

Social and Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting	18 July 2024
Report Subject	Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme 2022-2025
Report Author	Chief Officer – Social Services
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Welsh Government's (WG) Childcare and Early Years (phase 1) Capital Programme was completed at the end of March 2024. Planning for the next phase of the WG Childcare and Early Years Capital programme investment has already commenced and the projects feasibility studies are coming to an end.

£70 million capital funding is available to Authorities across Wales for the Childcare and Early Years Capital (phase 2) Programme 2022 to 2025. The capital build programme is 100% funded by Welsh Government.

Subject to Cabinet approval, the Flintshire Childcare and Early Years Capital Team would like to progress the project onto the next stage of design and build.

This report outlines the proposed projects for phase 2 of the Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme 2022-2025 and the potential building locations that have been identified. The projects within the programme have been selected using Childcare Sufficiency Assessments, and Welsh Government funding criteria.

The programme, if approved, will deliver new Childcare facilities, and increase childcare provision across Flintshire in various locations. The focus is on early years, however, the buildings can be used for childcare wrap-around, after school and holiday provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Scrutiny approves the Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme 2022-2025 for the 'starting a project' stage to the 'design and build' phase of the programme to meet the WG deadline for these projects.
2	That Scrutiny approves a Direct Award process for appointing a contractor to meet the WG deadline of March 2025 as accommodated through an existing national framework.

REPORT DETAIL

1.00	Explaining Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme 2022-2025
1.01	Welsh Government (WG) have made available capital grants to councils for the purposes of providing seamless childcare provision to children in the early years, supported through several WG programmes including Flying Start childcare for 2–3-year-olds, the 3–4-year-old Childcare Offer and early learning. A key policy driver is that the early learning, Flying Start and Childcare Offer is as clear and easy as possible for children to access and there is a seamless pathway into early education.
1.02	The 3–4-year-old Childcare Offer is a WG funded programme which provides up to 30 hours of funded childcare and early learning for up to 48 weeks of the year to 3–4-year-olds of eligible working and training parents. During term time the 30 hours is made up of 10 hours of early education (Early Entitlement) and up to 20 hours of childcare or 12.5 hours of nursery education and 17.5 hours of childcare with a CIW registered childcare provider and/or school.
1.03	The Flying Start programme helps progress children under 4 years of age, who live in the more disadvantaged areas of Flintshire. The aim is to ensure all children are healthy and thriving, that their families are capable and coping and finally that these children are reaching their full potential. The primary focus will be to ensure all 2–4-year-olds have access to quality part-time childcare, with the phased roll-out of the 2-year-old funded childcare for all children.
1.04	Feedback from parents, gathered through the most recent Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA), revealed that parents want to be able to drop their children off and pick them up from the same site, with a seamless transition from childcare to education or vice versa. For some parents, wrap around provision between schools and non-maintained childcare providers continues to be an important part of their childcare needs.
1.05	The CSA also identified areas in Flintshire that are most in need of further childcare provisions, and this has been included within the scoring system to ensure that the expansion of childcare services is being placed in the

	<p>priority areas. Other criteria included in the scoring system, based on WG funding criteria are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh medium • bilingual • co-location of sites • number of childcare places that will be created • the project expands the Flying Start programme • the setting supports the Childcare Offer • the setting aligns with WESP (Welsh in Education Strategic Plan).
1.06	<p>The primary purpose of the education capital programme is to facilitate and support the co-location of the Curriculum for Wales and childcare provision wherever possible. This is in line with the Prosperity for All commitment to “introduce a new model of Community Learning Centres, providing extended services with childcare, parenting support, family learning and community access to facilities built around the school day”.</p>
1.07	<p>The completion of the proposed phase 2 projects will help to further the Council’s and WG’s commitment to create a more equal Wales through the Well-Being of Future Generations Act (2015) by ensuring all children, regardless of socio-economic background, have access to high quality childcare that meets their needs to ensure that they are given every opportunity to reach their full potential. It also supports parents with training and work opportunities and commitments.</p>
1.08	<p>The commitment to and completion of these Childcare and Early Years projects, supports the statutory duty for providing sufficient childcare places within Flintshire, and to consider the future needs of children and their families.</p>
1.09	<p>The legal framework will include commissioning for building the schemes, and a management agreement with respective school Governing Bodies to ensure that the settings continue to remain operational for a minimum 10-year period or if this is no longer feasible due to a change in circumstances to comply with the arrangements set out in the Agreement, as required by WG.</p>
1.10	<p>Following the completion of the Phase 1 Capital Projects, the Council has been able to expand the number of quality childcare places available for children eligible for childcare through the Flying Start Programme and/or the Childcare Offer. By expanding the reach of these programmes more families now have access to more government funded accessible childcare, which enables parents/carers the additional time to either re-enter the workforce or to seek additional training that would eventually lead them into employment. For many children this has meant they have gained quality childcare to support their development needs and prepare them for school.</p>
1.11	<p><u>Phase 1 Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme</u></p> <p>Phase 1 of the Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme ran between 2019-2022 and saw the delivery of nine new modular buildings</p>

	<p>and the refurbishment of an existing building. One capital project was extended into 2024, with Welsh Government approval. Phase 1 projects were completed within the allocated budget of £7,209,253 excluding VAT.</p> <p>The sites that were completed were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ysgol Bro Carmel • Ysgol Croes Atti, Shotton • Ysgol Sychdyn • Ysgol Caerwys • Ysgol Maes Y Felin • Ysgol Merllyn • Ysgol Derwen • Ysgol Y Llan, Whitford • Westwood School, Buckley • Aston Family Centre (Flying Start modular building) 						
1.12	<p>The completion of the above projects has enhanced childcare provision in these areas. The settings have custom built buildings that have been designed with the needs of the children at the heart, improving facilities for childcare, which in turn attracts both parents and children to the setting/school and creates seamless pathways for children from childcare to early education.</p>						
1.13	<p>The completion of the phase 1 Childcare and Early Years programme has seen 163 childcare spaces, in a modernised and purpose-built building, become available within the County.</p>						
1.14	<p><u>Proposed Phase 2 Childcare and Early Years Capital</u></p> <p>The following projects have been prioritised on the basis of FCC’s, CSA and the Welsh Government funding criteria and have been submitted to the WG for approval. The WG have agreed to explore the options for both the Treuddyn and Flint areas for a capital project and have provided FCC with development grants to complete the required feasibility studies.</p> <p>These feasibility studies are currently underway and are expected to be fully completed by the beginning of June 2024.</p>						
1.15	<table border="1" data-bbox="336 1615 1383 2092"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="336 1615 464 1653">Priority</th> <th data-bbox="464 1615 703 1653">Setting</th> <th data-bbox="703 1615 1383 1653">Description</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="336 1653 464 2092">1</td> <td data-bbox="464 1653 703 2092">Ysgol Terrig/Ysgol Parc Y Llan, Treuddyn</td> <td data-bbox="703 1653 1383 2092"> <p>This project is on a shared site between Ysgol Terrig (Welsh Medium) and Ysgol Parc Y Llan (English Medium). The original scope for this project was Ysgol Terrig, however, due to site constraints, the scope for this project has had WG approval to extend to include Ysgol Parc Y Llan to provide more workable options.</p> <p>This project will see an additional 20 Welsh Medium childcare places become available for Ysgol Terrig, taking their total capacity up</p> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Priority	Setting	Description	1	Ysgol Terrig/Ysgol Parc Y Llan, Treuddyn	<p>This project is on a shared site between Ysgol Terrig (Welsh Medium) and Ysgol Parc Y Llan (English Medium). The original scope for this project was Ysgol Terrig, however, due to site constraints, the scope for this project has had WG approval to extend to include Ysgol Parc Y Llan to provide more workable options.</p> <p>This project will see an additional 20 Welsh Medium childcare places become available for Ysgol Terrig, taking their total capacity up</p>
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			<p>to 40 places. The site is also located in a Flying Start expansion area.</p> <p>This project also aims to increase the number of English Medium childcare places by an additional 10 places, taking their overall total to 30. The site is also located in a Flying Start expansion area.</p>
	2	Cornist Park, Flint	<p>This project will provide 40 additional childcare places in a location that does not have any available childcare provision on site. Furthermore, the Flint area in general is lacking in childcare provision as a whole and is in need of investment to provide sufficient childcare. Cornist Park will be a bilingual setting, co-located setting and will expand the Flying Start programme to an additional 18 children in the area.</p>
1.16	Phase 2 of the Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme 2022-2025 would potentially increase childcare places by an additional 80 places within the County.		
1.17	<p><u>Ysgol Terrig – Costing</u></p> <p>Option 1 – The construction cost for this option would be £777,265.08. This site has a number of drawbacks including being located on a shared site, there is no additional parking added to the site for the increased traffic and it would be constructed on a shared playing field, meaning that Ysgol Parc Y Llan will lose greenspace to their school.</p> <p>Option 2 – The construction cost for this option would be £845,912.58. This site is in the same position as Option 1 and therefore has all the same issues, except this option would include additional parking.</p> <p>Due to there only being one possible location available and that the site is located on a shared playing field with Ysgol Parc Y Llan, the feasibility studies for this project have been extended. The extended studies will now also consider a full refurbishment of the community centre that is located on site. This has meant that potential options for Ysgol Parc Y Llan have been considered as any work to the community centre will directly affect Ysgol Parc Y Llan’s: school entrance, hard play areas and their green play areas.</p>		
1.18	<p><u>Cornist CP – Costing</u></p> <p>Option 1 – The construction cost for this option would be £787,858.83. However, this option has a major drawback as it is located in a zone that Education would seek to use for a school expansion should the need ever arise.</p>		

	Option 2 – The construction cost for this option would be £811,730.08. This is the school and Education’s preferred choice as whilst there is additional cost, due to having to relocate a playing field, it is removed from the main school buildings and would not affect any further expansion plans.
1.19	Subject to approval, the Childcare and Early Years Capital Team would progress the Programme from the ‘starting a project’ stage to the ‘design and construction’ stage of the programme. The projects are fully funded by WG.
1.20	A further report will be submitted to update Cabinet and Scrutiny prior to construction contract award of the design choices that have been made as well as the proposed timelines, costs and dates of completion for the projects.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The funding for the Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme will be agreed by Welsh Government and is funded by the Welsh Government on approval.
2.02	The programme can be managed within existing Council staffing resource.
2.03	There are no revenue impacts on the Council.
2.04	Due to the tight time constraints placed on these projects, Cabinet’s approval will be required during the September 2024 meeting in order to complete the project within the WG deadline (March 2025).

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT				
3.01	<p>All projects are managed using a risk register. Financial risks are managed through a project contingency, with regular meetings with the Capital Finance Team to ensure compliance with the WG capital grant award and that all costs are allocated to the correct scheme.</p> <p>Any high-level risk which cannot be managed with the projects/programme will be incorporated into the risk register for the Project Team to consider. Governance arrangements are in place for this process.</p>				
3.02	<p>Well-being Principle Impacts</p> <p>Under the five delivery principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act this report will have the following impacts:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="319 1944 1385 2056"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ways of Working Principle</th> <th>Impact</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Long-term</td> <td>Positive – ensures that high quality and affordable childcare will be</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Ways of Working Principle	Impact	Long-term	Positive – ensures that high quality and affordable childcare will be
Ways of Working Principle	Impact				
Long-term	Positive – ensures that high quality and affordable childcare will be				

		available to communities with demand.
	Prevention	Positive – will improve parents employment opportunities due to available and affordable childcare. It will provide positive transitions for children from childcare to education as the settings will be built on the school’s grounds.
	Integration	Positive – the new childcare settings will integrate children from varying social backgrounds and allow them to develop friendship groups in their early years, in-line with the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act (2015).
	Collaboration	Positive – partnership arrangements in-house and with external parties including school governing bodies through Project Plan and Communication Strategy.
	Involvement	Positive - The proposed projects will help promote greater community integration/use/involvement and many parents have reported improvement in friendships both for themselves and their children.
3.03	Against the seven well-being goals of the Act, the potential impact of the report and its recommendations would be evaluated as follows:	
	Well-being Principle	Impact
	Prosperous Wales	Positive impact - Capital investment directly benefits local supply chain/economy as a percentage of local expenditure is a requirement of the grant funding. The completion of projects will lead to an increase in employment opportunities for those seeking to enter construction, childcare, cleaning services and maintenance.
	Resilient Wales	Positive impact - Use of sustainable and recycled materials during construction, more energy efficient, potential reduction in carbon emissions.
	Healthier Wales	Positive impact – modular buildings will have both indoor and outdoor play areas for children to play and staff will work with healthy pre-school colleagues in line with

		governmental schemes to promote and impart wisdom on what a healthy diet consists of. As well as early years advisory teachers/officers to support play and a healthy and thriving childhood.
	More Equal Wales	Positive impact – completion of modular buildings will help to ensure suitable childcare is available across all of Flintshire, including areas of need (as identified through the CSA) that have been given priority due to the lack of childcare provision available in those areas.
	Cohesive Wales	Positive Impact – quality childcare provides further opportunities.
	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	Positive impact – childcare settings will offer opportunities to promote the Welsh Language and culture through the use of Welsh phrases, songs and storytelling, introducing children early.
	Globally Responsible Wales	Positive - Capital investment, delivers a more sustainable product, local spend and added benefits for apprenticeships and work experience in construction. The settings are encouraged to recycle all waste that occurs from the day to day running of the settings and to engage the children in the importance of recycling waste for a more sustainable future.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Consultation has been undertaken with colleagues within Education's School Modernisation Team and the umbrella childcare organisation CWLWM.
4.02	Consultation will be undertaken through the planning application process for each individual project.
4.03	Consultation has been undertaken with the Headteacher, Governing Bodies and childcare providers for each individual project.
4.04	Consultation has taken place between the project team and FCC's financial team.

4.05	Consultation has taken place with colleagues from FCC's Design and Build Team.
4.06	Consultation has taken place with colleagues from FCC's Legal Team.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	EY2 Cornist Option 1 Indicative Outline Cost Plan EY2 Cornist Option 2 Indicative Outline Cost Plan
5.02	EY2 Terrig Option 1 Indicative Outline Cost Plan EY2 Terrig Option 2 Indicative Outline Cost Plan

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme 2022-2025 - Cabinet Paper, 17 October 2023.
6.02	Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme 2022-2025 - Capital and Assets Programme Board, 08 August 2023.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officers:</p> <p>Gail Bennett, Early Years and Family Support Service Manager Byra Foulkes, Early Years Support Manager Joseph Penlington, Capital and Projects Officer</p> <p>Telephone: 01352 703953 (Gail Bennett) 01352 703934 (Byra Foulkes) 01352 703551 (Joseph Penlington)</p> <p>E-mail: gail.bennett@flintshire.gov.uk byra.foulkes@flintshire.gov.uk joseph.penlington@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) - The CSA is a questionnaire that was sent out to families living in the Flintshire area that enquired about what improvements they would like to see made to the childcare provisions that are offered in the Flintshire area.

Risk Register - A logbook that is kept of all the risks that could impact on the completion of a project.

Capital Funding - Capital funding is usually linked to acquiring or improving a long-term asset such as equipment or buildings.

Revenue Funding - Is linked to items that will be used within a year. Examples include salaries, heating, lighting, services and small items of equipment. Routine repairs are revenue expenditures and can include significant repairs that do not extend the life of the asset or do not improve the asset (the repairs merely return the asset to its previous condition)