



## Report of the Director of Education

Education & Skills Service Transformation Committee – 26 July 2023

### Right Schools in the Right Places

<b>Purpose:</b>	The report presents contextual information regarding the school stock in Swansea at July 2023, and suggests the production of a school organisation plan to cover a ten-year period
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#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The purpose of Service Transformation Committees is to contribute to the ongoing development of the Council's agreed transformation activities (specifically in relation to the council's corporate plan, policy commitments, Corporate Transformation Plan, and Medium-Term Financial Plan) for consideration and adoption by Cabinet Members, Cabinet and/or Council as appropriate.
- 1.2 At the meeting held on 14 June 2023, it was agreed that Right Schools in the Right Places would be a key area for consideration by the Education and Skills Service Transformation Committee.
- 1.3 This report – the first of three programmed for the municipal year 2023-2024 – will set the context for the school estate in Swansea and will outline how the council can plan to have the right schools in the right places over a ten-year period.

#### 2. Current Estate (Status Quo)

- 2.1 There are currently 93 schools in the City and County of Swansea:

- 77 primary schools (of which 10 are Welsh medium and 5 are faith schools/voluntary aided)
- 14 secondary schools (of which, 2 are Welsh medium and 1 is a faith school/voluntary aided)
- 2 special schools

2.2 As of January 2023 there were the following learners on roll at Swansea schools:

Sector	Number on Roll by Year Groups																Total	
	N (Rising 3)	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13		Y14
Primary	702	2305	2517	2479	2586	2659	2631	2638	2862									21379
Secondary										2767	2640	2616	2763	2624	689	580		14679
Special	0	4	6	4	6	6	5	15	7	28	18	22	24	16	26	26	20	233
Total	702	2309	2523	2483	2592	2665	2636	2653	2869	2795	2658	2638	2787	2640	715	606	20	36291

2.3 Each school has a calculation undertaken each year to assess its capacity to accommodate learners. The school will need to admit pupils, including those expressing parental preference for an out-of-catchment place, until the capacity (admission number) has been reached in each year group. If the capacity is not filled, surplus places are created. There is an associated cost to the school to maintain places that are surplus.

There were 3,460 surplus places (16.07%) in primary schools in January 2023, and 2,273 (13.62%) in secondary schools.

2.4 Surveys are undertaken on all schools 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).

There are currently no category D schools in Swansea, and then eeds of schools in category C are being addressed by the capital maintenance and Sustainable Communities for Learning programmes.

Although a school's condition may be sound, there could still be issues surrounding its suitability to provide the national curriculum or accommodate learners/staff with additional needs.

- 2.5 Every school building with a floor area greater than 250m<sup>2</sup> will have a Display Energy Certificate (DEC) and accompanying Advisory Report (AR). A DEC shows the energy performance of a building based on actual energy consumption as recorded over the last twelve months within the validity period of the DEC, known as the operational rating. The operational rating is a numerical indicator of the actual annual carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions from the building. The various types of energy consumption must be brought together on a common basis so that the performance of one building can be compared with that of another. This rating is shown on a scale from A to G, with A having the lowest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (best) and G having the highest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (worst).

The AR accompanies the DEC and contains recommendations for improving the energy performance of the building. It may contain a range of possible improvements, including cost-effective measures that may be implemented to improve the energy performance of the property. The report includes zero and low cost operational and management improvements, possible upgrades to the building fabric or services, and opportunities for the installation of low and zero carbon technologies.

The profile for DEC's of schools in Swansea are:

Operational Rating	School Buildings over 1000m2	Percentage
A	0	0%
B	5	7%
C	18	25%
D	30	42%
E	18	25%
F	1	1%
G	0	0%
Total	72	100%

- 2.6 Home to School Transport is provided to the catchment school in accordance with the council's policy [Home to school transport policy \(Sept 2015\) - Swansea](#). This is usually based on distance from school (2 miles for primary schools; 3 miles for secondary schools) but can be provided for shorter distances if there is no available walking route. The budget for Home to School Transport in Financial Year 2023-2024 exceeded £8m but is already projected to overspend by around £3m, due to increasing contract costs, linked to fuel prices in the main. Any overspends have to be rectified from elsewhere within the Education Directorate, i.e. from educational services for learners in Swansea.

### 3. The Need for Change

- 3.1 There are a number of reasons why the status quo cannot remain in Swansea.
- 3.2 The birth rate in Swansea is reducing each year. This reduction, coupled with the shift in demand from English medium to Welsh medium, is creating additional surplus places in schools. It should be noted that Swansea has seen pockets of inward migration in recent years, in particular linked to the universities and hospitals, with a high percentage of applications for faith schools.
- 3.3 Swansea's Cabinet approved the Welsh In Education Strategic Plan (WESP) at its meeting on 21 July 2022. The WESP requires additional places to be provided in the Welsh language. [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 21 July 2022, 10.00 am - Swansea](#)
- 3.4 The condition of some of our school buildings leads to the school spending a large proportion of its delegated budget share on repairs and maintenance instead of on the education of learners on roll. Again, if the building is not energy efficient then the delegated budget share is diverted to utility costs, as well as negatively impacting on the Council's carbon footprint.
- 3.5 A number of our school buildings are not suitable to deliver the curriculum and/or unable to welcome learners with additional learning

needs. Schools, through the Welsh Government's Community Focused Schools initiative, are also being encouraged to engage with the wider community on the school site.

- 3.6 The continual increase in Home to School Transport costs is unsustainable.
- 3.7 As school revenue budgets get tighter, with increasing costs for energy and other spending areas, a review of the overall school stock could lead to economies of scale and best value.
- 3.8 As the Local Development Plan rolls out across the county, the learner population will move and change, leading to a new pattern of demand in our schools. Timing for change is in the hands of the developer for each of the housing estates.

#### **4. Sustainable Communities for Learning**

- 4.1 The Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning (SCfL) programme provides matched capital funding to enable local authorities to improve the quality of the school estate.
- 4.2 Swansea Council has successfully delivered many projects under Band A and Band B of the previous programme (21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools) and is now required to submit a new bid for funding by 31 March 2024 to cover a nine-year period (in 'waves' of three years).
- 4.3 Officers are working on a draft bid for the new programme of funding (the Strategic Outline Programme) and this will be submitted to Cabinet in December 2023.

#### **5. Formulating a Ten-year Plan**

- 5.1 Through the Education and Skills STC, it is proposed that a ten-year school organisation plan should be produced for consideration by Cabinet. The plan should dovetail with the Strategic Outline Programme under SCfL, as well as other relevant plans, but should also include the following information:
  - Demographic details relevant to the supply of school places, including:
    - Pupil rolls – actual and projected (English medium, Welsh medium and faith)
    - Surplus/shortage of capacity - primary and secondary
    - ALN provision and places (including at non-maintained schools)
    - 6th form provision
    - Vocational provision
    - WESP and Welsh-medium school place requirements
    - Ages of school buildings

- DEC ratings
- Condition ratings
- Pupil Turnover Percentage

- A statement of assumptions in respect of provision for pupils, for example appropriate/maximum size of schools
- Details on historical school reorganisation in Swansea
- Policies and principles linked to school organisation, including Home to School Transport
- Diversity of provision
- Accessibility of provision
- Parental preference and popular schools
- Energy efficiency

5.2 The draft plan could be shared with stakeholders and workshops could be held with STC to consider aspects of the plan if appropriate.

## **6. Integrated Assessment Implications**

6.1 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.

6.1.1 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'.

6.1.2 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.

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

## **7. Legal Implications**

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

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

### **Background papers:**

[Home to school transport policy \(Sept 2015\) - Swansea](#)

[Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 21 July 2022, 10.00 am - Swansea](#)

**Appendices:** None