



CABINET- 28TH JUNE 2023

SUBJECT: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING BAND B PROGRAMME – PHASE 3 PROPOSAL

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on the next phase of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B programme and seek Members approval to proceed to Outline Business Case stage with Welsh Government in respect of the project outlined in the report.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report provides Members with an update on the next phase of the Band B (£78 million) Sustainable Communities for Learning Capital Programme.
- 2.2 The project identified is:
- **Relocation of Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School**
The proposal seeks to create a sustainable school building with shared facilities, to accommodate Ysgol Y Lawnt, Upper Rhymney Primary School and Community use. The two schools will continue to provide both Welsh and English Medium Primary education and remain as separate entities, situated within the new dual purpose building.
- 2.3 The project outlined in 2.2 above is in early developmental stage and officers will ensure that Members are updated on a regular basis in relation to all aspects of the proposal e.g., financial, business case, consultation process etc, in line with the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018 and the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet Members are asked to:

- a) Note the contents in this report.
- b) Approve proceeding to Outline Business Case submission with Welsh Government in respect of the proposed project outlined in 2.2, and subject to Welsh Government approval, subsequent formal consultation in line with the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure Cabinet Members are updated on the next phase of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B programme.
- 4.2 To seek Members approval to proceed to Outline Business Case stage with Welsh Government in respect of the project for the relocation of Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School to a new build dual purpose site.
- 4.3 To assist the Council in discharging its duties to consult in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018 where this statutory legislation applies.

5. THE REPORT

The Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme is a major, long term and strategic capital investment programme supporting large scale capital building projects across Wales with the aim of educational transformation through enhancing school buildings and developing them as hubs for learning to meet 21st Century Educational and Community needs.

- 5.2 The Programme focuses resources on the right school, in the right place, from early years through to post-16, with funding jointly provided by Welsh Government and Local Authorities.
- 5.3 The key aims of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B investment programme, outlined by Welsh Government, is:

- *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.

5.4 The schemes identified for Phases 1 & 2 of the Band B programme were:

- A new replacement Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon on the former Cwmcarn High School site.
- An extension of Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre
- The amalgamation of Llancaeath Junior School and Llanfabon Infants School to create a new Primary School provision
- A new replacement Plasyfelin Primary School on the existing site
- The establishment of a Centre for Vulnerable Pupils (Pupil Referral Unit) on the former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive site

5.5 The scheme identified for the next phase of the Band B programme, is the relocation of Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School to a new build dual purpose site.

5.6 The two schools will continue to provide both Welsh and English Medium Primary education and remain as separate entities.

5.7 The new school build will be designed to maximise local infrastructure, sustainability and energy efficiencies and meeting the Welsh Government Net Zero Carbon School requirements.

5.8 **Conclusion**

Members are asked to approve the recommendations to proceed to outline business case submission to Welsh Government and subsequent formal consultation in relation to the next phase of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Programme as outlined in 2.2.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report as it merely updates on the progress of individual projects.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 Not required at this stage in the process. A full Integrated Impact Assessment will be completed at the relevant stage in the process.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The estimated proposed project cost for the relocation of Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary, which forms the next phase of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B programme, totals £17,605,140.

8.2 Costings are based on Building Bulletin 98 and the Welsh Government 2024 Cost allowance. Subject to approval to proceed, further verification will be undertaken by the Council's Quantity Surveyor prior to submission to Welsh Government (WG).

- 8.3 The Authority's contribution of £6,052,119 to be set aside from the Authority's Place Shaping reserve.

Project Name:	LA Contribution	WG contribution	Total Funding
New School Build	£5,777,916 (35%)	£10,730,414 (65%)	£16,508,330
SRB (16 places)	£274,203 (25%)	£822,607 (75%)	£1,096,810
TOTAL PROJECT	£6,052,119	£11,553,021	£17,605,140

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 This proposal was presented to the Education Scrutiny Committee on 20th June 2023. Comments and responses are summarised as follows:

10.2 EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING BAND B PROGRAMME – PHASE 3 PROPOSAL

At The Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20th June 2023 the committee commented on the following areas in respect of the proposal to proceed to an outline business case with Welsh Government for the Relocation of Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School to a shared facilities site.

Members asked if parking would be considered as part of the proposals, as this is an issue with a number of schools in the county borough and can impact significantly upon surrounding residential areas. The scrutiny committee were advised that if taken forward, this proposal would be subject to a Full Planning application and parking is an area for consideration as part of this process.

Members asked why there had been no prior consultation on this proposal and were advised that this is at an early developmental stage and requires an outline business case to be approved by Welsh Government before the detailed proposals are developed and then consulted upon. Clarification was sought on whether this proposal was included in previous discussions with Members on the wider Band B proposals and were assured that Upper Rhymney was included in discussions held in 2017.

Concerns were expressed regarding the proposal to develop a dual site as it was felt that Children being taught in Welsh need to be immersed in the language and a dual site might be distracting. The scrutiny committee was advised the proposal is for two schools on the same site with shared facilities available for community use. However, each school will be distinct and run separately. An example was provided to illustrate this of a much larger school hall that will be divided into two for each school to use separately but the divider can be opened up for use by the community. There are examples of this model in other local authorities, and it was suggested that if these

proposals proceed that a visit could be arranged for Scrutiny Committee Members to see similar examples.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation this was supported by the majority present with 9 for and 2 abstentions.

11. STATUTORY POWER

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

Author: Andrea West, Sustainable Communities for Learning Manager

Consultees: Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion and ALN
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager

Background Papers:
None