

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **26th November 2018**

Report Subject: **21st Century Schools Band B Programme Progress**

Portfolio Holder: **Education and Learning Portfolio – Cllr. Clive Meredith**

Report Submitted by: **Head of Education Transformation – Lynn Phillips**

Report Written by: **Education Transformation Manager – Claire Gardner**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
✓	6.11.18	14.11.18			26.11.18	19.12.18		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Scrutiny Committee with an update on progress against the 21st Century Schools Band B development programme. The report also highlights recent key developments and updates, such as the Welsh Government’s Welsh-medium grant, which has a direct impact upon delivery of the 21st Century Band B Programme.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Vision for Education (2017) in Blaenau Gwent is to improve pupil attainment, achievement and well-being through the transformation of schools and learning environments that meet 21st Century expectations and are in line with nationally recognised Welsh Government priorities. The endorsed vision is based upon a school-led, self-improving system. Blaenau Gwent’s vision for education is firmly aligned to the revised 21st Century Schools investment objectives detailed below:

- **Investment Objective 1:** to raise standards and achievement in line with localised targets at foundation phase, KS2, KS3 and KS4; and secure improved transition into post 16 learning.
- **Investment Objective 2:** to create a sustainable model for the 21st Century school estate in consideration of both capital and revenue investment, along with the condition and suitability of buildings.
- **Investment Objective 3:** to establish effective management and provision of school places, by having the right schools in the right place at the right time.
- **Investment Objective 4:** to implement the 21st Century Schools Programme in line with local, regional and national school organisation policy; ensuring synergy between progression, development and

implementation.

- **Investment Objective 5:** meeting the needs of vulnerable learners.

2.2 Welsh Government has been clear in terms of the focus of and their expectation that the Band B programme will address condition and suitability in schools. Education work closely with partners in Technical Services, Finance, Planning, the Diocesan Directors of Education etc. in order to establish 21st Century Schools Programme priorities. The assessment is based upon on an in-depth analysis of:

- condition and suitability;
- maintenance and repair;
- pupil place planning and admissions data;
- school capacities and plans;
- live birth data; and,
- regional school organisation plans etc.

2.3 This information is then considered in line with learning from the Band A Programme, and the cost / size models Welsh Government propose aligned to new school builds, remodelling, fixtures, fittings and equipment. Plans need to be realistic, affordable and the best option for the school(s) in question. For example, consideration needs to be given to the most suitable solution (new build versus remodelling), the associated cost model and the timeframe within which it is achievable.

2.4 During the Summer of 2017, Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee received and offered their comments on a report on the proposed 21st Century Schools Band B Programme, which was subsequently approved by the Executive Committee. The Blaenau Gwent Band B Programme and associated Welsh Government funding allocation (for which the intervention rate is set at 50%), were approved by Welsh Government Capital Panel in 2017; however, each project within the programme will be subject to a detailed business case, along with statutory processes in line with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2013).

2.5 The Blaenau Gwent Band B Programme spans the period 2019 – 2024. Encompasses the following priority projects:

- Priority 1 - Secondary School/Phase Re-modelling
- Priority 2 (i) - 360 Place Primary Ebbw Fawr Valley
- Priority 2 (ii) - Welsh Medium Seedling
- Priority 2 (iii) – Primary School Refurbishment (in line with the availability of funding post creation of the new 360 place primary in the Ebbw Fawr valley)

2.6 In addition to the Band B Programme, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance announced on 16th January 2018 that £30 million (100% funding, with no match requirement from Councils), would be allocated to support capital projects dedicated to and growing Welsh language in education (the grant was

to be administered in addition to the capital allocations confirmed in Band B). Proposals were required to create additionality and contribute to meeting the Welsh Government's aim of one million Welsh speakers by 2050. The grant application process was initiated in March 2018, for return by the 1st June 2018. As Blaenau Gwent is the only Local Authority area in Wales with only 1 Welsh-medium primary school, and therefore, an ambitious bid for £7 million was put forward in securing additionality at primary phase aligned to latent demand identified, particularly within the Tredegar / Sirhowy valley.

- 2.7 Blaenau Gwent Council's Education Directorate received confirmation in October 2018, that they were successful in securing £6 million from the Welsh medium capital grant. The grant has been awarded in line with the growth of the seedling school proposed under Band B (which includes the creation of a nursery and reception in the first instance comprised of 24 places each, then growing to incorporate years 1-4), along with the development of a new 210 place Welsh-medium primary school in the Tredegar / Sirhowy valley, which will accommodate seedling pupils moving forward.
- 2.8 The original submission by Blaenau Gwent also included remodelling works to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, which would address resource space development in securing additional capacity, along with improved condition and suitability ratings. This was initially a project within the Band A Programme, which was later re-profiled due to the capacity of the school to support remodelling works at a time when their primary focus was school improvement. Due to the condition and suitability aspects of this project, it was felt by Welsh Government Capital Panel that this project would be better suited to the 21st Century Schools Programme, as opposed to the Welsh-medium grant which, aims to create additionality. Therefore, the Education Transformation team will need to consider if it is viable to undertake the required remodelling works to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg within Band B, by re-visiting the seedling / new school growth model, timelines and cost implications. Work has begun in preparing the consultation document and processes involved in the delivery of these projects i.e. identifying and appraising sites and options i.e. models for delivery in terms of location and governance; detailed timelines; financial profiling etc. The Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee, as statutory consultees, will be integral to the consultative process that will be taken forward early in the new calendar year.
- 2.9 Extensive research has taken place with other authorities throughout Wales including neighbouring Councils such as: Newport and Caerphilly, regarding seedling models and governance structures. This will be used to inform the consultation process, along with the views of headteachers from the existing Welsh-medium primary and Tredegar cluster. The potential options under consideration for the seedling school are likely to include:
- maintain the status quo;
 - co-location on a school site with a big enough external area to incorporate temporary accommodation;
 - co-location within an existing school where there is adequate capacity for phase 1 of seedling development (nursery and reception); and,

- secure a suitable site for the development of the new 210 place Welsh-medium primary school, and develop temporary accommodation to house the seedling provision, whilst the new build is being developed.
- 2.10 The Welsh-medium proposal is timely in that WG approved the Blaenau Gwent Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-20 in March 2018; which advocates increasing Welsh learning opportunities across the County Borough. In addition, the Council are preparing to undertake their Welsh-medium demand survey which has been consolidated and developed with the following regional partners: Torfaen, Monmouth, Caerphilly and Newport Councils. In addition, there is a Regional Welsh-medium Forum Planning of School Places and Demand Sub-group (chaired by the Education Transformation Manager); who are working together to identify how the growth of primary provision is likely to affect secondary school places.
- 2.11 Welsh Government established contact with Councils in the summer-term to consider revising timelines for early implementation, in line with potential financial over-commitment on their part in the years 2020/ 2021. Therefore, a revised financial profile was submitted and approved by Welsh Government early in the autumn-term (which will now require a further review in line with the approval of Welsh-medium grant). This request initiated a further in-depth analysis aligned to capacity, site availability etc. in securing early implementation timelines.
- 2.12 The current timeline, which will be subject to further review over the next period, highlights the following consultation and delivery timelines:
- **Priority 1 - Secondary School/Phase Re-modelling** – the remodelling programme will span the course of the programme and delivery will commence in 2019, concluding in 2024 - along with further work under Band C.
 - **Priority 2 (i) - 360 Place Primary Ebbw Fawr Valley** – consultation spring-term 2019 and conclusion autumn-term 2019 for occupation in 2022.
 - **Priority 2 (ii) - Welsh Medium Seedling** - consultation spring-term 2019 and conclusion autumn-term 2019, for occupation in the autumn-term 2020. It is currently proposed that the new-build 210 place school was scheduled for occupation in the autumn-term 2025. ***This will be subject to change, in line with the aforementioned assessment of the growth model and associated cost implications*.**
 - **Priority 2 (iii) – Primary School Refurbishment (in line with the availability of funding post creation of the new 360 place primary in the Ebbw Fawr valley).** This development would span the following phase of the programme – 2022 -2024.
- 2.13 The Welsh-medium seedling and new primary build school proposals will be the subject of a separate report to the Executive Committee in the Spring-term 2019, prior to the statutory consultation period. The Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee will be statutory consultees and the views of the committee will be considered via the consultation process.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 The Band B programme comprises the following priorities which have been previously discussed by Scrutiny Committee and agreed at the Executive Committee:

- To explore a seedling school for Welsh medium provision where there is currently unmet provision for demand.
- To build a new 360 primary school in a school currently at the C/D borderline/primary school redevelopment.
- Secondary school remodelling.

3.2 It is proposed that the Scrutiny Committee offer comments and feedback on the proposed developments, prior to initiating the formal consultation process.

3.3 The 21st Century Band B programme is anticipated to start in April 2019 and was originally due to conclude in 2024, however, WG have indicated that the programme could be extended into the financial year 2024/25 and beyond.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 There is a statutory requirement upon the Council to deliver the Band B Programme in line with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2013). The projects are required to be approved via the Welsh Government Business Case Scrutiny Group and Capital Panel, using the HM Treasury Green Book, Five Case Model.

4.2 Education is a strategic priority within the Corporate Plan, of which 21st Century Schools is an essential component. The 21st Century Schools Programme also features as a priority in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), and consequently, has generated a high-level of support from the capital programme.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on the Budget***

Current affordability

The Council's current capital programme has identified available funding of £5.5m. A match-fund of £5.5m from Welsh Government means that there will be a total of £11m available to complete the programme of works set out below, without the need to engage in any prudential borrowing arrangement, however, further bids will be made to the Council's capital programme during the autumn for financial year 20124 and beyond:

Welsh Medium Seedling	£1m
360 place Primary (Ebbw Fawr)/primary remodelling	£9m
Secondary School Remodelling	£1m
Sub-Total	£11m
(NB. Welsh medium £6m capital funding confirmed)	(+£6m)

5.2 **Risk**

Failure to raise educational standards is a strategic risk on the Corporate Risk Register (CRR). The 21st Century Schools Band B Programme proposals presented within this report will contribute to mitigating this risk. Moreover, there are very robust risk management arrangements in place for the 21st Century Schools Programme, with identified risks being regularly reported to Corporate Leadership Team via the quarterly highlight report.

5.3 **Legal**

There are legal implications associated with potential proposals; therefore, the Council will seek independent legal advice at an appropriate stage in the programme's development, in line with statutory processes.

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no direct personnel implications associated with this report; however, any statutory consultation exercise is likely to be resource intensive. Consequently, there may be a need to support staff and consider their well-being during the consultation process.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

The Blaenau Gwent Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) for the 21st Century Schools Programme identifies sustainability as one of its key strategic objectives. Therefore, potential changes to the school estate will ensure that sustainability of provision is at the heart of any proposals, whilst also considering and managing the needs and impact of upon pupils, parents, and schools/post 16 education providers. Consequently, the Executive Committee is requested to approve the implementation plan. Scrutiny's views have been considered and fed into the Band B implementation planning process.

6.2 **Expected Outcome for the Public**

The public can expect a programme that ensures that the school estate is fit for purpose and meets 21st Century standards in terms of condition and suitability, teaching and learning environments, which aim to improve outcomes for children and young people.

6.3 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**

The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2013) is clear in relation to the requirements for stakeholder involvement in the consultation exercise. Engagement has already taken place with headteachers on the 21st Century Schools Band B Programme and this engagement will continue throughout the implementation period. In addition, there is a Band B Development Group which is comprised of representatives from: Technical Services, Planning,

Regeneration, Finance, Early Years, Health and Safety, Organisational Development etc. The group feeds into the 21st Century Schools Programme Board, and reports to Education DMT and CLT.

6.4 *Thinking for the Long Term*

The Council's preferred options for the Band B programme involves thinking for the long term, particularly addressing schools that have low suitability and condition ratings.

6.5 *Preventative Focus*

The preventative focus of the report is aligned to meeting the expectations of learners in the 21st Century, the priorities identified within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and the need for Education to contribute to making revenue financial efficiencies.

6.6 *Collaboration / partnership working*

The consultation requirement, in line with the School Organisation Code, requires all stakeholders with an involvement in any school re-organisation proposal to be engaged in the consultation process, including Scrutiny Committee.

6.7 *Integration*

The Council is taking an integrated approach through working in a 'One Council' corporate approach, for example, corporate / education colleagues contributing to the 21st Century Schools Programme Board.

6.8 *EqIA*

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) will be completed for each of the Band B's respective projects; including, more detailed analysis of any of the projects prior to amendments to the school estate.

7. *Monitoring Arrangements*

7.1 The Education Directorate has established a 21st Century Schools Board that has a strategic oversight for the programme, in line with the requirements of the Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) good practice guidelines. The 21st Century Schools Board produces regular highlight reports for Education Department Management Teams (DMT) and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). The Education and Learning Scrutiny / Executive Committees monitor progress via their forward work programmes and Scrutiny are also consultees on any statutory school re-organisation consultation exercise. Furthermore, the 21st Century Schools Programme is independently assessed through the WG facilitated Gateway Review process and the positive outcome from the last review in July 2017 has been previously reported to Scrutiny and the Executive Committee.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

N/A

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