



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5TH JULY 2016

SUBJECT: SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING STRATEGY

REPORT BY: CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek the views of Members on a future School Place Planning Strategy.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The report identifies some key issues associated with school place planning and identifies proposals to be considered for a future strategy.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

3.1 The report considers provision of school places to ensure the Council's key strategies are best achieved.

3.2 The report links directly to the Education for Life, sustainability, regeneration and equality strategies. The report also links to the Learning theme of Caerphilly Delivers, the Local Service Board single integrated plan.

4. THE REPORT

Background

4.1 Local Authorities have a statutory duty to supply sufficient school places, subject to parental preference, and in so doing requires determining the number, size, composition and location of its schools.

4.2 CCBC inherited 92 primary sector schools (infant, junior, primary) and 5 nursery schools in 1996. Following a period of school rationalisation, the current number comprises the following:

- 65 Primary schools (of which 11 are Welsh Medium)
- 6 Infant schools
- 4 Junior schools.

4.3 Council has previously adopted four principal criteria in considering rationalisation of primary school places, namely:

- i. Viability to deliver the national curriculum
- ii. Financial viability
- iii. Surplus capacity
- iv. Building maintenance needs of school.

4.4 When schools are considered in the context of the above, they will often meet 2 or more criteria for review. In every instance to date the national curriculum viability (criterion(i)) has been relevant together with some or all of the remainder.

4.5 CCBC inherited 16 secondary schools in 1996. There have been 2 closures (Bedwellty and St. Ilan) resulting in 14 at present, comprising 9 11-18 schools and 5 11-16 schools.

4.6 The planning and provision of school places can often be a complex task. A number of challenges are encountered, namely:

- Statutory processes
- Parental preferences
- Pupil forecasting
- In/out county/catchment demand
- Capacity of schools
- Suitability of school buildings
- School sizes.

4.7 The size distribution of Primary schools (number of pupils including nursery) as at September 2015 is as follows:

Under 100 pupils	4 schools
100-150 pupils	14 schools
151-200 pupils	24 schools
201-250 pupils	13 schools
251-300 pupils	6 schools
301-400 pupils	8 schools
401+ pupils	6 schools

4.8 The size of Secondary schools as at September 2015 is as follows:

	11-16	11-18
Under 500 pupils	2	-
501-600 pupils	-	1
601-750 pupils	1	3
751-900 pupils	-	2
901+ pupils	2	3

NB.

- Oakdale & Pontllanfraith included
- Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymini included as 1 school (includes Fleur-de-Lis & Y Gwyndy sites)

School Places Plan

4.9 Members have considered a school places plan previously on a number of occasions, the most recent of which was at Scrutiny on 4 November 2014 (School Places Plan 2013/14-2023/24).

4.10 This plan can assist with the formulation of future key strategic decisions, to include:

- Size and viability of schools
- Future pupil projections
- Current and future levels of surplus school places
- School type, including age ranges.

4.11 The development of the Council's LDP will also be critical with the assessment of future school place planning strategies. Decisions on strategies to 2031 will have very significant

impact across the County borough and these will require detailed consideration and will form the basis of regular reporting to Members.

21st Century Schools

- 4.12 CCBC agreed a strategic outline programme (SOP) in 2010. The overall aim of CCBC's programme is to transform the educational opportunities for learners through the provision of improved learning environments. The benefits to be realised from the programme will be improvements in outcomes and in the condition, suitability, sufficiency and sustainability of school buildings. These will complement the key objectives within the Welsh Government's (WG) wider strategic agenda, as set out in 'Wales: A Better Country' and Iaith Pawb. The Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) is also underpinned by other key policy and strategy themes of WG.

Surplus Places

- 4.13 The following is a summary of the projected surplus places at the commencement of the current academic year:

Year	PRIMARY		SECONDARY	
	Surplus Places	%	Surplus Places	%
2015	2363	14.0	3654	24.7
2016	2365	13.9	3206	22.5
2017	2343	13.7	3048	21.4
2018	2279	13.3	3008	20.9
2019	2333	13.6	3041	20.9
2020	2400	14.0	2927	20.1
2021	2554	14.9	2742	18.8
2022	-	-	2566	17.6
2023	-	-	2521	17.3
2024	-	-	2726	18.7
2025	-	-	2973	20.4

- 4.14 As at 2015, 10 of the Primary schools had in excess of 25% surplus places and 8 of the secondary schools had in excess of 25% surplus places, including Pontllanfraith. These details need to be considered in the context of the Council's LDP as referred to above.

School Condition Surveys/25 Year Maintenance

- 4.15 Members have previously received updated school asset management plans (SAMP).
- 4.16 School Condition Surveys were most recently updated in 2014. A summary of the condition factors at that date are as follows:

PRIMARY		SECONDARY		SPECIAL	
No. of Schools	Condition	No. of Schools	Condition	No. of Schools	Condition
2	A				
29	B	1	B	1	B
44	C	11	C		

NB. The 2 PFI secondary schools are excluded from this analysis.

- 4.17 The relative condition factors are described as:

- A Good (no deterioration)
- B Satisfactory (minor deterioration)
- C Poor (major deterioration).

4.18 A summary of the 25 year maintenance costs is as follows:

	P1 £m	P2 £m	P3 £m	P4 £m	Total £m
PRIMARY	0.9	6.4	11.1	85.4	103.8
SECONDARY	0.5	8.2	13.9	59.8	82.4

4.19 The 25 year maintenance costs vary by school from £463k to £2.662m in the Primary sector and £4m to £9.1m in the secondary sector.

School Catchment Areas

4.20 These are a combination of those inherited by CCBC in 1996 (and following formal review in 1999), those determined by the Welsh Government in respect of the Lower Islwyn area (English medium secondary) and those determined locally following provision of additional Primary schools since 2004 (Welsh Medium). A small number of catchment area boundaries have also changed either by local agreement or following a formal consultative process and determination by Cabinet.

4.21 3 of the English medium secondary schools in the 'Islwyn' area have shared catchment areas, being the only examples in CCBC apart from Welsh Medium and the 1 aided primary school.

4.22 With the need to reduce surplus schools places, catchment areas will inevitably require review.

Governance and Federation

4.23 There will be a need to consider governance arrangements, e.g. linkages between infant and junior/primary and primary and secondary schools in the future.

4.24 Federation of schools will need to be considered, particularly in the context of viability (both educationally and financially) of schools.

4.25 Initial views have been sought from 6 governing bodies which presently have collaborative arrangements (Fleur de Lis, Pengam, Cwmfelinfach, Ynysddu, Bedwas Junior and Rhydri). These developments are being reported separately to this meeting of Scrutiny Committee.

All Through Schools

4.26 There can be advantages in bringing schools together into larger groups or units. Essentially, the potential gains are:

- Continuity of provision for children and links with parents.
- Flexibility of resource allocation and use (especially staffing), and
- Economic efficiency (as resources can be rationalised and duplication reduced).

4.27 As the managerial demands of running schools increase, bigger units or groupings can enable head teachers to focus more on teaching and learning, while other senior support staff are employed to manage matters such as premises and administration. Staff development opportunities are significantly improved in bigger units.

4.28 There is potential to develop all through schools and this is being explored initially with the Abertyswg/Pontlottyn Primary and Rhymney Comprehensive Schools as a possible 3-18 school.

Proposed Way Forward

4.29 To review the future composition and mix of schools, having regard to such factors as:

- Size and viability of schools
- Future pupil projections
- Current and future levels of surplus school places
- School type, including age ranges.

4.30 In this context:

- Need to consider federation and all through schools as ways of organising schools to increase their future viability, both from a curriculum and financial perspective.
- Plan for the reduction in English Medium secondary school surplus places by developing phases 2 and 3 of secondary rationalisation when funding permits.
- Review post 16 provision and assess the merits of school 6th forms vis a vis tertiary education. This has been agreed by Council in July 2013 to be considered in conjunction with phase 2 of secondary rationalisation.
- Review Welsh Medium and Faith provision in the context of increased demand.
- Need to continually review sizes of schools, and
- Review and (if deemed appropriate) reduce surplus capacity in schools with more than 25% surplus places and consider proposals in schools with overfilled places in excess of 10%.

4.31 The forward pupil projections will result in increased demand for school places in some localities whilst in others there will be a need to consider the removal of increased numbers of surplus places.

4.32 The 21st Century Schools Stakeholder Group determined that the minimum sizes of schools should be 120 pupils in the Primary sector and 750 (11-16) and 900 (11-18) in the Secondary sector.

Key Issues

4.33 These may be summarised as follows:

	Description
Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 Infant and 4 Junior schools. Do we maintain or integrate into Primary schools? • Small Primary Schools. 7 presently below 120 pupils, including nursery. Should we have a minimum size before proposing amalgamation/closure or federation? • Should there be an optimum (or minimum) size/range for Primary schools? • Seek to meet increased demand in areas such as Welsh Medium and Faith provision.
Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should we continue with a mix of 11-16 and 11-18 schools? Council agreed in 2013 to review 6th form provision alongside consideration of Secondary rationalisation phase 2. • Should we continue to maintain Lewis Girls and Lewis Pengam as single sex schools? This would also be considered as part of Secondary rationalisation phase 2. • Should there be an optimum (or minimum) size for Secondary schools (11-16 and 11-18)?
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federation – Should we have a policy on federation or develop ‘as and when’ situations arise as largely at present?
All Through Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should these be encouraged and developed for the future?
Catchment Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we formally review school catchment areas, having regard to factors such as surplus places, excess pupils and LDP preferred strategy implications?

4.34 Members views are sought on the proposed way forward and key issues identified in order to develop a report for Cabinet to determine a future school place planning strategy.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Specific school organisation proposals will be implemented in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2013. As part of this process, detailed equality impact assessments will be developed.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 These will be dependent upon specific proposals, the detail of which will form part of the School Organisation Statutory Processes.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 These will be dependent upon specific proposals.

8. CONSULTATIONS

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

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Members views are sought on the proposals for a future School Place Planning Strategy which will be reported to Cabinet in the future.

10. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

10.1 To apprise Members of proposals for a future School Place Planning Strategy.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 School Organisation Code 2013 (Welsh Government)
School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013
School Admissions Code 2013 (Welsh Government)
School Admissions Appeal Code 2013 (Welsh Government)
School Standards & Framework Act 1998
Welsh Government Circular 21/2011 Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales
Education and Inspections Act 1996
Education Act 1996
Education Act 2002
Equality Act 2010

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Background Papers:

School Places Plan 2013/14-2023/24

Starting School 2016/17

21st Century Schools Strategic Outline Programme