



Report of the Director of Education

Education and Skills Service Transformation Committee
8 November 2023

Right Schools in the Right Places

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| Purpose: | The report presents a suggested template for a School Provision Plan for Swansea |
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| For Information | |

1. Background

- 1.1 A report was taken to the Education and Skills Service Transformation Committee (STC) on 26 July 2023 that presented contextual information regarding the school stock in Swansea, and proposed the production of a school organisation plan to cover a ten-year period.
- 1.2 Members noted through the Education and Skills STC that the plan should be produced for consideration by Cabinet, and should dovetail with the Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) under Sustainable Communities for Learning (SCfL), as well as other relevant plans.
- 1.3 This report, the second of three in this municipal year, outlines a draft template of that plan, under a proposed heading of School Provision Plan.

2. School Provision Plan

- 2.1 Through the Education and Skills STC, it is proposed that a School Provision Plan (SPP) should be produced for consideration by Cabinet.

- 2.2 The SPP should be a contextual document that draws conclusions about the need to add or to remove school places within the City and County of Swansea. Once adopted, the plan can help the council, schools, parents and local communities to understand the need for school places and establish future demands. It can provide a basis on which the council and others can consider proposals for opening, closing or changing the character of schools, subject to the availability of resources.
- 2.3 The SPP would be a key reference document for school organisation proposals and would align with the SCfL SOP that would run on a parallel timeline. With this in mind, it is suggested that the SPP should run for a nine-year period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2033, with data refreshed every three years. This will align with the SOP that will run from 1 April 2024 for a nine-year period, with three-year 'waves' as part of that programme.
- 2.4 A draft of the SPP will be prepared for the STC meeting on 24 January 2024 and would then be taken to a subsequent meeting of Cabinet. This could potentially be in February 2024 which would again align with the request for Cabinet to approve the SOP, which would be submitted to the Welsh Government by 31 March 2024.
- 2.5 Co-construction will be key when producing the SPP, and this can take place through the QEd (Quality in Education) Programme Board, which meets monthly to strategically consider the school estate. The Board has representation from key officers in Education and Corporate Building Services. Engagement with schools will also be required, and representative headteachers can be sought through main consultative groups (YCA for the primary sector and SCCASH for the secondary sector).

3. Contents of the Plan

- 3.1 A list of suggested contents was provided in the previous report and are expanded upon as follows:
- 3.2 Pupil numbers
 - 3.2.1 The number of pupils on roll in a school is key to school organisation. Swansea is currently facing a reducing birthrate but also high inward migration. The SPP can outline past, current and projected pupil numbers for each school, and geographical areas within the City and County of Swansea.
 - 3.2.2 Identifying an appropriate size of primary or secondary schools is a complex issue as the quality of educational provision is influenced by a number of factors, not just the number of pupils. It should be noted that the Audit Commission indicated that a primary school should ideally have no less than 90 pupils, a secondary school without a sixth form

should have at least 600 pupils and a secondary school with a sixth form should have at least 700 pupils. However, this is a matter for each individual local authority and the SPP could identify the factors that the Council may wish to consider when determining the optimum size of a school and the options that could be pursued in response to demographic patterns. The SPP could also put a cap on the size of the primary school. The SPP would be used to review the school estate as a whole and to identify when a review of an individual school was required.

- 3.2.3 Total numbers can be provided, as well as broken down into English-medium, Welsh-medium and faith.
- 3.2.4 The location of housing developments and strategic sites within the LDP will influence pupils numbers in an area and should be noted in the SPP.
- 3.2.5 Parental choice can affect numbers on roll in a school, as a school has to admit up to its published Admission Number, even if pupils do not live within the catchment area of a school. Understanding these trends will help to plan future provision.
- 3.2.6 The SPP could highlight where a school has lost or gained more than a defined percentage of roll over a period of time, for example 10% over a two-year period. This could trigger a review of accommodation for that school, that could consider:
 - a) additional accommodation
 - b) removal of accommodation
 - c) a change of use for part of the building
- 3.2.7 Pupils educated in places other than schools can also be noted, for example those educated at home by their parents, who are in receipt of home tuition or are attending alternative provision, such as our Pupil Referral Unit at Maes Derw.
- 3.2.8 The turnover of pupils in a school is also useful to note, as a constant churn creates difficulties for the school when planning and delivering education to learners.
- 3.3 Capacity/Surplus Capacity
 - 3.3.1 School capacity is calculated using a Welsh Government formula [measuring-the-capacity-of-schools-in-wales-circular.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)
 - 3.3.2 The capacity of a school takes into account the number of places available for teaching and learning. When compared to pupil numbers, this will identify if a school is oversubscribed or has surplus capacity.

3.3.3 The SPP could note trigger points where a review of the school should take place.

3.4 Additional Learning Needs

3.4.1 The Specialist Teaching Facility (STF) provision currently includes facilities for children with learning difficulties, speech and language difficulties, hearing impairment, autism, profound and multiple learning difficulties and children with social and emotional difficulties.

3.4.2 Current planned places for STFs and special schools can be noted in the SPP, as well as a link to the second strand of the Education & Skills STC work for the current year, i.e. a review of the provision on offer.

3.5 School Buildings and Accessibility

3.5.1 Surveys are undertaken on all schools each year to ascertain their condition and identify required maintenance. Each topic area, for example the roof or electrics, are provided with a condition rating, which is then aggregated to give an overall rating for the school. All buildings that make up a school are included.

Condition categories are defined as:

- Condition A – As new condition. This category typically features one or more of the following: typically built within the last five years or may have undergone a major refurbishment within this period; maintained/serviced to ensure fabric and building services replicate conditions at installation; no structural, building envelope, building services or statutory compliance issues apparent; no impacts upon operation of the building.
- Condition B – Sound, operationally safe, and exhibiting only minor deterioration. This category typically features one or more of the following: maintenance will have been carried out; minor deterioration to internal/external finishes; few structural, building envelope, building services or statutory compliance issues apparent; likely to have minor impacts upon the operation of the building.
- Condition C – Operational but major repair or replacement needed in the short to medium-term (generally three years). This category typically features one or more of the following: requiring replacement of building elements or services elements in the short to medium-term; several structural, building envelope, building services or statutory compliance issues apparent, or one particularly significant issue apparent; often including identified problems with building envelope (windows/roof etc), building services (boilers/chillers etc); likely to have major impacts upon the operation of the building, but still allow it to be operable.

- Condition D – Inoperable or serious risk of major failure or breakdown. This category typically features one or more of the following: building is inoperable or likely to become inoperable, due to statutory compliance issues or condition representing a health and safety risk or breach; may be structural, building envelope, or building services problems coupled with compliance issues; the conditions are expected to curtail operations within the building (exclude very minor items which can be rectified easily).

Condition ratings can be noted in the SPP, with a statement about where we would expect our school ratings to be in Swansea.

The age of buildings can also be noted.

- 3.5.2 The Display Energy Certificate (DEC) rating for each school can be a good indication of energy efficiency. The council is also working with schools through Energy Sparks to support more energy efficient buildings and relevant data can be included in the SPP.
- 3.5.3 Accessibility, including transport, is vital to enable learners to access our school provision. Information can be provided on the accessibility of schools. A workshop was held with STC to understand the legislation around home to school transport, as well as increasing costs and complexities. The SPP can consider travel time to schools and what would be an optimal maximum, for example less than 30 minutes for a primary learners and less than 50 minutes for secondary learners.

3.6 Vocational Provision

All secondary schools in Swansea now offer some sort of vocational offer. The SPP can outline what is on offer at each setting, to show the breadth of coverage. The other providers in the boundary of the City and County of Swansea can also be noted.

4. **Conclusions**

- 4.1. The SPP can culminate in a section that will give conclusions to influence effective planning of school provision.
- 4.2. A draft SPP can be brought to the next meeting.

5. **Integrated Assessment Implications**

- 5.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

5.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

5.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

5.1.3 This report is for information only. Any initiatives developed following this review will be subject to the IIA process as required.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no specific legal implications associated with this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Background papers:

None

Appendices:

None