



# **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 21/22**

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**8<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2021**

**SCHOOL MODERNISATION - 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME (BAND B UPDATE)**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES**

**Report Author: Andrea Richards, Service Director for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Transformation**

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the Council's revised 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Strategic Outline Programme (SOP), recently approved in principle by the Welsh Government.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the contents of this report.
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise any parts in greater depth.

## **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To provide the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with an update on the investment secured through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Colleges Programme to improve the quality of the education provision and learning environments for all learners throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf.

## **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 A Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) was submitted to the Welsh Government in July 2017 to secure funding through Band B of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Colleges Programme. The SOP outlined the Council's ambitions to continue to invest in the education portfolio throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf, and an approval in principle was secured from the Welsh Government totalling £167 million. This

investment was to be split between both Capital and MIM (Mutual Investment Model) funded projects.

4.2 Since receiving approval in 2017, several projects have been progressed. The current position of the existing Programme is as follows:

- **Hirwaun Primary** has been completed;
- Works at **YGG Aberdar** are on site and progressing well;
- Works at **YG Rhydywaun** are on site and progressing well;
- Planning consultation has commenced for a new **Welsh medium school in Rhydyfelin**;
- Planning consultation for 3 new primary schools funded through MIM, these are **Pontyclun Primary, Penygawsi Primary** and **Llanilltud Faerdref Primary**;
- The creation of **2 all-through schools** is progressing in **Pontypridd** and **Hawthorn**; and
- The new 6<sup>th</sup> form teaching block and significant improvements to **Bryncelynog Comprehensive School** are at planning consultation stage.

## **5. UPDATE/CURRENT POSITION**

5.1 Since our SOP approval in 2017 a number of national and local priorities have been realigned which has resulted in new legislation being developed and disseminated by the Welsh Government to all Local Authorities. This includes Cymraeg 2050, Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act, New Curriculum for Wales, the 10 year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), and Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales.

5.2 The Council has made a number of commitments to ensure that it can deliver its statutory obligations in line with these strategies, and where it can, exceed them. This has resulted in the submission of an updated SOP which has been approved in principle by the Welsh Government. The delivery of the revised SOP will allow the Council to invest more in Welsh medium education, it will ensure that improvements to its special school provision continue, it will deliver more improved 21<sup>st</sup> Century classroom environments, and will create more community facilities on our school sites. The Council's overarching ambition is to increase the number of learners benefitting from 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools funding, investing in our schools to meet the needs of our young people and our wider communities, as we continue with our mission to *deliver equity and excellence in education and enhanced well-being for all*.

5.3 The revised SOP and the significant increase in the investment allows the Council to deliver on these commitments and achieve these ambitious targets. The original SOP totalled £167 million of investment and the new Programme totals £252 million, which is a substantial increase that enables a further £85 million to be invested in the schools of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

5.4 Development work will now commence on the revised Programme and a number of key projects will be progressed. This additional 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools funding has been earmarked for the following projects:

- Ysgol Llanhari – to modernise and replace the majority of the existing buildings;
- Ysgol Cwm Rhondda – creating a new 3-19 all through school by remodelling and modernising the existing site or building a brand new school on an alternative site;
- A new English medium primary provision for Glyncoch to replace the two existing schools, subject to statutory school reorganisation consultation and decision making processes;
- A new special school to cater for the increased demand in the Council's special school provision;
- A new 21st Century school for Penrhys Primary;
- A new 21st Century school for Maesybryn Primary; and,
- A new 21st Century school for Tonysguboriau Primary.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The Council has to satisfy its public sector duties under the Equalities Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties Councils must in making decisions, have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics.

6.2 Equality and Community Impact Assessments will be prepared as appropriate and will be shared with the appropriate committees at the appropriate time.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

7.1 Any statutory consultation required in respect of any projects delivered within this Programme will be undertaken in accordance with the arrangements outlined within the School Organisation Code 2018.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 As projects are developed and final costs identified, individual reports setting out the Council's financial contribution will be put before Council for approval on a project by project basis.

8.2 Any revenue and capital costs that are accrued in preparing financial business cases for Welsh Government approval will be met from within existing budgets.

8.3 All projects will be developed in accordance with the Welsh Government's business case approval process.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 Part 1 of the Education Act 1996 (“the 1996 Act”) imposes a number of general duties on all local authorities in Wales. The general duty in section 13 of the 1996 Act is to contribute (so far as the Council’s powers enable them to do so) towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by securing that efficient primary education and secondary education are available to meet the needs of the population of their area.
- 9.2 Section 13A (3) of the 1996 Act states that a local authority in Wales must ensure that their relevant education functions and their relevant training functions are exercised by the authority with a view to promoting high standards and promoting the fulfilment of learning potential by every person to whom the subsection applies, including those who are of compulsory school age or are below school age and are registered as pupils at schools maintained by the authority.
- 9.3 Section 14 of the 1996 Act then requires the Council to secure sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education in the Council’s area. Schools available for an area shall not be regarded as sufficient unless they are sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity for appropriate education.
- 9.4 Appropriate education means education which offers such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of (a) the pupils’ different ages, abilities and aptitudes; and (b) the different periods for which they may be expected to remain at school, including practical instruction and training appropriate to their different needs.
- 9.5 Powers for Councils to develop school organisation proposals are governed by the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the Code. Local authorities must, when exercising functions under Part 3 of the 2013 Act, act in accordance with any relevant requirements contained in the Code and must have regard to any relevant guidelines contained in it. A copy of the Code is found here: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/schoolorganisation-code-second-edition.pdf>

## **10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL’S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP**

- 10.1 There are links to RCTCBC’s Corporate Plan for the period between 2020 to 2024, specifically the priority:
- Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper
    - Ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education.
- 10.2 Due regard will be made to all seven well-being goals and the Five Ways of Working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, during project development.

It is expected that each project will contribute to achieving the wellbeing goals by:

- Improving sustainability of school buildings in the Council portfolio through a commitment to achieving a zero carbon building and building to BREEAM excellent standards.
- Providing additional school places to meet Welsh Government targets and to promote the Welsh language in the community.
- Ensuring an inclusive and equitable education is available for all learners.
- Opening new community facilities and creating opportunities for local people to utilise.

This proposal would achieve the five ways of working by:

- Creating new school environments that can deliver the New Curriculum for Wales as set out in the national mission statement.
- Providing first class learning facilities for pupils and the wider community and contribute towards a healthier Wales by providing additional outdoor sport facilities for pupils.
- Contributing towards a prosperous Wales by committing to opportunities for local tradespeople and to use local resources, wherever possible, to build new schools.
- Engaging with the community on a thorough consultation with opportunities for all stakeholders in the community to engage throughout the process.

10.3 An Equality Impact Assessment, including further detail on the contribution of each project to the Wellbeing of Future generations Act, will form an integral part of project development.

## 11. **CONCLUSION**

11.1 This significant increase in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Colleges funding for Rhondda Cynon Taf provides an exciting opportunity for more learners and our communities to benefit from improved educational and community facilities.

11.2 It will allow more learners to be taught through the medium of Welsh. It will support the access of significantly more learners, including the most vulnerable, to experience 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools' facilities. It will deliver exciting opportunities for the community focussed schools' agenda, putting schools at the heart of our communities. It will help us deliver our Net Zero Carbon targets. This investment will support the Council to deliver its mission, '*to deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all*'.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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