

# Annex 1: Strategic outline programme (SOP) revision template

## Request for change

## Key facts

**Local Authority: Neath Port Talbot**

**Requested amount of Increase / Decrease to Envelope: increase of £13.3m**

**Has this been signed off by the Cabinet / Board / Diocese: Yes 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

**Please provide a summary of the proposed change.**

### **Maximum 1000 Words (Any words above 1000 will be discounted)**

What is changing?

Will there be more / fewer projects delivered as a result of this change?

What are they?

The Councils Band B Strategic Outline programme (SOP) was approved by members in October 2017 and subsequently by Welsh Government. All projects have been completed in Band B apart from Coed Darcy and Swansea Valley.

The Band B SOP included Ysgol Newydd Swansea Valley, a new build English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist Learning Support Centre (LSC) for 16 pupils with a statement of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwig Primary proposal. The scheme also included a new build pool on the Parc Ynysderw site, to replace the aging Pontardawe Pool. The project was planned to be delivered in 2024 at a cost of circa. £22.7m.

In April 2023, Cabinet determined not to progress the Ysgol Newydd Swansea Valley proposal. As a result of this decision, the £14.7m Welsh Government funding which had been approved is no longer required for this proposal and Cabinet approval has been given to request that this scheme is removed from the Band B funding envelope.

It is proposed to replace the Ysgol Newydd Swansea Valley scheme with 3 alternative schemes. General details of the schemes are described below:

**Godre'rgraig Primary School-** This proposal seeks to provide a new build replacement Godre'rgraig Primary school, at Gnoll Road, Godre'rgraig.

The school would be a one form entry, English-medium school and would provide education for 210 full time and 30 part time nursery pupils from the current Godre'rgraig Primary catchment area. The proposed pupil numbers of 210 full time and 30 part time nursery pupils would provide the school with one classroom space per year group, and officers believe that this is the smallest size school that should be considered.

Gnoll Road has been identified as the only potentially feasible site available for this proposal. An independent Feasibility Study for Gnoll Road was commissioned to

ascertain whether the site would be suitable for a new build school. The study concluded that the site specific abnormalities are considerable and are likely to contribute to increased costs. The estimated costs amount to circa. £17m.

**Ysgol Maes y Coed** - Ysgol Maes Y Coed is a purpose built special school that opened in 2007 and provides for pupils with ASD, SLD and PMLD. This proposal seeks to build an extension to Ysgol Maes Y Coed, creating a new purpose built facility that will allow the school to increase the number of planned places and allow more pupils to benefit from the specialist facilities that already exist. It is anticipated that the extension will provide 40 additional pupil places.

The current school has reached its capacity and it is not possible to admit any more pupils without compromising the provision available. The new extension will allow the school to reorganise its provision appropriately, relieving the pressure on planned places and ensuring that the Council is able to provide specialist education for pupils with complex needs within the county borough.

An extension will also potentially allow new pupils use of the current specialist facilities including the hydrotherapy pool and the new Cruyff Court. It will also ensure that the good standard of education provided by the leadership and staff team at Ysgol Maes Y Coed can continue and be extended, and that staff will be available to advise the project team and ensure the build is equipped with the necessary equipment and facilities needed to meet the complex needs of the children and young people who require a place there.

Changes to pupil numbers will require a statutory proposal and a full consultation.

The estimated costs amount to circa. £10m.

**Skills Centre and Vocational Hub-** This proposal seeks to create a central hub provision which will offer a range of skills based learning and vocational opportunities for pupils all across Neath Port Talbot. It is planned to expand and enhance current internal provision and promote a wide range of subjects for a more cohesive vocational learning experience for young people. It is also planned that the hub will be a bilingual provision, aiming to meet the aspirations of the WESP outcomes 4 and 7.

It is proposed to undertake a heavy refurbishment of the vacated former Education Learning Resource Service (ELRS) building at Velindre, Port Talbot to create a base for co-ordinating the development of learning pathways as well as creating multiple vocational learning pods, to provide on the job training.

This project is part of a county wide strategy which aims to create and develop meaningful learning pathways for every pupil in Neath Port Talbot, supporting transition into the next stage of their education, employment or training and providing all children and young people with the best start in life. Further work is expected to involve provisions at all secondary and middle schools, some of which will be provided in the future new build schemes, and some through reorganising existing provision or by providing hubs through potential future grant funding streams.

The estimated costs amount to circa. £9m.

**What is the reason for this change?**

**Maximum 1000 Words (Any words above 1000 will be discounted)**

## Why is this change necessary?

In April 2023, Cabinet determined not to progress the Ysgol Newydd Swansea Valley proposal. As a result of this decision, the £14.7m Welsh Government funding which had been approved is no longer required for this scheme and Cabinet approval has been given to request that this scheme is removed from the Band B funding envelope.

Reasons why the alternative schemes have been identified:

### **Godre'rgraig Primary School**

In July 2019, Godre'rgraig Primary was relocated from Godre'rgraig to Parc Ynysderw, adjacent to Cwmtawe Community School after geological experts found there was a potential landslide risk to the school's playground. Earth Science Partnership (ESP), the experts commissioned by Neath Port Talbot Council, reported a medium level risk from a quarry spoil tip near the school. A further report in September 2021 has revealed that the quarry tip is moving and is now noted to be 'actively unstable' meaning that it would be unsafe for staff and pupils to return to the school. In December 2022, the Council's Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Cabinet Board determined that Godre'rgraig Primary school building at Graig Road should be demolished.

Currently Godre'rgraig Primary School are operating from temporary accommodation (demountables) and have been since September 2019, and it is therefore clear that a permanent solution must be found. As such it is proposed that a new build replacement school for Godre'rgraig Primary School is progressed. If approved, this would provide Godre'rgraig pupils with 21<sup>st</sup> Century state of the art facilities in the village of Godre'rgraig.

### **Ysgol Maes y Coed**

The number of pupils presenting with complex needs in Neath Port Talbot has been increasing year on year, and the identified need for specialist places is exceeding the number of places available. Inclusion data identifies that within the next 3 years additional places are needed for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) / Social Communication Difficulties, in addition to Severe and Profound Multiple Learning Difficulties (SLD/ PMLD). It is a high priority for Neath Port Talbot that the needs of the most complex and vulnerable learners are met.

Ysgol Maes y Coed has reached its capacity and it is not possible to admit any more pupils without compromising the provision available. Land to build a new school is not readily available, and it is felt that as Ysgol Maes Y Coed is well established and has a strong leadership and staff team, a new purpose built extension would be an effective way of ensuring additional places can be successfully provided. The new extension will allow the school to reorganise its provision appropriately, relieving the pressure on planned places and ensuring that the Council is able to provide specialist education for pupils with complex needs within the county borough.

### **Skills Centre and Vocational Hub**

It has been recognised that there is a need to ensure a cohesive and strategic approach to developing a wider curriculum, skills based and vocational offer for young people across NPT, however it has proven difficult to identify clear and supported pathways particularly for those pupils requiring an alternative to the more usual academic route. Feedback from NPT schools, families and young people has highlighted the need to have

greater access to a range of meaningful learning opportunities that develop skills and promote engagement. Schools and families find it difficult to navigate the complex and ever-changing picture of what wider curriculum offers young people can access. Most recently, challenges around disengagement, poor attendance, disruptive behaviour and the rising exclusion rate has highlighted the need for this work to be progressed more rapidly.

As a result work has been undertaken to identify where the issues lie and how NPT can better co-ordinate and, where appropriate, develop the services available across the county. It is proposed to create a central learning hub in the vacated former Education Learning Resource Service (ELRS) building at Velindre, Port Talbot to provide a range of bilingual skills based learning and vocational opportunities as well as providing a centrally based support centre which will be able to co-ordinate wider provision across all of NPT. It is envisaged that the hub will provide a range of equipment and resources to support more specialist learning experiences as well as providing a base for outreach work across all the schools, and facilitating skills based learning and vocational training with external providers, both on and off site.

### What options have you explored?

#### Maximum 1500 words (Any words above 1500 will be discounted)

A series of meetings have been held throughout the Autumn term to discuss possible options with officers and stakeholders throughout the Local Authority

Godre'rgraig Primary		
Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Maintain Godre'rgraig Primary School in its current temporary accommodation and site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Least disruption</li> <li>• No capital spend</li> <li>• Godre'rgraig will remain in its current location and accommodation i.e. no change process for staff and pupils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not create 21<sup>st</sup> century school provision for pupils</li> <li>• Severely compromised external space</li> <li>• Does not meet building bulletin 99 requirements</li> <li>• Does not enhance the school estate</li> <li>• Does not enable any environmental benefits e.g. BREEAM, Net Carbon Zero</li> <li>• Unlikely to be supported by the community</li> </ul>
2. Close Godre'rgraig Primary and relocate pupils to school (s) in the local area with surplus capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No capital spend</li> <li>• Creates potential for revenue savings</li> <li>• Reduces surplus capacities in the receiving school(s)</li> <li>• Sufficient surplus capacities available in surrounding area schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial disruption to pupils, staff and the school community</li> <li>• Does not enhance the school estate</li> <li>• Unlikely to be supported by the community</li> <li>• Doesn't provide 21<sup>st</sup> century schools facilities</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for pupils to transition into local WM schools (supported through immersion provision available in YGG Pontardawe) – contribute to NPT WESP targets</li> <li>• Early resolution to temporary accommodation issue</li> <li>• Permanent solution to being in temporary buildings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No school in village of Godre'rgraig</li> <li>• Potential for travel time to be increased for some pupils</li> </ul>
3.New build school for Godre'rgraig Primary in Gnoll Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New build will enable substantial environmental efficiencies achievable through design</li> <li>• New build would fully comply with BB99</li> <li>• It would provide a permanent new school for Godre'rgraig pupils in Godre'rgraig village</li> <li>• Permanent solution to being in temporary buildings ending uncertainty and disruption for pupils and staff</li> <li>• Provides 21<sup>st</sup> century state of the art education facilities</li> <li>• Potentially reduces travel time for some pupils</li> <li>• Community support for new school</li> <li>• Provides new facility for the community of Godre'rgraig</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short term disruption for pupils and staff</li> <li>• Cost of the capital build due to site abnormalities</li> <li>• Potential impact to Welsh-medium education due to the close proximity to Welsh-medium primary schools</li> <li>• Pupils will need to remain in temporary accommodation until the scheme is complete (3-4 years)</li> <li>• Potential impact on nearby schools in the area who may see pupil numbers decline if increased parental choice for new school</li> </ul>

### Ysgol Maes y Coed

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

### Skills Centre and Vocational Hub

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	

### How will this affect your ability to match fund?

#### Maximum 1000 Words (Any words above 1000 will be discounted)

Please state the total programme envelope, including the additional funding requested and how this is match funded.

The result of the revisions included in this submission will result in an overall increase in the Band B programme envelope of £13.3M.

If approved by WG the Council can confirm that it's able to meet the appropriate intervention rate of the increased programme envelope. It will be funded through prudential borrowing.

Signed.....

Printed.....Andrew Thomas

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Position in the organisation.....Director Of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning .....

Date.....1.12.23

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**PLEASE ENSURE A REVISED FINANCIAL MATRIX IS SUBMITTED WITH THIS FORM TO REFLECT THE PROPOSED CHANGES**