

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 12TH JUNE, 2019

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER

**PRESENT: Leader of the Council/Executive Member Corporate Services
Councillor N.J. Daniels (Chair)**

**Executive Member – Environment
Councillor G. Collier**

**Executive Member – Education
Councillor J. Collins**

**Executive Member –
Regeneration & Economic Development
Councillor D. Davies**

**Executive Member – Social Services
Councillor J. Mason**

**AND: Chair of Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor S. Thomas**

**WITH: Managing Director
Chief Officer Resources
Corporate Director of Social Services
Corporate Director of Education
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Press and Publicity Officer**

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<u>TIMING OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u> RESOLVED that future meetings of the Executive Committee continue to be held at 10.00 a.m.	
No. 3	<u>APOLOGIES</u> The following apologies for absence were received from:- Councillor P. Edwards, Chair of Environment, Economic Development and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee; Corporate Director Community Services and Regeneration; and Chief Officer Commercial.	
No. 4	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u> No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.	
	<u>MINUTES</u>	
No. 5	<u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u> The minutes of the Executive Committee held on 1 st May, 2019 were submitted. RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.	

ITEM	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<u>DECISION ITEMS</u>	
	<u>GENERAL MATTERS</u>	
No 6	<p><u>MEMBERSHIPS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the following Memberships and Subscriptions received:-</p> <p>WLGA 2019/2020 Annual Subscription in the total sum of £67,640.00 (inclusive of VAT).</p> <p>RESOLVED that the WLGA 2019/2020 Annual Subscription be approved.</p> <p>LGA Annual Membership Subscription 2019/2020 in the total sum of £8,614.42 (inclusive of VAT).</p> <p>RESOLVED that the LGA Annual Membership Subscription for 2019/2020 be approved.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 7	<p><u>CONFERENCES AND COURSES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to attendance at the following:-</p> <p>Leadership Programme for Elected Members 2019/2020</p> <p>RESOLVED that approval be granted for Councillor J. Collins, Executive Member for Education, to attend.</p> <p>Invitation to Festival of Military Music – Saturday, 4th May, 2019</p> <p>RESOLVED that approval be granted for Councillor B. Thomas, Armed Forces Champion, to attend.</p> <p>Invitation – A Day to Remember – South Wales Armed Forces Day Saturday, 23rd June, 2019</p> <p>RESOLVED that approval be granted for Councillor B. Thomas, Armed Forces Champion, to attend.</p> <p>The Leader also reported the following additional invitations which had been submitted for approval since the preparation of the report:-</p> <p>Invitation – Tredegar Town Council – Armed Forces Day Event on Sunday, 30th June, 2019.</p> <p>RESOLVED that approval be granted for Councillor B. Thomas, Armed Forces Champion, to attend.</p> <p>Invitation – Tredegar Town Council - Aneurin Bevan Day Event on Sunday, 7th July, 2019.</p> <p>RESOLVED that approval be granted for Councillor M. Moore, Chair of Council, to attend.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<u>JOINT PORTFOLIO MATTERS</u>	
No 8	<p><u>ALL WALES PLAY OPPORTUNITIES GRANT – BLAENAU GWENT SPLASH PARK</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the joint report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services and the Corporate Director Social Services.</p> <p>The Leader noted that the report which outlined the position regarding the development of a children’s splash park in Blaenau Gwent and advised that he would invite the Corporate Director Social Services to speak to the report. The Leader added that the Chair of the Social Services Committee was in attendance to reflect the views of the Scrutiny Committee and the rationale behind Option 3 which had been proposed by the Joint Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Social Services spoke to the report and informed the Executive that that in January 2018 the Authority was informed by Welsh Government that the allocation for Blaenau Gwent for 2017/18 was £14,669 to be spent by the end of March 2018 via slippage from the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant. Officers had become aware that a number of authorities were not going to claim their allocation and so officers made a an opportunistic bid for additional funding to create a children’s splash park similar to the Splash Park installed at Cyfarthfa Park, Merthyr which we had been informed had cost £110K to build.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p>Officers drew up a shortlist of sites based on criteria such as a high level of security, full closure after hours, car parking, cafe, toilets and other play facilities. The shortlist of 3 locations was reached Bryn Bach Park, Bedwellty House and Garden Festival Park. The preferred option was Bryn Bach Park run by Aneurin Leisure Trust which delivered leisure and other services on behalf of the Local Authority.</p> <p>The Corporate Director continued that in February 2018 Welsh Government approved the request for £110,000 for a splash park. Although it was recognised that the scheme would not be delivered by the end of March 2018 and it was thereupon agreed with Welsh Government that funding be transferred to Aneurin Leisure Trust with a legal agreement to commission the work for the splash park to be completed by the end of July or beginning of August 2018.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Social Services referred to the meetings which took place with Aneurin Leisure Trust, However from a Council perspective there were additional technical complications such as the requirement for a sustainable recirculation water system costing an additional £100k.</p> <p>The Corporate Director indicated how the Council and Leisure Trust Officers were in communication concerning the possibility of extending the deadline through discussions with Welsh Government and how we may be able to raise the additional funding for the water recirculation system, however whilst these discussions were in train the money was returned by the Trust, Indicating they were no longer interested in proceeding with the project as they had identified concerns around the technical issues, the additional funding required for the water system and on-going running and maintenance costs to the Trust. As Bryn Bach Park was not in the running then Bedwellty House would have the same issues, so we approached the Garden Festival Park to ensure we could achieve a splash park and avoid losing the funding obtained.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p>The Corporate Director advised that meetings were undertaken with the new owners of Festival Park who were enthusiastic and keen to explore the concept of the splash park being based there and felt this could be part of a bigger planned investment to improve the Festival Park site. Throughout the process Officers have kept Welsh Government fully informed and they continued to remain supportive. Welsh Government proposed we had 3 options to submit a full business plan for the Festival Park site by the 31st March 2019, a contingency plan for using the funding before the end of the financial year or pay back the funding. The preferred option was to submit a business plan so not to lose the funding which was done and approved by Welsh Government in April. Through our discussions with Garden Festival Park they were willing to provide the additional funding required to construct the splash park and cover on-going running and maintenance costs.</p> <p>At this juncture the Leader invited the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee to give an overview of discussions at the Scrutiny Committee which led to Option 3 being put forward to the Executive.</p> <p>The Chair of Social Services Scrutiny Committee informed that the meeting was volatile as Members expressed their concern and anger at the lack of reports presented to Scrutiny on the initiative. The Members also concerns raised around the article which had been published in the press the day before the Scrutiny Committee which informed that the Splash Park was being located in Festival Park. This new proposal also concerned Tredegar Members as the facility was no longer planned for Bryn Bach Park. The Chair added that at the meeting officers conceded that the reporting of the project had not been handled effectively.</p> <p>The Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee added that the Chair of Regeneration and Economic Development had a vote at the meeting and advised that although he had been invited in his capacity as Chair of Social Services he did not have a vote and therefore felt that he was in attendance on behalf of the Chair of Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee. This was an issue that should be revisited by Democratic Services where invitations are extended to Members across Scrutiny Committees.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p>With regard to concerns raised at the Scrutiny meeting, the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee advised that Members raised reservations about public money being used for a private facility, the lack of representative from Aneurin Leisure Trust also caused concern as the report identified that the Trust was a part of the process and therefore a representative should have been present. The Chair of Scrutiny noted the issues faced by the Trust at present which was discussed at the meeting. This resulted in Option 3 being put forward to the Executive which would allow the Trust to be invited to a future meeting to answer questions raised by Members. It was also felt that officers be asked to re-engage with Valleys Task Force and Welsh Government to see if additional funding was available to support the Trust. He added that Scrutiny Members felt that Blaenau Gwent and Aneurin Leisure Trust had failed to bring this project to fruition and therefore Option 3 was put forward to have further discussions around the merits of both sites.</p> <p>The Leader noted the comments raised and wished to invite the Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development to respond to comments made in relation to public monies being used in for the private sector which had been mentioned in the Scrutiny meeting. The Leader also stressed that officers had not done anything to undermine the democratic process and he advised that if the Chair of the Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee had wished to invite a representative from the Aneurin Leisure Trust he should have extended an invitation.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development advised that there are many occasions where public monies had been utilised for private projects. He added that grants gifted to the Authority had been used for many areas including the regeneration of Town Centres. The Authority also supported local businesses with public monies with this in mind it was difficult to identify the reason for the concerns. He continued that this investment was available for Blaenau Gwent and Festival Park had the means to facilitate the project, unfortunately Aneurin Leisure Trust was not in a position to financially support the project, therefore he felt it was important we look at alternative options to take the project forward and bring the investment to Blaenau Gwent.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p>The Corporate Director Social Services informed that in light of Option 3 further dialogue had been undertaken with Aneurin Leisure Trust who reiterated that they were not in a position to provide capital funding and continue to have concerns around revenue costs associated with running and maintaining the Splash Park. Following contact with the Valleys Task Force it was confirmed that the project did not fit with their strategic vision. The Corporate Director stated that Welsh Government advised that if the funding remained unspent by September it would be reclaimed.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Social Services added that Aneurin Leisure Trust had prepared a bid for the Valley Regional Park. The bid was approximately £550,000 and officers are working with Aneurin Leisure Trust to secure funding to enhance the facilities at Bryn Bach Park.</p> <p>The Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee advised that Members felt it was morally unacceptable that the grant should not be spent in the public sector, namely, Bryn Bach Park which had been identified as the original preferred option.</p> <p>In response to comments made by the Leader, the Chair of Scrutiny wished to point out that he had not suggested that officers had deliberately mislead Scrutiny Members, although it was felt the scrutiny reporting process had been badly handled.</p> <p>The Chair of Scrutiny further noted that officers had originally identified Bryn Bach Park as a preferred site, however it was common knowledge that the Trust had financial issues and therefore may not be able to sustain ongoing costs. He asked why this was put forward as a preferred site when the Council had been held to account by the Wales Audit Office for supporting unsustainable projects. In conclusion, the Chair of Scrutiny reiterated that the concerns raised at the Joint Scrutiny Committee and supported Option 3 put forward to the Executive.</p>	

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	<p>The Leader noted the comments and appreciated the concerns raised, particularly by Tredegar Ward Members. However, the Leader stated that the facts remained that Aneurin Leisure Trust were not in a financial position to contribute to the facility. He added that as a Local Authority we could not place this on local tax payers and advised that great deal of support had been provided to the Trust in previous years.</p> <p>At the invitation of the Leader, the Executive Member expressed their views, the Executive Member for Social Services supported the comments made by the Corporate Director Social Services. He felt that from a Local Authority aspect it would enhance a number of areas we are responsible for including Looked After Children and he was of the opinion that this project created an excellent opportunity.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader added that it would be detrimental to this Authority if funding was reclaimed by Welsh Government and he fully supported the Splash Park being located at Festival Park.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Education felt that this investment was for Blaenau Gwent and was an excellent opportunity to enhance facilities we already have in the area. The Festival Park was in a position to provide the financial support for a Splash Park where Aneurin Leisure Trust was not, therefore she acknowledged her support to the Festival Park as a preferred location.</p> <p>In light of the comments made by the Executive Members, the Leader noted that officers reported that dialogue with Welsh Government, Valleys Task Force and Aneurin Leisure Trust had been carried out as asked in the recommendation from Scrutiny had proposed. The Leader felt that if the grant was reclaimed by Welsh Government it would result in reputational issues for this Authority. He welcomed the funding being pursued for Bryn Bach Park via the Valleys Regional Park which would provide investment and opportunity for the area.</p> <p>The Leader proposed Option 2 for approval and this was supported by the Executive Members.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>																																										
	RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive agreed Option 2 namely, the continued development of a Splash Park within Blaenau Gwent and progress the development at the Garden Festival site as agreed with Welsh Government. Also, Members to be provided with regular progress updates on the progress of the Splash Park.																																											
	<u>LEADER/CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS</u>																																											
No. 9	<p><u>GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>Members were advised of the following additional grants that had been submitted for approval prior to the preparation of the report:-</p> <p><u>Abertillery Ward- Councillor N. Daniels</u></p> <table data-bbox="212 1176 1372 1861"> <tbody> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Abertillery Excelsiors FC</td> <td>£100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.</td> <td>Abertillery Excelsiors Juniors FC</td> <td>£100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3.</td> <td>Abertillery Netball Club</td> <td>£100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4.</td> <td>Old Tyleryans RFC</td> <td>£100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5.</td> <td>Abertillery Cricket Club</td> <td>£100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6.</td> <td>Abertillery Kids Cricket</td> <td>£100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7.</td> <td>Abertillery Town Band</td> <td>£100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8.</td> <td>Abertillery & District Museum Society</td> <td>£50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9.</td> <td>Abertillery Ladies Orpheus</td> <td>£75</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10.</td> <td>Ebbw Fach Choir</td> <td>£75</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11.</td> <td>Bishop Street Allotments</td> <td>£50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>12.</td> <td>Gelli Grug Community Garden</td> <td>£50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>13.</td> <td>Abertillery BG RFC</td> <td>£100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>14.</td> <td>Blaenau Gwent Methodist Church</td> <td>£50</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	1.	Abertillery Excelsiors FC	£100	2.	Abertillery Excelsiors Juniors FC	£100	3.	Abertillery Netball Club	£100	4.	Old Tyleryans RFC	£100	5.	Abertillery Cricket Club	£100	6.	Abertillery Kids Cricket	£100	7.	Abertillery Town Band	£100	8.	Abertillery & District Museum Society	£50	9.	Abertillery Ladies Orpheus	£75	10.	Ebbw Fach Choir	£75	11.	Bishop Street Allotments	£50	12.	Gelli Grug Community Garden	£50	13.	Abertillery BG RFC	£100	14.	Blaenau Gwent Methodist Church	£50	
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	<u>Abertillery Ward- Councillor J. Holt</u>	
	1. Pant Y Pwdyn Allotment Association	£100
	2. Bishop Street Allotments	£100
	3. Abertillery Bowls Club	£100
	4. Abertillery Mini & Junior RFC	£100
	<u>Cwmtillery Ward- Councillor T. Sharrem</u>	
	1. Friends of Blaenau Gwent Village	£50
	2. Blaenau Gwent Methodist Church	£120
	3. Abertillery BG RFC	£75
	4. Abertillery Belles FC	£75
	5. Abertillery Bluebirds AFC	£75
	6. St Paul's Church	£60
	7. St Paul's Church Hall	£60
	8. Six Bells Bowls Club	£75
	9. Abertillery Bowls Club	£75
	10. Cwmtillery Pigeon Club	£120
	11. Bishop Street Allotments	£50
	12. Chillax	£50
	13. Abertillery & District Museum Society	£50
	14. Abertillery Angling Club	£120

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<u>Cwmtillery Ward- Councillor J. Wilkins</u>	
1.	Abertillery BG RFC	£100
2.	Chillax	£100
3.	Abertillery Excelsiors Junior FC	£100
4.	Abertillery Belles FC	£100
5.	Tillery Dragons Netball Club	£100
6.	Friends of Blaenau Gwent Village	£50
7.	Tillery Road Tenants & Residents	£50
8.	Abertillery Bowls Club	£50
9.	Bishop Street Allotments	£50
10.	Llanhilleth Tenants & Residents Association	£50
11.	Six Bells Bowls Club	£50
12.	St Paul's Church	£50
13.	St Paul's Church Hall	£50
14.	Abertillery & District Museum Society	£50
15.	Ebbw Fach Choir	£50
16.	Blaenau Gwent Foster Carers Association	£50
17.	Falcons Martial Arts	£50
	<u>Llanhilleth Ward- Councillor J. Collins & N. Parsons</u>	
1.	Aberbeeg Community Events Group	£150

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<u>Six Bells Ward – Councillor D. Hancock</u>	
1.	Six Bells Bowls Club	£50
2.	Abertillery Excelsiors Junior FC	£50
3.	Abertillery Excelsiors FC	£50
4.	Abertillery Bluebirds AFC	£50
5.	Abertillery Business & Professional Ladies Ass.	£50
6.	Six Bells Over 50's Club	£50
7.	Six Bells Community Centre	£100
8.	Friends of Six Bells Park	£50
	<u>BRYNMAWR</u>	
	<u>Brynmawr Ward- Councillor J. Hill</u>	
1.	Blaenycwm Primary School	£50
2.	Friends of Parc Nant y Waun	£100
3.	Brynmawr Community Millenium Fund	£100
4.	Brynmawr Museum Society	£100
5.	The Market Hall Cinema and Arts Trust	£100
	<u>Brynmawr Ward- Councillor L. Elias</u>	
1.	Friends of Parc Nant y Waun	£50
2.	Brynmawr Community Millenium Fund	£100
3.	Ebbw Vale Works Museum	£50
4.	Brynmawr Guides	£70
5.	Brynmawr Pensioners Association	£70

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	<p><u>Brynmawr Ward- Councillor W. Hodgins</u></p> <table data-bbox="204 521 1377 660"> <tr> <td data-bbox="204 521 240 562">1.</td> <td data-bbox="316 521 1070 562">Blaenycwm Primary School (Beehive Project)</td> <td data-bbox="1307 521 1377 562">£50</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="204 568 240 609">2.</td> <td data-bbox="316 568 1091 609">Blaenycwm Primary School (Intergenerational)</td> <td data-bbox="1307 568 1377 609">£50</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="204 616 240 656">3.</td> <td data-bbox="316 616 954 656">Brynmawr Community Millenium Fund</td> <td data-bbox="1286 616 1377 656">£100</td> </tr> </table> <p><u>EBBW VALE</u></p> <p><u>Badminton Ward – Councillor C. Meredith</u></p> <table data-bbox="204 909 1377 996"> <tr> <td data-bbox="204 909 240 949">1.</td> <td data-bbox="316 909 791 949">Glyncoed Community Group</td> <td data-bbox="1286 909 1377 949">£100</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="204 956 240 996">2.</td> <td data-bbox="316 956 651 996">Falcons Martial Arts</td> <td data-bbox="1307 956 1377 996">£50</td> </tr> </table> <p><u>Rassau Ward – Councillor G. Davies</u></p> <table data-bbox="204 1149 1377 1189"> <tr> <td data-bbox="204 1149 240 1189">1.</td> <td data-bbox="316 1149 975 1189">Rassau & Beaufort Royal British Legion</td> <td data-bbox="1286 1149 1377 1189">£100</td> </tr> </table> <p><u>NANTYGLO & BLAINA</u></p> <p><u>Blaina Ward – Councillor G. Collier</u></p> <table data-bbox="204 1431 1377 1518"> <tr> <td data-bbox="204 1431 240 1471">1.</td> <td data-bbox="316 1431 871 1471">Blaina Monday Night Dance Club</td> <td data-bbox="1307 1431 1377 1471">£50</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="204 1478 240 1518">2.</td> <td data-bbox="316 1478 512 1518">Blaina RFC</td> <td data-bbox="1286 1478 1377 1518">£100</td> </tr> </table> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted.</p>	1.	Blaenycwm Primary School (Beehive Project)	£50	2.	Blaenycwm Primary School (Intergenerational)	£50	3.	Brynmawr Community Millenium Fund	£100	1.	Glyncoed Community Group	£100	2.	Falcons Martial Arts	£50	1.	Rassau & Beaufort Royal British Legion	£100	1.	Blaina Monday Night Dance Club	£50	2.	Blaina RFC	£100	
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No 10	<p data-bbox="188 398 927 479"><u>PROFESSIONAL LEGAL SUPPORT TO CHILD PROTECTION, SOCIAL SERVICES</u></p> <p data-bbox="188 524 1390 607">Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance.</p> <p data-bbox="188 651 1390 1379">The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance advised that the report sought approval for proposals in relation to future service provision due to the capacity issues in the child care team. There had been a gradual rise in the current workload cases due to the increase in looked after children cases and there was a difficulty to recruit specialist solicitors in this area. At present the Authority used external solicitors based in Cardiff which delivered a good service and were sourced through the National Procurement Framework. Although the analysis of the costs outlined in the appendices to the report suggests that in-house provision would be best value for money, as previously mentioned the Officer advised that the Council had difficulty in recruiting and retaining suitable in-house professionals. This was not an issue unique to Blaenau Gwent, other councils are also in similar positions. The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance advised that with this in mind we reviewed the current arrangements and the options are presented in the report. It was the intention to set out the procurement notices by late summer with appointment by autumn.</p> <p data-bbox="188 1424 1390 1592">The Leader noted the importance of consultation with trade unions as they would have a view on the preferred option. Although he was mindful that the most important aspect was providing a safe service for children.</p> <p data-bbox="188 1637 1390 1850">RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive agreed Option 2, namely undertake a formal procurement exercise and request expressions of interest from any providers (public or private) who may be able to offer professional services to Social Services Child Protection.</p>	