

CABINET – 30TH APRIL 2013

SUBJECT: 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS – ACQUISITION OF FORMER ALDI SITE, RHYMNEY

REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on developments in relation to Priority 2 of the 21st Century Schools Band A bids, namely the Rhymney 3-18 proposal.

2. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 2.1 The report links directly to the Education for Life, sustainability, regeneration and equality strategies.

3. THE REPORT

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the project proposes a new primary school (plus potentially an integrated childrens centre) on the Rhymney Comprehensive site. The project bid also made provision for other enhanced community facilities.
- 3.2 Property Services circulated details of the former ALDI site in Rhymney in December 2012. The site makes provision for circa 2.4 acres. The sale price amounts to £300,000 which includes the site plus building.
- 3.3 The landowners had spent circa £3m in recent years acquiring the site plus rebuild from the former Kwik Save to an ALDI store.
- 3.4 It became apparent that this represented a suitable alternative and more compliant Upper Rhymney School site. The present school site is in close proximity to the ALDI site.
- 3.5 The governing body met on 15 April 2013 and are in support of acquiring the site and seeking WG approval to include it within a revised Rhymney 3-18 proposal. It is anticipated the costs of acquisition and provision of a new school could be funded from the £12m bid.
- 3.6 There is merit in seeking WG approval to retitle the proposal along the lines of an Upper Rhymney Valley regeneration proposal. The last decade has seen significant improvement to Education buildings in the area, including new White Rose Primary, new Bryn Awel (Lower Rhymney) Primary, two major extensions to Rhymney Comprehensive (replacing circa 30 demountable classrooms), plus double classroom build at Ysgol Y Lawnt. These combined with the specific 3-18 proposal would leave Upper Rhymney Primary as the one major school not to be involved in upgrade during this period.
- 3.7 Initial responses have been sought with Planning, Engineers and the Environment Agency. These have been generally positive with few changes required.

- 3.8 The agents for the landowner are seeking a speedy resolution to the matter.
- 3.9 There is no guarantee that WG will incorporate this proposal into its 21st century schools approval but the acquisition was supported at a recent meeting of CCBC's 21st Century Schools Board. In the event that this site does not progress as a school then there is housing potential, albeit there is currently little or no interest in housing presently in this area.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 An Impact Assessment screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and no potential for unlawful discrimination has been identified affecting one or more of the target equality groups. Upgrading of Upper Rhymney Primary will ensure that catchment pupils will have, regardless of their individual circumstances and backgrounds, the same improved education provision as the pupils in other local catchment areas have had through the upgrades to their schools noted in 3.6 above.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 These have been outlined in the report. The intention would be to include site acquisition and adaptation to make new school provision and incorporate in the original £12m bid sum (at 2011 prices).

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None.

7. CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 All comments received have been reflected in the report.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Members to agree the land (and building) purchase in the sum of £300,000 and to seek WG approval to incorporate this proposal into a revised Upper Rhymney Valley School Regeneration Strategy from the £12m approved bid.

9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 To be apprised of developments.

10. STATUTORY POWER

- 10.1 The School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
The Education (School Organisation Proposals) (Wales) Regulations 1999.
The Education (Maintained Special Schools) (Wales) Regulations 1999.
The Change of Category of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2001.
The Learning and Skills Act 2000.
The School Organisation Proposals by the National Assembly for Wales Regulations 2004.

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