

# Report

## Cabinet Member for Education & Skills

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### Part 1

Date: September 2020

Item No:

**Subject** **School Reorganisation Proposal – Expansion of Bassaleg School**

**Purpose** To seek approval to move to formal consultation on a school reorganisation proposal “to increase the overall capacity of Bassaleg School from 1747 to 2050 with effect from September 2023”.

**Author** Service Manager - Education Planning & Resources

**Ward** Graig

**Summary** This report references the requirement to move to formal consultation on the proposal to increase the overall capacity of Bassaleg School from 1747 to 2050 with effect from September 2023. Bassaleg School is a community maintained school in Newport for pupils aged 11-18 years with a published admission number (PAN) of 270. However, following the opening of Jubilee Park Primary School in September 2017, this admission number is no longer sufficient to meet the demand for places from pupils living within the catchment area. As a result, it is proposed that the PAN is increased to 330, equivalent to an additional 60 pupil places for each of the Year 7 to Year 11 groups; thereby ultimately increasing the overall capacity of the school from 1747 to 2050, with effect from September 2023.

There is now a requirement to move to the formal consultation stage of the statutory reorganisation process. The formal consultation pack will include further information regarding the proposal to enable all consultees and stakeholders to be fully informed on the proposals for expansion.

**Proposal** **To move to a period of formal consultation on a school reorganisation proposal to increase the overall capacity of Bassaleg School from 1747 to 2050 with effect from September 2023.**

**Action by** Chief Education Officer

**Timetable** Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Corporate Management Team
- Education Senior Management Team
- Senior HR Business Partner
- Senior Finance Business Partner
- Headteacher and Chair of Governors of Bassaleg School

**Signed**

## Background

Bassaleg School is a community maintained school in Newport for pupils aged 11-18 years. The measured capacity of the school is 1747 and the published admission number (PAN) is 270. Following the opening of Jubilee Park Primary School in 2017, the current admission number of Bassaleg School is no longer sufficient to meet the demand for places from pupils living within the catchment area. As a result, it is proposed that the PAN is increased to 330, thereby ultimately increasing the overall capacity of the school to 2050, with effect from September 2023.

Bassaleg School is due to benefit from building replacement works under Band B of the Welsh Government 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Colleges Programme. Under this arrangement, Welsh Government will provide 65% of the required funding, subject to business case approval. It is proposed that the Council uses this opportunity to provide the additional school capacity within the building replacement project.

The population of Newport grew by almost 3,500 people between 2011 and 2016. Consequently, the primary school population of Newport has grown by 1,565 pupils between January 2014 and January 2020. As these pupils move through their school life, the pressure on school places is moving into the secondary sector. Much of the city's population growth is attributable to the scale of new housing developments, making use of former industrial sites and the regeneration of dilapidated and under-occupied residential buildings. New housing developments will result in the creation of thousands of new homes across the city. A development of over 1000 new homes is underway at Jubilee Park, just one mile away and within the catchment area of Bassaleg School. This development is reasonably expected to result in an increase of approximately 250 secondary school age pupils needing places in local schools.

High birth rates and inward migration of families moving to the Bassaleg and Rogerstone areas was noted prior to the commencement of new house building programmes. To support this population growth, five additional temporary "bubble" classes were introduced in Reception year groups at High Cross, Mount Pleasant and Rogerstone primary schools for five consecutive years, between 2011 and 2016 to provide extra capacity. A further "bubble" class is being created at Mount Pleasant Primary to support the 2020 Reception year group. The result of these primary school population increases is that the admission number for Bassaleg School is no longer sufficient to admit all of the in-catchment pupils progressing to secondary school from the cluster primary schools. Without expansion, some in-catchment pupils applying from the Marshfield area, being the furthest located area within the school catchment, are unlikely to be receive an offer of a place at Bassaleg School.

## Formal Consultation Process

The school reorganisation proposal will be undertaken in accordance with the guidance outlined in Welsh Government's statutory School Organisation Code. The formal consultation stage enables all consultees and stakeholders, in particular the families of current and prospective pupils, to find out more about the proposal. Due to the current public health situation in the UK, and to help limit the spread of the Coronavirus, no public drop-in events will be arranged to support this consultation. Instead, questions can be submitted to the Education Service, with officers providing a response to these within 7 days to enable stakeholders to submit informed responses by the deadline date. A list of *Frequently Asked Questions and Answers* will also be maintained and published on the Council website.

The proposal will be "**to increase the overall capacity of Bassaleg School from 1747 to 2050 with effect from September 2023**". Formal consultation will take place during the autumn term of 2020 and last for a period of 42 days. Following the end of this period, a consultation report will be prepared and published on the Council website. The Cabinet Member for Education & Skills will also consider this consultation report when taking the decision on whether to move to the next stage in the process, which is the publication of a statutory notice.

If there are no objections to the statutory notice, the Cabinet Member for Education & Skills will be asked to take the final decision on the expansion of Bassaleg School. If there are any objections however, the decision will be referred to the full Cabinet of the Council, acting as the Local Determination Panel.

## Financial Summary

### Capital

The project will require a capital investment of approximately £28m, made possible through Welsh Government's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme that will provide approximately £16m of the required investment. The balance of £12m will be met by Newport City Council through banked Section 106 developer contributions from the Jubilee Park and Tredegar Park Golf Club housing developments, and supported borrowing.

### Revenue

There is currently a pressure identified within the Local Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan linked to the growing demand for secondary school places within the Authority, which includes the increased provision proposed at Bassaleg School. The funding for the school will come from the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) and therefore is dependent on the level of funding that is put into the ISB to fund the increasing demand for school places.

## Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
Failure to gain approval for the proposal	H	L	The school reorganisation proposal will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code.	Chief Education Officer
Delays in securing planning permission impact project delivery	H	M	Early engagement with City Services and Regeneration, Investment and Housing has enabled the relevant issues to be identified prior to the submission of the planning application. Impact assessments and details of proposed necessary mitigation measures will form part of the application.	Chief Education Officer
Funding sufficiency to deliver the project	H	L	The proposed scope of the project and outline design has been commercially assessed and is considered affordable within the Newport City Council 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band B programme envelope. The affordability of the project is under constant review.	Chief Education Officer
Demand for pupil places decreases	M	L	Pupil forecasts indicate growing demand across the city, and Bassaleg School is an identified pressure area.	Chief Education Officer
Demand for places increases beyond proposed capacity increase	M	L	It is possible that the school will continue to receive more applications than spaces available. However, the Council is confident that the proposed expansion will be sufficient to meet in-catchment demand for the near future.	Chief Education Officer

\* Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

## **Links to Council Policies and Priorities**

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Corporate Plan

Council Improvement Plan (*Aspirational People* theme)

Education Service Plan

## **Options Available**

Option 1: To maintain the status quo and provide no investment at Bassaleg School in terms of additional or replacement facilities.

Option 2: To use the available funding to replace and improve existing facilities at Bassaleg School, but provide no expansion in terms of additional capacity.

Option 3: To use the available funding to replace and improve existing facilities at Bassaleg School and at the same time increase the capacity of the school to meet the expected demand from within the catchment area.

Option 4: To use the available funding to increase the capacity of other secondary schools and subsequently change secondary school catchment areas to divert projected pressures away from Bassaleg School.

## **Preferred Option and Why**

The preferred option is Option 3. This will provide sufficient capacity at Bassaleg School to meet the expected demand from in-catchment families for the near future, and enable the provision of a fully accessible, state of the art new build teaching block with dining and assembly facilities.

## **Comments of Chief Financial Officer**

### Capital

The capital programme includes funding for the expansion of Bassaleg School within the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band B programme. Due to the limited amount of resources available for capital and the significant revenue financial costs of funding capital projects, the delivery of this project needs to be kept within the current financial envelope provided for Band B programme.

### Revenue

There is an increasing pressure within the schools sector with a projected 29 schools utilising reserves and 10 schools projected to have a deficit balance position by 31 March 2021. The proposal to permanently increase the PAN to 330 will create an additional pressure on the ISB at a time when school budgets are already under severe strain; however, there is a requirement to expand school provision within the Authority due to increasing demand for school places from the growing population. The Secondary pupil growth pressure is included within the Councils Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for consideration by Cabinet and the level of additional funding provided will be dependent on any additional funding being provided into the ISB as part of the budget setting process and any other factors affecting schools from that process.

## **Comments of Monitoring Officer**

The proposed action is in accordance with the statutory school reorganisation procedures set out in the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code. Because the proposed permanent expansion of Bassaleg School would increase the capacity of the school from 1747 to 2050 pupils, then this is a regulated alteration under the Code and, therefore, has to be the subject of formal statutory consultation. In accordance with the statutory procedures, a detailed consultation document will need to be prepared; setting out the educational reasons for the proposals, and meaningful consultation will need to be carried out with key stakeholders, including children and young people, who are likely to be affected by the changes. This statutory consultation process will need to be carried out for a period of 42 days during the autumn term and, because of continuing Covid-19 restrictions; the process will need to be adapted to avoid the need for public meetings. The outcome of the statutory consultation would then be reported back to the Cabinet Member to consider whether the Council should proceed with the necessary statutory notices.

## Comments of Head of People and Business Change

The proposed expansion of Bassaleg School is intended to create capacity to meet the increased demand for pupils from within the catchment area thereby avoiding increased appeals, higher school transport costs and impacts on pupil wellbeing. In addition, the proposal would bring about improvement in the quality of the buildings and learning environment.

The school reorganisation proposal will be undertaken in accordance with the Welsh Government's statutory School Organisation Code and should the proposal be supported, would be subject to formal consultation with a range of stakeholders.

## Local issues

Comments from Cllr David Williams, Ward Member for Graig:

I welcome the progress being made on this project.

## Scrutiny Committees

None

## Equalities Impact Assessment

The Equality Act 2010 contains a Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on 06 April 2011. The Act identifies a number of 'protected characteristics', namely age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership. The new single duty aims to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the regular business of public authorities. Compliance with the duty is a legal obligation and is intended to result in better-informed decision-making and policy development and services that are more effective for users. In exercising its functions, the Council must have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The Act is not overly prescriptive about the approach a public authority should take to ensure due regard, although it does set out that due regard to advancing equality involves: removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics; taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these differ from the need of other people; and encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low. The Fairness & Equality Impact Assessment (FEIA) will be reviewed as the proposal progresses.

## Children and Families (Wales) Measure

Children and Young People will be consulted as part of the statutory consultation process.

## Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Report writers need to indicate how they have considered the five things public bodies need to think about to show they have applied the sustainable development principle put into place by the Act. You will need to demonstrate you have considered the following:

- Long term: the importance of balancing short- term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs. **Bassaleg School is consistently over-subscribed. This demand is expected to increase as new housing developments in the area continue to mature. Increasing the capacity will ensure that the projected demand from in-catchment pupils can be supported, both in the short and longer term.**
- Prevention: How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help us meet our objectives. **Pupil projection models show that Bassaleg School will continue to be over-subscribed, however moving forward this over-subscription correlates to pupils within the designated catchment area. Failing to take action now could result in on-time in-catchment applications being refused in the future on a regular basis. This will affect pupil wellbeing, as well as increasing the number of school admission appeals and having an impact on home to school transport costs and arrangements.**

- Integration: Consider how the proposals will impact on our wellbeing objectives, our wellbeing goals, other objectives or those of other public bodies. **A formal statutory consultation will be carried out and supported at each stage by a FEIA to consider impact. This proposal supports the “A prosperous Wales”, “A more equal Wales” and “A Wales of cohesive communities” Well-being Goals and has no adverse effect on any of the other Well-being Goals. In addition, this proposal supports the Newport City Council Well-being Objective “To improve skills, educational outcomes and employment opportunities”.**
- Collaboration: have you considered how acting in collaboration with any other person or any other part of our organisation could help meet our wellbeing objectives. **There will be the opportunity to engage with all stakeholders through a formal statutory consultation. The full engagement of the Bassaleg School leadership team will play a part in helping to meet the wellbeing objectives.**
- Involvement: The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the wellbeing goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the City we serve. **A formal school reorganisation proposal will be undertaken and supported at each stage by a FEIA that will consider impact. This proposal will include a period of formal consultation that will offer the opportunity for all stakeholders to find out more information about the proposal and how it may affect them. Following conclusion of the formal consultation, a Consultation Report will be prepared, published and distributed to all identified stakeholders.**

### **Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

Section 17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty on the Local Authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

### **Consultation**

None at this stage but this will be facilitated with key stakeholders as part of the school reorganisation proposal.

### **Background Papers**

FEIA (attached)

Dated: September 2020