



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 12TH SEPTEMBER 2022

**SUBJECT: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING PROGRAMME –
TRINITY FIELDS SCHOOL EXPANSION UPDATE REPORT**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE
SERVICES**

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Scrutiny Members on a proposed amendment to the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme Band B proposal for the expansion of Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre.
- 1.2 The proposal seeks to amend the previously endorsed decision of Cabinet on the 7th April 2021 to expand the school on to the Council owned sports pitch adjacent to the existing school site.
- 1.3 A report will be considered by Cabinet on the 21st September 2022 and as key consultees, the Scrutiny Committees views are sought on the amended plans.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The decision taken by Cabinet on the 7th April 2021 approved the expansion of Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre on to the Council owned sports pitch adjacent to the School and set aside circa £300k to create an alternative pitch and enhance the spectator and changing facilities at the nearby Sue Noake Leisure Centre.
- 2.2 The proposed expansion of the school formed part of the Council's Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Strategic Outline Plan and would enable the school to continue to provide first class learning facilities for existing learners as well as creating 80 additional places at the school to manage with future demand.
- 2.3 Over the years the school has established an excellent reputation as a provider of education to our most vulnerable learners, many of whom have a wide range of learning difficulties and physical and medical needs. A 2019 Estyn Inspection awarded the school five 'Excellent' judgements with inspectors making a number of very positive comments about the school, its leadership and its inclusivity.

- 2.4 As the Schools reputation has grown, so too have the number of pupils on roll. The school and the LA are already employing a number of strategies to cope with this additional demand. Without additional capacity there is a risk that vulnerable children will not have their needs met locally and out of county provision would be required. There is also a risk that placements can be directed by Tribunal for children within or outside the locality.
- 2.5 The decision taken by Cabinet in April was taken in the face of significant community opposition to the scheme. The opposition was largely from members of the Rugby Club that are the main user of the sports pitch and a group established to save Green Spaces within Ystrad Mynach. The proposal was placed under further pressure as a result of an untimely series of sewage breaches at the Sue Noake Leisure Centre, close to the location of the proposed new pitch.
- 2.6 The Council recognised that the progression of the scheme to expand Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre relied heavily on Welsh Water resolving the sewage issues at Sue Noake Leisure Centre and so placed the expansion on hold in June 2021 in lieu of remedial action. Work has continued since to resolve those issues and Welsh Water have been very supportive in this regard, undertaking surveys, carrying out desilting works and clean ups on extended sections of the sewer.
- 2.7 That aside, a year has now been lost in this crucial development and the school is facing further demand for places in September. The pressure to provide additional places and facilities at the school has never been more acute and a proposal now needs to progress at pace.
- 2.8 On this basis, a compromise solution that enables the additional places to be provided in the most time efficient manner was sought with Officers revisiting the original expansion proposal, with a view to developing some innovative alternatives that did not involve the loss of the sports pitch. A suggestion was identified that seeks to develop a two storey extension on part of the Schools Car Park, which would create an additional ten classrooms and some additional facilities (see 5.6).
- 2.9 However there are a number of features that have been asked for by learners and would have been available to the wider community that will not be possible should the school be expanded in this manner. These are set out in bold text in table 5.6. This proposal is also likely to require the development of an additional Special School as part of the Council's Sustainable Communities for Learning Band C proposals although this will of course require approval at a future point.
- 2.10 While the designs continue to be refined, the proposal has received unanimous support from the School and its Governing Body and Welsh Government have also verified that no further consultation for this proposal would be required. Being able to provide the places without losing the sports pitch is also considered likely to be favourably received by the Community.
- 2.11 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the revised proposals to expand Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre and support a recommendation to Cabinet to proceed on this basis.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Prior to a report being presented to Cabinet, Scrutiny Members are asked to: -

- a) Consider and scrutinise the information contained in the Report
- b) Endorse the recommendation to Cabinet to expand Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre via a two storey extension on part of the School Car Park
- c) To ask officers to investigate a longer term option to create a 2nd Special School in the Borough under Band C of the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise an amended proposal to expand the Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre as part of its Band B Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme
- 4.2 To seek Member endorsement on the recommendations to Cabinet outlined in 3.1 prior to Cabinet consideration.
- 4.3 To assist the Council in discharging its duties in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 Alternative Configuration for Build

- 5.2 The Council recognises that there are many routes to realising transformational change and investment in key projects is important in order to meet the strategic vision of the Band B programme.
- 5.3 As referenced in the Summary section above, there are a number of external factors that reduced the chances of the successful delivery of the original scheme in a timely manner. Factors such as community opposition, the sewage breaches associated with the development of a new pitch at Sue Noake and the ever increasing demand for pupils to attend the school, have all contributed to the need for an alternative configuration for the expansion of the school to be developed.
- 5.4 The original proposed location and layout to expand the school onto the adjacent Trinity 1 pitch was planned on a single storey with additional classroom places, a wide range of additional indoor and outdoor facilities for the pupils as well as enhanced community provision (see 5.6).
- 5.5 The potential alternative configuration now proposed is a two storey extension that makes use of part of the existing car park. It should be noted, however, that whilst the alternative configuration for the build will still deliver an expansion of the school, a number of features that were asked for by learners and would have been available to the wider community, will not now be possible.

5.6 When comparing the two options, the table below outlines the differences between the two proposals:

Original Option	Alternative Configuration for Build
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new single storey extension onto the adjacent pitch • Opportunity for further expansion on site given size of area and potential for Two-Storey in future or build onto Carpark area • 80 additional places <p>New facilities in Single-Storey extension to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 x classrooms with changing facilities and toilets • Hydro-therapy Pool and changing facilities • Hall • Rebound/Therapy room • Extended seating for Café Oren • 9 x multi-use areas • Family Room • 2 x Sensory Rooms • Spaces for Holistic services – Social Services, Health • 1 x Soft play • Staff Room, offices • Internal Courtyard with Sensory Garden, Play and animal area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new two storey extension within the curtilage of the current school • No further opportunity for expansion on site after this development has been undertaken • 80 additional places <p>New facilities in Two-Storey extension to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 classrooms (although requires reconfiguration of existing school to accommodate 2 of these) • No additional Pool, but upgrade to the existing pool • No additional Hall • No designated Rebound/Therapy room • Limited additional seating for Café Oren • 6 x multi-use areas Usage to be determined by the school • No designated Family Room • Significant Reduction in space for Holistic services • 1 x Soft play • Staff Room, offices and Training area on first floor • Outdoor area with no sensory garden or animal area • Access to adjacent sports pitch during the day • Lift <p>*Note: Bold indicates differences in Facilities through new configuration</p>

The school to be given access to the adjacent sports pitch during the school day to compensate for the loss of outdoor facilities as a result of the reconfiguration of the proposed extension.

5.7 A decision will also be sought from Cabinet at a future point on how to treat the previously set aside £300k for an additional pitch and upgrade to facilities at the Sue Noake Leisure Centre. Members will be aware that this funding was set aside to provide a mitigation for the loss of the pitch at Trinity 1. As this pitch will no longer be required to support the expansion of the school Cabinet may be minded to invest this elsewhere.

5.8 The alternative configuration option in this report would not require any further Statutory Consultation as prescribed under the School Organisation Code 2018. However, the proposal has limited potential for further development and a longer term option would therefore need to be investigated to create a 2nd Special School in the Borough under Band C of the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme. This would come with an element of risk as any future proposals would require separate Welsh Government approval, its own consultation process and at present a site for a new build has not been identified.

5.9 It is anticipated that the alternative option would be deliverable by September 2024 albeit this builds in very little contingency.

5.10 **Conclusion**

Members are asked to consider the contents of this report and the potential for an alternative reconfiguration of the build to deliver the proposal for the expansion of the existing Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre, and to endorse the recommendation to Cabinet to progress to planning and full business case submission based on this alternative way forward.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 That the scheme is deliverable within the allocated budget.

6.2 That the scheme will achieve statutory approvals.

6.3 That the alternative scheme will be delivered by September 2024.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment and Post consultation Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) for this proposal was undertaken alongside the original Consultation processes forming part of the outline consultation pack which are both published on the Council's website.

7.2 The purpose of this further assessment is to take account of any further information that has come to light since the final determination was made and to reflect consideration of environmental factors which has resulted in the alternative option being presented.

[Link to Updated IIA \(July 2022\)](#)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Welsh Government and Members have previously agreed in principle to earmark a total of £12,588,573 for the Trinity Fields School expansion. The Authority's contribution within this sum is £3,147,143.

8.2 Currently market forces are indicating a significant inflationary increase within the construction sector. This is being kept under close review but the current projected costs for the 21st Century Schools Programme will be subject to change. Members will be updated further as matters progress.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This will be dependent on specific proposals and will be considered as part of the process.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The draft report was distributed as detailed below. All comments received have been reflected in this version of the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 School Organisation Code 2018 (Welsh Government)
School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

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Background Papers:

None