsh Government for funding of £5.8million to undertake this project via the *Welsh Medium Capital Grant*. This capital funding will be used to make improvements to the seedling facility and to the existing Pillgwenlly Primary School buildings. The new school build on the Whiteheads development is one of the projects included within the Council's 21st Century Schools Band B programme and as such is being funded jointly by Newport City Council and Welsh Government.

The revenue funding required for the operation of the primary school will need to be provided through the Council's overall schools budget and the profiled budget requirements have been included within the Council's medium term financial plan (MTFP) for consideration within future budget decisions.

The table below shows the financial impact of this decision over the current life of the Council's Medium Term Financial Projections though it should be noted that costs for the new Welsh Medium School will continue to expand beyond 2022/23 as the seedling model increases year groups each year, and therefore costs, for about 6 years. Once established, the school will require appropriate funding from within the overall schools budget, whether or not the proposal for growth within the current MTFP is accepted. If increased funding is not available, it will dilute the current overall school's budget across all existing Newport schools.

	Year 1 2019/20 £	Year 2 2020/21 £	Year 3 2021/22 £	Year 4 2022/23 £	Notes
Welsh Medium		247,000	464,000	639,000	School Opening September 2020
Pillgwenlly Expansion			59,000	238,000	Expansion January 2022 Costs based on AWPU and 10 place LRB only

Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
Failure to move to formal consultation	H	L	The Council has been successful in a capital funding bid to facilitate this project that will support the commitment outlined in the approved WESP.	Chief Education Officer

* Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Corporate Plan

Council Improvement Plan (Aspirational People theme)

Education Service Plan

Options Available

Option 1: To move to formal consultation on the proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium primary school in Newport from September 2020 and as a result to relocate Pillgwenlly Primary School from its current site to the new school on the Whiteheads development from January 2022.

Option 2: Not to move to formal consultation on the proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium primary school in Newport from September 2020 and as a result to relocate Pillgwenlly Primary School from its current site to the new school on the Whiteheads development from January 2022.

Preferred Option and Why

The preferred option is Option 1. This will deliver on the commitment outlined in the WESP and is supported by a capital funding award of £5.8million from Welsh Government. This project will also assist the Council in supporting Welsh Government's charter of achieving 1 million Welsh speakers across Wales by 2050.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

Opening the Welsh-medium primary school in September 2020 is estimated to cost £247,000 for the 7-month period ending 31 March 2021. Expanding Pillgwenlly Primary School from January 2022 would be an estimated cost of £59,000 for the 3 months to 31 March 2022. The estimated costs for both have been identified within the Council's MTRP.

There is increasing pressure within the schools sector with increasing schools utilising reserves and moving into deficit balance positions. At the end of 2018/19, there were five schools in a deficit reserves position, of which one was a primary school and one a nursery. Schools are being challenged to find savings in order to deliver balanced budgets in future years. In spite of the challenging position from the limited ISB funds, there is a requirement to expand school provision within the Authority due to increasing demand for school places from the growing population and the need to further develop Welsh medium provision in line with Newport's WG approved WESP.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

The proposed action is in accordance with the statutory school reorganisation procedures set out in the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code. The proposal to establish a new Welsh medium primary school and to relocate the existing Pillgwenlly primary school to a new site on the Whiteheads is a regulated alteration and, therefore, a formal statutory consultation process has been carried out in accordance with the Code. A detailed consultation document will need to be prepared, setting out the educational reasons for the proposals, and meaningful consultation is required with key stakeholders, including children and young people, who are likely to be affected by the changes. At least 42 days will need to be allowed for this period of formal consultation. The Cabinet Member will then be invited to consider whether, in the light of the consultation responses, the Council should proceed with the necessary statutory notices.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

The proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium primary school in Newport will deliver on the commitment in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan; will contribute to the Welsh Government's aim to achieve 1 million Welsh speakers in the Country by 2050 and help to achieve the National Wellbeing Goal of 'a Wales of thriving Welsh language and culture'. It will also meet the growing demand locally for Welsh medium education, whilst taking advantage of the vacant building as Pill Primary relocates to a larger site. The report proposes to progress to the consultation stage which will be undertaken in accordance with the Welsh Government statutory School Organisation Code.

The preferred option will see an increase in numbers of staff, providing valuable job opportunities within the organisation and wider community. The new school will offer a range of standard roles requiring Welsh language skills helping to contribute to the Council's equality objectives and the People and Business Change Service Plan 2018-22 objectives including a workforce that will be representative of the population we serve, improving access to services in the medium of Welsh and promoting and increasing the use of Welsh in Newport.

Local issues

The local ward members for Caerleon and Pillgwenlly have been advised of the content of this report.

Councillor J Watkins:

Whilst I am aware of the Welsh government initiatives to increase the number of Welsh Speakers across Wales there would appear to be moderate appetite for this in the Newport area. Given it is not an area where the language has a high priority.

I am concerned also that while different funding schemes can be accessed to promote Welsh speaking schools there is as a result a bias against English speaking schools particularly in terms of funding. Indeed in terms of funding and financial investment there is a large disparity. In my view therefore this initiative gives rise to concern. Indeed some English speaking schools find themselves in fiscal difficulty while money is poured into Welsh speaking establishments creating an unfair imbalance. I and many

others view this as unacceptable. This imbalance needs to be addressed following which the introduction of another Welsh school would be acceptable.

Comments of Non-Executive Members

Councillor J Hughes:

I would like to support the proposal in my capacity as the Welsh Champion of the city of Newport. Whilst acknowledging this is a temporary proposal in relation to the seedling school in Caerleon, I am certain this will contribute and stimulate demand for the Welsh language in the city allowing the school to grow naturally whilst supporting immersion.

I am pleased to see the City of Newport increasing its Welsh language provision which supports the Welsh governments ambitious targets into the next decade. The proposal also makes appropriate use of two already established education sites in the city whilst allowing additional growth in the Pill area to be met. I also welcome the thought that has gone in to considering transport issues in both the long and short term and the opportunities this will bring to the continued regeneration of Pill.

On a personal level, I never thought having moved to Newport as a Welsh speaker over two decades ago that we would be discussing proposals to open a fourth Welsh language school in our city and this is a credit to the progress made in the City. I would like to thank colleagues in the education department for their efforts and the Leader of Newport City Council, Councillor Debbie Wilcox and Cabinet Member Councillor Gail Giles for supporting the drive to improve Welsh language provision and securing Welsh Government Capital funding.

Scrutiny Committees

None

Equalities Impact Assessment

The Equality Act 2010 contains a Public Sector Equality Duty which came into force on 06 April 2011. The Act identifies a number of 'protected characteristics', namely age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership. The new single duty aims to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the regular business of public authorities. Compliance with the duty is a legal obligation and is intended to result in better informed decision-making and policy development and services that are more effective for users. In exercising its functions, the Council must have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The Act is not overly prescriptive about the approach a public authority should take to ensure due regard, although it does set out that due regard to advancing equality involves: removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics; taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these differ from the need of other people; and encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

A Fairness & Equality Impact Assessment (FEIA) has been developed to support the decision making of this stage of the proposal. If the proposal is taken forward, the FEIA will be updated at each decision stage and published on the web site.

Children and Families (Wales) Measure

Children and Young People will be consulted as part of the statutory consultation process.

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Report writers need to indicate how they have considered the five things public bodies need to think about to show they have applied the sustainable development principle put into place by the Act. You will need to demonstrate you have considered the following:

- Long term: the importance of balancing short- term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long – term needs. **The proposal to establish an additional Welsh-medium primary school will increase the availability of Welsh-medium primary school places by 50% across the City. This will address the commitments outlined in the WESP and supports Welsh Government’s charter of achieving 1 million Welsh speakers across Wales by 2050. The proposal to relocate Pillgwenlly Primary School will enable the school to grow to a 3-form entry arrangement as outlined in the Council’s 21st Century Schools Band B programme. The school is currently oversubscribed, and in many cases, siblings are forced to attend different schools. Creating additional places in this school will ease this problem, and will have a positive impact on attendance, punctuality and parental engagement.**
- Prevention: How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help us meet our objectives. **The need for Welsh-medium education has grown significantly in recent years and there is currently no Welsh-medium education within the Caerleon or Pillgwenlly area. The proposal will therefore stimulate demand from pupils living in both of these areas, as children will have the opportunity to attend a Welsh-medium school local to their home address. The proposal will deliver 430 additional pupil places that will provide capacity for accelerated and long-term growth in Welsh-medium education over future years and potentially relieve pressure on other schools.**
- Integration: Consider how the proposals will impact on our wellbeing objectives, our wellbeing goals, other objectives or those of other public bodies. **A formal school reorganisation proposal will be undertaken and supported at each stage by a FEIA that will consider impact. This proposal supports the “A prosperous Wales”, “A more equal Wales”, “A Wales of cohesive communities” and “A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language” Well-being Goals and has no adverse effect on any of the other Well-being Goals. In addition, this proposal supports the Newport City Council Well-being Objective “To improve skills, educational outcomes and employment opportunities”.**
- Collaboration: have you considered how acting in collaboration with any other person or any other part of our organisation could help meet our wellbeing objectives. **A formal school reorganisation proposal will be undertaken and supported at each stage by a FEIA that will consider impact. The proposal has been developed in response to representations from a range of stakeholders including the Newport Welsh Education Forum and accords with the commitment outlined in the WESP.**
- Involvement: The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the wellbeing goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the City we serve. **A formal school reorganisation proposal will be undertaken and supported at each stage by a FEIA that will consider impact. This proposal will include a period of formal consultation that will offer the opportunity for engagement with all stakeholders and will include a series of drop-in events where people can find out more information about the proposal and how it may affect them.**

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Section 17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty on the Local Authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

Consultation

None at this stage but this will be facilitated with key stakeholders as part of the school reorganisation proposal.

Background Papers

None

Date: 17 June 2019