

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

Date: 8 February 2022

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Phyl Davies

Portfolio Holder for Education

REPORT TITLE: Ysgol Cedewain Special School – Transforming Education Programme

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval to submit a Full Business Case (FBC) to the Welsh Government for capital investment to replace the existing Ysgol Cedewain building in Newtown
- 1.2 The project is included within the Council's Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) for Band B, which was approved by Welsh Government and the Cabinet in July 2017
- 1.3 The Strategic Outline Case was approved by Cabinet in May 2020 and Welsh Government in July 2020.
- 1.4 The estimated required funding, is as follows:

Welsh Government contribution 75%	£14,788,252
PCC 25%	£4,929,418
Total	£19,717,670

- 1.5 The approved funding envelope at the previous Outline Business Case stage was £22m, therefore this now releases approximately £3m within the Council's Band B Programme, which will be re-directed to other projects.

2. Background

Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys

- 2.1 On the 14th April 2020, a new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys was approved by the Leader via a delegated decision.

2.2 The Strategy was developed following extensive engagement with a range of stakeholders during two separate periods between October 2019 and March 2020. The Strategy sets out a new vision education in Powys, as follows:

'All children and young people in Powys will experience a high quality, inspiring education to help develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that will enable them to become healthy, personally fulfilled, economically productive, socially responsible and globally engaged citizens of 21st century Wales.'

2.3 The new strategy also sets out a number of guiding principles which will underpin the transformation of education in Powys. These are as follows:

- *A world class rural education system that has learner entitlement at its core*
- *Schools that are fully inclusive, with a culture of deep collaboration in order to improve learner outcomes and experience*
- *A broad choice and high quality of provision for 14 – 19 year old learners, that includes both academic and vocational provision, meeting the needs of all learners, communities and the Powys economy*
- *Welsh-medium provision that is accessible and provides a full curriculum in Welsh from Meithrin to age 19 and beyond*
- *Provision for learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN)/Additional Learning Needs (ALN) that is accessible as near to home as is practicably possible, with the appropriate specialist teaching, support and facilities that enables every learner to meet their potential*
- *A digitally-rich schools' sector that enables all learners and staff to enhance their teaching and learning experience*
- *Community-focused schools that are the central point for multi-agency services to support children, young people, families and the community*
- *Early years provision that is designed to meet the needs of all children, mindful of their particular circumstances, language requirements or any special or additional learning needs*
- *Financially and environmentally sustainable schools*
- *The highest priority is given to staff wellbeing and professional development*

2.4 The new strategy sets out a number of Strategic Aims and Objectives, to shape the Council's work to transform the Powys education system over the coming years. One of the Strategic Aims of the Strategy is to *'improve learner entitlement and experience'*.

2.5 The strategy also includes an enabling action to implement *'a major capital investment programme that will ensure that schools in Powys*

have inspiring, environmentally sustainable buildings that can provide opportunities for wider community activity, including where possible childcare services, early years, ALN, multi-agency support and community and leisure facilities.'

Case for Change

2.6 Ysgol Cedewain is situated in the town of Newtown in the county of Powys and provides education for pupils from 2 and a half years old to 19 years old, with a wide range of complex educational, sensory and physical needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN), or education health and care plan (ECHCP).

2.7 **The case for change is based on the need to improve facilities for pupils at Ysgol Cedewain. The school is in a very poor condition and has significant site constraints:**

- The current building is in very poor condition, categorised as condition C. Most of the classrooms are ageing portable structures and, in some cases, are in need of urgent maintenance and repair, nearing end of usable lifespan. It is a sprawling site, spread over a large area. The distance and obstacles between classrooms mean that a lot of time and effort is spent safely escorting pupils with complex sensory and physical needs around the school site. This can be particularly challenging during bad weather. The buildings and layout also severely limit the provision of specialist equipment for pupils with significant additional needs. Specialist equipment is not available in all areas of the school therefore limiting access and mobility for some pupils.
- There are significant health and safety and safeguarding issues with the site, including a public right of way that runs across it, difficult access areas and poor parking facilities. The minibus parking area uses up part of the playground, which restricts use at peak times.

2.8 **The requested investment will deliver a brand new, purpose-built school with 108 places in age-appropriate environments. The new build will deliver the following:**

- Specialist support and provision to pupils with significant additional learning needs, in a modern and innovative learning environment and will better equip teachers to tailor lessons to meet the specific needs of the learners, improving accessibility to learners across the North of Powys;
- Appropriate learning spaces to deliver the new curriculum;

- Specialist equipment, including IT facilities, to support teaching and learning outcomes which will help to ensure all learners maximise their potential;
- More effective use of the site - the school will no longer be dependent on demountable accommodation which is currently dispersed across the site;
- A holistic integrated multi agency approach, with dedicated physiotherapy and medical rooms, and a hydrotherapy pool and sensory rooms and garden. The facilities will support the school's well-established relationships with the specialist services and will also further cement the Council's relationship with Powys Teaching Health Board;
- A fully equipped early years class base, with breakout space, calming room, laundry and hygiene facilities, together with an individual outdoor learning area, which will enable the school to increase their early years provision. The facilities would also enable the school to consider providing after school care, holiday play schemes and wrap around childcare and to support the childcare offer for learners with additional needs;
- A flagship community focused school, with community groups being able to access the facilities out of school hours. Safeguarding will be ensured as the school will be able to lock down the teaching areas while enabling community access to the community zone;
- Therapeutic facilities available to hire, - these include a hydrotherapy pool and changing facilities, rebound room, touchtrust room, community kitchen and café, meeting room and hall. The hire of the facilities will be managed by the school and provide additional revenue income. There are very few therapeutic facilities within the locality and it is anticipated that there will be a strong demand.

2.9 The new school will be built on a part of the current site of Ysgol Cedewain and part of the adjoining primary school – Maesyrrhandir CP School. There will be a new grassed sports pitch and Multi Use Games Area for shared usage by Ysgol Cedewain & Maesyrrhandir CP School.

3. Advice

- 3.1 The advice of officers is to submit the FBC to Welsh Government for approval. This would enable construction to commence with the new school being opened to pupils in Summer Term 2023.
- 3.2 Actual costs are now confirmed – see Appendix A – Full Business Case.

- 3.3 Welsh Government intervention rate for special schools included within the Band B programme is 75%, which represents good value for money for the council.

4. **Resource Implications**

4.1 **Financial Capital:**

The project will be funded through the 21st C Schools Band B Programme. The total cost associated with the project is **£19,717,670**. The Council is requesting that Welsh Government provide 75% of the total cost of the project, with Powys County Council responsible for the remaining 25%. The project is funded from Powys 21st C Schools Band B programme- the overall Band B Programme will need to be adjusted to take account of the cost of this scheme to ensure that the overall funding envelope is not exceeded.

Capital funding from Powys County Council will be profiled as follows:

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Borrowing	961,681	0	3,967,737	0	4,929,418
Total PCC funding	961,681	0	3,967,737	0	4,929,418

The borrowing detailed above is included in the capital programme and therefore the costs of borrowing are included in the council's capital charges. The following capital from Welsh Government is requested:

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Total Welsh Government funding	0	10,209,999	4,208,547	369,706	14,788,252

The capital costs include an allocation of £2m, as allocated provisional sums for risk, with a low likelihood of occurrence. A request to utilise this sum as contingency to cover off unforeseen costs as the scheme adapts to become Net Zero Carbon has been submitted. Welsh Government advise that funding would be separate from the main grant and would only be released if incurred. Evidence would need to be provided in the form of a compensation event.

4.2 **Financial Revenue:**

Based on the current accommodation schedule, the funding delivered to the school via the schools funding formula will increase by an estimated £37,586 taking into account the floor area and other premises factors. This figure will potentially change with the revised formula. This pressure will need to be considered by the Schools Service as it updates its Integrated Business Plan to include provision

for 2023/24 budget planning. There are no rates implications for the school as rates are not charged for special schools due to the exemption category for property used by people with disabilities.

4.3 Impact on balance sheet

The new school will remain on the public sector balance sheet.

4.4 Overall affordability and funding support

75% of the costs of the new school will be funded by Welsh Government, and 25% from PCC. Cabinet and Welsh Government approved the 21st C Schools Band B Strategic Outline Programme in July 2017.

The Council sets its Prudential Indicators, under the Prudential Code, based on making prudent and affordable decisions and the 21st Schools' project were included in these indicators. The annual cost for the project is £190,000 based on the spend profile above over a 50 year life.

If the new building was not to proceed, the Council would need to continue maintaining a poor condition building with an estimated backlog maintenance figure of £2.4m.

The existing infrastructure is included within the development boundary and will be demolished to make room for playing and sporting areas. The demolition costs are included within the funding envelope.

4.5 Procurement:

“The appointed contractor was procured under the new SEWSCAP3 framework. Appropriate bonds and collateral warranties will be obtained, and contract signed prior to commencement. The contractor will also be required to secure a Project Bank Account as a condition of the contract”.

4.6 Section 151 Officer comments.

4.7 Corporate Property comments:

“There are no implications to Corporate Property. The current Ysgol Cedewain estate will be demolished to make room for the new-build and playing areas. No assets will be declared surplus to Schools Service requirements as part of this scheme.”

4.8 Project delivery will require specialist PCC staff resourcing from various departments, including ICT, Schools Service, Finance and Catering and Cleaning. These service areas will be kept informed of the development of the proposal throughout the statutory process.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Legal: The recommendations can be accepted from a legal point of view.
- 5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report."

6. Data Protection

- 6.1 N/A

7. Comment from local member(s)

- 7.1 Comments received from Cllr David Selby:

1. The replacement of the buildings of Cedewain School is long overdue. The current physical structure is far from ideal and this new school is an essential investment.
2. Reference is made to community facilities being made available. It is key that this is written into the establishment of the new school. Unfortunately, there is a severe lack of community facilities in the surrounding area and the building of the new school reduces available open space. The school facilities should be available wherever possible to those living in the nearby estate.
3. The new school should have clear links with the neighbouring Maesyrrhandir school for the benefit of both schools.

- 7.2 Comments received from Cllr Daniel Rowlands:

Thank you for sharing this report. The current school is in a very poor condition, and in order to deliver a world class education where pupils can learn in a safe environment, a new building is required. I support this report.

8. Impact Assessment

- 8.1 An initial impact assessment of the preferred way forward is attached as Appendix B. The impact assessment considers the proposal's impact on the Welsh Government's well-being goals, as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The summary of the impact assessment is as follows:

The impact assessment suggests that the impact is generally positive with few negative aspects, such as the loss of Ysgol Maesyrrhandir sports field currently used as an area to exercise and walk dogs by the local community. The development of new age-appropriate innovative

facilities for additional learning needs pupils in the North Powys area would address many issues related to the poor condition of the buildings, improving their learner entitlement and experience for pupils aged 3 - 19. The proposed changes will meet the challenges of the anticipated rise in numbers of severely disabled or non - ambulant pupils in the area and may lead to less pupils needing to be placed in schools outside of the County.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 To seek Cabinet approval to submit the Full Business Case (FBC), as set out in Appendix A, to Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Programme for capital investment to replace the existing Ysgol Cedewain building in Newtown.

- 9.2 To note that the estimated cost of the overall project is **£19,717,670** with Welsh Government funding 75% of the costs, and the Council funding 25%.

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