

Report



Cabinet Member for Education & Early Years

Part 1

Date: July 2023

Item No:

Subject School Reorganisation Proposal – Expansion of Tredegar Park Primary School

Purpose To seek approval to take forward a school reorganisation proposal, commencing with a period of formal consultation, “to increase the capacity of Tredegar Park Primary School from 420 to 525 pupil places with effect from September 2024”.

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Ward Tredegar Park & Marshfield

Summary This report references the requirement to move to formal consultation as part of a statutory school reorganisation proposal to increase the capacity of Tredegar Park Primary School with effect from September 2024.

Whilst the school is currently operating at 89% of total available capacity, the demand for pupil places is expected to increase as a result of new housing developments in the area. The additional places created will support the increasing demand arising from the Tredegar Park & Marshfield, Gaer and Pillgwenlly wards of the City, and will be applied incrementally over a 7-year period from September 2024.

In accordance with Welsh Government’s statutory School Organisation Code, school reorganisation proposals must commence with a period of formal consultation and stakeholder engagement. 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 establishment of this new provision.

Proposal To confirm that a school reorganisation proposal can be taken forward “to increase the capacity of Tredegar Park Primary School from 420 to 525 pupil places with effect from September 2024”.

Action by Chief Education Officer

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Corporate Management Team
- Education Senior Management Team
- Senior HR and Finance Business Partners
- Headteacher and Governing Body of Tredegar Park Primary School

Signed

Background

Tredegar Park Primary School is a 2-form entry community maintained English-medium primary school situated in the Tredegar Park & Marshfield ward of the City. The school currently has a published admission number of 60, with capacity for 420 pupils of statutory school age. There is also a 40-place nursery class which is able to accommodate a maximum of 80 children over either a morning or afternoon session.

This proposal will allow the school to increase the published admission number from 60 to 75 and therefore increase the total capacity for pupils of statutory school age from 420 to 525. This increase is possible by utilising part of the Forest Family Centre which is adjacent to the school and has recently been vacated by Duffryn Community Link, and also making some adaptations to the existing space in the main school building.

It is intended that the proposed increase in capacity will be applied incrementally over a 7-year period. As a result, from September 2024, 75 places will be available in each new Reception year group at the school; this arrangement will continue until September 2030 when the increased Published Admission Number of 75 will be realised across all year groups, and the proposal will become fully implemented.

The January 2023 Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) identified that the school is currently operating at 89% of total available capacity. However the demand for pupil places at the school is expected to increase as a result of housing developments in the areas around the school including at the Panasonic, Mon Bank and Whiteheads sites. The scale of development in the wider area will result in a significant pressure on the availability of school places in The John Frost School cluster, and indeed, all available spaces in the September 2023 Reception year across the cluster have now been allocated. All primary schools in the cluster have been considered for expansion; however other schools are either not suitable, are too far away or are already being considered for expansion under alternative projects.

The capital costs associated with this proposed expansion are being funded via a Welsh Government grant.

Formal Consultation Process

The school reorganisation proposal will be progressed by the Council in accordance with the guidance outlined in Welsh Government's statutory School Organisation Code. The formal consultation period represents stage 1 of the consultation process and is an opportunity for people to learn about the proposal, ask questions and make comments that will be recorded and summarised in a consultation report. The consultation period will involve 2 drop-in sessions at Tredegar Park Primary School with those affected by the proposal, where Council officers will be on hand to explain the proposal in more detail and answer any questions. Consultation responses can also be submitted by email. In order to support engagement with stakeholders, a Children and Young People's Everyday Summary version of the consultation has also been produced, and officers will meet with pupils from the school to gain their views on the proposal.

Formal consultation will commence in September 2023, and will last for a period of 42 days. Following this, a consultation report will be drafted and published on the Council website. The Council's Cabinet Member for Education & Early Years will then consider this consultation report when taking a decision as to whether or not to progress the proposal. If the decision is to proceed, a statutory notice will be published. If there are no objections to the statutory notice, the Council's Cabinet Member for Education & Early Years will be able to take the final decision on this proposal. If there are any objections however, an Objection Report will be prepared, and the decision will be referred to the Council's Cabinet in its capacity as the Local Determination Panel.

Financial Summary

Capital

The Council has been awarded Welsh Government grant funding of £1m to support the capital works associated with this project. Officers are confident that this is sufficient to undertake the required works; therefore this project will not impact on the capital headroom.

Revenue

The proposed increase to the PAN will be incremental, growing at 15 places per year over 7 academic years. The total funding required for the additional places is outlined in the table below. Once fully established, the 105 additional places will cost c. £360k per annum. As a maintained setting, these places will be funded through the school's Individual School Budget (ISB), distributed by the Council according to the prescribed funding formula.

School Name	24/25 £,000	25/26 £,000	26/27 £,000	27/28 £,000	28/29 £,000	29/30 £,000	30/31 £,000	31/32 £,000
Tredegar Park Primary	60	108	151	195	236	278	319	360

The expansion proposal is currently included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Funding of c.£29k was first approved in 2021/2022; however due to the delay in progressing the proposal, the MTFP will be revised to reflect the incremental funding requirements each financial year from 2024/2025 onwards as per the table below:

2024/25 £,000	2025/26 £,000	2026/27 £,000	2027/28 £,000	2028/29 £,000	2029/30 £,000	2030/31 £,000	2031/32 £,000	2032/33 £,000
6	53	45	44	42	42	41	41	17

It is important to note that as the additional places are required due to an increase in demand for primary sector places, if this proposal is unfunded, the ISB funding available for all other schools will be diluted.

Risks

It is important to identify and manage any project or scheme's exposure to risk and have in place controls to deal with those risks.

Risk Title / Description	Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Risk Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	Risk Mitigation Action(s) <i>What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect?</i>	Risk Owner <i>Officer(s) responsible for dealing with the risk?</i>
Failure to gain approval for the proposal	H	L	The proposal will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code.	Chief Education Officer
Proposed expansion is insufficient to demand the demand for pupil places in the area	M	L	Pupil projections will continue to be monitored by the Council's Planning of School Places group, with mitigating action taken as required to support oversubscription.	Chief Education Officer
Demand for pupil places in the area diminishes leading to an increase in the number of surplus places	M	L	Pupil projections will continue to be monitored by the Council's Planning of School Places group; however this risk is considered unlikely due to latest pupil projections and considering the impact of housing developments in the local area.	Chief Education Officer

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The increase in the number of primary school places causes greater pressure on secondary school places in the area	M	L	Pupil projections will continue to be monitored by the Council's Planning of School Places group; however as there are no proposed changes to catchment boundaries, this risk is considered unlikely.	Chief Education Officer
Insufficient capital funding to support the project	H	L	Officers are confident that the grant funding of £1m awarded for this project is sufficient to support the required capital works.	Chief Education Officer

* *Taking account of proposed mitigation measures*

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
Corporate Plan
Education Service Plan

Options Available and considered

Option 1: To maintain the status quo, and continue to work to the existing school capacity of 420, equivalent to 60 places per year group. Under this option, there is a risk that pupils within the area will be unable to secure a place at a local school. This could result in siblings having to attend different schools and might impact on home to school transport costs. The grant funding awarded for the project would also have to be returned to Welsh Government.

Option 2: To progress a proposal to increase the capacity of Tredegar Park Primary School from 420 to 525 pupil places, and as a result use grant funding awarded by Welsh Government to create additional primary school places to support the projected demand for places in the local area.

Option 3: To take forward a proposal to expand a different primary school in The John Frost cluster area to support the projected demand for additional pupil places. However this option has been discounted due to the confined nature of some school sites, the distance between some schools and the new housing developments, and the impact on other proposals either already planned or underway.

Preferred Option and Why

The preferred option is Option 2. This will result in the capacity of Tredegar Park Primary School being increased from 420 to 525 pupil places on an incremental basis over a 7-year period. This incremental approach will ensure that other schools in the area are protected from the significant pupil migration which could occur if the full expansion was realised immediately. This preferred option will allow the school to eventually grow to a full 2.5 form entry arrangement, and will provide an additional 105 English-medium places in the Duffryn area, specifically to deal with future pressure from new housing developments in the locality.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

Capital

Whilst the Welsh Government has awarded £1m to undertake the required works, there remains significant volatility in relation to inflationary price increases and, therefore, the capital expenditure will need to be monitored closely to ensure the project remains within the available funding, as it will not be possible to absorb any overspending from existing local authority capital funding.

Revenue

The proposal will create capacity within the John Frost Cluster in response to an increased demand for places, following a number of housing developments in the surrounding area. Whilst the growth of the school is planned to be incremental to mitigate migration from other surrounding schools, there remains a risk that pupil numbers at those existing schools may reduce over time if primary numbers remain static overall, which could lead to a loss of funding to those schools and consequentially create budget pressures.

If approved, this revenue funding requirement will become a pre commitment to fund the growth from the ISB. As noted in the financial summary, the expansion proposal is currently included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the MTFP has been revised to reflect the incremental funding requirements from 2024/25 onwards. However, if it is deemed not possible to fund this pressure from within the overall Council budget, and the provision is implemented, it will dilute the funding available to all other schools, many of whom are already facing significant financial challenges.

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. The proposal to increase the pupil capacity of Tredegar Park Primary School incrementally from 420 to 525 pupil places over a 7-year period, commencing in September 2024, 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 commencing in September 2023. 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, Policy and Transformation

The report sets out the proposal to increase the capacity of Tredegar Park Primary School and use Welsh Government funding to create additional primary school places, to help meet demand for places in the local area. Following Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, such proposals must commence with a period of formal consultation and stakeholder engagement. The consultation would include further information regarding the proposal to inform stakeholders on the proposals for establishment of this new provision. A Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken to inform the Cabinet Member and subsequent consultees.

There are no direct human resources implications at this stage although the proposed expansion would provide valuable job opportunities in the near future.

Scrutiny Committees

None

Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:

- **Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Socio-economic Duty**
- **Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

The Council has a number of legislative responsibilities to assess the impact of any strategic decision, proposal or policy on people that may experience disadvantage or inequality. A Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment (FEIA) has been completed to support the decision to launch this proposal and will be reviewed and updated to support the decision on whether or not to progress with the proposal following consideration of the feedback received during the formal consultation period.

This school reorganisation proposal will be undertaken in accordance with the legislation outlined in the statutory School Organisation Code. This Code outlines the key stakeholders that should be consulted with as part of the process, but this is not exclusive, and the Council has extended this list because of feedback received in relation to previous proposals. An invitation to engage in the consultation process will be emailed to identified stakeholders.

The proposal will be published on the Newport City Council website, and social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook will also be used to share information. The consultation documents will contain a consultation response pro-forma, and there will be an opportunity for any questions or concerns to be submitted. All consultation documents will be available bilingually in Welsh and English. The consultation will involve 2 drop-in sessions with those affected by the proposal, and Pupil Voice sessions will be facilitated. A Consultation Report will subsequently be prepared and published, and used by the Council's Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years in deciding whether or not to proceed with the proposal.

The FEIA has identified positive impacts of the proposal in relation to *Age and Pregnancy or Maternity*. The proposal will increase the capacity of Tredegar Park Primary School by 105 pupil places, and this will increase the likelihood of local children securing places in a local primary school. Whilst the additional places will be available to all applicants, in accordance with the Council's School Admissions Policy, priority will be afforded to children living within the school catchment area. The increase in pupil places will also have a positive impact on families with, or planning to have, children within the Tredegar Park & Marshfield area. Whilst no negative impacts have been identified, the proposal will have no impact on the Council's plans to grow Welsh-medium education provision across Newport as outlined in its 10-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. It is acknowledged therefore that this proposal will not contribute to the Council's targets in relation to Cymraeg 2050.

The sustainable development principle and 5 ways of working set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act have been considered as outlined below:

- Long term: the importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs. **The proposal seeks to increase the capacity of Tredegar Park Primary School by 105 pupil places, starting in September 2024. Over the past 5 years the number of pupils attending Tredegar Park Primary School has fluctuated with a high of 398 in 2021/22. However the first round of offers for the September 2023 Reception year group confirmed an allocation of 58 pupils, 53 of which were either in-catchment or highest priority; the remaining 2 spaces were filled in the first late round, and it is likely that the year group will remain full for the duration of this cohort group's time in primary education. Most other year groups in the school are already operating at almost full capacity, and there is very little surplus in any of the other six English-medium primary schools in The John Frost School cluster area. Whilst birth rate and admission trends suggest a historically low uptake rate at Tredegar Park Primary School, this will change as pressure on places across the cluster increases. There is a need therefore to provide additional pupil places in the area; all primary schools within the cluster were considered for expansion, with Tredegar Park Primary School being identified as being the most suitable.**
- Prevention: How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help us meet our objectives. **Welsh Government guidance recommends a 10% surplus of places across schools. As of January 2023, there were 11% surplus places at Tredegar Park Primary School, predominantly due to an unusually small Reception intake in September 2022. The increase in housing developments in the local area and the fact that many of the primary schools in the cluster are already full means that additional school places are required. The Newport One ward profiles show that the Tredegar Park & Marshfield ward population has constantly grown over the past 10 years in all age groups. Tredegar Park Primary School has been identified as the school most suitable to accommodate a small scale expansion to 2.5 form entry.**

- 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 the impact of the proposal. 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.**
- 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. **A formal consultation will be carried out with the opportunity for engagement with all stakeholders and supported at each stage by a FEIA to consider impact. The Education Service will work with the Governing Body to Tredegar Park Primary School to successfully deliver this proposal and achieve the required expansion.**
- 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. **The Council will engage with identified stakeholders during the formal consultation process. Hard copies of the consultation document will be available on request and several copies will be delivered to affected schools. Documents will also be available online, and public drop in sessions will be held where council officers will be on hand to explain the proposal and answer questions. Learner Voice sessions will also be facilitated at the affected schools to gain the pupils’ thoughts on the proposals, and a Children and Young Person’s consultation document will be made available and distributed to the affected schools. These will also be provided prior to and during all learner voice sessions.**

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Not applicable

Consultation

Formal consultation will be facilitated with key stakeholders as part of the school reorganisation proposal. However ward members have been briefed on the proposal with comments received as follows:

Cllr Allan Screen, Tredegar Park & Marshfield ward:

Option 2 outlined in this paper seems reasonable and I see no major issues with this approach.

Cllr Rhian Howells, Tredegar Park & Marshfield ward:

I confirm that I am supportive of this proposal.

Background Papers

FEIA

Dated: July 2023