

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 18TH DECEMBER, 2019**

**REPORT OF:**

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PRESENT: COUNCILLOR N. DANIELS (CHAIR)

Councillors G. Collier  
J. Collins  
D. Davies

WITH: Managing Director  
Corporate Director Education  
Corporate Director Social Services  
Corporate Director Community Services and Regeneration  
Chief Officer Resources  
Chief Officer Commercial  
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance  
Press Officer

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b>  It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b>  An apology for absence was received Councillor J. Mason.	
No. 3	<b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b>  There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.	

	<b><u>MINUTES</u></b>	
<b>No. 4</b>	<b><u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></b>	
	<p>The minutes of the Executive Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2019 were submitted; whereupon:-</p> <p>The Executive Member for Education reported an amendment to Page 20, Item 14, 2019 School Performance For: End of Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 (Provisional Only) which should read schools not authorities, as follows:-</p> <p><i>The Executive Member for Education provided an overview of the report and advised that this was a positive report for the Authority. The Corporate Director Education concurred with the comments and advised that schools in Blaenau Gwent were performing in line with similar schools in the South East Region. The Corporate Director added that this was due to the dedication of head teachers, teachers and support staff.</i></p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p> <p>FURTHER RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
	<b><u>GENERAL MATTERS</u></b>	
<b>No. 5</b>	<b><u>CONFERENCES AND COURSES</u></b>	
	<p>Consideration was given to attendance at the following:-</p> <p><b><u>Armed Forces in Wales and Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Awards 28<sup>th</sup> November 2019</u></b></p> <p>RESOLVED that approval be granted for Councillor Brian Thomas, Armed Forces Champion to attend.</p>	
<b>No. 6</b>	<b><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - 29TH JANUARY 2020</u></b>	

	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Leader/Executive Member for Corporate Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED, that the report be accepted and the forward work programme for 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2020 be noted.</p>	
	<p><b><u>DECISION ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS</u></b></p>	
<p><b>No. 7</b></p>	<p><b><u>THE CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR THE YEAR 2020/21</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report which had been presented to set the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2020/21. The Chief Officer referred to the option which sought approval to set the council tax base at 20,662.45.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Council Tax base calculation for 2020/21 as detailed in Appendix 1 tables 1 to 6 and the Council Tax base for tax setting purposes be 20,662.45 be approved.</p>	
<p><b>No. 8</b></p>	<p><b><u>CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, APRIL TO SEPTEMBER, 2019/2020 FINANCIAL YEAR</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources provided a detailed overview of the report which outlined each portfolio's actual and forecast capital expenditure against funding approvals as at 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2019.</p> <p>The Chief Officer noted that Welsh Government had awarded 100% funding for the Household Waste Recycling Centre and as a result the Councils own resources were no longer required. Therefore, it is proposed the £520,000 be reallocated to the Capital contingency for allocation.</p> <p>In addition during 2019/20 the Council had received Welsh Government Economic Stimulus funding of £444,465. It was proposed that this funding be utilised for the Industrial Units</p>	

Improvement Programme which would release £280,000 of the Council's own resources to the Capital contingency for allocation at a future date.

The Leader welcomed the additional monies to be reallocated to the Capital contingency fund.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely:-

- the appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report be provided;
- the appropriate financial control procedures agreed by Council be continued;
- the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place to safeguard Authority funding be noted; and
- the funding proposals in relation to the Industrial Units Improvement Programme and Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) projects be approved.

**No. 9** **REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING -2019/2020, FORECAST  
OUTTURN TO 31 MARCH 2020 (AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2019)**

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report which provided the forecast financial outturn position across all Portfolios for the current financial year and referred to the information related to the actions taken forward to move towards a balanced budget as detailed in the appendices. The Chief Officer noted the impact on the budget and advised that the forecast overall financial position as at 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2020 showed a small adverse variance of £7,200 against the total net budget.

The Chief Officer Resources noted the reasons for adverse variances in Education and Environment and outlined the actions taken towards the favourable variance in Social Services. The Chief Officer reported that the Education Portfolio received a virement of £60,000 to assist in costs incurred for Looked After Children attending schools out of Blaenau Gwent.

The Leader welcomed the good position of the budget which showed excellent budgetary control and was a good example of how CLT, and portfolio holders managed the resources allocated

	<p>to the Authority. The Deputy Leader concurred with the comments raised and hoped that the position could be sustained going forward.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes was received. The action plans attached at Appendix 4 to address the forecast adverse variances as at the end of September 2019 be noted and the budget virements attached at Appendix 5 which exceeded £250,000 be approved.</p>	
<p><b>No. 10</b></p>	<p><b><u>GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The following additional grants were reported:-</p> <p><b><u>EBBW VALE</u></b>  <u>Badminton Ward – Councillor C. Meredith</u></p> <p>1. One Life Autism Support Group</p> <p><u>Cwm Ward – Councillor D. Bevan &amp; G. L. Davies</u></p> <p>1. Gayden Barrass £</p> <p>FURTHER RESOLVED subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 11</b></p>	<p><b><u>GRANTS WORKING GROUP - 28TH NOVEMBER 2019</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the notes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2019.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 12</b></p>	<p><b><u>GLOBAL RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Governance and Partnership.</p>	

	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 namely:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the update on current participation be noted;</li> <li>• the continued commitment of support via the Global Resettlement Scheme proportionate to local capacity of services be approved; and</li> <li>• further updates of progress made under the scheme be received.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b><u>DECISION ITEMS - ENVIRONMENT MATTERS</u></b></p>	
<p><b>No. 13</b></p>	<p><b><u>ACTIVITIES REPORT – LITTERING AND DOG CONTROL ORDER ENFORCEMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2018/19</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 2 namely:- the extension of the current contract with Kingdom be approved for a further 12 months (with a 2 month notice period) subject to service and cost information that would need to be modelled as part of a wider review. (Extension of the current contract would be subject to Strategic Procurement Board approval).</p>	
	<p><b><u>DECISION ITEMS - REGENERATION &amp; ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS</u></b></p>	
<p><b>No. 14</b></p>	<p><b><u>ENERGY PROSPECTUS</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development referred to the topical stories in the media around climate change and advised that the Energy Prospectus demonstrated the proactive approach being taken by the Council to be on the forefront of the reduction of the Authority’s carbon footprint. The Executive Member expressed his thanks to officers who had produced the Energy Prospectus and commended their investigations into the available sources of energy.</p>	

The Executive Member added that the project linked to the Bridging the Gap project and work undertaken around the Council's Carbon Footprint by the Managing Director. The Energy Prospectus would also feed into the Refit Programme and would provide further regeneration opportunities working with Welsh Government, Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and Tech Valleys. The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development felt that there was a need for engagement with partners and constituents on the Prospectus which could be linked into the Authority's aspirations for the new Household Waste Recycling Centre.

In conclusion, the Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development stated that the Council was at the forefront of this significant project with some of the best officers in Wales leading on the project. He suggested a launch of the project be pursued as there were a number of opportunities to be explored in communities and with schools, businesses and residents.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services concurred with the comments raised and also expressed thanks to Welsh Government who had supported the Authority on this journey. The Corporate Director added that the Council had worked hard and the Energy Prospectus demonstrated the Authority's commitment.

The Leader advised that the Energy Prospectus was an excellent project and concurred that a launch would be beneficial to inform people of the work being taken forward by the Authority. The Leader referred to visits made by himself and the Executive Member for Education to School Councils in both primary and secondary schools and advised that at all these meetings pupils had raised climate change and recycling matters. It was encouraging that our younger people in communities are aware of such significant issues. An Education Centre to work with schools would be a superb initiative to be aspired to in the Authority's future plans.

**RESOLVED** that the report be accepted and Option 2 namely:- the energy prospectus (including associated communication plan), be approved enabling a proactive approach in the councils efforts to increase the reliance on renewable sources of energy and associated business and community energy models developed.

**DECISION ITEMS - EDUCATION MATTERS**

**No. 15**

**QUALITY ASSURING SAFEGUARDING IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES (LGES)**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education .

The Executive Member for Education noted the report which outlined the revised assurance protocol for safeguarding arrangements in Local Government Education Services. The Corporate Director Education added that findings from the process was helpful and would feed into the Local Authority self-evaluation processes.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.

**MONITORING ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES**

**No. 16**

**USE OF GENERAL AND EARMARKED RESERVES 2019/2020**

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the attached report of and the planned forecast increase of the General Reserve to 4.58% (above the 4% target level) for 2019/2020 and future years strengthening the Council's Financial Resilience be noted. The Executive considered the impact the £0.007m forecast adverse variance for 2019/2020 would have on the General Reserve target and the challenge on budget overspends be continued along with the implementation of the appropriate service Action Plans, where required.

**No. 17**

**SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.

The Leader referred to discussions at the Corporate Overview



	<p>Scrutiny Committee in relation to absence monitoring and from January 2020 each Scrutiny Committee would have individual directorates sickness review reporting as part of their Forward Work Programme for consideration. An overview of these reports would also feed into the Executive for discussion.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the staff sickness absence performance for 2018/19 and the proposed actions for improvement be noted.</p>	
<b>No. 18</b>	<p><b><u>STAFF SURVEY 2019 – SUMMARY RESULTS</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the joint report of the Managing Director and Chief Officer Commercial.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
<b>No. 19</b>	<p><b><u>QUARTER 1 AND 2 (APRIL TO SEPTEMBER) JOINT FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Partnerships and Governance.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information therein be noted.</p>	
	<p><b><u>MONITORING ITEMS - EDUCATION</u></b></p>	
<b>No. 20</b>	<p><b><u>EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICES (EAS), VALUE FOR MONEY REPORT, FINANCIAL YEAR 2018/19</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
<b>No. 21</b>	<p><b><u>IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME 2019</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p>	

	<p>The Executive Member for Education reported that since the publication of the report Brynmawr Foundation School had been placed in special measures following the Estyn Inspection in October. The Executive Member noted that schools in red and amber categories had made positive progress.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Education advised that the number of green schools had increased since 2017 with 4 schools, 8 schools in 2018 and 11 schools in 2019. The Corporate Director added that there are 2 schools in the red category, one with complex issues and these schools would continue to be supported to achieve improvements.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained in the report be considered to contribute to the continued assessment of effectiveness by making further appropriate recommendations for implementation.</p>	
	<p><b><u>MONITORING ITEMS - SOCIAL SERVICES</u></b></p>	
<p><b>No. 22</b></p>	<p><b><u>PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SAFE REDUCTION OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER STRATEGY 2017- 2020</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 23</b></p>	<p><b><u>ADULTS SAFEGUARDING REPORT 1ST APRIL TO 30TH JUNE 2019</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 24</b></p>	<p><b><u>SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION FOR</u></b></p>	

**SOCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION – 1ST APRIL TO 30TH JUNE 2019**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the approach and information detailed in the report be noted.

**No. 25**

**EBBW VALE HI TEC TEST FACILITY**

Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.

RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development informed the Executive of the extensive work undertaken by the consultants and the opportunities to be explored. He noted the importance of taking forward the investigations to ascertain if there was potential for further development and advised that the next level would be to explore investment.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services added that a meeting had been arranged with Welsh Government to discuss the programme and advised that the Tech Valleys Board had shown support for the facility. The Corporate Director referred to the various companies which had been contacted to measure interest and advised that it had been important that these initial stages had been undertaken to explore all options. If approval was received for market testing the Authority would hold all the appropriate evidence. However, the Corporate Director stated that if no positive outcome was reached from the process

he would be satisfied that all options had been explored in order to seek maximum opportunities for Blaenau Gwent.

The Managing Director concurred with the comments raised and noted the good work which had been carried out by the Corporate Director. The Managing Director reiterated the importance of identifying evidence as going forward it would be required for investment. It would also show that the Council had been robust around the governance and that the Authority was taking a more proactive approach in working as a commercially minded Council.

The Leader noted the comments and commended officers on the amount of work undertaken. The Leader felt that it would be paramount going forward that finances are monitored as part of the in-house team and also requested that financial matters was also included as part of future discussions with the Executive.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and option 3, namely that market testing be agreed to identify a private sector partner and develop the scheme in partnership to a position where it could be determined whether there was a business case to proceed.

**No. 26**

**SILENT VALLEY WASTE SERVICES LTD PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.

RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Community Services.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of

persons other than the Authority be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.	
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