



CABINET - 14TH JUNE 2023

SUBJECT: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING BAND B PROPOSAL - UPDATE ON PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT, PONTLLANFRAITH (CENTRE FOR VULNERABLE LEARNERS)

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members in relation to the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Programme in respect of the Pupil Referral Unit, Pontllanfraith – locally referred to as the 'Centre for Vulnerable Learners'.
- 1.2 The project is seeking to create a Pupil Referral Unit for vulnerable pupils on the former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive site to accommodate between 80 - 120 pupils and be equipped with high quality learning opportunities, indoor and outdoor sporting provision as well as enabling wider community use of the facilities outside of school hours.
- 1.3 The project will support vulnerable learners from across Caerphilly at Key Stage 3/4, sitting at the centre of the Council's Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Strategy and the Cwmpawd hub and spoke model.
- 1.4 Members are asked to approve that an additional £2,150,739.40 is set aside from the Authority's Place-Shaping Reserve in respect of the increased financial contribution required to complete the proposal for a new Pupil Referral Unit, Pontllanfraith as part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B programme.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Cabinet approved on the 26th January 2022 the proposal to create a new Pupil Referral Unit, locally referred to as the 'Centre for Vulnerable Learners' with extra facilities for use by the school and wider community.

- 2.2 Welsh Government and Members have previously agreed in principle to earmark a total of £5,500,000 for the creation of a new Pupil Referral Unit on the former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School site, with a Welsh Government contribution of £4,125,000 (75%) and the Authority's contribution within this sum of £1,375,000 (25%).
- 2.3 Further site investigations and confirmed designs together with the impact of inflation has resulted in the total cost of the project now being £14,102,957.61. The design has also maximised opportunities to provide low energy/decarbonisation elements to meet Welsh Government legislation.
- 2.4 As a result, there needs to be an increase of £8,602,957.21 in funding for the project overall. This will mean a revised overall Welsh Government contribution of £10,577,218.21 (75%) and a revised contribution from Caerphilly of £3,525,739.40 (25%).
- 2.5 Members are asked to approve an additional £2,150,739.40 be set aside from the Authority's Place-Shaping Reserve, on top of the £1,375,000 previously agreed.
- 2.6 Full Business Case approval is anticipated for July 2023, however Welsh Government approval of the Strategic Outline Case and the Outline Business Case demonstrates that Welsh Government are supportive of the project.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet Members are asked to agree:

a) A further £2,150,739.40 be set aside from the Authority's Place-Shaping Reserve to fund the cost of the creation of a new Pupil Referral Unit, Pontllanfraith

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure Cabinet Members are updated on the progress of the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Programme in respect of the creation of a Pupil Referral Unit, Pontllanfraith.
- 4.2 To ensure that funding is available to meet the additional costs of creating the Pupil Referral Unit.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 Band B

- 5.1.1 The key aims of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B investment programme, outlined by Welsh Government, are:

- *Investment Objective One* - to provide efficient and effective educational infrastructure that will meet current and future demand for places

To include:

- The right number of places for the delivery of Welsh and English medium

- education
 - Addressing sufficiency issues where relevant
 - Reducing in Backlog maintenance costs for schools
 - Working towards Net Zero Public Sector Buildings in line with Welsh Government Carbon Reduction Commitments
- *Investment Objective Two* – to optimise the use of infrastructure and resources, to deliver public services for our communities.

This will include:

- Flexibility of our assets so that space and facilities available for our stakeholders are maximised.

5.2 Pupil Referral Unit, Pontllanfraith (Centre for Vulnerable Learners)

- 5.2.1 Cabinet approved on the 26th January 2022 the proposal to create a new Pupil Referral Unit, locally referred to as the 'Centre for Vulnerable Learners' with extra facilities including a 4 court Sports Hall and MUGA with 3G surface for use by the school and wider community.
- 5.2.2 Officers have subsequently undertaken a tendering exercise for delivery of the project, using the SEWSCAP Framework, with the appointment of Wynne Construction as the successful contractor.
- 5.2.3 Welsh Government and Members have previously agreed in principle to earmark a total of £5,500,000 for the creation of a new Pupil Referral Unit on the former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School site, with a Welsh Government contribution of £4,125,000 (75%) and the Authority's contribution within this sum of £1,375,000 (25%).
- 5.2.4 Whilst there is no specific guidance directly relevant to providing building area formulae for Pupil Referral Units, when calculating the cost, Building Bulletins 104 and 98 were referred to as a guide which provide the formulae recommended for special schools and primary provision. In addition, the sports hall has been designed in accordance with Sport England guidelines. As such the estimated original cost for the project of £5,500,000 was not market tested at Outline Business Case stage.
- 5.2.5 Further site investigations and confirmed designs together with the impact of inflation has resulted in the total cost of the project now being £14,102,957.61. The design has also maximised opportunities to provide low energy/decarbonisation elements to meet Welsh Government legislation.
- 5.2.6 As a result, there needs to be an increase of £8,602,957.21 in funding for the project overall. This will mean a revised overall Welsh Government contribution of £10,577,218.21 (75%) and a revised contribution from Caerphilly of £3,525,739.40 (25%).
- 5.2.7 Members are asked to approve an additional £2,150,739.40 be set aside from the Authority's Place-Shaping Reserve, on top of the £1,375,000 previously agreed.

- 5.2.8 Full Business Case approval is anticipated for July 2023, however Welsh Government approval of the Strategic Outline Case and the Outline Business Case demonstrates that Welsh Government are supportive of the project.

5.3 **Conclusion**

The proposal for the Pupil Referral Unit, Pontllanfraith- locally referred to as the 'Centre for Vulnerable Learners' has progressed through the appropriate consultation and engagement process guided by the School Organisation Code 2018 and has progressed through the planning application, and procurement processes.

To meet these additional costs and ensure this exciting project can be delivered, Cabinet Members are asked to approve an additional £2,150,739.40 from the Authority's Place-Shaping Reserve, on top of the £1,375,000 previously agreed, bringing the overall Authority contribution towards the project to £3,525,739.40 which equates to 25% of the total project cost.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 It is assumed that the increase in project cost for the Authority will be no more than £2,150,739.40 in order to complete the project.
- 6.2 It is assumed that the completion date of August 2024 is achievable.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment for this proposal was undertaken and updated as part of the School Organisation Code 2108 and consultation process and is published on the Council's website.

[Link to full Integrated Impact Assessment](#)

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Welsh Government and Members have previously agreed in principle to earmark a total of £5,500,000 for the creation of a new Pupil Referral Unit on the former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School site, with a Welsh Government contribution of £4,125,000 (75%) and the Authority's contribution within this sum of £1,375,000 (25%).
- 8.2 However, currently market forces have resulted in significant inflationary increase within the construction sector along with additional low energy requirements requested from Welsh Government. This has been kept under close review and has been reflected within the tendering costs provided from Wynne Construction.
- 8.3 The revised total cost of the project is now £14,102,957.61. An increase of £8,602,957.21 for the project overall and a revised Welsh Government contribution of £10,577,218.21 (75%) and revised Authority contribution of £3,525,739.40 (25%).
- 8.4 It is proposed that an additional £2,150,739.40 be set aside from the Authority's Place-Shaping Reserve in order to meet the additional financial contribution.

8.5 Any unspent allocation will be returned to the Authority's Place-Shaping Reserve.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications to the recommendations of the report at this time.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 The draft report was distributed as detailed below. All comments received have been reflected within the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

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

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