



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

7TH NOVEMBER 2022

**21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME – BASIC NEED ACCOMMODATION
ADDITIONAL CLASSROOMS AT
Y PANT COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH
PARTICIPATION AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE, COUNCILLOR RHYS LEWIS.**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the provision of additional teaching accommodation at Y Pant, following the Report presented to Cabinet on 13 December 2021 highlighting the increasing pressures on pupil numbers in the south of the County Borough.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the changes that impact upon school places as detailed within this report.
- 2.2 Approve the changes to the scope of the project.
- 2.3 Approve the increase in the capital investment to build a new two-storey teaching block at Y Pant.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To continue to deliver on the Council's statutory duties and to provide the appropriate number of school places in the right locations. Delivering this statutory duty is becoming increasingly challenging given the rising requests for school admissions in the south of the County Borough.
- 3.2 Since the last report was presented to Cabinet in December 2021, the scope of the scheme has changed which has impacted on both project costs and the delivery programme.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 As referenced in the Cabinet Report dated 13 December 2021, school places in the south of the County Borough are being carefully monitored due to the number of housing developments being constructed in the locality, increasing pressure on the capacity of our secondary schools in this area. For example, as at September 2022, 207 new dwellings have been built and are already occupied on the Llanilid housing development site. This site is within Y Pant's catchment area, with planning consent approved to deliver hundreds more over the next few years.
- 4.2 The Education Directorate continues to proactively manage these pressures and invest in our schools, and to seek Cabinet support to increase capacity in schools where an increase in demand is anticipated. In addition to this, the Directorate has a responsibility for implementing changes to catchment areas where necessary to help alleviate pressures on pupil places.
- 4.3 As alluded to in the previous Cabinet Report, capacity pressures are also affecting the Council areas of Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan resulting in changes to the catchment areas in their localities. Consequently, pupils who reside in RCT but attend out of county primary schools, have experienced difficulties in securing a place at their associated secondary school causing additional pressures for Y Pant in particular. The tangible impact of these changes, is that 20 pupils currently attending out of county primary schools, secured a place in Y Pant in September 2022, with RCT already receiving a further 32 applications for September 2023. To confirm, despite the primary school attended, these pupils live within RCT and within the catchment area of Y Pant.
- 4.4 Current data shows that of the 1420 pupils on roll at Y Pant, 92% reside within the catchment area, suggesting the pressure on the school is predominantly from in-catchment pupils. The Council has already received 268 applications for Year 7 pupils to access the school in September 2023 against a school admission number of 233. Table 1 outlines the impact of the housing developments in the South of the County Borough area on pupil numbers in Y Pant and neighbouring secondary schools in the area.

Table 1: Number of Pupils on Roll and School Capacity

SCHOOL	NOR	CAPACITY
Y Pant	1420	1402
Bryncelynnog	1362	1442
Tonyrefail (Secondary age pupils)	1330	1387

- 4.5 The risk of not having enough school places in Y Pant is that pupils will not be able to attend their in-catchment school which means that the Council will have to transport and fund children to attend their second choice, or nearest suitable school, which would be Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School. This clearly is a concern as Table 1 highlights the capacity pressures faced by the three neighbouring schools in this area. Furthermore, the costs of transporting children to their out of catchment school would be estimated to be circa 60k a year, which would add to our escalating costs for school transport and negatively impact upon our carbon emissions and our ambition to be a carbon neutral Council by 2030.
- 4.6 The Council's Admissions Team has been working proactively with the schools in the south of the County Borough to ensure that out-of-catchment pupils attend their home school. If an application for a school place is unsuccessful, parents/carers have the right to appeal that decision. Table 2 shows, despite the best efforts of the Admissions Team, the Independent Appeals Panel uphold a significant number of appeals. In these circumstances, learners may well have exceptional and compelling social, emotional, medical or family reasons why a placement at Y Pant is essential and should be agreed.

Table 2: Number of Admissions Appeals at Y Pant

Year	Appeals held	Successful	Unsuccessful	Withdrawn
21/22	3	2	1	0
20/21	16	5	10	1
19/20	27	10	17	0
18/19	0	0	0	0
17/18	29	5	21	3
16/17	14	5	9	0
15/16	19	15	2	2
Total	108	42	60	6

- 4.7 As Cabinet will be aware, at the meeting of 13 December 2021 the Council approved the increase in capacity of Y Pant by delivering a two-phase construction programme. It was agreed that initially 4 classrooms would be constructed, and a further 4 classrooms added at a later date, ensuring the school capacity is future proofed in the medium to long-term. At the time of the report, construction costs to construct a single storey building were estimated to be £900k with the additional costs for design/ build, prelims and project management fees to be met from within existing resources.
- 4.8 Following lengthy discussions with the Corporate Design Team, and in an attempt to secure best value for money to deliver both phases for the Council,

the recommended delivery approach has changed. The preferred option is to now construct a two-storey building at the outset, and fit-out four classrooms only at this stage. The ground floor will remain an open space where additional classrooms can be created at a later stage with relative ease and minimum disruption, the costs of which will be met from within the existing education capital programme.

4.9 The financial and logistical benefits of phasing the construction programme in this way is as follows:

- This phasing option would not incur abortive costs as no temporary works would be required. For example, a temporary roof would not be required as the fabric of the building in its entirety would be complete in phase 1;
- There would be no future warranty issues as there would be no requirement to use another contractor to construct a second floor on top of the existing structure. To note, additional work could also invalidate the warranties on the existing building;
- No temporary accommodation would be required to deliver the additional classrooms as providing accommodation on the first floor allows works to the ground floor to be undertaken whilst the school is operational. If we were to build the ground floor then add a second floor, the school would not be able to utilise this building for the duration of the build, leading to additional temporary accommodation costs and logistical issues estimated to be in region of circa £600k;
- This phasing option significantly reduces the timescales of delivering phase 2 as the works required to fit out the ground floor would be relatively simple and could be carried out over a summer holiday period. Building a second storey would take considerably longer, causing further disruption for the school at considerable cost.
- Our preferred option provides best value for money and is estimated to be significantly less expensive over both phases.

4.10 Unfortunately, given the volatility in the construction industry, costs for this project, along with many other construction projects across the Council, have escalated significantly. The cost of construction materials nationally continues to escalate, reaching a 40 year high based on the annual growth of the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) Materials Cost Index. Increased global demand in the construction sector, combined with the multiple and complex impacts of the COVID pandemic and logistics issues have caused unprecedented shortages, delays and ultimately increased prices in materials and labour across the sector. Because of this, demand has outstripped supply, giving rise to longer lead times and inevitably price increases, as contractors are now more risk averse when pricing packages of work.

- 4.11 Nationally, complications resulting from Brexit have exacerbated this situation affecting all aspects of trade and labour availability, the repercussions of which are acutely impacting the construction sector. In addition, the recent invasion of Ukraine has placed further pressure on supply chains that were already under strain. Building material costs continue to rise, with +20% additional cost increases expected on materials that use more energy in their manufacturing processes such as steel, cement etc, as energy prices continue to rise across Europe. All in all, this perfect storm has created an increasingly volatile market within the construction industry.
- 4.12 As a result of the increase in costs being felt across the construction industry, as well as the major changes to the scope and delivery programme of the project which essentially now delivers a two-storey building rather than a single-storey, the total project costs to deliver this option is an estimated £3.466M (including professional and project management fees, and a risk allocation). This equates an increase from £900k to £1.9M for the construction element. An education budget of circa £1.7M has already been earmarked for delivery in the current capital programme, and the £1.7m shortfall can be met from Education Revenue Maintenance Grant.
- 4.13 To confirm alternative options to increase the accommodation at Y Pant have been explored, including building another storey on the existing school building as well as investigating the use of mobile classrooms. The challenging logistics of building on the existing school whilst the school is in session has ruled out this option, and the costs for the use of mobile classrooms do not provide the savings we had hoped. For context, high level costs for a number of mobile accommodation options have been sought:
- re-locating a used two-classroom mobile from a neighbouring RCT school would cost in the region of £1M;
 - the costs to purchase and site a four-classroom refurbished mobile unit have been estimated at £1.3M; and,
 - to purchase a brand new four-classroom mobile unit would cost in the region of circa £2.1M.
- 4.14 Whilst these solutions appear to be less expensive than the preferred option, none of these solutions provide the future proofing required for the delivery of the 8 classrooms we will require within the next 4-6 years due to the considerable housing developments in this area.
- 4.15 We have also considered utilising temporary accommodation in the interim and constructing the permanent solution in two years' time when budgets may be under less pressure. However, using the BCIS as an indication of where construction costs will be, it seems that we would be looking at an uplift of circa 13% on the current construction costs which would be required in addition to the costs estimated above for the use of temporary accommodation in the interim.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 The Council has to satisfy its public sector duties under the Equality 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.
- 5.2 All works carried out will be fully compliant with the Equality Act (2010) which will ensure that the new facilities are fully accessible.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A Welsh Impact Assessment is not required at this juncture. However, if further works are required which triggers a statutory school consultation, then an assessment will be required in accordance with the School Organisation Code (2018) as stated in paragraph 7.1 below.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 There are no formal consultation requirements arising from these proposals as the increase in pupil numbers is below the threshold required to trigger a statutory school organisation consultation. However, if Cabinet decide to proceed with any future options brought before them to build new schools, or significantly increase the capacity of schools, the Council will have to meet the requirements of the School Organisation Code and undertake the necessary statutory consultations.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 As referenced in Section 4, the costs associated with this proposal are estimated at £3.466M including a risk allowance. Please see section 4:12 for further information.
- 8.2 The increase in costs can be funded from resources already set aside in the existing capital programme and the repairs and maintenance revenue grant funding for school modernisation, earmarked to support the ongoing Band B Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme.

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 OF THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 10.1 The Council's Corporate Plan commits to "Continue to invest in improving school buildings, to ensure the County Borough's pupils have the learning environment fit for the 21st Century".
- 10.2 The proposals considered in the report contribute to all 7 wellbeing goals with the Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015 and due regard has been made to the Five Ways of Working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

11. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

- 11.1 This proposal is relevant and will benefit the wards within the Y Pant catchment area.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 Cabinet will be aware that school places in the south of the County Borough are extremely constrained and that the additional teaching accommodation at Y Pant will alleviate the immediate pressures currently being faced at this time.
- 12.2 It is recommended therefore that consideration be given to agree to the construction of the two-storey teaching block at Y Pant with the phased programme to fit out the first floor initially and subsequently the ground floor when the capacity demands at the school dictate. This will allow the Council to continue to deliver on its statutory duty to provide the appropriate number of school places in the right locations.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
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Background Papers

Link to Cabinet Report of 13 December 2021:

[Planning of School Places South of the Borough.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

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