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THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

Dydd Mercher, 17 Chwefror 2021 Dydd Mercher, 17 Chwefror 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

PWYLLGOR GWAITH

A meeting of the Pwyllgor Gwaith will be held in Ystafell y Weithrediaeth, Canolfan Ddinesig, Glynebwy on Dydd Mercher, 24ain Chwefror, 2021 at 10.00 am.

Yours faithfully

Michelle Morris
Managing Director

AGENDA

Pages

1. CYFIEITHU AR Y PRYD

Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o hysbysiad ymlaen llaw os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais.

2. YMDDIHEURIADAU

We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh or English. / Croesawn ohebiaith trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

3. DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU

Derbyn datganiadau buddiant a goddefebau

COFNODION

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5. CYNADLEDDAU, CYRSIAU, DIGWYDDIADAU A GWAHODDIADAU 19 - 20

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14. **RHAGLEN BUDDSODDIAD ADFYWIO WEDI'I DARGEDU A CHYNLLUN CYLLID AD-DALADWY CANOL TREFI** 157 - 166

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15. **PARC CYFLOGAETH, RHODFA CALCH – DIWEDDARIAD CYNNYDD** 167 - 170

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16. **EITEM(AU) EITHREDIG**

Derbyn ac ystyried yr adroddiad(au) dilynol sydd ym marn y swyddog priodol yn eitem(au) eithriedig, gan roi ystyriaeth i'r prawf budd cyhoeddus ac y dylai'r wasg a'r cyhoedd gael eu heithrio o'r cyfarfod (mae'r rheswm am y penderfyniad aam yr eithriad ar gael ar restr a gedwir gan y swyddog priodol).

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GWASANAETH ARALL**

Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfawryddwr Corfforaethol
Addysg.

To: N. Daniels (Cadeirydd)
J. Collins
D. Davies
J. Mason
J. Wilkins

All other Members (for information)
Manager Director
Chief Officers

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 13TH JANUARY, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

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

Deputy Leader/Executive Member –
 Regeneration & Economic Development
 Councillor D. Davies

Executive Member – Education
 Councillor J. Collins

Executive Member – Environment
 Councillor J. Wilkins

Executive Member – Social Services
 Councillor J. Mason

WITH: Corporate Director Social Services
 Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services
 Corporate Director Education
 Chief Officer Resources
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
 Head of Organisational Development
 Head of Partnerships and Governance
 Press Officer

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>No apology for absence were received.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest and dispensations were received.</p>	
	<p><u>GENERAL MATTERS</u></p>	
	<p><u>MINUTES</u></p>	
No. 4	<p><u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 9th December, 2020.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 15th December, 2020.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	

DECISION ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS

6.

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 24TH FEBRUARY, 2021

Consideration was given to the report of the Leader of the Council.

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

7.

GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS

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

The following additional grants to organisations were received:-

ABERTILLERY

Abertillery Ward – Councillor N. Daniels

1. Ebenezer Baptist Church £50

BRYNWAWR

Brynmawr Ward – Councillor L. Elias

1. St. Mary's Church in Wales Primary School £100

EBBW VALE

Ebbw Vale South Ward – Councillors J. Millard & K. Pritchard

1. Briery Hill Allotments £75

2. Tyllwyn Allotments £75

RESOLVED accordingly.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and information contained therein be noted.

**DECISION ITEMS –
REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS**

8. BUS EMERGENCY SCHEME (BES)

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

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services spoke to the report which provided an overview on progress of the Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) Phase 2. The response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the longer term arrangements to be entered into which would make the bus services more sustainable across Wales. The Corporate Director noted the journey undertaken to date and plans for BES2. The BES2 agreement formalised Welsh Government's commitment to supporting recovery of bus services following the impact of COVID-19. The Corporate Director advised that under the terms of the BES2 agreement operators would be required to provide bus services that met the local needs which would be obtained from the Lead Authority for region. This work would be undertaken on behalf of the communities of respective local authorities. The end date for the BES2 contract was 31st July 2022 which should allow enough time for revenues to recover following the pandemic.

The Corporate Director also outlined the funding responsibilities, directing the provision of services and the regional work being taken forward. He also outlined the results which was hoped to be achieved with BES2 and what it meant for bus operators which included a mechanism for managing the recovery and reshaping of bus services to respond to the impact of the pandemic.

The Corporate Director further referred to the options for consideration and noted the preferred option as detailed in the report.

In response to a question raised in relation to discussions undertaken at Scrutiny Committee, it was confirmed that Scrutiny Members supported the approach and long term benefits.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development welcomed the report and progress being made through Transport for Wales which supported to the IRT. The project presented an opportunity to grow the services already in place to improve services across the region. It was hoped that it would also encourage people to use public transport.

The Executive Member for Social Services also welcomed the report and felt that the improved services would be beneficial for our communities. The Executive Member felt that from the Social Services perspective it would help people maximise their independence and develop mental health and wellbeing.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely Blaenau Gwent endorsed the contents of the report and supported the BES2 arrangements as part of a regional and Wales approach.

MONITORING ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES

**9. CARDIFF CAPITAL REGION CITY DEAL
PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2020/21 QUARTER 1**

Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director and Head of Regeneration.

The Leader referred to the timeliness of the report and noted that the report provided information in relation to Quarter 1 which covered the period of April to June 2020. The Leader advised that whilst this Quarter highlighted a great deal of good work undertaken at that point in time there had also been a great deal of additional work.

The Leader added that he had raised these concerns with the Managing Director as more timely reports needed to be presented for consideration by the Executive and Scrutiny Committee. It was hoped that a more updated report would be drafted in the future to allow Elected Members and residents to have sight of the impact the City Deal had for Blaenau Gwent.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be approved; namely the overall progress on the CCR programme of work for 2020/21 be considered.

<p>10.</p>	<p><u>CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY PERFORMANCE MONITORING</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial.</p> <p>The Leader referred to the report which had been submitted to consider the performance of the Communications Strategy. The Leader felt that due to the Covid-19 Pandemic the Strategy had not fulfilled its potential, however he wished to commend the Corporate Communications Team on their work during the pandemic to ensure that information was available in the public domain.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely that the performance of the Communication Strategy be noted, particularly on the impact of the strategy during COVID19 Pandemic. The period covered would be from March to September 2020.</p>	
<p>11.</p>	<p><u>COMMERCIAL STRATEGY PERFORMANCE MONITORING</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely the performance of the Commercial Strategy during the period March 2020 – September 2020 be noted.</p>	
<p>12.</p>	<p><u>PREPARATIONS FOR EU TRANSITION</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Governance and Partnerships.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option One; namely the Executive Committee noted the progress made during the transition period and receives update reports as part of its forward work programme.</p>	

13. SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE

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

The Head of Organisational Development noted the overall year end outturn figure for the Council of 13.91 days per full time equivalent employee - the figure would reduce to 13.48 days excluding Covid 19 sickness. These figures saw an increase from the previous year's outturn of 12.66 days and exceeds the target set of 11 days. The Officer advised that over the last three years that Council had sustained absence levels which exceeded 11 days' sickness absence per full time employee. The Head of Organisational Development further referred Members to the continued actions for managers which detailed a number of actions. Sickness absence performance was reported quarterly to Corporate Leadership Team and included as part of the Finance and Performance report to Members.

The Head of Organisational Development provided the current position in terms of sickness absence and advised that there was a drop in sickness for Quarter 1 with 2.49 days (2.21 excluding Covid) per full time employee which compared to 3.05 days for the same period last year. In terms of Quarter 2 4.83 (4.43 excluding Covid) days were reported compared to 5.96 days for the same period last year.

In conclusion the Head of Organisational Development advised that Directorates had reviewed the top 20 cases of sickness absence for their service area and that new Workforce Strategy would have a continued focus on workforce wellbeing.

The Leader referred to concerns brought forward by Members in terms of sickness absence performance reporting and felt that further discussions were needed at the appropriate time to introduce quarterly reporting to relevant scrutiny committees. He also said that it would be interesting to understand the impact home working had on reducing sickness absence levels.

Following discussions, it was agreed that more stringent quarterly reports be introduced for all Directorates for consideration by Executive and Scrutiny.

RESOLVED accordingly.

	<p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely that Members having considered the sickness absence performance information and the ongoing actions to support improved attendance within the Council identify any further areas for improvement in order to drive forward performance improvement.</p>	
	<p><u>MONITORING ITEMS – REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</u></p>	
<p>14.</p>	<p><u>ENERGY PROSPECTUS ANNUAL REVIEW</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities</p> <p>The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development welcomed the report which was paramount moving forward towards zero carbon work being undertaken and further projects would come forward as the work progressed.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 2; namely to continue to support, promote and develop the projects within the energy prospectus and to ensure that the document be updated to reflect any additional projects that have emerged. To also continue to identify future projects that would also meet the vision and objectives of the Council with respect to energy and decarbonisation.</p>	
	<p><u>MONITORING ITEM – ENVIRONMENT</u></p>	
<p>15.</p>	<p><u>CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT – SERVICE UPDATE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Head of Community Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option A; namely that update on progress relating to Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) since its introduction in 2019 be noted.</p>	

16.	<p><u>ACTIVITIES REPORT – LITTERING AND DOG CONTROL ORDER ENFORCEMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2019/20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Environmental Protection.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
17.	<p><u>SOUTH EAST WALES RESILIENT UPLANDS – WALES RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT SCHEME</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Community Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely the activity taking the South East Wales Resilient Uplands Project be noted and continue to support the collaborative working approach as programmed.</p>	
	<p><u>MONITORING ITEMS – EDUCATION</u></p>	
18.	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2019/20 AND WELSH MEDIUM GRANT PROPOSAL PROGRESS REPORT / CYNLLUN STRATEGOL CYMRAEG MEWN ADDYSG 2019/20 BLAENAU GWENT AC ADRODDIAD CYNNYDD AR Y CYNNIG GRANT CYFRWNG CYMRAEG</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and associated course of action be approved.</p>	
19.	<p><u>IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and information contained therein be noted.</p>	

20.	<p><u>MANAGEMENT OF PUPIL PLACES AND THE SCHOOL ESTATE 2019/2020</u></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>	
21.	<p><u>EDUCATION ICT – INFRASTRUCTURE CONNECTIVITY PROJECT</u></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>	
	<p><u>MONITORING ITEMS – SOCIAL SERVICES</u></p>	
22.	<p><u>INTEGRATED CARE FUND (ICF) UPDATE 2019/20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Social Services advised the report provided an overview on the current allocation of funding for projects monitored by the Social Services Department and funded via the Welsh Government Integrated Care Fund as at November 2020. It also highlighted the current position in relation to the announcement that there would be a further extension of the fund for a further 12 months’ transition year and identified the work the Department had undertaken to address associated risks with the potential ceasing of the funding from April 2022.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be agreed; namely that the actions currently underway to evaluate the future impact of the cessation of the ICF funded posts and services.</p>	

DECISION ITEMS - ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

24. UPDATE CEMETERY BURIAL CAPACITY

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 of Team Manager Street Scene.

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 1 be approved.

25. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

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.

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 2 as detailed in the report be approved.

**DECISION ITEMS –
REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT MATTERS**

26. APPLICATION TO LEASE LAND

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 Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities.

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 1 as detailed in the report be approved.

**DECISION ITEMS –
REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS**

27. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

Due to the need to consider the following item as a matter of urgency, the Leader of the Council confirmed that the following matter could be considered under the Provisions of Paragraph 4(b), Section 100(b) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

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 Regeneration and Economic Development wished it be placed on record his appreciation for the work undertaken by a number of partners to bring this project to fruition. The Executive Member felt that the project would benefit the Community greatly and had hoped that following consideration of the report by the Executive, if approved, the appropriate plans could be publicised within the public domain to ensure residents are aware of the project and the benefits it would bring to their Community.

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 4 as detailed in the report be approved.

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Agenda Item 5

Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Executive**

Date of meeting: **24th February, 2021**

Report Subject: **Conferences, Courses, Events and Invitation Report**

Report Submitted by: **Democratic Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	09.12.2020	N/A	

1. **Purpose of the Report**

To present a list of Conferences/Courses for consideration and determination by the Executive.

2. **Scope of the Report**

2.1 **Live Virtual Broadcast Event and Q&A with The Army Engagement Team 2:00pm on Thursday 11th February 2021**

To approve the attendance of Councillor Brian Thomas, Armed Forces Champion.

Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Gwent Awards Ceremony 2021 Virtual Invitation – 18th February, 2021

To approve the attendance of Councillor Mandy Moore, Chair of Council and Councillor Brian Thomas, Armed Forces Champion.

3. **Options for Consideration**

3.1 To seek approval for attendance at the above.

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Agenda Item 6

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **24th February 2021**

Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme – 14th April 2021**

Portfolio Holder: **All Portfolio Holders**

Report Submitted by: **Cllr Nigel Daniels, Leader / Executive Member
Corporate Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
X	x					24.02.21		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present the Executive Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 14th April 2021.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Executive Work Programme is a key aspect of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and supports the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's recently revised Corporate Plan, agreed by the Council on 23rd July 2020, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 All Scrutiny Committees and the Council Forward Work Programmes have been aligned to the Executive Forward Work Programme.
 - 2.4 As the document is fluid there is flexibility to allow for regular review between the Chair and the Committee.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 **Option 1**
To agree the Forward Work Programme as presented for the Meeting on 14th April 2021.
 - 3.2 **Option 2**
To suggest any amendments prior to agreeing the Forward Work Programme.

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Executive Committee Forward Work Programme

Executive Meeting Date: Wednesday 14th April 2021

Report Submission Deadline Date to Liz Thomas: Friday 19th March 2021

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Executive

Decision: 7 items
Monitoring: 8 items
Information: 6 items

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
DECISION ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Services				
Grants to Organisations	Approval To agree the Grants to Organisations.	Rhian Daly	N/A	N/A
Portfolio: Education				
School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education Statutory deadline for the policy to be published by 15th April	Decision To approve the School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education.	Claire Gardner	Education and Learning – 09.03.2021	N/A
Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2021/22	Decision To consult Members on the EAS Business Plan for 2021/22 and consider options for 2022 onwards.	Lynn Phillips / Michelle Jones	Education and Learning – 09.03.2021	N/A
Portfolio: Deputy Leader / Regeneration				
New Destination Management Plan for 2020-2025	Decision To approve the new Destination Management Plan for 2020-2025.	Alyson Tippings/Moe Forouzan	Regeneration – 24.03.21	N/A
Portfolio: Social Services				
Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy	Decision Members to consider and approve the new strategy for 2020-25.	Tanya Evans	Social Services – 11.03.21	N/A
Portfolio: Community Services				
Fly Grazing Horses	Decision To outline policy and current response arrangements.	Dave Thompson	Community Services – 01.03.21	N/A
Central Depot new Build / Relocation / Business Plan	Decision To approve the business plan and options for the relocation of the Central Depot.	Dave Watkins / Matthew Stent	Community Services – 12.04.21	N/A

MONITORING ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Services				
CCTV Annual Monitoring report Updated position	Performance Monitoring The will incorporate the result of the scheduled reviews of the DPIA's and who has responsibility for which aspect of CCTV. Performance monitoring to include viewing, data protection and working cameras.	Rhian Hayden / Clive Rogers / Bernadette Elias	Corporate Overview – 05.03.2021	N/A
Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/21	Budget Monitoring To provide members with an expenditure forecast at the end of quarter 3 across all portfolios for 2020/21.	Rhian Hayden	Joint Budget – 15.03.21	N/A
Forecast Capital Expenditure 2019/20	Budget Monitoring To provide details of each portfolio's forecast capital expenditure against allocation at the end of quarter 3.	Rhian Hayden	Joint Budget – 15.03.21	N/A
Forecast of General and Earmarked Reserves	Budget Monitoring To present report at the end of quarter 3 detailing the actual and forecast use of general and ear marked reserves.	Rhian Hayden	Joint Budget – 15.03.21	N/A
Portfolio: Deputy Leader / Regeneration				
RE:FIT	Progress Update To provide members with an update on the RE:FIT Project and progress to install energy efficiency measures in public sector buildings.	Amy Taylor	Regeneration – 24.03.21	N/A
Lime Avenue Business Park and Boxworks	Performance Monitoring To provide members with details of the delivery of the developments.	Nick Landers / Amy Taylor	Regeneration – 24.03.21	N/A
Portfolio: Social Services				
Update on Legal costs associated with the Children's Services	Progress Update Members to receive a progress update in relation to legal costs within Children's Services (to include anonymised case studies).	Damien McCann / Tanya Evans	Social Services – 11.03.21	N/A
Vulnerable children during COVID-19	Monitoring	Damien McCann / Tanya Evans	Social Services – 11.03.21	N/A

	An update report on vulnerable children during COVID-19, focussing on any issues arising from school closures.			
INFORMATION ITEMS				
Annual Air Quality 2019/20	Information To receive the annual report for Members' information.	Dave Thompson	Community Services – 01.03.2021	N/A
Inspire to Achieve / Work Performance	Information To receive performance information in line with targets and spend.	Joanne Sims	Education and Learning – 09.03.2021	N/A
My Support Team	Information Members to be informed of the progress of the team in returning children from residential placements.	Tanya Evans	Social Services – 11.03.2021	N/A
Tredegar Townscape Heritage Initiative Project Closure Report	Information To provide members with details of the final outputs and outcomes of the THI project.	Nick Landers / Amy Taylor	Regeneration – 24.03.21	N/A
Pest Control – Annual Performance Report	Information To receive the annual report for Members' information.	Dave Thompson	Community Services – 18.01.2021	N/A
Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Annual Return 2019/20	Information Members to receive the Annual Assessment from Welsh Government which highlights Blaenau Gwent's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards.	Joanne Sims	Education and Learning – 09.02.21	N/A

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

REPORT SUBJECT: GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS – 24th Feb 2021

REPORT AUTHOR: RHIAN HAYDEN

**LEAD OFFICER/
DEPARTMENT CHIEF OFFICER RESOURCES,
RESOURCES**

ABERTILLERY

Cwmtillery Ward - Councillor M. Day

1.	Friends of Blaenau Gwent Village	£100
2.	Salvation Army	£100
3.	Abertillery Town Band	£50
4.	Six Bells Bowls Club	£50
5.	Cwmtillery Coarse Fishing Club	£100
6.	Abertillery R.F.C.	£75
7.	Old Tylerian R.F.C.	£75
8.	Abertillery Cricket Club	£75
9.	Abertillery Excelsiors A.F.C.	£75
10.	Blaenau Gwent Baptist Church	£150

Llanhilleth Ward – Councillor J. Collins

1.	Llanhilleth Miners Institute	£250
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Six Bells Ward – Councillor M. Holland

1.	Six Bells Bowls Club	£300
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EBBW VALE

Badminton Ward – Councillor G. Paulsen

1. Persona Studios £100

Beaufort Ward – Councillors G. Thomas & S. Healy

1. Persona Studios £100

NANTYGLO & BLAINA

Blaina Ward – Councillor L. Winnett

1. Cwmcelyn Methodist Church £100

Blaina Ward – Councillor J. Morgan

1. Cwmcelyn Methodist Church £200

CHIEF OFFICER RESOURCES

Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 11.02.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 11.02.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **24 February 2021**

Report Subject: **Revenue budget 2021/2022**

Portfolio Holder: **Leader/ Executive Member Corporate Services,
Councillor Daniels**

Report Submitted by: **R Hayden – Chief Officer Resources**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	28/01/2021	11.02.21			23/02/2021	24/02/2021	04/03/2021	

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report is presented to Members to:-

- i) provide an update on the positive provisional local government settlement for 2021/22 and its impact upon the Council's budget
- ii) consider and propose the detailed revenue budget for 2021/22
- iii) proposes level of Council Tax increase for the 2021/2022 financial year in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy assumptions.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 The revised Medium Term Financial Strategy was agreed by Council in December 2020, this report updates Members with the latest financial position regarding the budget following the announcement of the provisional local government settlement for 2021/22. The report covers the following:

Section	Contents
2.7 – 2.18	National Aggregate External Finance (AEF) Position
2.19 – 2.25	Blaenau Gwent AEF position
5.1.1 - 5.1.3	Aggregated External Finance (AEF) funding compared to MTFS
5.1.7 – 5.1.10	Cost Pressures and Growth
5.1.11-5.1.13	Individual Schools Budget
5.1.14	Revised funding gap
5.1.15–5.1.20	Bridging The Gap Programme
6.1.1	Revenue Budget 2020/21 – half year position
6.1.2	General Revenue Reserves 2020/21 – half year position

2.2 The Provisional Settlement contains details of the revenue funding that Welsh Authorities can expect to receive in 2021/22 in order to allow them to set their budgets and determine levels of Council Tax for that year. It also provides details of the Capital funding that Authorities can expect to receive to fund their Capital

Programmes. Indicative figures for the 2022/23 financial year and beyond have not been provided at this stage. The written statement from the Minister for Housing and Local Government is attached as Appendix 1.

- 2.3 Revenue funding from Welsh Government (WG) is provided in the form of Aggregate External Finance (AEF) which is made up of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR). This AEF funding is un-hypothecated i.e. it is not earmarked for specific services and it is up to individual Councils to decide how to allocate to services in order to fit with their priorities (while taking into account statutory responsibilities).
- 2.4 Revenue funding also comes in the form of specific grants, in which case the funding is earmarked for a particular purpose. It is the long term intention of the WG that the number of specific grants is reduced, with funding being transferred into the AEF, giving Local Authorities more flexibility on distributing funding to services. Hence, this form of funding should diminish over time.
- 2.5 Capital funding is provided in the form of General Capital funding, made up of an Un-hypothecated Supported Borrowing (USB) approval and General Capital Grant approval. The USB approval is a borrowing approval for which revenue support is provided within the AEF to cover debt financing costs i.e. principal and interest. It is un-hypothecated, meaning that borrowing can be carried out for any capital purpose. The General Capital Grant is, as its name suggests, a grant that can be used for any capital purpose.
- 2.6 The positive provisional settlement combined with the opportunities identified in the Bridging the Gap programme means that the Council is able to invest in key priorities, avoid cuts to services and enhance its financial resilience.
- 2.7 **National Position (All Wales)**
- 2.8 On the 22 December 2021, the Minister for Housing and Local Government published the provisional local government settlement. The overall headline increase in AEF quoted by WG is 3.8%, after taking into account transfers into the settlement. Compared to the Welsh average the 3.7% increase for Blaenau Gwent places us in the bottom third of the all-Wales table (see Appendix 2).
- 2.9 There have been two transfers into the settlement:-
- £3.98m for the teachers' pay grant
 - £1.1m for the Coastal Risk Management Programme (no impact for this Council)
- 2.10 Certain Specific Revenue Grants data has only been published on an all-Wales basis, totalling £968m. Funding for some grants has increased e.g. Social Care Workforce Grant (£10m), Free Concessionary Bus Travel Grant (£29m), Road Safety Grant (£1m). Some grants have decreased e.g. the Childcare Offer Grant (£13m), Transformation Fund Grant (£3m), Sustainable Waste Management Grant (£1m).

- 2.11 In terms of capital grants, there are some significant increases in the 21st Century Schools, Welsh Medium Education, Local Transport Fund, Resilient Roads Fund, Childcare Offer and Ultra Low Emissions Vehicle transformation Grant.
- 2.12 Further details of the specific grants for local government will be published alongside the final RSG settlement in March 2021.
- 2.13 With the exception of the NHS and for those on the lowest pay, the UK Government's decision to pause public sector pay increases has meant that Welsh Government did not receive additional funding to provide for the wider public sector pay awards. As a consequence, any financial impact arising from pay increases will therefore need to be accommodated within the overall funding settlement.
- 2.14 The current policy and funding arrangements for Council Tax Reduction Schemes (CTRS) continues into 2021/2022. Consequently, £244 million continues to be included in the Settlement for funding the Council Tax Support Scheme. This reflects the costs of the Scheme when it was first established in 2013/2014, but again means that any additional costs resulting from increases in council tax levels or caseload for 2021/2022 will fall to Local Authorities (of the £244m, the Council receives £8m towards costs of £9.6m).
- 2.15 The non-hypothecated general capital funding for 2021/2022 will be £198 million (including £20 million for public highways refurbishment grant) – remaining unchanged from the 2020/2021 financial year.
- 2.16 Welsh Government have confirmed that funding for Covid-19 pressures for increased costs and income losses will be considered separately within the WG final budget. This provides clarity that the settlement does not provide funding for cost pressures relating to the pandemic in 2021/2022.
- 2.17 The Minister states this is a good settlement and one which should alleviate some of the anticipated pressures.
- 2.18 The provisional settlement announcement marked the start of a seven week consultation period which ends on 9th February 2021. After this the Minister will consider whether further amendments are to be made, before the final settlement is announced on 2 March 2021.
- 2.19 **Blaenau Gwent Position**
- 2.20 The headline increase for BGCBC after allowing for transfers is 3.6% (£4.2m), compared to the all Wales increase of 3.8%. This positive settlement combined with the opportunities identified in the Bridging the Gap programme means that subject to the recommendations in the report being agreed, the Council is able to agree a budget for 2021/2022.
- 2.21 The Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) increase, quoted as 4.1%, is the joint 5th lowest in Wales (compared to an all Wales increase of 4.4%).

2.22 The SSA is the detailed funding formula that is intended to reflect variations in the need to spend which might be expected if all Welsh Authorities responded in a similar way to the demand for services in their area. Indicators of need include population, pupil numbers, deprivation factors, population dispersion etc. The SSA is the mechanism for distributing RSG which enables Authorities to ***theoretically*** charge the same council tax for the provision of a similar standard of service. However, if Authorities don't spend at SSA level, then council tax levels will not be the same, which in practice, is what happens.

2.23 Changes in SSA data and formulae with a significant impact in Blaenau Gwent are explained below:

Population – Blaenau Gwent's population has increased by 0.1% compared to the Welsh average increase of 0.8%.

Population indicators make up a large proportion of the cost driver indicators within the SSA formula.

Education – Nursery & Primary pupil numbers have reduced by 1.9% compared to the Welsh average reduction of 0.8%. Secondary school pupil numbers have increased by 4.3%, compared to the Welsh average increase of 2.2%. Free School meals data has been frozen at the 2018 level.

All these factors have resulted in an overall increase to Blaenau Gwent's Education SSA. For information, BGCBC has consistently spent above the Education SSA on the Education services it provides.

Deprivation Indicators - IS (Income Support)/ JSA (Job seekers Allowance) /PC (Pension Credit)/ UC (Universal Credit)/ not in employment claimants have fallen by 0.1% compared to the Welsh average increase of 3.6%. This has had an impact on the SSA increase.

2.24 The Authority remains the highest receiver of Aggregate External Finance (RSG plus NNDR) on a per capita basis.

2.25 General Capital Funding has reduced slightly by £54,000 from 2020/2021 to £3.8m. Blaenau Gwent's allocation of the Public Highways refurbishment grant is expected to be in the region of £370,000.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1 (preferred option)**

3.1.1 Subject to the decisions on the following recommendations, Members recommend to Council the 2021/2022 revenue budget as shown in table 2 in paragraph 5.1.14.

- 3.1.2 Members to provide comment on the outcomes within the overall provisional RSG Settlement and note the potential for further change in the Final RSG Settlement (paragraphs 2.7 – 2.18).
- 3.1.3 Members to provide comment on the outcomes within the BGCBC provisional RSG Settlement and its impact upon the Medium Term Financial Strategy (paragraphs 2.19 – 2.25).
- 3.1.4 Members to consider and recommend to Council the cost pressures and growth items (£2.074m in total) identified in Appendix 3 (paragraphs 5.1.7 – 5.1.10) for inclusion in the Council’s budget.
- 3.1.5 Members consider and recommend to Council an uplift of £1.472m which equates to a net 3.3% increase to the ISB. This reflects a gross uplift of 3.6% (which incorporates the Teachers pay grant transferring into the settlement of £84,000) adjusted for a £150,000 reduction in demographics (paragraphs 5.1.11 to 5.1.13).
- 3.1.6 Members consider and recommend to Council that any achievement of Bridging the Gap proposals which exceeds the in-year budget requirement be transferred into an earmarked reserve to support medium term financial planning, specifically for the later years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (paragraph 5.1.21).
- 3.1.7 Members recommend to Council a Council tax increase of 4% for 2021/22 (paragraph 5.1.3) as per the MTFS assumptions.
- 3.2 **Option 2**
- 3.2.1 Members consider and suggest alternative proposals .
- 4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 The budget setting process and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) supports the Corporate Plan outcome “an ambitious and innovative Council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities” and ensures effective forward planning arrangements are in place to support the Council’s financial resilience.
- 4.2 The revenue & capital budgets support the delivery of all the Council priorities.
- 4.3 To comply with statutory responsibilities, the Council must set a balanced budget and set its Council Tax for the forthcoming year by 10 March.
- 5. **Implications Against Each Option**
- 5.1 **Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)**

5.1.1 The most recent iteration of the MTFS (agreed by Council on December 17th 2020) indicates (prior to the identification of budget reductions or increased income) funding gap of:-

5.1.2 **Table 1 – MTFS Funding Gap (as at December 2020)**

2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Total
£2.9m	£4.7m	£2.7m	£2.7m	£2.7m	£15.7m

5.1.3 These are based upon a number of assumptions including:

- cash flat level of funding from WG
- a Council Tax increase of 4% per annum
- cost pressures arising as a direct response to Covid-19 will continue to be funded by Welsh Government during 2021/2022.
- contribution to General Reserve of £200,000

5.1.4 Comparison to MTFS

5.1.5 AEF Funding

5.1.6 Clearly, the unadjusted provisional settlement increase in funding of £4.3m (3.7%) for 2021/2022 for Blaenau Gwent is better than the MTFS modelled position. As a result, the original funding gap can now be revised. Table 2 takes account of the provisional settlement and revised cost pressures.

5.1.7 Service Cost Pressures and Growth

5.1.8 Existing, new service cost pressures and growth items totalling £2.819m for 2021/2022, have been included in the MTFS and the funding gap identified in table 1 above. £1m per annum has been assumed for 2022/2023 onwards.

5.1.9 Cost pressures and Growth items are regularly reviewed and updated to take into account updated/new information. The updated cost pressures and growth items are attached at Appendix 3 and total £2.074m.

5.1.10 In addition to the cost pressures identified on Appendix 3, cost pressures have been identified relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. Currently these are estimated to be in the region of £445,000 per month and reflect additional costs incurred and lost income. It has been assumed that Welsh Government will continue to fund these costs into the next financial year.

5.1.11 It is proposed that the revised cost pressures and growth items totalling £2.074m are agreed and built into the Council's budget from 2021/22.

5.1.12 **Individual Schools Budget (ISB)**

5.1.13 Given that the Council will receive an uplift of 3.6% (after adjusting for the transfer of grant for the Teachers pay award), it is proposed to also uplift the ISB by 3.6%. The financial impact would increase the ISB by £1.472m after taking into account a reduction in pupil demographics of £150,000 (net increase of 3.3%). The increase would be inclusive of the transfer of the pay award grant into the settlement of £84,000.

5.1.14 The increase in funding will need to provide for the cost of the pay awards during 2021/2022, as Welsh Government have indicated that there will be no further financial support for pay awards during 2021/2022.

5.1.15 The table below shows the financial impact on the funding gap should the cost pressures and growth of £2.074m and the increase in the ISB of £1.472m be approved.

5.1.16 **Table 2 - Funding Gap based on 2021/2022 Provisional RSG***

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Funding					
AEF	(120,361)	(120,361)	(120,361)	(120,361)	(120,361)
Council Tax @ 4%	(36,786)	(38,257)	(39,788)	(41,379)	(43,034)
Total Funding	(157,147)	(158,618)	(160,149)	(161,740)	(163,395)
Draft Estimates - Prior to savings	152,853	161,659	165,997	170,394	174,854
Funding Gap /(surplus)	(4,294)	3,041	5,848	8,654	11,458
Cost Pressures/growth	2,074	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Increase in ISB	1,472				
Contribution to Reserves	200	200	200	200	200
Funding Gap /(surplus)	(548)	4,241	7,048	9,854	12,658

*the above funding gap is prior to Bridging the Gap opportunities being applied

5.1.17 **BRIDGING THE GAP – Position Statement**

5.1.18 The pandemic has had a significant impact on the progress of delivering the outcomes of the strategic business reviews as the Council continues to respond to Covid-19. In light of this the estimated financial impact has been reviewed and updated.

5.1.19 The table below provides a summary of the estimated achievement of the Strategic Business Reviews, details of the individual strategic reviews are attached at Appendix 4.

5.1.20 **Table 4 – Estimated Achievement of Bridging the Gap Strategic Business Reviews**

Estimated Achievement Range:	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Low	500	1,073	764	846	846
High	1,000	2,083	1,314	1,446	1,446

5.1.21 For 2021/22 the most recent estimate against Bridging the Gap indicates that achievement will surpass the low estimate and reach **£755,000**.

5.1.22 Factoring in this revised amount and assuming the lower level achievement of the proposals for 2022/23 onwards the funding gap/(surplus) is as follows:-

5.1.23 **Table 5 – Funding Gap / (Surplus) After Applying the Bridging The Gap Estimated Achievement**

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Revised Funding Gap	(548)	4,241	7,048	9,854	12,658
BTG low current year	(755)	(1,073)	(764)	(846)	(846)
BTG prev. year		(755)	(1,828)	(2,592)	(3,438)
Final funding Gap/(surplus)	(1,303)	2,413	4,456	6,416	8,374

5.1.24 When factoring in the achievement of Bridging the Gap for 2021/2022, there is a budget surplus of £1.3m.

5.1.25 ***Transfer to Earmarked Reserves***

5.1.26 It is proposed that the achievement of Bridging the Gap which exceeds the budget requirement of £1.3m be transferred into an earmarked reserve to support medium term financial planning, specifically for the later years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

5.2.1 MTFs Outcomes are not delivered as expected – this risk will be mitigated by regular monitoring of proposals, which will also be reported through the quarterly budget monitoring reports to the Joint Budget Scrutiny Committee and Executive.

5.2.2 Council may fail to set a balanced budget within the legal timeframe. This will be mitigated by ensuring that Members consider the budget on 4 March 2021.

5.2.3 If grant funding does not continue at the current level, there is a risk that cost pressures will emerge particularly where grants are used to support core services, e.g. sustainable social services grant. This can be mitigated by close monitoring of the budget and consultation with Welsh Government/WLGA on service pressures.

5.2.4 There is a risk that Welsh Government will not continue to fund the ongoing cost of responding to the pandemic. However, Wales Government have indicated that there will be further announcements alongside the final settlement with regards to funding the response to the pandemic.

5.2.5 If Welsh Government does not provide indicative figures for Revenue Support Grant into the medium term, there is a risk that budget planning will be adversely affected. This risk can be mitigated somewhat by robust medium term financial planning.

5.2.6 There is a risk that there will be an adverse financial impact on the procurement of goods and services as a result of the UK Exiting the EU. This risk can be mitigated through the governance processes that the Council has introduced to monitor the impact.

5.3 **Legal**

5.3.1 The Council has a legal duty to set a balanced budget.

5.4 **Human Resources**

5.4.1 The positive provisional settlement combined with the opportunities identified in the Bridging the Gap programme means that the Council is able to invest in key priorities and avoid cuts to services.

5.4.2 There will be service change implications arising from the continued commercial activity and transformation of services, which may impact upon staff in the future.

Following Council's agreement to establish community hubs, it is likely that some existing posts will be repurposed. This may lead to changes in responsibilities, opportunities for redeployment or redundancies.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

6.1.1 **Revenue Budget 2020/21 – Half Year Position**

At the end of September 2020, i.e. the half year position for the current financial year, Portfolios and Committees forecast an overspend of £0.248m.

6.1.2 **General Revenue Reserves 2020/2021 – Half Year Position**

As at the end of September 2020 it is forecast that the General Reserve will decrease from the 31st March 2020 provisional level (subject to external audit) of £6.435m, to £6.39m. Over the last 5 years however the level of the General Reserve has increased by £1.3m, addressing the improvement needed in reserves which was highlighted by the Audit Wales and supports the strengthening of the Council's financial resilience.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

6.2.1 The proposed budget will enable the Council to protect front line services and jobs, to invest in its priority areas including the creation of community hubs and the co-location of some council services, and to continue its work to become a more commercial and resilient organisation.

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

6.3.1 The Council's approach to financial planning and the positive Welsh Government settlement means that there will be no impact on frontline services in the financial year 2021/22. As a result, the consultation on the budget focuses on people's views on the Council's priorities and the proposed Council Tax increase for 2021/22.

6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**

6.4.1 The Council is moving to medium to long term financial planning. This is evidenced by:-

- Budget proposals being considered on a five year rolling programme basis.
- The MTFS as agreed by Council in December 2020 covers the period 2021/2022 to 2024/2025 and will roll forward one year, every year. The MTFS will be reviewed and updated during 2021/2022.

- Proposals within the Bridging the Gap programme are taking a long term view of opportunities for development.
- The current approved capital programme covers the period 2019/2020 to 2025/2026 in line with the 21st Century schools programme and it is reviewed and updated periodically.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

6.5.1 An increasing proportion of the Council's budget is invested into early intervention and prevention activities to prevent the escalation into more complex, high cost services.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

6.6.1 The report and accompany information has been developed in partnership with budget holders across all service areas.

6.7 **Integration(across service areas)**

N/A

6.8 **EqlA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)**

6.8.1 Screening has been undertaken on the Bridging the Gap proposals.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Wider Corporate Leadership Team, political groups, Joint Budget Scrutiny, Executive and Council.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1*
- *Appendix 2*
- *Appendix 3*
- *Appendix 4*

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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Provisional Local Government Settlement 2021-22**

DATE **22 December 2020**

BY **Julie James MS, Minister for Housing and Local Government**

Today I am publishing details of the core funding allocations for unitary authorities for the forthcoming financial year through the Provisional Local Government Revenue and Capital Settlements for 2021-22 (the Settlement).

Adjusting for transfers, the core revenue funding for local government in 2021-22 will increase by 3.8% on a like-for-like basis compared to the current year. In 2021-22, local authorities will receive £4.65 billion from the Welsh Government in core revenue funding and non-domestic rates to spend on delivering key services.

In addition to this, I am publishing information on revenue and capital grants planned for 2021-22. These amount to nearly £1 billion for revenue and over £720 million for capital. The Government is providing these indicative grant values and distributions now so that local authorities are able to plan their budgets efficiently. This information will be further updated for the final settlement.

As set out in yesterday's draft budget the Welsh Government's funding priorities continue to be health and local government services. While I know local government has been facing significant pressures, particularly arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, I hope that this increase, building as it does on a significantly improved settlement in 2020-21, enables Authorities to continue to support and deliver critical and valued local services. In setting the overall Settlement at this level the Government has responded to the negative impact of the pandemic on Non Domestic Rate (NDR) collection. The baseline Settlement increase of £176m reflects a larger increase in the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) to compensate for the fall in NDR. It also accounts for the impact of freezing the NDR multiplier. After adjusting for transfers into the Settlement, this equates to an increase of £172 million in Settlement funding, compared with 2020-21.

The Minister for Finance and Trefnydd was clear in the draft budget that one of the hard choices we have faced in setting our spending plans for next year is our approach to public sector pay. The reality is that we did not receive any additional funding through the Barnett

formula to provide for public sector wide pay awards next year given the UK Government's decision to pause public sector pay rises, with the exception of the NHS and those on the lowest wages. The implications of pay awards in 2021-22 will therefore need to be accommodated within Authorities' budget planning in the light of this Settlement. Our decisions in the budget, target as much support as we can to health and local government to support pressure in frontline services focusing on schools and social services.

Whilst we did not receive any additional funding from the UK Government for public sector pay, in determining the distribution of funding across authorities for the Settlement, we have recognised the decisions made on the 2020/21 teachers' pay deal and the commitment made by local government to fund this deal by directing funding into the schools part of the formula. We are also continuing to provide funding for our proposals for new eligibility criteria for free school meals, given the continued rollout of Universal Credit by the UK Government.

Through this Settlement, we are continuing to provide £4.8 million for authorities to deliver additional discretionary rates relief for local businesses and other ratepayers to respond to specific local issues.

In line with the Government's focus on countering the effects of poverty, we remain committed to protecting vulnerable and low-income households from any reduction in support under the Council Tax Reduction Schemes, despite the shortfall in the funding transferred by the UK Government following its abolition of Council Tax Benefit. We will continue to maintain full entitlements under our Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for 2021-22 and are again providing £244 million for CTRS in the Settlement in recognition of this.

Alongside the Settlement we are continuing to provide funding to support local government to waive fees for child burials. This shared commitment ensures a fair and consistent approach across Wales.

I am not minded to provide for a funding floor for this year given the increased settlement for 2020-21 and the proposed allocations I am announcing today for 2021-22. I have accordingly allocated all the funding available up front.

A wide range of services of course have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. As the Finance Minister's statement on the budget made clear, we recognise the need to continue to provide funding to support Local Government's response to the pandemic. This will be considered separately and does not form part of this Settlement.

This Settlement provides Local Authorities with a stable platform for planning their budgets for the forthcoming financial year. I fully appreciate the pressures local government is facing and am committed to protecting local government, particularly at this difficult and challenging time. This is as good a Settlement as the Government can offer and one which should help to alleviate some of the pressures Authorities are anticipating. While I can't guarantee that there will be no changes between the provisional and final settlements, due to the financial uncertainty that we currently face, I do not intend making any significant changes to the methodology or the data underpinning the distribution of this Settlement.

Attached to this statement is a summary table setting out the Settlement allocations by authority. The allocations are derived using the formula agreed with local government. As a result of the formula and related data, the table shows the range of the funding allocations, from a 2.0% increase over the 2020-21 settlement to a 5.6% increase.

Further details on the Settlement will be sent to all local authorities and published on the Welsh Government's website:

<https://gov.wales/local-government-revenue-and-capital-settlement-2021-2022>

General capital funding for 2021-22 will continue to be set at £198 million. Included within this amount is £20 million for the continuation of the public highways refurbishment grant, including support for active travel; £54 million of historic baselined general capital grant; and the continuation of an additional £35 million of general capital grant, which was announced as part of the 2019-20 and 2020-21 budgets. This additional £35 million will enable Authorities to begin to respond to our joint priority of decarbonisation, including for housing and economic recovery following Covid-19.

We have discussed, before, our shared recognition of the need to invest in the supply of housing. Investing in social housing should minimise the pressures on local authority budgets and on homelessness services. Investment in housing can also support the Welsh economy and local economies. I hope that this Settlement, capital and revenue, can support Authorities in increasing the scale and pace of housebuilding across Wales.

I know that Authorities will need to make choices in setting their budgets. They will need to engage meaningfully with their local communities as they consider their budget priorities. The setting of budgets, and in turn council tax, is the responsibility of each local authority and authorities will need to take account of the full range of sources of funding available to them, as well as the pressures they face, in setting their budgets for the coming year.

This announcement commences the formal seven-week consultation on the provisional local government settlement. This will end on 9 February 2021.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.

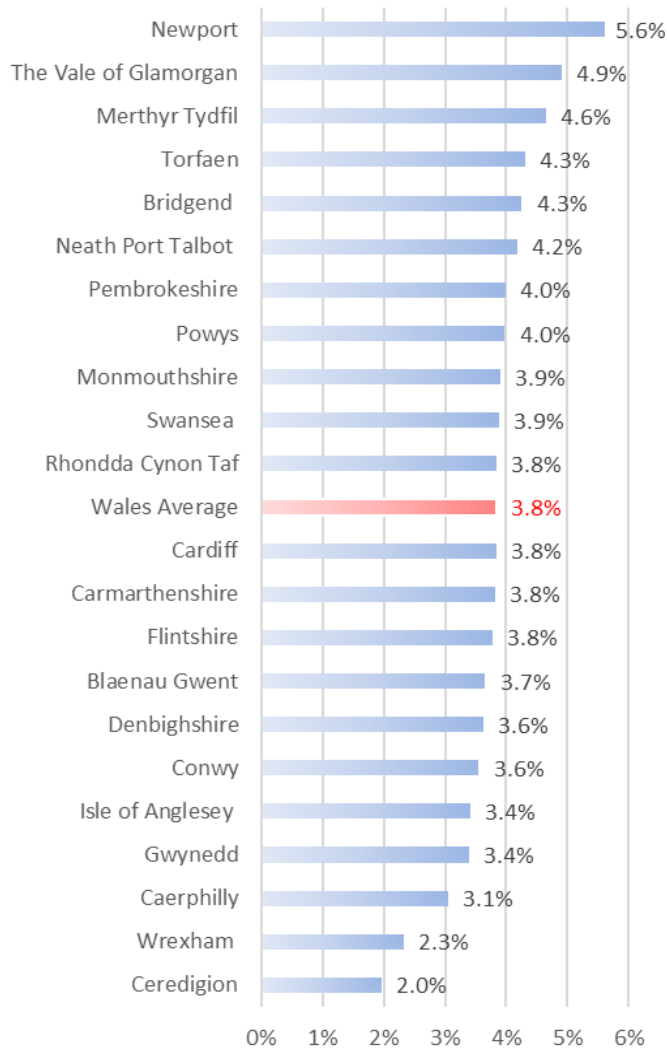
Summary Table

2021-22 provisional settlement – comparison of 2020-21 AEF (adjusted for transfers) and 2021-22 provisional AEF, and distribution of the 2020-21 Council Tax Reduction Schemes funding (distributed within AEF) (£000s)

Unitary authority	2020-21 adjusted AEF ¹	2021-22 provisional AEF	% change on adjusted 2020-21 AEF	Rank	Council Tax Reduction Schemes (within AEF)
Isle of Anglesey	101,369	104,825	3.4%	18	5,186
Gwynedd	188,409	194,793	3.4%	19	8,541
Conwy	161,181	166,906	3.6%	17	9,138
Denbighshire	153,089	158,632	3.6%	16	8,920
Flintshire	199,267	206,778	3.8%	14	9,609
Wrexham	184,569	188,856	2.3%	21	9,062
Powys	184,554	191,897	4.0%	8	8,775
Ceredigion	107,545	109,658	2.0%	22	5,122
Pembrokeshire	172,502	179,387	4.0%	7	8,187
Carmarthenshire	274,355	284,820	3.8%	13	13,996
Swansea	339,445	352,642	3.9%	10	19,264
Neath Port Talbot	227,198	236,680	4.2%	6	15,977
Bridgend	203,540	212,192	4.3%	5	13,088
The Vale Of Glamorgan	160,455	168,316	4.9%	2	9,062
Rhondda Cynon Taf	389,403	404,375	3.8%	11	21,936
Merthyr Tydfil	96,973	101,476	4.6%	3	5,595
Caerphilly	283,708	292,367	3.1%	20	12,372
Blaenau Gwent	116,112	120,361	3.7%	15	8,067
Torfaen	140,308	146,340	4.3%	4	8,331
Monmouthshire	97,673	101,483	3.9%	9	5,753
Newport	228,000	240,796	5.6%	1	10,083
Cardiff	469,913	487,913	3.8%	12	27,934
All Unitary Authorities	4,479,570	4,651,494	3.8%		244,000

Note: Total may not sum correctly due to rounding

1. 2020-21 AEF adjusted transfers of £5.127m (at 2020-21 prices) into the Settlement



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PORTFOLIO	SERVICE	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Comments
		£	£	£	£	£	
EXISTING SERVICE COST PRESSURES							
Corporate Services							
	ICT	160,000					
	Council Tax Reduction Scheme	280,000					Total forecast cost pressure is £650,000, of which £370,000 is related to Covid-19 Pressures and it is assumed WG will continue funding.
		440,000	-	-	-	-	
Social Services							
	Legal Fees - Children's	350,000					
	Community Care - National Minimum Wage	250,000	400,000				To cover the increase in the Minimum Living Wage over & above inflation and non pay related cost increases.
		600,000	400,000	-	-	-	
Education							
	Home to School Transport	100,000					Increased number of pupils at Penycwm - impact on Transport
		100,000	0	0	0	0	
Environment							
	Legionella Monitoring	50,000					One member of staff and software (Water quality Report)
	Corporate Landlord	60,000					Ongoing budget shortfall
	Environmental Health	24,000					End of collaboration with Torfaen CBC - remaining cost pressure. Delayed due to interim response to Covid-19, and will be considered as part of SMR2 in due course
	Cwmcrachen Utility Costs	22,000					Improved position compared to 19/20 Investigations into electricity consumption being carried out
	General Offices	23,000					Potential loss of rental income
	Waste	35,000					Reduction in the Sustainable Waste Management Grant for 2021/2022
		214,000	-	-	-	-	
Economy							
	Industrial Units	133,000					Reduced income opportunities due to economic uncertainty and increased income target (BtG Strategic Business Review). If target figure is further increased for 2021/2022 budgets, the adverse figure will increase significantly. Budget holder requests target figure for 2021/2022 to freeze.
		133,000	-	-	-	-	
Planning							
	Review of LDP	66,500	66,500				Delays to producing the new Local Development Plan due to Covid-19 and as a result the shortfall will fall over 2 financial years
		66,500	66,500	-	-	-	
Licensing							
	Fees & Charges	33,000					Cost pressure arising as a result of no increase being approved to the fees charged
		33,000	-	-	-	-	
All Portfolios							
	Cardiff City Deal	34,500					

Highways Prudential Borrowing funding	200,000					previous scheme is funded from insurance fund contributions. However, this funding source is no longer sustainable (22 years of repayments remaining, from 30 year PB loan)
	234,500	-	-	-	-	
TOTAL EXISTING COST PRESSURES	1,821,000	466,500	0	0	0	
GROWTH / NEW RESPONSIBILITIES						
Corporate Services						
SRS - New Data Facility	11,000			57,000		Business Case developed
Community Hubs	25,000					
	36,000	-	-	57,000	-	
Education						
ALN Reform	100,000					statutory post currently grant funded
Pupil Population	-	45,000	(213,000)	126,000		
	100,000	45,000	(213,000)	126,000	0	
Environment						
Waste Wardens	67,000					
Waste Services - Transfer Station (Operated by Silent Valley)	50,000					Ongoing shortfall with management fee, usually covered by in year virements but this is no longer sustainable.
	117,000	-	-	-	-	
SUB TOTAL GROWTH / NEW RESPONSIBILITIES	253,000	45,000	-213,000	183,000	0	
TOTAL COST PRESSURES / GROWTH (BAU)	2,074,000	511,500	-213,000	183,000	0	

STRATEGIC BUSINESS REVIEWS

Review	Lead Officer	Scope	Estimated Achievement							
			2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023		2023/2024		2024/2025	
			£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Industrial Portfolio	Richard Crook / Ellie Fry	To review the Council's Industrial Unit Portfolio to identify areas for improvement and opportunities to maximise income.	0	0	0	50	0	100	50	200
Commercial Waste	Richard Crook	To roll out a new Commercial Waste service borough wide. A successful capital bid secured £250,000 for Blaenau Gwent's Commercial Waste Service. During the financial year 2019/2020, the Trade Waste Service underwent a full revamp with a revised implementation date of 1 st April 2021.	0	0	23	23	64	64	96	96
Income Recovery	Rhian Hayden	To review current income recovery activities to ensure best / efficient practices in place.	54	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fees and Charges	Bernadette Elias	To review and develop an approach to the setting of fees and charges that reflects full cost recovery, and identifies further opportunities for raising income from discretionary services. Options to stretch targets on those budget lines that over achieving will be explored in future years.	121	0	100	100	100	100	100	100
Commercial activity, investment and new income	Richard Crook	This strategic review will focus on identifying additional commercial opportunities to supplement the current activities of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fees and charges • Developing the Industrial Portfolio • Current income from traded or shared services 	0	0	0	0	50	50	50	50

Review	Lead Officer	Scope	Estimated Achievement							
			2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023		2023/2024		2024/2025	
			£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property Investment inside the Borough and out of the Borough Investment in energy and low carbon activities Disposals or development of assets and property 								
Third party expenditure – commissioning, procurement and contract management	Bernadette Elias	The Council commissions, procures and manages contracts with a wide range of third party suppliers across all its services spending circa. £80m +. This strategic business review seeks to identify for efficiencies and improved outcomes where possible.	550	490	250	550	250	550	250	550
Assets and Property	Richard Crook	The Council has a range of property assets. This review will ascertain their value to the Council and identify how best to maximise these assets to strengthen our balance sheet. This review would include buildings and green spaces and will align with the growth strategy.	85	35	150	210	0	0	0	0
Review of the MRP Policy	Rhian Hayden	To commission the Council's Treasury Management advisors to review the MRP.	0	0	50	500	0	0	0	0
Future work place and service delivery	Bernadette Elias	This is a new Strategic Business Review that merges the previous business review on customer experience and the business review on workplace transformation. The impact of the pandemic has force the organisation to think radically about how and where it will deliver services to the communities in Blaenau Gwent. This Strategic Business Review includes:	50	0	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

Review	Lead Officer	Scope	Estimated Achievement							
			2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023		2023/2024		2024/2025	
			£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of face to face service delivery models and development of community based provision; Review of the democratic space to ensure the organisation fulfils its role as community leader in an inclusive and transparent way; Review of the current physical office environment so staff can work safely and productively; <p>With the current level of data analysis and financial information it is not possible to quantify the potential cost avoidance or savings beyond 2021/22. Work on this Strategic Business Review will inform the assessments for the later years of the MTFP.</p>								
Growth Strategy	Richard Crook	Our Growth Strategy involves a programme of housing development that will see an impact on our revenue streams through increase Council Tax. This will contribute to the MTFS and is a critical element of building strong communities.	220	230	300	300	100	100	100	100
Low Carbon	Michelle Morris	Develop a Low Carbon Plan which sets out an ambitious vision and targets for BG to become a Low Carbon Borough and supports the corporate objectives of being a more Efficient Council and Strong & Environmentally Smart Communities.	138	0	200	350	200	350	200	350
		TOTAL	1,218	755	1,073	2,083	764	1,314	846	1,446

Review	Lead Officer	Scope	Estimated Achievement							
			2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023		2023/2024		2024/2025	
			£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Strategic Business Reviews – No Estimated Financial Impact Identified										
Use of external grants	Bernadette Elias	<p><u>Scope of the Review</u></p> <p>This strategic business review is concerned with deployment of additional grant funding that is available to the council and its partners. It is estimated that the organisation receives approximately £22m additional funding to support our priorities. This review will explore how the grants are utilised across the council to deliver outcomes for our residents.</p> <p>This review will also consider the impact of the removal of these grants and the risk placed on core funding.</p>								
Reducing demand by changing behaviours	Bernadette Elias	The Council's role in place shaping means that we need to encourage and enable communities to do as much as they can for themselves and to build resilience. This strategic business review will identify any opportunities to work closely with our communities to encourage changes in behaviour. This has been done in many other locations to deal with issues relating to littering, payment of council tax and antisocial activities.								
Prevention and early intervention services	Damien McCann / Lynn Phillips	This review will focus on an evaluation of the long term impact of prevention and early intervention on reducing the requirement for high cost services and better outcomes for our most vulnerable residents								
Using data to deliver better services	Bernadette Elias	Becoming a 21 st Century Council means using data and insight to drive decision making. This Strategic Business Review will identify opportunities for the sharing of data to design services and target our resources to deliver outcomes for our residents.								

Agenda Item 9

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 09.02.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 09.02.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**
Date of meeting: **24th February 2021**
Report Subject: **ICT Investment Roadmap**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader / Executive Member
Corporate Services**
Report Submitted by: **Anne-Louise Clark, Chief Officer Commercial;
Rhian Hayden, Chief Officer Resources;
Matt Lewis, Chief Operating Officer, SRS**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	07/01/21	09.02.21			22/01/21	24/02/21	25/03/21	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Executive Committee with a full set of proposals on investment options required to maintain a stable and resilient ICT infrastructure.

The proposals are broken down into three categories which aim to describe the current challenges and future options. This is designed to help decision making required for the SRS Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council capital refresh.

1. Desktop estate;
2. Network and telephony estate
3. Contract register.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 There has not been, in the history of the SRS, nor indeed the internet, such a massive and sudden shift in the way we all expect to use and rely on technology as now. With so many of us unable to meet in person, due to COVID-19, our way of working has suddenly shifted from direct contact to having meetings and working virtually overnight.
- 2.1.2 Whether it is holding team meetings, running Emergency Response Team (ERT) meetings, social services settings, teaching children remotely or making sure our staff are coping in partial lockdown, people are using their technology in a way and to an extent they have never done before.

2.1.3 The current situation, which seems set to continue for some time in 2021, has introduced millions to a technology which up to this point was, really, just limited to those who already worked virtually. This will undoubtedly have a major impact on the strategy of the SRS and indeed of Blaenau Gwent.

2.1.4 Due to the above reasons, all partners including Blaenau Gwent rely more heavily on the technology infrastructure than ever before and this paper sets out the component parts of the technology estate within Blaenau Gwent and the capital investment required to maintain it.

2.2 **The benefits of maintaining the infrastructure**

2.2.1 There are many benefits from maintaining the technology estate in Blaenau Gwent and they include but are not limited to:

- the SRS and Blaenau Gwent needs to continually improve the technology estate to ensure that is flexible enough to deliver the changing demands upon it. March 2020 is a good example of this when we had to switch Blaenau Gwent across to remote working and Teams over a single weekend. This was possible because of a programme of improvement that had been put in place and was ready for an event such as this.
- to continue to achieve Public Sector Network (PSN) accreditation the technology hardware estate has to be able to be “patched” and upgraded to the latest versions to ensure the estate is secure. You have to have PSN accreditation to deliver services such as Revenues and Benefits.
- user devices such as laptops and desktops have a useful life expectancy of between 3-5 years, when a standard device is used past that time it becomes a regular support issue for the user.
- the technology estate is what connects everyone together and delivers everything you see on your device. If network, server and storage estates are left past their useful life then the entire provision starts to slow down, to become unable to host the newest systems and becomes a performance issue for the entire organisation.
- it is typical that the older a technology estate is the more expensive it becomes to procure support contracts for it. This means that every year we retain the existing estate it gets more expensive to support and there will be a point in the next two years where the majority of it is unsupportable by vendors.

2.3 **Component parts of the technology estate**

2.3.1 Figure 1 over the page is a diagram of the technology estate to assist members in understanding which areas of the estate this capital request covers.

2.3.2 There are many component parts involved overall and we could simply describe all locations as either “edge sites” or “core sites”. For example, we would call Ebbw Vale

Civic Centre, Abertillery Learning Centre, Blaina Library or Anvil Court an “edge site”, this simply means that it is not the central site where all IT services are delivered from, it is on the edge of the network. A “core site” is a location such as the data centre where all of the services are delivered from.

2.3.3 If we used example Blaenau Gwent locations such as Ebbw Vale Civic Centre, Abertillery Learning Centre, Blaina Library or Anvil Court then it would include:

- laptops / desktops and other devices that people use in their day to day work at those locations to access services
- the WiFi network they connect to when in those locations provided by the Cisco Wireless Access Points that you may have noticed on ceilings or walls.
- an edge switch is a network switch in the edge location. So, in those locations there is an edge switch that connects those locations to Blaenau Gwent.
- PSBA means Public Sector Broadband Aggregation and very simply the broadband connection that is used to connect Blaenau Gwent locations together.
- the items in the data centre and below are not part of this capital request.

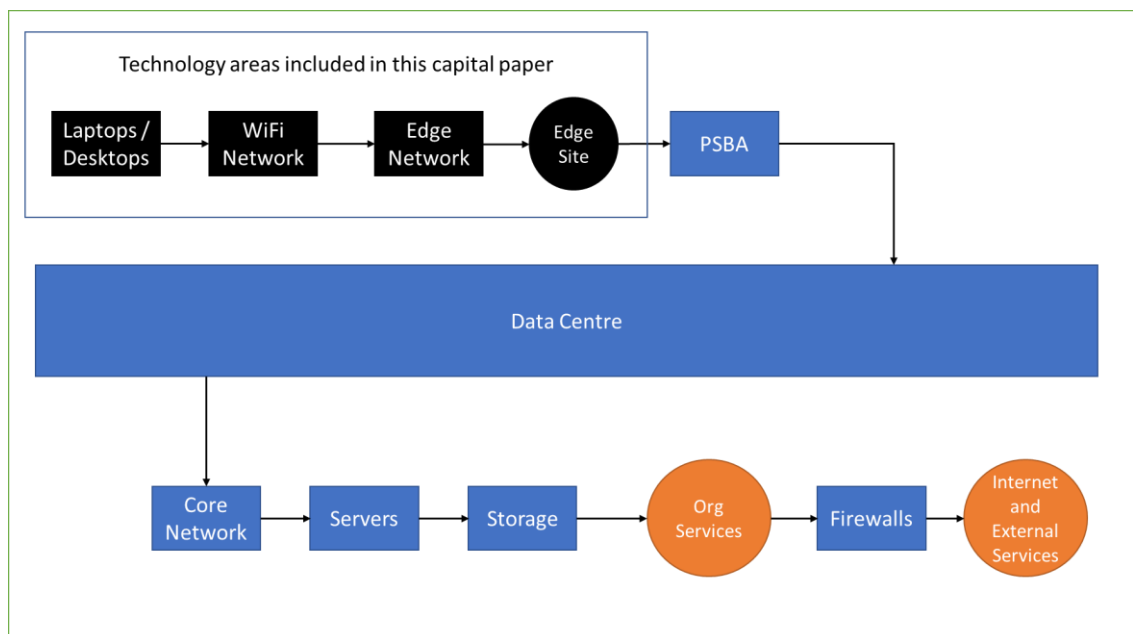


Figure 1 Technology estate component parts

2.4 Desktop estate

2.4.1 The SRS MTFP provides an estimated investment that Blaenau Gwent should make in their desktop estate. This amount is not factored into the MTFP itself. The life span of the current desktop estate has been a critical element of ICT Delivery Group meetings over the year in the Council and a desktop replacement process began in quarter 3 of 2019.

- 2.4.2 Planning the desktop replacement is currently done on an estate of 1,451 devices. This is based on the number of devices requested by the Council to deliver services and meet the needs of staff and elected members.
- 2.4.3 SRS advise partners to refresh their laptop/desktop estate every five years. Performance is hampered after year six and this can lead to interruptions in service delivery and emergency replacement of devices.
- 2.4.4 The current cost of a standard laptop is £510 per device which would suggest a budgetary number of £123k per year is needing to be factored into departmental budgets or a core budget to replace 241 devices per year.
- 2.4.5 This excludes the software support such as Office 365, it is purely a hardware replacement cost for laptops. A separate budget might need to be considered for display screens if Blaenau Gwent wished to do so or fund on a break fix basis, these are standard catalogue items and cost £140 each.

2.5 **Network estate**

2.5.1 Edge switch network

Blaenau Gwent has 120 network edge switches and 144 wireless access points across their corporate infrastructure. The end of life points of these switches, as set by the support available from Cisco for updates and patches, range from January 2020 to November 2021. The recommendation from the SRS is to replace key building infrastructure in 2020-21 financial year which equates to 67 edge switches and 22 wireless access points. The cost of this is currently estimated at £70k (increased from £58k due to dollar rate fluctuation since the initial quotes). The recommendation from the SRS is to replace the remaining infrastructure in 2021-22 financial year which equates to 53 edge switches and 122 wireless access points. The cost of this is currently estimated at £148k. If these are not replaced, then the risks in section 5.2 will be realised.

- 2.5.2 Telephony Part 1: The telephony estate in Blaenau Gwent is outdated and whilst it can currently still be supported it is becoming more difficult to maintain and support, this year costing approximately £43k for telephony hardware. The SRS Strategic Board has agreed a proposal to move to the use of Teams telephony. This would replace all of our existing telephony, voicemail and conferencing needs. Any telephony hardware support contract, voicemail support contracts and rentals of any handsets would be able to be removed. Based on Blaenau Gwent's view, there could be costs for headsets for using with Teams telephony which would be an additional capital spend. The cost of a license is £57 per year per person and the total cost is dependent on the number of staff that Blaenau Gwent require, this is a revenue cost.
- 2.5.3 Telephony Part 2: The SRS were asked to find a solution to replace the contact centres and switchboard functionality which are critical to the operation of Blaenau Gwent. Blaenau Gwent has had a demonstration of a product that appears to meet all these needs and the product set offers improved functionality and flexibility including the ability for contact centre leads to manage the contact centre queues directly through a simple interface. The solutions would be procured using a Welsh

Government framework called Connecting Wales and the estimated revenue costs are estimated to be ~£30k a year.

2.6 Contracts register

2.6.1 Taking forward the investments outlined in this report provides the opportunity to reduce expenditure on key software and hardware support contracts that are managed on our behalf by SRS and some that are managed directly by ourselves. The total reduction is approximately £100k and will be built into the SRS budget process.

2.6.2 PSBA Contracts

Blaenau Gwent currently funds over 80 PSBA connections at a cost of £187k a year. With the review of our strategic property assets it is likely that the number of PSBA connections will be reduced further reducing our costs. PSBA lines are typically able to be cancelled and the bill will reflect that change within one month and the SRS are working with Blaenau Gwent as part of the Estate's Strategy to identify what those cost differences could be.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 **Option 1:** That the Executive consider the proposals and recommend the ICT infrastructure investment to Council for approval.

3.2 **Option 2:** That the Executive consider the proposals and do not recommend the ICT infrastructure investment to Council.

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

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (Section 15), places a duty on all Local Authorities in Wales to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. As part of this, the Council is required to develop a Corporate Plan. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 also places individual duties on public bodies. The legislation is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and creating a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

Investment to secure resilient and future proofed ICT infrastructure is vital for all public sector organisations and this supports these objectives and the Corporate Plan priority 'An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities'. It is a critical organisational investment strategy for the future sustainability of the organisation. It is designed to secure the best use of our resources and to create ways of working that are fit for the 21st Century.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

Capital

The infrastructure investment proposals require an initial capital investment across the desktop and network estate of £464,000 in the first 2 years followed by an annual investment of £166,000 thereafter.

The recent desktop replacement programme for the initial tranche has been funded by reserves, however, this is not sustainable in the longer term.

It is therefore proposed that an annual allocation of £166,000 is agreed as part of the Council's capital programme from 2021-22 onwards with the balance for years 1 & 2 (£132,000) funded from the ICT Reserve.

Revenue

Revenue Costs for the implementation of Teams Telephony & Contact Centre are estimated to be £77,000 per annum. This will be funded from the established revenue budget however there is expected to be some transitional costs incurred whilst transferring from current provision to new, it is proposed that these cost be funded by the ICT Reserve.

The table below identifies the annual impact on capital and revenue.

		Revenue or Capital	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Desktop Estate	Phase 1 - 20%	Capital	123000				
	Phase 2 - 20%	Capital		123000			
	Phase 3 - 20%	Capital			123000		
	Phase 4 - 20%	Capital				123000	
	Phase 5 - 20%	Capital					123000

			2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Network Estate	Network Refresh	Capital	70000	148000	43000	43000	43000
	Teams Telephony	Revenue	54000	54000	54000	54000	54000
	Teams Contact Centre	Revenue	23000	23000	23000	23000	23000

Total Capital	193000	271000	166000	166000	166000
Total Revenue	77000	77000	77000	77000	77000

5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions

The performance of our ICT infrastructure is built into the management fee and the partnership arrangement with the SRS. Performance is reported to Council on an annual basis and the maintenance of a resilient infrastructure underpins our ability to deliver critical services to our communities. The risks associated with under-performance against ICT expectations will be mitigated through implementation of these recommendations.

There are major risks currently associated with the provision and why a decision is required at this time:

- Blaenau Gwent's infrastructure in many areas is over 10 years old and requires to be replaced. Without this being done there is a high risk of the ICT equipment failing.
- If the infrastructure is not upgraded, then there is a risk that Blaenau Gwent will lose their PSN accreditation.
- The upheaval around transition time between infrastructures will create issues around availability and performance for a short period.
- Operating costs in continuing with the current provision will continue to increase.
- Dollar rate fluctuations are occurring by the day and prices keep changing as we have seen between draft one and draft two of this report.
- Nightingale installations take priority over business as usual for many suppliers which has created delay in costing and design work and will continue to do so.
- The PSBA stopped work on business as usual (BAU) in March and only recently started accepting BAU work again which has delayed our costings and design work.
- The social distancing measures will undoubtedly cause complications in the implementation phases of the work.

5.3 ***Legal***

Changes in service delivery that might emerge through the deployment of the recommendations in this plan will be reviewed from a legal perspective. Due diligence will be undertaken for any related procurement.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

Where changes in service delivery or roles as a result of this plan are identified normal human resources processes and policies will be applied including consultation with the Trade Unions.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Key performance information and data will include:

- Delivery of the planned activities within timescales and budget;
- Regular reports on progress;
- Visibility of the overall programme and impacts on service delivery;
- Risks and any programme changes will be managed by the Chief Officer Commercial.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Through the delivery of this plan the Council will maintain and develop the ICT infrastructure to ensure continuity of service delivery, strengthened capacity to deliver digital solutions and improved ways of working. This strategy will also contribute to the resilience and sustainability of the organisation therefore protecting front line services.

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

Corporate Overview Scrutiny considered this report on 22nd January 2021 and support the proposals for investment into the Council's ICT infrastructure.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

This programme is at the heart of the development of a resilient and fit for future ICT infrastructure for Blaenau Gwent and recognises the critical nature of continuous investment in digital products and services.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

This strategy is designed to support the needs of the Council now and in the future. It is designed to build ICT resilience and to prevent the unanticipated expenditure.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

There are opportunities through this programme to seek value for money opportunities across the SRS partnership.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

This strategy takes a whole council approach and promotes transparency across key elements of the ICT infrastructure ensuring systems can be supported and services delivered effectively and efficiently.

6.8 ***EqIA***

All service changes arising for this strategy will be screened to ensure there is no adverse impact on any protected characteristics.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The implementation of this programme of work will be monitored by the Chief Officer Commercial and supported by the Digital Programme Officer in partnership with the SRS. Feedback on the delivery of the outcomes will be through the financial management arrangements for the capital investment programme.

What are the key outcomes expected from these investments:

- Deliver a fit for purpose infrastructure
- Retain PSN accreditation.
- Deliver a secure infrastructure.
- Deliver a flexible infrastructure capable of a blended service of on premise and remote.
- Minimise failures and disruption for the partners due to an ageing infrastructure.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Blaenau Gwent Planning document.

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Blaenau Gwent Future Planning Pack



Mission

To use shared technology platforms to consolidate the demand and broker the supply of all types of services to the Public Sector.

Vision

To be more efficient through the use of technology.

Values

When people are sharing their practice, they add value to the common purpose of the SRS.

Strategic Aim #1

INNOVATING WITH EXPERTS: improve services to provide a solid foundation upon which partner organisations can operate.

Strategic Aim #2

MODERNISING THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE: ensure the investment in technology is focused on delivery of the corporate priorities of the partner organisations.

Strategic Aim #3

POWERING UP THE CLOUD: provide a collaborative platform for public sector organisations to share common ground.



Blaenau Gwent Future Planning Pack

Audience	List of partners: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.
Document Status	Draft
Document Version	1.0
Issue Date	
Prepared By	Matt Lewis (COO)
Date Agreement Approved	
Date Agreement Approved	

Key Documents	List of key documents associated with this strategy
Name	Comment
MTFP	Managed through the Finance and Governance Group and used to agree annual budgets.
Performance framework	Agreed by the Strategic Board.
RAID Log	Managed by the SRS after each Strategic Board, Finance and Governance Group and business and Collaboration Group meeting.
SLA	The Service Level Agreement document is agreed by the strategic Board in June each year.

Version	Date	Name	Comment
1.0	19/4/2020		Initial draft



Blaenau Gwent Future Planning Pack

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Blaenau Gwent Future Planning Pack

1. Purpose of the document

This document seeks to provide Blaenau Gwent with the set of information relating to future planning. It includes the investment options required.

The document is broken down into four categories which aim to help describe the future options Blaenau Gwent have over investments and help decision making required for the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Blaenau Gwent capital refresh:

- Desktop estate
- Network estate (including VPN, firewall, edge and core networking, PSBA and telephony)
- Server estate (including server hardware, storage devices and disaster recovery)
- Contract register



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2. Investment Roadmap

		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Desktop Estate	Phase 1 - 20%	£123k				
	Phase 2 - 20%		£123k			
	Phase 3 - 20%			£123k		
	Phase 4 - 20%				£123k	
	Phase 5 - 20%					£123k

		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Network Estate	Network Phase 1	£58k				
	Network Phase 2		£134k			
	Teams Telephony	£54k	£54k	£54k	£54k	£54k
	Teams Contact Centre	£23k	£23k	£23k	£23k	£23k

		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Server Estate	Server Phase 1	£15k				
	Server Phase 2		£30k			
	Server Phase 3			£20k		
	Storage Phase 1	£45k				
	Storage Phase 2		£50k			

The investment numbers below relate to the alternative data centre project being worked up as a business case with the Finance and Governance Board. Some of these items replace the need for the above investments and they are marked as such, until the business case is approved, these investments should be classed as not yet agreed.

		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Data Centre Business Case (Indicative for info and timeline)	PSBA (DC Bus Case)	£30k				
	Shared Core Network		£25k	£25k	£25k	£25k
	Shared Firewall		£25k	£25k	£25k	£25k
	Shared Storage		£37k	£37k	£37k	£37k
	Shared Compute		£25k	£25k	£25k	£25k



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3. Supporting document

There are a number of key supporting documents which are available and have been through various SRS meetings. The most relevant is included as appendix one, this is the annual agreed budget document.

The document describes all revenue based costs and how they are calculated.

4. Desktop Estate

The MTFP provides an estimated investment that Blaenau Gwent should make in their desktop estate but is clear that this is not an amount factored into the MTFP itself. The desktop estate has also been discussed as part of the Delivery Group meetings over the last twelve months in Blaenau Gwent as part of the desktop replacement process.

Desktop estates rise and fall throughout the year as more or less staff are engaged or different services are delivered, an example being the COVID-19 tracing function starting in June 2020. This will increase the numbers of devices in Blaenau Gwent and therefore the numbers of Office 365 licences, the numbers of McAfee licenses and so on.

Planning is currently done on an estate of 1,451 devices being used and is a number driven directly by Blaenau Gwent requirements. We typically advise partners to refresh their laptop / desktop estate every five years. When year six arrives, the devices really start to struggle and performance is hampered as we are starting to see now. Partners may choose a longer period of time to sweat these assets over which is not an issue, it is important to recognise we will continue to support them in year six but performance issues can be expected.



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If we were to plan a replacement of one sixth of the desktop estate each year for budget purposes, then at the start of each financial year we would meet to agree, using a RAG status, the devices that would be replaced that year. Some years there may be less and some more, but for budgetary purposes we would advise a plan of 241 devices per year. The current cost of a standard laptop is £510 per device which would suggest a budgetary number of £123k per year needing to be factored into departmental budgets or a core budget.

This excludes the software support such as Office 365, it is purely a hardware replacement cost for laptops. A separate budget might need to be considered for display screens if Blaenau Gwent wished to do so or fund on a break fix basis, these are standard catalogue items and cost £140 each.

5. Network Estate

PSBA

There is PSBA capital work required as part of the data centre move requested by the Strategic Board, Michelle Morris for Blaenau Gwent, at the January 2020 Board meeting. For Blaenau Gwent this is in relation to the PSBA configuration required in the new data centre location removing the current risks around Ebbw Vale as agreed in the business case to transfer into the SRS.

We are working to an assumption that the equipment we need will now be funded by WG. There is a consultancy cost to the work which is wrapped into the data centre move business case being finalised with the Finance and Governance Board.



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Firewall

There is firewall capital work required as part of the data centre move requested by the Strategic Board at the January 2020 Board meeting. For Blaenau Gwent this is in relation to moving from Ebbw Vale to a new data centre location and being part of a shared investment that is part of the data centre business case.

There is a consultancy cost to the work which is also wrapped into the data centre move business case being finalised with the Finance and Governance Board.

Core switch networking

There is a core network switch replacement required as part of the data centre move requested by the Strategic Board at the January 2020 Board meeting. For Blaenau Gwent this is in relation to moving from Ebbw Vale to a new data centre location and being part of a shared investment that is part of the data centre business case.

There is a consultancy cost to the work which is also wrapped into the data centre move business case being finalised with the Finance and Governance Board.

Edge switch networking

Blaenau Gwent have 120 network edge switches and 144 wireless access points across their corporate infrastructure, this does not include BG Learning or Education, both of which should be off the corporate network by September 2020.

The end of life points of these switches, as set by the support available from Cisco for updates and patches, range from January 2020 to November 2021.



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The recommendation from the SRS is to replace key building infrastructure in 2020-21 financial year which equates to 67 edge switches and 22 wireless access points. The cost of this is currently estimated at £58k.

The recommendation from the SRS is to replace the remaining infrastructure in 2021-22 financial year which equates to 53 edge switches and 122 wireless access points. The cost of this is currently estimated at £134k.

Cisco pricing is incredibly volatile at the moment due to global supply chain issues and dollar rate fluctuations. However, there could be an option to reuse equipment being replaced in the School estate. Some of the equipment is still supportable and could be rehomed into a corporate environment. The only risk is timeline as the EdTech work keeps slipping with school closures etc due to COVID-19 and we will have no certainty on availability and volume until August 2020.

VPN

The capability across all SRS partners will change to use Microsoft Always On VPN. This has not been implemented yet for any partner due to it only recently being approved under PSN to be used. Blaenau Gwent could be the first which enable removal of Mobile Iron etc.

Telephony

The telephony estate in Blaenau Gwent is outdated and whilst can currently still be supported it is becoming more difficult to maintain and support, this year costing approximately £43k for telephony hardware and a further contract and upgrade cost for voicemail and so on.

The contact centre Blaenau Gwent use is the same on as Torfaen and Monmouthshire so a step change together is required for contact centre or



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one partner will be left with a high cost system. The proposal for Teams telephony has been agreed as a Strategic Board recommendation and the paper shows the below costs of licensing purely as indicative.

Part 1: The cost of a telephony license in Office 365 is shown below if you were to license all employees. However, if for example, the number of extensions used by current staff for external calling functionality was around 50%, then only these people would require a telephony license as internal calling is replaced by Teams only functionality included in current licensing. This is a challenge to the organisations to review their external calling needs. The Monmouthshire cost is also shown below which is more indicative of what Blaenau Gwent would pay when they have Office 365 licensing. The current Blaenau Gwent cost below is prior to having Office 365 licensing as you currently do not have it.

This would replace all of your existing telephony, voicemail and conferencing needs. Any telephony hardware support contract, voicemail support contracts and rentals of any handsets would be able to be removed. Based on Blaenau Gwent’s view, there could be costs for headsets etc for using with Teams telephony.

Authority	Teams		
	Per Month Cost	12 Month Cost	12 Month Cost (50% utilisation example)
<i>Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (as not currently licensed for Office 365)</i>	£12,356	£148,282	£74,141
<i>Monmouthshire County Council</i>	£8,908	£106,908	£53,454



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Part 2: The SRS were asked to find a solution to replace the other two parts of the telephony requirement. Contact centre and switchboard functionality are critical to the operation of each Authority.

The SRS has and the Business and Collaboration Board have had a demonstration of a product that appears to meet all these needs and we now need to assess with contact centre leads if it covers all of the key functionality of the Cisco / Unify and PSBA contact centres currently in place. The product set offers functionality and flexibility to partners that they have sought for a considerable amount of time in some areas, such as the ability for partners to manage the contact centre queues directly through a simple interface. This product integrates into Teams in Office 365 and management consoles etc can be delegated to organisational leads.

The costs are per Office 365 tenant, this means that we can utilise a single installation and license for the four local authorities due to our decision to manage you all in OneWales.

The design and deployment costs are approximately £25k for all four local authorities and the annual license fee is then approximately £75k and would cover all four local authority contact centres.

6. Server Estate

Server hardware

Blaenau Gwent's physical server estate is relatively small at less than ten physical hosts with multiple virtual servers residing on them which forms the server estate.

All servers are out of warranty with the manufacturer, however they are in support contracts with CDW.



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The recommendation from the SRS is to replace three physical hosts in 2020-21.

Storage devices

Blaenau Gwent's file storage infrastructure is out of warranty but in support, very similar to above. Due to the ability to maintain and support these devices the SRS would recommend replacing two of those storage systems.

Costs for 20-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23

The currently estimated costs for server and storage capacity in 2020-21 is £60k.

The currently estimated costs for server and storage in 2021-22 is £80k.

The currently estimated costs for server and storage in 2022-23 is £20k.



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7. Contracts Register

Software / hardware support contracts

The savings items listed below are realised if the above projects go according to the timelines.

		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Possible savings	Enterprise Vault	£12k				
	Mcafee Mail Filter		£20k			
	VPN		£8K			
	Egress		£8K			
	MobileIron		£36k			
Possible cost avoidance	VPN Contract Change		£34k			

The contracts register is an annually updated document and fluctuates by the year. In 20-21 the cost of Blaenau Gwent contracts is £17k less than the cost of contracts in 19-20. That variance is taking as a saving prior to budget setting by each partner each year.

The tab in appendix one called “contracts” shows all currently budgeted spend for contracts that the SRS manages for Blaenau Gwent.

Of the £421k in 20-21 budget, £339k relates to the Blaenau Gwent Enterprise Agreement in readiness for Office 365. If the numbers at the time of purchase match the numbers estimated back in 2019 then there is sufficient budget in place to fund the Office 365 license cost. This will need to be reviewed prior to implementation but £339k is in line with the cost of partners who have already migrated to Office 365 with similar volumes. Blaenau Gwent are currently consuming free E1 Office 365 licenses which expire on September 17th 2020, which means a decision on the way forward is required prior to August 17th.



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The current Enterprise Agreement does not include Microsoft Teams telephony licenses.

Of the remaining £82k there are some items that could be removed when Blaenau Gwent move to Office365 with some additional work such as:

- Enterprise Vault is currently £12k a year and provides email archiving. Blaenau Gwent could decide they either no longer want archiving, as Gwent Police did and removed everything older than twelve months, or you could decide to put it all into Office 365. Either way this support contract would go.
- Part of the £20k McAfee contract is mail filtering which is free in Office 365.
- Around £8k is associated with VPN costs which could be removed if Blaenau Gwent chose to use Microsoft Always On VPN which is included in the O365 agreement. The only caveat here is that no partner currently uses this and it would need to be implemented for Blaenau Gwent from scratch.
- There are also examples of contracts paid in BG that could be removed such as Egress which could be replaced by Office 365 email encryption and Sharepoint Online document sharing through OneDrive. These are currently being investigated as projects in Newport which will help progress Blaenau Gwent quicker.

The remainder of the contract costs represent items that are needed in 20-21.

PSBA contracts

Blaenau Gwent currently funds over 80 PSBA connections at a cost of £187k a year. All PSBA connections are shown with their building name and street name in the “PSBA” tab in appendix one.



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The SRS is entirely dependent on Blaenau Gwent's estate strategy for ensuring these sites are all required and actively used.

8. Security Issues

The SRS wants to ensure that some of the investment areas required in the areas of information security are highlighted, they are for BG to make decisions through Rhian Haydn as SIRO on the Information Security Leadership Board.

The SRS are aware of a requirement for a Security Incident and Event Management System (SIEM) which comes with an investment cost in the tens of thousands but until it is defined it is unknown.

The other key area is anything being identified out of PSN certification work and penetration testing. The cost of penetration testing is included in the annual revenue budget.

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Agenda Item 10

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 09.02.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 09.02.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **24th February 2021**

Report Subject: **Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act Readiness**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Joanne Collins, Executive Member
Education**

Report Submitted by: **Lynn Phillips, Corporate Director of Education**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
14.01.21	21.01.21	09.02.21			09.02.21	24.02.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to provide the Executive Committee with an update on the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) and the progress the Education Directorate is making in readiness.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Over thirteen years ago, Welsh Government felt that there was a need to look at reforming the current Special Educational Needs (SEN) system. Preliminary consultations took place in 2007 on the assessment and statementing system and this led to a series of reform pilots from 2009-12.
- 2.2 Over the course of the following five years, further trials and pilots took place and Blaenau Gwent participated in this work, leading on the development of Person Centred Practice (PCP) in all schools across South East Wales. This resulted in our schools receiving training and beginning to work on a PCP approach, sharing their practice locally and regionally.
- 2.3 In December 2017, the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) was passed by Welsh Government. The aim of the ALN Act is to create a unified process for children and young people 0-25 that will improve outcomes with a single statutory framework.
- 2.4 The ALN Act creates the legislative framework to improve the planning and delivery of additional learning provision, through a person-centred approach to identifying learner needs earlier, putting in place effective support and monitoring, and adapting interventions, ensuring the desired outcomes.
- 2.5 The ALN Act will be supported by a new ALN Code of Practice but there have been delays in its development and finalisation. Welsh Government has committed to the Code of Practice being laid before the Senedd in March

2021, in time to be in place in September 2021. It is worth pointing out that until September 2021, the Council are required to comply with the duties placed upon us under the current SEN Code of Practice and from then from 2021-2024 there will be two systems in place as the service transitions from one to the other.

- 2.6 From September 2021, all Councils have a responsibility to ensure that the requirements of the ALN Act and accompanying Code are in place to support learners aged 0-25 and that they work effectively with other agencies such as Health to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people.
- 2.7 The ALN Act and draft Code make clear that each area of a child's need cannot be seen in isolation and a holistic approach is required where all of a child's needs are met, accompanied by a single unified plan - the individual development plan (IDP). Therefore, planning to meet children's education, health and social care needs have to be considered as a whole with agencies planning together.
- 2.8 IDPs will replace statements of special educational needs (SEN) and individual education plans (IEPs) for learners currently supported through Early Years Action/School Action or Early Years Action Plus/School Action Plus. Where required, a school will decide whether the child or young person has additional learning needs (ALN) and, if so, put an IDP in place. Schools can refer such decisions to the local authority if:
- determining the extent and nature of the young person's ALN, or the additional learning provision (ALP) that they require, is beyond the school's capability; and/or,
 - it would not be reasonable for the school itself to secure the required provision.
- 2.9 The ALN Code will also impose mandatory requirements on the governing body of maintained schools in Wales in respect of decisions about ALN, the preparation, content, form, review and revision of IDPs, and ceasing to maintain IDPs. In relation to Children Looked After (CLA) and working with Children's Services, it will be essential that directorates work together to plan changes and transitions particularly where children have an ALN, and therefore, an IDP that would form part of the Personal Education Plan (PEP).
- 2.10 In relation to children who are Electively Home Educated (EHE) with an identified additional learning need, the current expectation is that the IDP must be maintained by the LA.

2.11 **A Regional Approach**

In preparation for September 2021, LAs across the South East Wales consortia region (SEWC) have been working together to ensure that there is a collaborative and coherent approach to the implementation of the ALN Act and associated guidance (ALN Code) through the use of a regional implementation plan.

- 2.12 The plan has four key areas of work (early years, schools, post 16 and communication/collaboration). Within collaboration, the role of the EAS is included due to the need to ensure ALN is also considered as part of the school improvement agenda.
- 2.13 The region has developed a cluster approach with the appointment of both regional and cluster ALNCos. The ALNCos have supported the completion of school readiness surveys which have been developed to support planning, delivery and self-evaluation at a school level, as well as the development and implementation of a training plan. Welsh Government has provided the region with funding to enable current ALNCos to undertake the accredited National Middle Leadership qualification, in collaboration with the EAS.
- 2.14 The benefit of regional working has been significant and below are a few of the many ways in which Blaenau Gwent has benefited from, and contributed to a regional approach,
- Modular training for Early Years (EY) providers established by EYs leads;
 - PCP approaches embedded across the region (piloted originally by Blaenau Gwent);
 - The development of a school readiness survey with the sharing of good practice;
 - The development of a health readiness survey for Health teams;
 - Professional learning offer developed for ALNCos;
 - Post-16 training offer developed for post-16 staff including Coleg Gwent;
 - Enhanced transition programme developed and being trialled in each LA;
 - An online 'Matrix' being trialled by each LA to support Removing Barriers to Learning;
 - Special Schools working together to support the roll out of IDPs; and,
 - Parental engagement sessions in each LA run by SNAP Cymru.
- 2.15 All these areas have benefited from the support of the ALN Transformation Lead funded by Welsh Government.

2.16 **A Local Approach**

The ALN Act required from January 2021 the introduction of a new statutory post in each LA – that of an Early Years ALN Lead Officer. This post was appointed to in December and sits within the ALN Service, based in Pen-y-Cwm Special School. A local steering group is in place which is cross-Directorate to ensure that the requirements of the Act are fulfilled.

- 2.17 A Strategic Headteachers group planned as part of the regional approach will now be carried out locally and the Service Manager – Inclusion is in the process of formulating this group. This group will be key over the next two terms in supporting schools in their preparations. In addition, the EAS, as a regional partner, are also making ready for September 2021.
- 2.18 SNAP Cymru continue to provide local engagement sessions and raise awareness with parents. Welsh Government are finalising online training that will be rolled out across Wales. The training will be multi-level and designed

to ensure the appropriate level of knowledge is available for those who require it. The SEN team will be complementing this with a range of short 'bite-size' sessions/briefings to provide further support in this area.

- 2.19 Blaenau Gwent's local ALNCo Forum, held half-termly provides our key point of contact for all our ALNCoS and Education Officers to share good practice and support the development of the processes needed in schools from September 2021. These discussions are coordinated by the Educational Psychology Service but led by one of our Regional ALNCoS.
- 2.20 Blaenau Gwent has expanded the ALN team in preparation for September 2021. Welsh Government has provided some additional funding in the short term which has been used to create a fixed term post of ALN Officer.
- 2.21 COVID-19 – Welsh Government took the decision not to suspend statutory SEN processes during COVID. The requirements for statutory assessments to be carried out have continued with the right of parental appeal to the SEN Tribunal. This has not been easy to manage when schools have been closed and with remote learning now taking place. COVID-19 has also impacted upon the preparation work for the ALN Act. However, with the regional and local approach in place, the Inclusion team are confident that all that needs to be in place for September 2021 will be.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 The options to consider are:

- 1. The Executive accept the report and agree that Blaenau Gwent will be ALN ready for September 2021 when the ALN Act becomes operational and appropriate preparations are taking place; and/or,
- 2. Members consider the report and provide feedback/comments to ensure appropriate preparations are taking place.

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

4.1 The ALN Act and preparations for it support Priority 1 for Education: to improve pupil outcomes, progress and wellbeing, for all our pupils, particularly for our vulnerable learners. It will also contribute to priority 3 regarding supporting school leaders to help our pupils achieve their ambitions. The ALN Act and the preparations for it further support our strategic responsibilities with regard to progressing our Vision for Education (school led, self-improving system based on effective school to school collaboration), as well as supporting the securing of effective, efficient and economical high quality provision for our vulnerable learners.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)

The impact on budget from September 2021 is not fully known. The original expectation of Welsh Government was that the reforms would bring about a revenue saving. Welsh Government later revised this and now consider the impact as cost neutral. This is not the general view of Education services across Wales. Increasing the age range, extending (or deepening) the statutory right of Tribunal appeal) and increasing the number of pupils potentially entitled to a statutory IDP points to a cost impact upon schools (in managing the increased number of plans) and on the Council (in managing a potential increase in the number of LA plans) as well as in Tribunal directions and decisions (impacting upon required provision). The requirement to manage two parallel statutory systems will require additional staffing within the ALN Team which is an identified cost pressure. In addition, the requirement for a statutory Early Years ALN Lead Officer has a budget implication leading to further cost pressure of £70,000.

5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions

Funding commitments from Welsh Government has enabled the release of staff to support preparations. A continuation of the current progress will ensure that the implementation plan stays on track with appropriate monitoring at a local and regional level.

5.3 Legal

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5.4 Human Resources

The requirement placed on the Council to introduce a new strategic post of Early Years ALN Lead Officer from January 2021 has been completed. There will be further consideration of pressures once the finalised ALN Code is released and there is clarification provided in a number of other areas such as Elective Home Education and CLA.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 Performance Information and Data

The last Pupil Census information on SEN showed that in 2019/20 Blaenau Gwent had 1795 pupils on the SEN register of which 246 had Statements of SEN. Whilst not all 1795 pupils would be entitled to an IDP, it is clear that the number will be higher than the 246 that currently have statutory and legally challengeable statements.

6.2 Expected outcome for the public

The Council is working to ensure that the ALN Act is implemented in an efficient and effective manner, in line with regional and national good practice and in partnership with schools and other services/agencies, will provide a level of reassurance to the public. In addition, the introduction of the ALN Act will ensure that the processes related to pupils with ALN will be much more pupil focused, less bureaucratic and more responsive.

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

Significant consultation has been undertaken by Welsh Government in the development of the ALN Act. At a local and regional level, SNAP Cymru has undertaken parental engagement sessions and previous Headteacher meetings and ALNCo Forums have continued to keep the reform on the agenda. In addition, significant work has taken place with Health, and Social Services have been provided with initial awareness raising sessions. This will be ongoing.

6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**

Appropriate attention is required to ensuring the smooth transformation and implementation of the ALN Act. Once in force and subsequent to that, there is an expectation that the processes will have a positive impact on our learners with ALN, their families, schools and other partners.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

Ensuring that the ALN Act is implemented in an efficient and effective manner, in line with regional and national good practice and in partnership with schools and other services/agencies, will ensure an improved system that works for the benefit of pupils, families and the wider community.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

The Inclusion team are working closely with the region, with Councils across Wales and with Welsh Government as well as with Health and Social Services. Where alignment and further collaboration is possible as a result of the introduction of the ALN Act these will be pursued. Closer working can only bring benefit to our ALN learners, of all ages.

6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

The ALN Act complements other areas of work such as the broader wellbeing work and the work of the EAS. In addition, the introduction of IDPs, particularly given the age range and the introduction of the Early Years ALN Lead Officer post will benefit a holistic approach to meeting children and young people's needs.

6.8 **EqIA**

There are no implications arising directly from this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The work towards implementation of the ALN Act is monitored at multiple levels. Estyn has carried out a thematic review on the readiness of Councils, as well as having discussions with the Education Directorate via LA link inspector (LALI) meetings and with individual schools. Welsh Government also monitors via regional and themed reporting requirements.

Agenda Item 11

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 09.02.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 09.02.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **24th February 2021**

Report Subject: **Community Meals**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Alyson Hoskins, Head of Adult Services**

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
10/12/20		09.02.21			21/01/21	24/02/21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update the Executive committee on the transition of the Community Meals (CM) service and progress made since transition from the Regeneration and Community Services Directorate to the Social Services Directorate.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The decision to transfer the service, along with its budget deficit of £25k, was agreed at CLT on 22nd October 2019.
- 2.2 The service was scheduled to transfer to the Community Options Division of Adult Services on 1st April 2020 with direct delivery of the service being managed by the Community Options Team Manager (COM). A Project Officer (PO) was appointed, on a fixed term basis, to support the COM in developing and supporting the implementation of strategies to create a sustainable service.
- 2.3 The COVID-19 outbreak resulted in transition being “informally” brought forward to the 23rd March to ensure customers’ needs were taken into consideration as part of Social Services emergency planning. Having to react to increased demand as well as challenges within the service, has meant the Department has not been able to focus on service development as planned.
- 2.4 As the Department needed to prepare for transition of CM prior to the 1st April 2020 a significant amount of work needed to be undertaken to create robust mechanisms for monitoring customer and capacity levels.
- 2.5 COVID-19 created additional operational pressure on the service resulting from social distancing rules and Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) requirements. However, the Department developed the appropriate risk assessments, ensured adequate stocks of PPE were available and additional staff were identified to provide cover where necessary.

- 2.6 A number of operational processes were identified as creating unnecessary pressure on the service. The COM and PO worked with staff to review these processes and ensure efficient and effective running of the service. These have included processes to support leave requests, stock control, cash reconciliation and referrals for new customers.
- 2.7 Working with the service, has on times been challenging. To resolve issues, the Department had a formal meeting with staff in August 2020. The meeting facilitated an open discussion and has been further supported by the implementation of structured supervision sessions across the whole team.
- 2.8 It is important to note all staff are valued and committed to the service. Previous staffing/operational issues were a result of staff having gone through a number of changes and uncertainty of the future of the service. The Department has built positive relationships with the remaining staff and will ensure they are fully communicated, consulted and supported through any future changes to the service.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 The options for consideration are:
- 3.2 **Option One:** Executive are asked to consider the report and accept the recommendations for the long term forward planning of the service (section 6.4).
- 3.3 **Option Two:** Executive are asked to consider the report and provide comment of an alternative approach in relation to the future planning of the service.

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

- 4.1 The Blaenau Gwent Corporate Plan 2020/22 notes the Authority aims to intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater and asks residents to take more responsibility for managing their own health and wellbeing.
- 4.2 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on all local authorities to increase preventative services within the community to minimise the escalation of critical need.
- 4.3 The CM service supports both the objectives of the Corporate Plan and the Blaenau Gwent Well-being plan by enabling citizens to have a choice in accessing a service that allows them to stay independent and take responsibility for managing their own health and wellbeing thus reducing reliance on more traditional care.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 *Impact on Budget*

5.1.1 Having undertaken an analysis of the period 6 budget forecast (September 2020) for the service, the Department estimates a cost pressure of approximately £18K which is a reduction on the original deficit of £25k.

5.1.2 The Department will be prioritising a review of the budget to identify how it can be brought inline with actual expenditure.

5.2 *Risk*

5.2.1 The Department recognises the importance of CM and the negative impact its cessation has for both vulnerable citizens and other teams across the Directorate. For example, removal of the service leads to increased demand for domiciliary care as some citizens may not be able or have support to prepare meals.

5.2.2 These risks will be mitigated by the Department focussing on key areas to build a sustainable service as noted in section 6.4

5.3 *Legal*

CM is not a statutory requirement. However, the Department follows the key principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 which provides a legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support and carers who need support.

5.4 *Human Resources*

5.4.1 A report presented to CLT on 6th November 2018 and Special Council on 12th December 2018 (**Appendix One**) recommended CM reduce from 8 to 5 Drivers each working 16 hours per week, 80 hours in total. However, negotiations at the time resulted in all 8 staying in post with 10 hour contracts.

5.4.2 As noted in section 2.3, transition of CM took place on the 23rd March 2020 and as this was the date the country went into full lockdown only 4 drivers remained in the workplace; three permanent and one fixed term. The remaining 4 Drivers due to being in COVID-19 vulnerable groups refrained from the workplace under the furlough scheme.

5.4.3 The fixed term post was terminated as of 31st July 2020 and backfilled via a redeployment arrangement and with the furlough scheme ending on the 31st October 2020, the Department entered into discussions with the remaining 7 Drivers and their Trade Union to discuss and agree a return to work for all staff on furlough in-line with social distancing guidelines.

5.4.4 The outcome of these discussions was the Department agreeing a mutual termination date of 11th November 2020 with the furloughed staff members. The hours of the 5 remaining posts have been increased to 16 per week. The COVID-19 social distancing rules had enabled the Department to test the feasibility of operating the service with the reduced drivers which supported this decision.

5.4.5 The service now employs 3 permanent Drivers. The 4th post is currently filled via a re-deployment arrangement with Community Options providing relief cover for the 5th post. This arrangement will be revised when Community Options reinstates full operations.

6. Supporting Evidence

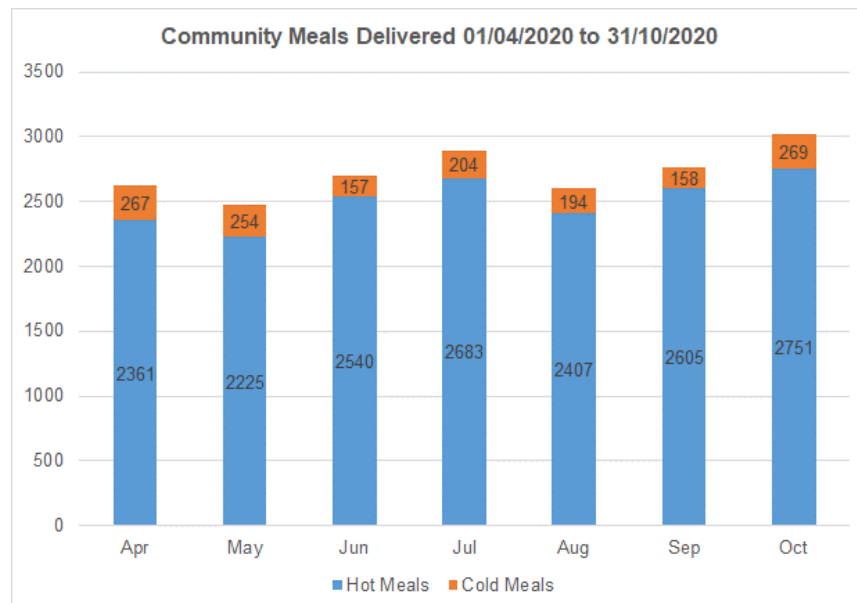
6.1 Performance Information and Data

6.1.1 In the period 1st April 2020 to 31st October 2020 the service delivered a total of 19,075 meals:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Total
Hot Meals	2361	2225	2540	2683	2407	2605	2751	17572
Cold Meals	267	254	157	204	194	158	269	1503
Total	2628	2479	2697	2887	2601	2763	3020	19075

Prior to transition CM was delivering between 88 and 94 hot meals per day. During the first quarter of 2020/21 the service was averaging a delivery of 128 hot meals per day which based on an average delivery of 94 meals is an increase of 36%.

6.1.2 As the graph below indicates, demand rose from April in-line with the COVID-19 pandemic and as expected dropped by just under 10% from July to August as restrictions were lifted. However, it did not drop to the levels seen pre-transition with the service still averaging the delivery of 120 hot meals per day throughout August. During the week commencing 26th October 2020 an average of 130 hot meals was delivered per day.



6.1.3 As of 10th August 2020 new referrals to the CM service were routed via the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) team. Between 10th August and 31st October the service received 29 referrals for 33 customers as highlighted below. Of those customers referred, 85% took up the service.

Route	Aug		Sep		Oct		Total Referrals	Total Individuals
	No. of Referrals	No. of Individuals	No. of Referrals	No. of Individuals	No. of Referrals	No. of Individuals		
Abertillery			4	4	7	8	11	12
Brynmawr	2	2	5	6	1	2	8	10
Ebbw Vale	2	2			2	3	4	5
Tredegar					6	6	6	6
Grand Total	4	4	9	10	16	19	29	33

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

The continued provision of an accessible, affordable healthy meal service.

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

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 looks to build and strengthen existing arrangements by involving service users, carers and other key partners where possible in helping to shape and influence future design of services. It is the Department's intention to involve both staff and customers in future service developments.

6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**

The Department is committed to the future of the CM service. The PO is currently implementing a project to move the service to digital cashless payments with a pilot planned for April 2021. The Department has also identified a number of key priorities for moving the service forward over the next 12 months:

6.4.1 *Resilient Budget Monitoring:* As noted in section 5.1, the budget deficit remains a priority for the Department. Some Areas to be explored to reduce this deficit are; re-mapping of routes, accessing capacity of vehicles, investigating opportunities / grants available for "going green" and staffing arrangements.

6.4.2 *Development of a Marketing Strategy:* With usual service promotion being impacted by the pandemic, the Department will develop a robust marketing strategy to further enhance service demand. This will enable a full understanding of customers' needs and build on existing trust to re-brand and promote the service. As well as developing the current more traditional method of promoting the service we will explore the benefits of digitally promoting the service.

6.4.3 *Learning from Other Local Authorities:* Exploring how other local authorities are operating their CM services' will enable the Department to modernise the service. We will investigate other services that can be provided alongside traditional meals and will evaluate the impact of introducing an eligibility criteria and subsidising meals for most vulnerable citizens.

6.4.4 *Enhancing Links with Health & Social Care Colleagues:* This will involve identifying and strengthening partnerships within both health and social care as well as the wider community in future service planning arrangements. There is also an opportunity to understand how the Community Options Service could assist in supporting and enhancing the service. One example could be the preparation of tea trays to be delivered alongside the traditional meal.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

Investment in prevention and early intervention services reduces reliance on Social Services by supporting the future health and well-being of citizens. The

CM service supports early intervention and prevention as it promotes independence by assisting citizens to stay within their own homes.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Being situated within Adult Services provides CM with opportunities to strengthen collaborative arrangements to further promote and build resilience within the service.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

As the Department have been focussing on stabilising the service and responding to additional demands resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, as noted in section 6.4.4, the Department will explore opportunities for integrating the service with other aspects of Community Options such as the Catering Enterprise.

6.8 ***EqlA***

Not applicable.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The PO has established a Project Board which meet on a monthly basis to discuss any operational, strategic or managerial implications for the service.

7.2 The Department will propose a number of key objectives for the service to be included in the relevant team and service business plans for 2021/22.

7.3 Where necessary key decisions and changes to the service will be ratified at the appropriate reporting level.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

- ***Appendix One: CM Original CLT Report (6th November 2018)***

Briefing note - CLT 28.10.2018

Community Meals

Background

The purpose of this briefing note is to provide CLT with additional information to support the business plan for Community Meals as discussed at CLT on 2nd October 2018.

Business Plan Amendments

Section 5 (5.3.8) now reads:

“The service will benefit from employing a Community Meals Manager to enable the service to move towards a model operating on a commercial basis. It will be necessary for this position to have substantial commercial experience to allow for the best opportunities in managing the service in a new way”.

This new position has been included to ensure suitable capacity and experience is available to enable the service to operate on a fully commercial basis.

The cost associated with employing this additional post will require an additional £45,409 to the staffing budget as set out in the Business Plan.

Financial Model

Amendments to the commercial model budget have been made to include a new service manager position, potential redundancy costs training requirements and depreciation of equipment.

A 2 year forecast cashflow has been developed to show the costs associated with developing a commercial service for Community Meals.

If Community Meals Service Ceased

Cost implications for Council

Upfront Costs:

Redundancy Costs - Community Meal Staff £18,781

Ongoing Cost Pressures for Council:

Management Costs £10,000

Premises Costs £5,004

Central Costs £19,959

Total Cost Pressures £34,963

Total Costs £53,744*

*Potential increased costs for Adult Services ... £28,391 per annum***

Risk Implications for Social Services

151 Community Meals records were considered to help achieve an understanding of the potential impact to Social Services if the Community Meals service was stopped.

- Out of the 151 records, 130 customers are known to Adult Services.
- 41 of which have been assessed as requiring home care
- Of the 41 individuals who require home care, 25 are currently receiving a home care, lunch time service.
- Therefore 16 people could be at risk if Community Meals service was ceased.

If the Community Meals service was ceased and those 16 individuals who have been identified as 'at risk' presented as requiring a lunch time service, the additional cost for those individuals to receive a lunch time call from Social Services would be approximately £28,391.48**.

*** Please Note that this figure is calculated using sample data from Community Meals. The cost has been calculated based on individuals requiring a 30 minute call from a provider in the private sector.*

Alternative Meal Provision:

To help mitigate the financial risk to the Social Services Directorate, alternative meal delivery opportunities have been considered.

The option identified as preferred is:

Where new customers have an assessed need for support with meal preparation the Social Service Directorate will sign post individuals to alternative meal providers. In circumstances when assessments highlight an individual to have significant needs, then domiciliary care provision will need to be provided.

Recommendations:

Social Services would require time and resource to fully assess the customers identified as 'at risk'. If a decision to remove the Community Meals Service was made the Social Services Directorate would benefit from a lead in period before ceasing the service to undertake a care management review of the existing customers. It is recommended that 3 months' notice period is provided.

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Community Meals

Service Review – Preferred Option 3: Remodel of Existing Service
on a Commercial Basis

Business Plan – September 2018

Strategic Transformation Team

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1. Introduction

1.1 The objective of this business plan is to demonstrate how the Council's Community Meals service can be remodelled to become a commercial service for the Council and reduce the financial burden on the Council in the future.

1.2 The business plan outlines how the Community Meals service can:

- Reduce operational costs
- Generate additional income
- Develop commercial opportunities

1.3 The business plan highlights the associated risks and potential impact of implementing the proposed changes necessary for achieving a commercial service.

1.4 Project Team

1.4.1 A project team was established to identify and analyse the opportunities and any potential issues associated with developing a Community Meals service based on a commercial model.

1.4.2 The Project Team consisted of:

Damien McCann – Director Social Services
Dave Watkins – Team Manager, Community Meals
Claire Edmunds – Team Leader, Community Meals
Matthew Perry – Service Manager, Community Services
Clive Rogers – Head of Service, Technical Services
Mike Price – Service Manager, Property Services
Mary Welch – Community Options Team Manager
Sarah Abraham – Organisational Development
Katrina Davies – Business Support
Sandra Jones - Accountancy
Dave Rees – Trade Union Representative

1.5 Consultation

1.5.1 In addition to the project team, a number of officers and service areas were consulted to assist with the development of the delivery model detailed in this business plan.

1.5.2 The following officers have been consulted:

Matthew Stent – Team Leader, Transport
Sean Scannell - Communications, Marketing and Customer Access Manager
Wayne Turner – Team Manager, Adult Services
Alyson Hoskins – Head of Service, Adult Services
Mark Morris – Service Manager, Provider Services, Adult Services
Debbie Morgan – Project Manager, Adult Services

2. Vision

2.1 “To provide a nutritional meal to any member of the Community of Blaenau Gwent.”

2.2 Corporate Objectives and Regulations

2.2.1 The Council’s Corporate Plan 2018-2022 details the Council’s priorities. A key priority is to be an efficient council. To achieve this priority, the Council has recognised that it will aim to:

2.2.2 Ensure effective forward financial planning arrangements are in place to support the Council’s financial resilience.

2.2.3 This business plan provides 3 years financial planning arrangements and highlights the associated risks.

2.2.4 In addition to the Corporate Plan, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places duties on the Council to improve social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being.

2.2.5 The detail presented below provides arrangements in line with the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.

3. The Community Meals Service

3.1 Existing Service

3.1.1 Currently the Council’s Community Meals service provides a choice of hot or frozen meals via a home meal delivery service on Mondays through to Friday.

3.1.2 Hot meals can be delivered every day and by any of the four vehicles.

3.1.3 Frozen meals can only be delivered by two out of the four vehicles and at present are only delivered on Thursdays and Fridays.

3.1.4 The service provides meals between 10:30am and 12:30pm.

3.1.5 Approximately 500 meals are provided each week.

3.1.6 At present the service operates a flexible service. Customers can order a meal in the morning for same day delivery and can cancel a meal by 9:30am for any meals ordered for that day and receive no charge.

3.1.7 The service allows for meals to be delivered direct to people’s homes, meals to be plated and time for general wellbeing checks.

4. Fleet

4.1 Existing Fleet Arrangements

- 4.1.1 Currently the service operates four adapted vehicles. All vehicles are built with electric ports to hold two electric hot boxes, which maintain cooked meals at the required temperatures. Two of the four vehicles also have freezer boxes used for delivery of frozen meals.
- 4.1.2 Each vehicle has a maximum capacity to hold 40 hot meals and 40 hot desserts. Frozen meal storage capacity in each of the two vehicles is a maximum of 36 meals and desserts, giving a total maximum capacity of 160 hot meals plus 72 frozen meals.
- 4.1.3 All four vehicles are currently managed under lease arrangements. The lease term will cease with effect from April 2019.
- 4.1.4 At present, drivers identify the preferred routes for delivery, based on customer and local area knowledge.

4.2 Fleet evaluation

- 4.2.1 At approximately £5,000 per vehicle the existing fleet costs have been regarded by the project team as minimal. The project team however agreed that the existing meal numbers of approximately 25 meals being delivered per vehicle was inefficient and that all vehicles should be utilised to operate at maximum capacity.
- 4.2.2 During the review of fleet arrangements, consideration was given toward the time constraints the service has to work within due to a lunch time, meal delivery service.

4.3 Future Fleet Arrangements

- 4.3.1 Due to both the current and future meal numbers (as per sections 4.1.2 and 6.2) the new service delivery model has been based on reducing the fleet numbers from four to three.
- 4.3.2 All vehicles are to be adapted to allow both frozen and hot meals to be delivered.
- 4.3.3 A desktop exercise has been undertaken to identify the potential impact of reducing the vehicles and increasing delivery numbers and times.

4.4 Considerations

- 4.4.1 New delivery routes have been optimised on the basis that all meals will be delivered direct to people's homes only. There has been no provision for time to be available for customers who require additional assistance e.g. plating of meals, etc.
- 4.4.2 There will also be a number of influencing factors, which could affect the delivery times including traffic diversions and road works in the local areas. These factors

have not been taken into account for the purposes of route optimisation.

4.4.3 Although work has been carried out to gain an understanding of the impact of reducing the number of vehicles, it is recommended that the service carry out a pilot of the proposed new routes to further achieve a greater in-depth understanding of the impact.

4.5 Associated risks and issues

4.5.1 Reducing the delivery fleet from four vehicles to three will require the existing delivery period to be extended.

4.5.2 Customers may not accept new delivery times. To mitigate this risk, clear instruction and information will need to be provided. Existing customers will need to be engaged with prior to any changes being implemented.

4.5.3 There is risk that unplanned maintenance of one vehicle is required, resulting in just two vehicles being available for delivering. A contingency plan with a lease company and Social Services will mitigate potential delays in delivery.

4.5.4 In poor weather conditions, the existing vehicles are not fit for purpose, particularly during snow conditions. To mitigate the risk to service it will need to advise upfront that during periods of poor weather, frozen meals only will be available to cover the periods of weather warnings.

4.5.5 Due to the maximum capacity three vehicles can hold, there is a risk that customer demand will exceed the service capacity. The service will have to identify a sustainable maximum customer demand and tipping point before the service considers the requirement for additional vehicles.

5. **Staffing and Structure**

5.1 Existing Staff Structure

5.1.1 Currently the Service Employs:

- 8 Drivers, each employed to work 10 hours per week
- 1 Dual role, employed for 20 hours per week to undertake a cooks role and 17 hours to undertake business support

5.1.2 The service operates two drivers per vehicle and utilises 4 vehicles each day.

5.1.3 Each Driver consistently work additional hours every day. Hours of work fluctuate daily and can also differ amongst individual staff and rounds.

5.1.4 During 2017/2018 staff collectively worked on average an additional 6 hours each day, taking each employee actual hours worked to 14 hours per week.

5.2 Staff Structure Evaluation

- 5.2.1 The project team have deemed two drivers per vehicle as inefficient and one that is not sustainable during the current financial situation.
- 5.2.2 The existing Driver contractual hours are insufficient resulting in the service being heavily reliant up on staff working additional hours daily.
- 5.2.3 This presents a risk to the service as the staff could, at any time, revert to working their contractual hours only.

5.3 Future Staff Structure

- 5.3.1 The future staff structure has been developed based on reducing driver positions to one per vehicle. This decision, along with the changes to fleet numbers, will require just three drivers in the future.
- 5.3.2 It is proposed that the drivers working hours are increased to reflect the consistent regular additional hours worked currently. Also to allow for the additional time required due to a reduced delivery fleet and increased delivery times.
- 5.3.3 The project team has reviewed the positions and have identified that the remaining roles and responsibilities would benefit from change also.
- 5.3.4 The current dual role covering a Cook role and Business Support should be split. The Cook role, moving forward, should include supervisory and operational management responsibilities which are currently limited and restricted to the existing Team Leader.
- 5.3.5 It is proposed that this role is employed on a 30 hour working week initially with the option of reviewing the contracted hours after 12 months, when it is anticipated that the service will be operating business as usual.
- 5.3.6 The Community Meals service will benefit from ongoing business support during year 1 of implementing the new delivery model. The service needs will be different. The service will require marketing and strategic business support compared to the existing administrative support.
- 5.3.7 It is proposed that Business Support is employed for 17 hours per week and the work carried out is in-line with the existing grade 3 Business Support Officer role. This role is to be employed for a 12 month fixed term contract to enable the Community Meals service to review its requirements for Business Support once the implementation plan is completed.
- 5.3.8 The service will benefit from employing a Community Meals Manager to enable the service to move towards a model operating on a commercial basis. It will be necessary for this position to have substantial commercial experience to allow for the best opportunities in managing the service in a new way.

5.4 Associated Risks and Issues

- 5.4.1 There is risk that the Cook and Driver leave will result in staff shortage which could impact up on operations of the service.
- 5.4.2 It will be the expectation that the Cook will undertake Driver duties in the first instance during any period of a Driver's leave.
- 5.4.3 It is proposed that the service appoint on a rolling basis a pool of relief Cook and Driver positions to mitigate any potential risk for disruption to service. It is recommended that CLT agree for the service to implement these positions.
- 5.4.1 It is also proposed that the service develop joint working arrangements with Adult Services to utilise Driver positions on an emergency basis.

6. Financial Position

- 6.1.1 All financial information detailed under this section has been established using a baseline for customer information.
- 6.1.2 Customer and meal data is based on actual demand as at May 2018. It should be noted that given the very nature of this service and the range of customers who purchase a meal, its demand fluctuates regularly.
- 6.1.3 Financial data is based on a mid-year budget forecast for 2018/2019.
- 6.1.4 The current year's financial position is detailed in the table below:

Current Year Position – 2018/2019			
		Forecast 18/19	Unit Cost
Fixed costs per unit		£	£
	Meals (Apetito)	40,000	1.60
Variable Cost per unit			
	Employees	89,875	3.60
	Transport	19,680	0.79
	Premises	4,458	0.18
	Central Costs	19,568	0.78
		133,581	5.34
	Total	173,581	6.94
	Income	102,500	4.10
	Shortfall	71,081	2.84
Number of meals (Week / Year)		100	25,000

- 6.1.5 The current years staffing budget is £89,875. Based on last year's additional hours paid across the service, an estimated £11,000 is expected to be paid bringing the total staff costs up to £100,875 during 2018/2019.
- 6.1.6 A revised staffing structure has been developed and is estimated to cost £84,328 for 2019/2020.
- 6.1.7 The current years' fleet budget is £19,680.
- 6.1.8 A revised fleet budget based on reducing the vehicles from four to three is £15,858.

6.2 Income Target

- 6.2.1 During 2014/2015 the Community Meals service income target was increased by 35%, taking the income target from £133,000 to £178,000 and has been subject to annual increases year on year.
- 6.2.2 Since applying the income target, the Community Meals service has not achieved the income target. There has been no review of the income target
- 6.2.3 Due to a virement in the Community Meals budget the current years' income target is £162,774.
- 6.2.4 To achieve this year's income target the service will need to sell 800 meals each week based on the current years cost per meal of £4.10.
- 6.2.5 Alternatively the service would have to increase the cost of the meal to £6.45 to achieve its income target during 2018/2019.

7. **Opportunities**

There are a number of opportunities that have been identified by the project team and should be developed further by the service.

7.1 Meal Choice / Offering

- 7.1.1 There is opportunity for the service to explore new menu items and introduce a new menu offering.
- 7.1.2 Items to be explored include luxury and gourmet menu items which are available from the existing meals provider but are not made available to customers at present. New items can be made available to customers at varying costs.
- 7.1.3 Another option which should be explored further is the offering of sandwiches. It is recommended that this option is piloted and sandwich orders are delivered at the same time as lunch time meals.
- 7.1.4 Food packages could be made available to customers and could include items such as fresh grocery items and a selection of frozen meals. These packages could be aimed at people being discharged from hospital, following a period of illness or during

period when family members are not available.

7.2 Pricing Strategy

7.2.1 The service does not currently follow a pricing strategy and could benefit from implementing one.

7.2.2 A pricing strategy will allow the service to calculate and analyse factors in setting a price that is suitable for the product and service and help maximise profitability.

7.3 Re – Branding

7.3.1 With the proposed changes detailed within this business plan, the service will benefit from re-branding to help promote a new and improved service and attract new customers.

7.3.2 The existing service name has been deemed as appropriate for the service's vision; however a redesign of promotional material will be beneficial.

7.4 Revised Customer Procedures

7.4.1 To allow the Community Meals service to increase efficiencies and work more effectively, it would benefit from introducing new ordering and billing procedures.

7.4.2 At present the service has manual procedures which require significant resource and time.

7.4.3 There is opportunity for the service to develop online ordering and payment systems which will offer signatures and updates to the customer following deliveries.

7.4.4 It is envisaged that the service will have to maintain some manual elements for those who do not have access to digital means, however all back operations should migrate toward digital working.

7.4.5 A new cancellation policy will allow the service to provide customer and service expectations for improved planning of work.

7.5 Joint Working Arrangements

7.5.1 Joint working arrangements with Health, Housing Associations and Social Care should be utilised.

7.5.2 Housing Associations at present do not promote the Council's Community Meals service but have advised that as part of their community work will be keen to understand the service offering and promote the service with their tenants.

7.5.3 A number of opportunities have identified by improving working practices between

the Community Meals Service and Adult Services, Social Services.

7.5.4 Joint working with Adult Services will increase social care knowledge and allow for more effective customer service from the Council.

7.5.5 Opportunities include:

Joint working arrangements with the new Home First Gwent Hospital discharge service. This opportunity could allow people who are being discharged from A&E/ MAU at Nevill Hall to be offered a meal service at home and reduce potential reliance of Social Care.

7.5.6 There is opportunity that Adult Services utilise the Council's Community Meals service as a default home meal delivery service. This opportunity will involve replacing signposting to Wiltshire Farm Foods and the domiciliary care service to any new customers who require help with meals.

7.5.7 There is opportunity for the Community Meals service to provide time focused work placements for adults receiving social care. This will add social value to the service and help the Council achieve its requirement to improve social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being.

8. Desired Future Service Operations – The commercial model

8.1 Business Objectives

8.1.1 It is important that the Council utilises service areas which present income generating opportunities.

8.1.2 The Community Meals Service is a service which is not statutory and therefore the Council does not have a duty to provide the service.

8.1.3 There is however a demand for the service in the local area and the existing provision is highly valued.

8.1.4 With this in mind there is opportunity for the Council to generate income to cover its costs and ensure the service is sustainable in the future to continue to meet the needs of its customers.

8.1.5 Blaenau Gwent Council is the only organisation that will delivery hot meals direct to people's homes 5 days per week in the local area.

8.2 Business Change

The existing service delivery model has been deemed as unsustainable and has therefore presented a need for a new delivery model. The changes necessary for the Community Meals service to be delivered on a commercial basis in the future are listed below:

- Reduced delivery vehicles

- Reduced staff numbers
- Increased staff hours
- New delivery times
- A meal delivery only service
- Digital ordering and payments as default
- New cancellation policy
- Increased offering
- Joint working arrangements

9. Assumptions /Considerations

- 9.1 Consideration has been given to a reduction in customer numbers as a result of changes to the service i.e. payments upfront, increased fees, change of delivery times etc. it is anticipated that a 20% reduction customer numbers could occur during the first year.
- 9.2 As a result of promotion, marketing, engagement, new menu items etc. being carried out during year three, it is expected that the service will not see a significant increase in customer numbers until year two of the new service.
- 9.3 A three hour delivery window has been considered as reasonable. Customer feedback confirmed earlier delivery times are preferred compared to later. New delivery times will therefore be between 10am and 1:30pm. Customers will be informed that meals will be delivered during this time frame and individual requests cannot be met.

10. Investment

- 10.1 To allow the Community Meals service to introduce new effective ways of working and implement changes to service delivery it will require some investment.
- 10.2 To introduce more efficient methods of ordering and payments the service will require digital devices for all drivers. The cost for this will be a one off payment of £40 plus an annual payment of £672. This investment will allow online and upfront ordering and payments as well as GPS auto route optimisation, full audit trail and electronic signatures.
- 10.3 To enable the service to increase its maximum capacity and provide an effective delivery provision it will need to invest in freezer storage for one vehicle to increase frozen food delivery capacity.
- 10.4 One vehicle will need to be fitted with an additional electric port which will cost approximately £150 and the service will need to purchase one additional freezer box at a cost of approximately £400. The total cost to increase capacity would therefore equate to approximately £550.
- 10.5 This investment will increase delivery capacity in three vehicles from 192 to 228 at any one time.

11. Financial Forecasting

Appendix 1 sets out the projected financial position for the next 3 years.

It should be noted that at the time of writing this report, it is unknown what the impact of pay modelling could have on the new staffing budget.

12. Legal Implications

Section 93 of the local government act 2003 gives local authorities the power the charge for services that they have a power but not a duty to provide.

13. Staffing Implications

With the desired future delivery model job roles within the service will be required to undergo significant change.

Roles will be subject to job evaluation and if any roles change by 50% or more they will be subject to redundancy.

The reduction of roles will also result in redundancies of staff.

All roles identified as becoming redundant will need to be reported to the redundancy panel for approval.

14. Council Risk

Where a Council is involved in business activity it becomes vulnerable. It will, by its very nature, present reputational risk.

15. Financial Risk

Whilst the aim of commercial activity is to increase income, success is not guaranteed and there is a risk that the business makes a loss. All financial forecasting is based on calculated assumptions and therefore provides associated risks for achieving the suggested targets.

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CASHFLOW - YEAR 1

	April 2019	May 2019	June 2019	July 2019	Aug 2019	Sept 2019	Oct 2019	Nov 2019	Dec 2019	Jan 2020	Feb 2020	Mar 2020	19/20 TOTAL	
Current Income (guaranteed)														
No. of Units Sold	Max 3800	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	24,000
Cost per Unit		5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	
Unit Sales		£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£132,000.00
Costs														
Unit Purchase		-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£38,400.00
Promotion		-£1,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£1,000.00
Redundancy		-£18,781.11	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£18,781.11
Digital devices		-£40.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£40.00
Mobile Phone	*4	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£672.00
Wages	129,737	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£118,602.00
Vehicle Lease	*3	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£6,236.00
Vehicle MOT	*3	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£960.00
Vehicle Insurance	*3	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£4,000.00
Vehicle Maintenance	*3	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£2,400.00
Tyres	*3	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£800.00
Fuel Costs	*3	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£4,000.00
Premises		-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£5,004.00
Business Support		-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£11,135.00
Central Costs		-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£19,959.00
Training		-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£553.33
Depreciation Costs	2595	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£2,595.00
Total Costs		-£37,764.14	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£235,137.44
Net Expenditure		-£26,764.14	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£103,137.44
Net Cash Flow														
Opening Balance		-£40,000.00	-£66,764.14	-£73,707.17	-£80,650.19	-£87,593.22	-£94,536.25	-£101,479.28	-£108,422.30	-£115,365.33	-£122,308.36	-£129,251.39	-£136,194.42	
Closing Balance		-£66,764.14	-£73,707.17	-£80,650.19	-£87,593.22	-£94,536.25	-£101,479.28	-£108,422.30	-£115,365.33	-£122,308.36	-£129,251.39	-£136,194.42	-£143,137.44	-£143,137.44

CASHFLOW - YEAR 2

	Apr 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	Aug 2020	Sep 2020	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	20/21 Total
<u>Current Income (gauranteed)</u>													
No. of Units Sold	Max 3800	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	36000
Cost per Unit		6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	
Unit Sales		£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£216,000.00
<u>Costs</u>													
Unit Purchase		-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£59,904.00
Promotion		-£1,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£1,000.00
Redundancy		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Digital devices		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Mobile Phone	*4	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£672.00
Wages	129,737	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£119,076.41
Vehicle Lease	*3	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£6,236.00
Vehicle MOT	*3	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£960.00
Vehicle Insurance	*3	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£4,000.00
Vehicle Maintenance	*3	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£2,400.00
Tyres	*3	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£800.00
Fuel Costs	*3	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£4,000.00
Premises		-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£5,004.00
Business Support		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Central Costs		-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£19,959.00
Training		-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£553.33
Depreciation Costs	2595	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£2,595.00
Total Costs		-£19,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£227,159.74
Net Expenditure		-£1,630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£11,159.74
<u>Net Cash Flow</u>													
Opening Balance		-£143,137.44	-£144,767.84	-£145,398.23	-£146,028.63	-£146,659.02	-£147,289.42	-£147,919.81	-£148,550.21	-£149,180.60	-£149,811.00	-£150,441.39	-£151,071.79
Closing Balance		-£144,767.84	-£145,398.23	-£146,028.63	-£146,659.02	-£147,289.42	-£147,919.81	-£148,550.21	-£149,180.60	-£149,811.00	-£150,441.39	-£151,071.79	-£151,702.18

Agenda Item 12

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 09.02.21
Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 09.02.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**
Date of meeting: **24th February 2021**

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

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Joanne Collins, Executive Member for Education**

Report Submitted by: **Lynn Phillips, Corporate Director of Education**

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
14.1.21	21.1.21	09.02.21			9.2.21	24.02.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Executive Committee with the opportunity to consider progress in line with the delivery of the Band B Programme.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The 21st Century Schools Programme is a long-term strategic investment in the education estate throughout Wales. The Programme is broken down into phases of investment, categorised as Bands. The Band A Programme in Blaenau Gwent, successfully concluded in the autumn-term of 2019, with the delivery of the final project, Six Bells Campus.

- 2.2 The Band A Programme realised an investment of £20.25m in school estate between 2014-19 (50/50 WG and Council funded) as follows:

- **Tredegar Comprehensive School Remodelling Project £2.3m:**

The project concluded in 2017. A project closure/ evaluation workshop session with Construction Excellence Wales (CEW) deemed the project to be an example of best practice in terms of:

- value for money;
- partnership working;
- project management arrangements; and,
- effective delivery on a live site.

The project closure report has now been submitted to Welsh Government.

- **Abertillery Learning Community (Tillery Street Campus) New Build Primary School - £9.8m:**

The new school was occupied by staff and pupils June 2016. Phase 4 of the project, which involved demolition of the former school and external works, concluded in November 2016. The Welsh Government Minister for Education officially opened the Tillery Street Campus in January 2017. The closure report has been finalised and submitted to Welsh Government.

- **Ystruth Primary School Remodelling Project - £635,900:** The focus of the project was to remodel key areas of the school to meet the changing needs of the pupil population. The project had a specific focus on the transformation of provision for pupils with Autistic

Spectrum Disorder. The project commenced in October 2017 and concluded in August 2018 on programme and profile.

- **Abertillery Learning Community (Six Bells Campus) New Build Primary School - £8.8m (inclusive of an additional £150,000 of funding secured from Welsh Government in January 2019):** The project involved the development of a 360 place new build primary school along with a 60 place nursery and a 9 place resource base, to accommodate pupils from Queen Street and Bryngwyn Primary Campuses. Sewer diversion works concluded in July 2018, and the formal school build process commenced. Education was successful in securing an additional £150,000 to increase community parking on the site. This falls outside of the project and is planned for delivery between 2021 and 2022. The Minister for Education opened the Six Bells Campus in September 2019.

2.3 In July 2017, Welsh Government requested an ambitious Strategic Outline Programme (SOP). The Blaenau Gwent Band B SOP was later approved in 2018. Blaenau Gwent's submission aimed to address the following key priorities:

- I. Raising standards, particularly at KS4;
- II. Improving suitability and condition of the school estate;
- III. Programme deliverability-match-funding and affordability;
- IV. Sustainability and reducing revenue costs; and,
- V. Increasing Welsh medium learning opportunities.

2.4 The Blaenau Gwent Band B Programme investment objectives are as follows:

- **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.

2.5 Blaenau Gwent 21st Century Schools Programme has an established programme management structure, delivered in line with the Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) methodology. The Programme Board who oversee it, is comprised of key Council Officers, along with external partners, and is accountable to the Corporate Leadership Team, who act as Programme Sponsor. Projects are managed in accordance with Blaenau Gwent's Corporate Project Management Framework and PRINCE 2, and each has a dedicated project management team.

2.6 Welsh Government encourages and expects Councils to participate in a Gateway Review process. The Gateway Review is a form of peer review, which tests the Council's readiness and capacity to successfully deliver projects and programmes. 4 reviews have taken place to date within Blaenau Gwent, with the latest having taken place in 2019.

2.7 The Education Transformation Team agreed with the review team that, due to the programme status, the delivery confidence assessment should be split as follows, one for Band A and one for Band B respectively. For Band A, based upon a Gateway 5, the review team considered that the delivery confidence assessment as Green. For Band B, based upon a Gateway 0, the review team considered that the delivery confidence assessment as Amber, due to early stage of the programme. The outcome report (Please refer to **Appendix 1**), highlighted that the 21st Century Schools programme management arrangements are to be commended, as follows:

'...all of the projects within the Portfolio have been successfully completed... ongoing monitoring and realisation of benefits is well-evidenced. The positive impact of these projects on education and wider societal outcomes in the Blaenau Gwent area is also clearly evidenced... the very high quality of programme management in evidence is impressive.'

2.8 An internal audit of the 21st Century Schools Band A Programme was undertaken during the 2019/20 academic year, the outcome of which was a grading of 'reasonable assurance'. Only 2 weaknesses were found which pre-date the existing programme team. The weaknesses found were pertaining to the Band A SOP (submitted in 2010), along with business case submissions pre-2014. Both of these weaknesses have subsequently been addressed by the current Programme team (for more information please refer to **Appendices 2 (a), (b) and (c)** containing the audit reports).

2.9 The Band B Programme commenced in April 2019 and is set to conclude in 2025. The Programme will realise an investment of £19.6million throughout the Blaenau Gwent school estate. The Welsh Government intervention rate for Band B is a 65/35 split, in favour of Local Authorities. The Band B Programme seeks to deliver the following key projects in line with the investment objectives:

- Continued secondary school re-modelling within the following priority schools:
 - Abertillery Learning Community Secondary Campus
 - Brynmawr Foundation School
 - River Centre Learning Community
 - Tredegar Comprehensive School

This project will be a continued focus due to the level of investment required, in line with future bandings of the 21st Century Schools Programme – **Business case submission is programmed throughout 2021.**

- The development of a new 360 primary school to replace Glyncoed Primary, which is the only category 'D' building in terms of condition

within county borough – **All business cases have been submitted and approved by Welsh Government**

- Primary School remodelling within the Ebbw Fawr Valley consisting of Beaufort Hill, Cwm and Rhos y Fedwen Primary Schools – **All business cases have been submitted and approved by Welsh Government.**
- Remodelling of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg to address ongoing condition and suitability issues – **The business case for which has been submitted and approved by Welsh Government.**

2.10 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).

2.11 In addition to the Band B funding envelope, Blaenau Gwent Council received confirmation in October 2018, that they were successful in securing £6 million from the Welsh-medium capital grant, along with £200,000 from the Capital Childcare Grant. The grants were awarded in line with the proposal to create a new 210 place Welsh-medium primary school and associated childcare facility in the Tredegar/ Sirhowy valley. This proposal is currently subject to statutory consultation, which concluded on the 29th January 2021.

2.12 The delivery programme/timeline has and continues to be subject to regular review throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic. The financial profile has also undergone review in discussion with Welsh Government, with the latest profile submitted in December 2020 (Please refer to **Appendix 3(a)** for the delivery programme/timeline and **Appendix 3(b)** for the financial profile).

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 This report will be considered by the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 9th February 2021, any feedback from the Scrutiny Committee will be provided verbally to the Executive.

3.2 **Option 1:** Executive Committee accepts the report.
Option 2: Executive Committee considers the report and provides comments relating to improvements that can be made.

4. **Evidence of how 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's School Organisation Code (2018). Each project requires approval via the Welsh Government Business Case Scrutiny Group and Capital Panel. The Business Case documentation has to be developed in accordance with the HM Treasury Green Book, Five Case Model.

- 4.2 Education is a strategic priority within the Council's Corporate Plan and the Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan, of which 21st Century Schools is an essential component in securing: improved access to education, education facilities (including condition and suitability), provision and standards throughout the school estate. 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.
- 5.1 **Impact on Budget** - There are no new or additional budgetary implications for the Council. The financial profile was last reviewed and submitted to Welsh Government in December 2020 (see **Appendix 3 (b)** for the financial matrix). The total programme cost currently stands at £19.6million, with the Council's 35% contribution being £6.86million which has been secured and approved via the Council's Capital Programme. In addition, the Welsh Medium Project which has received 100% funding from Welsh Government is currently estimated to be £7.5million, which has been reflected in the attached matrix. Discussions have taken place with Welsh Government, who recognise the likely cost increase as a result of both COVID-19 and delayed implementation. More detailed cost reviews are currently underway with Education, Finance, Technical Officers (i.e. Quantity Surveyors) and Welsh Government, who are currently collating the national cost implications and uplift, with a view to identifying grant funding to address this. The programme is currently on profile, with regular reviews taking place with all relevant representatives on a monthly basis.
- 5.2 **Risk** – Raising educational standards is a strategic risk on the Corporate Risk Register (CRR). The 21st Century Schools Programme proposals presented within this report will contribute to mitigating this risk. Moreover, there are robust risk management arrangements in place for the 21st Century Schools Programme, with identified risks regularly monitored reported and escalated via the 21st Century Schools Programme Board.
- 5.2.1 The high-level risks associated with programme delivery at present, include: the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic along with financial, resourcing and programming implications. Project Groups have been established for all live projects monitoring development, delivery and associated requirements. Programme Board are monitoring programme delivery, with core Project team (Education, Finance and Community Services) monitoring and reviewing programme resourcing, progress, timelines and financial profiles on a monthly basis. 2 business cases have been approved to date, with the remainder on track for submission as programmed. Monthly meetings are taking place with Welsh Government, to consider the financial profile and delivery programme in line with the pandemic, along with Welsh Govt. grant and wider support.
- 5.3 **Legal** – There are no direct legal implications associated with this report, other than the requirement for the Local Authority to follow the statutory processes set out within the Welsh Government School Organisation Code. Education is supported by the Council's Legal section, along with Clarks

Legal as required, in fulfilling the obligations associated with regulated activity.

5.4 **Human Resources** – There are no direct human resource implications associated with the report, staffing and other resources have been secured in line with programme delivery, and contingencies built-in. Resourcing is subject to regular review at both a programme and project level, with transition plans established to oversee school organisation priorities (including HR).

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

To date the following outcomes have been achieved:

- All 4 projects have been delivered, securing successful conclusion of the Band A Programme, on programme and profile.
- The Band A programme has been subject to internal review and evaluation, internal audit, along with 4 external Gateway Reviews. The latter demonstrates excellent progress and strong programme/ project management arrangements are in place. Learning from the Band B Programme has been used to inform Band B development and implementation.
- Welsh Government have approved all Business Case submissions to date in line with delivery of the Band B Programme.
- Band B projects are currently on profile and programme.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public** - The 21st Century Schools Programme will contribute to raising the standard of education throughout the school estate.

6.3 **Involvement** - The 21st Century Schools Programme contributes heavily to the strategic direction for the school estate across the County Borough. The 21st Century Schools Programme Board has representation from across all services within the Council. There are also statutory requirements to involve stakeholders in school organisation proposals linked to the WG's School Organisation Code (2018).

6.4 **Thinking for the Long term** - The 21st Century Schools Programme is a long-term investment programme that at present, spans the period 2014 to 2034. The Band B element covers the period 2019 to 2025.

6.5 **Preventative focus** – The 21st Century Schools Programme will take a preventative approach in line with the needs of school staff and learners', placing an emphasis on delivering a school estate that is fit for purpose and contributes to raising educational standards, which is a Council priority.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working** – The Vision for Education is based upon a school led, self-improving, collaborative approach. The 21st Century Schools Programme plays a fundamental part in improving partnership arrangements with the schools and their respective communities e.g. the community focussed school's agenda. In addition, the programme itself is

delivered via a team officers from across all Council directorates, along with external partners such as the Shared Resource Service Wales.

- 6.7 **Integration** – The 21st Century Schools Programme is a key element in responding to the Council's wellbeing goals for all learners, particularly learners with Additional Learning Needs.
- 6.8 **EqIA** – There is no adverse impact upon the protected characteristics.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Gateway Review Report

Appendices 2 (a), (b) and (c) – Audit Reports

Appendix 3 (a) and (b) – Programme/timeline and Financial Profile

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OGC Gateway™ Review 5 - Operations review & Benefits Realisation & Review 0 Strategic assessment

Version number:	FINAL 1.0
Senior Responsible Owner (SRO):	Lynn Phillips
Date of issue to SRO:	25 th September 2019 Final Version 1 st October 2019
Project Title:	Blaenau Gwent's 21 st Century Schools Programme
Department/Organisation of the Project	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Education Transformation and Performance
Review dates:	23 rd to 25 th of September 2019
Review Team Leader:	Alex Porter
Review Team Members:	Robin Davis Sheila Powell
Previous Review:	Gateway 0 – Band A 17 th to 19 th of July 2017 Green Amber
IAH ID number:	AH/19/35

This assurance review was arranged and managed by:

Welsh Government Integrated Assurance Hub (IAH)
Cathays Park 2
Cathays
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

IAH helpdesk: ppmdevelopmentunit@gov.wales



1.0 Delivery Confidence Assessment (DCA)

<u>Delivery Confidence Assessment:</u>	For Band A - GREEN For Band B - AMBER
<p>The Review Team considers that, due to the programme construct, the Delivery Confidence Assessment for the current status of Blaenau Gwent’s 21st Century Programme, should be split into two separate assessments for Band A and Band B respectively.</p> <p>For Band A, based upon a Gateway 5, the Review Team considers that the Delivery Confidence Assessment is Green.</p> <p>For Band B, based upon a Gateway 0, the Review Team considers that the Delivery Confidence Assessment is Amber.</p> <p>For Band A, the Review Team found that all of the projects within the Portfolio have been successfully completed, with the most recent project - Six Bells - handed over a few weeks ago. Ongoing monitoring and realisation of benefits is well-evidenced. The positive impact of these projects on education and wider societal outcomes in the Blaenau Gwent area is also clearly evidenced. The Education team (and the Council colleagues who have supported them) should be commended for their efforts in delivering Band A successfully. The very high quality of programme management in evidence is impressive.</p> <p>For Band B, the Review Team found that whilst the vision and objectives of the programme are set out and a high degree of stakeholder ‘buy in’ already achieved, overall programme development is at an early stage. An initial list of projects within the Band B portfolio has been developed with the first project (Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg Remodelling) business case being developed. Other project business cases are being developed and will be put forward to the Welsh Government for consideration.</p> <p>The assessment of Amber reflects the current level of delivery confidence in the programme’s eventual <i>outcomes</i>. At this early stage there remain some unknowns; some risks have not been fully quantified; the final project list requires approval, and; there is uncertainty over some, specific aspects of funding which requires resolution.</p> <p>The Review Team are keen to note that the Band B programme already has some significant strengths on which to build. The Council has retained the existing Band</p>	



A team, funding requirements have been evaluated carefully and work is under way to drive forward the Band B programme. Clear evidence was seen of the commitment of the council's senior executive and the Welsh Government to the Band B programme.

In addition to Band B, the programme team are also managing a number of other projects that are interlinked with Band B. Focus does need to be maintained on delivering Band B with the right number of resources to successfully secure the outcomes.

1.1 Delivery Confidence Assessment

The Delivery Confidence assessment RAG status should use the definitions below:

RAG	Criteria Description
Green	Successful delivery of the project to time, cost and quality appears highly likely and there are no major outstanding issues that at this stage appear to threaten delivery.
Amber/Green	Successful delivery appears probable. However, constant attention will be needed to ensure risks do not materialise into major issues threatening delivery.
Amber	Successful delivery appears feasible but significant issues already exist requiring management attention. These appear resolvable at this stage and, if addressed promptly, should not present a cost/schedule overrun.
Amber/Red	Successful delivery of the project is in doubt with major risks or issues apparent in a number of key areas. Urgent action is needed to ensure these are addressed, and establish whether resolution is feasible.
Red	Successful delivery of the project appears to be unachievable. There are major issues which, at this stage, do not appear to be manageable or resolvable. The project may need re-baselining and/or overall viability re-assessed.

2.0 Summary of Report Recommendations

The Review Team makes the following recommendations, which are prioritised using the definitions below:

Ref. No.	Recommendation	Urgency (C/E/R)	Target date for completion	Classification
1.	The SRO should maintain management and team continuity from Band A into Band B.	C- Critical	24 th Dec 2019	10. Resource & Skills Management 10.2 Capacity Planning & Management
2.	Ensure a strong communications strategy to support delivery plans.	C- Critical	31 st Mar 2020	3. Programme and Project Management 3.6 Communications
3.	The SRO should continue to seek clarity on the revenue implications of a new Welsh Medium primary school in Blaenau Gwent.	E- Essential	31 st Oct 2019	1. Governance 1.3 Approvals

Critical (Do Now) – To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome it is of the greatest importance that the programme should take action immediately.

Essential (Do By) – To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome the programme/ project should take action in the near future.

Recommended – The programme should benefit from the uptake of this recommendation.



3.0 Comments from the SRO

The SRO presented to the Review team in a pre-meeting and requested that the Gateway Review focused on the following:

- A 'Programme' focus;
- Assess Band A progress – with a focus on closure; and,
- Assess preparedness for Band B.

The Blaenau Gwent team are pleased with the outcomes of the Gateway Review and accept the associated recommendations. The Review has been a totally valuable and worthwhile experience that will contribute to driving forward further improvement across the Council's 21st Century Schools Programme. The SRO would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Gateway Review team for their professionalism and the balanced approach that was taken throughout the review.

Blaenau Gwent's Education Transformation team will use the report's recommendations to produce a detailed action plan to cover the initial stages of the Band B Programme.

4.0 Background

The aims of the Programme:

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (“the Council”) is committed to providing all children and young people with education and training, tailored to meet their needs, which will develop their potential, promote social inclusion and contribute to the economic regeneration of the area. Whilst progress has been made, there is a long way to go to improve outcomes for young people in relation to the ‘All Wales’ educational attainment and achievement levels. A fundamental review of the existing school estate is an essential component to transform education across the Authority. The vision is to improve pupil attainment and achievement levels through the transformation of schools and learning to meet modern 21st Century School standards.

The driving force for the Programme:

Improving standards pupil outcomes and wellbeing in Education is a Council priority. On many measures, current performance is above expected levels against similar Local Authorities and, in fact, in some measures Blaenau Gwent is performing significantly above expectations. However, the Council’s ambition is to exceed the all-Wales means in every measure going forward in line with National Reform, which includes the new measures currently going through a transition period.

The procurement/delivery status:

The Programme has multiple projects, delivered over successive tranches known as ‘Bands’. ‘Band A’ both refurbished existing school sites and delivered entirely new learning environments, with complementary transformative changes to school governance and leadership. This is substantially complete, following the opening to pupils in September 2019 of the final project, the Six Bells school site, a key component of the wider Abertillery Learning Community.

‘Band B’ encompasses the remodelling of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, Blaenau Gwent’s sole existing Welsh Medium primary school; the remodelling of three existing secondary schools, and; the development of a new primary school, Glyncloed, in the Ebbw Vale locality. Band B is at an early stage. The Review Team found that activity was under way across multiple projects to, variously, secure Business Case sign-off, initiate Consultation exercises and conduct maintenance, condition and suitability assessments.



It should be noted that in addition to the projects formally in scope for Band A and Band B the Blaenau Gwent Education team seeks to deliver a number of further projects. Most of these are not in scope for this Review. However, a project to deliver a new Welsh Medium primary school in the Tredegar Valley, funded principally through a capital grant from the Welsh Government, is being managed as a *de facto* part of Band B and has therefore been considered by the Review team.

Current position regarding OGC Gateway™ Reviews:

This is the fourth Gateway Review of the Programme. The previous review (Gateway 0) was undertaken in July 2017. All recommendations from this previous Review have been completed.

A summary of recommendations, progress and status from the previous assurance review can be found in **Annex C**.

5.0 Purposes and conduct of the OGC Gateway Review

The primary purposes of an OGC Gateway Review 5: ‘Operations Review & Benefits Realisation’ are to assess whether the anticipated benefits are being delivered and confirm that the ongoing contractual arrangements meet the business need.

The primary purposes of a Gateway Review 0: ‘Strategic Assessment’ are to review the outcomes and objectives for the programme (and the way they fit together) and confirm that they make the necessary contribution to Ministers’ or the departments’ overall strategy.

Annex A gives the full purposes statement for an OGC Gateway Review 5 and an OGC Gateway Review 0.

Annex B lists the people who were interviewed during the review.

6.0 Acknowledgement

The Review Team would like to thank Lynn Phillips, Senior Responsible Owner (SRO), the Programme Team and all stakeholders who attended interviews for their support and openness, which contributed to the Review Team’s understanding of the Programme and the outcome of this Review. Particular thanks go to Sharon Northall for managing the logistics for the Review and coordinating the interview process, and

to Stefan Roberts, specialist English-Welsh translator, who stepped in at short notice to support the Review Team in ensuring successful interviews for all stakeholders.

7.0 Scope of the Review

Against the background set out above, the scope of the review is two-fold. For Band A, a Gateway 5 - review of operating phase - was undertaken. For Band B, a Gate 0 – ongoing strategic assessment - was undertaken.

8.0 Review Team findings and recommendations

8.1: Gate 5: Review of operating phase

The Review Team found that, following the recent opening of the Six Bells site, all Band A projects are now complete and operating as planned. Band A represents a major achievement in the delivery of sometimes complex infrastructure projects. The Review Team considers that this is the outcome of a successful partnership between the Council, the Schools, the Welsh Government and appointed contractors, in which all parties have invested early and consistently. The Review Team commends the programme team for their enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism in delivery a challenging Band A programme.

The strength of the partnerships between the Council and other stakeholders allowed the programme team to manage potentially disruptive issues effectively, minimising the impact on outcomes for pupils and families. This was particularly well-evidenced at the Six Bells site, where the Council, Welsh Government and Morgan Sindall worked together in a way characterised by professional diligence, open communication and financial flexibility to overcome the late discovery of a sewerage main across the planned school footprint (not shown on incorrect, dated Welsh Water plans). An additional £1.5M of required funding was secured through discussion between the Council and Welsh Government; the Morgan Sindall team delivered viable alternative designs rapidly, and – critically – strong communication with community representatives was maintained throughout. As a result, Six Bells opened to pupils, as planned, at the start of the Autumn term 2019.

While Band A has had a large infrastructure component, the Council is clear that building and refurbishment work are *enablers* to improved learning and wider

outcomes for the young people of Blaenau Gwent, and the community of which they are part.

8.2: Gate 5: Business Case and benefits management

Prior to delivery of each of the projects, a business case with clearly identified benefits was submitted for approval to the Council executive and Welsh Government. The result of this was appropriate funding being secured for projects to commence.

A clear approach to benefits realisation and management was articulated for each project, and managed coherently at a programme and corporate level. With delivery of all of the projects in the Band A portfolio now completed, the Review Team have found that benefits realisation, ensuring Value for Money and continued monitoring of benefits is at the core of the Council's and programme team's scrutiny, with regular meetings and reports conducted.

Closure reports for each of the projects have been produced, with the exception of Six Bells Primary, which has only recently been occupied. This report is the only one left to produce. Each closure report contains statements on benefits achieved and the programme team are collating ongoing benefits realised through delivery of the projects. The Review Team found that the delivery of community benefits has been at the heart of the programme and the subsequent projects delivered.

8.3: Gate 5: Plans for ongoing improvements in value for money, performance and innovation

The programme team is well-versed not just in monitoring benefits but in consistently reviewing activity and seeking opportunities for improvement. The Education team lead co-ordinates the South East Wales Education Group to share best practice and regularly works with Welsh Government to pilot new initiatives and attend all-Wales Education fora.

As a Council under austerity, the focus is very much on delivering Value for Money and using innovative measures in projects and making improvements to do so. It is clear to the Review Team that this approach underpins everything the Council undertakes and that this will continue into the Band B projects. Quite simply, if a project was forecast not to meet the strategic objectives, not to deliver value for money or not to secure expected benefits, this experienced programme team would not take it forward.

For each of the projects delivered in Band A, governance and monitoring is in place for continued improvements to be made. The Council has transitioned ownership of continuous improvement to local school leadership teams, who are proactive in generating ideas for future utilisation and improvement.

8.4: Gate 0: Policy and business context

The Vision for Education puts schools at the centre of the improvement plans, setting ambitious plans for an outward-looking, self-improving system, building a joint, shared vision, core values and principles. The successful delivery of Band A projects provides valuable lessons learnt to support Band B delivery.

The Education team demonstrate a strong commitment to the programme and clear understanding of the task ahead. They have developed consultation plans to focus on the delivery of the Welsh Medium provision, which whilst outside the formal scope of Band B is a key aspect of the Vision for Education. To support this, the team have already built strong links with the key stakeholder groups.

In terms of the proposed secondary school remodelling proposals, the team are liaising with Head Teachers, many of whom are new to their schools. Their focus is to understand the school vision and identify how best to allocate the resources available to provide solutions which will meet the school aspirations within available budgets.

The current programme team have been integral to the success of Band A. The Review Team note that the programme team is continuing into Band B and judge that this will help to set Band B for success.

The Review Team support the planned creation of a new post to supplement existing programme team resources, in recognition of the multiple, interlinking programmes and projects which are supporting the wider improvements in education delivery.

Recommendation - The SRO should maintain management and team continuity from Band A into Band B.

8.5: Gate 0: Business Case and stakeholders



The Council is at an early stage in the Band B programme, having identified a range of projects within the allocated budget forecast of £19.6m. These include a new build primary, Glyncoed, in the Ebbw Vale area and remodelling of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg and the three secondary schools. The provision of a Welsh Medium primary school, which as noted above is not within the Band B programme but clearly impacts Band B plans as it will be managed by the same team, will be delivered through a full capital cost grant of circa £6m from Welsh Government.

The Council has not yet developed any detailed business cases to identify the project specifics. The Education team have, however, identified the key stakeholders and are building relationships to ensure that the solutions will have the necessary support and deliver to the aspirations of the individual schools.

It is important to also recognise the importance of community engagement to build trust and overcome potential barriers. Communications plans must include both the schools and the wider communities they support in order to maximise the benefits of the proposed investments.

Recommendation - Ensure a strong communications strategy to support delivery plans.

8.6: Gate 0: Readiness for the next phase

The Council has a clear strategic vision for Band B, has identified several projects and has secured capital funding to support delivery of all projects formally in scope. The Council has an effective delivery team, who have demonstrated their capability to deliver through the Band A programme and to improve for the future using lessons learned from the Band A projects.

The Council has recently issued a statement about the revenue implications of the new Welsh Medium primary school provision and is working to clarify the situation with Welsh Government and other stakeholders. The Review Team note that such revenue challenges are not unique to Blaenau Gwent and have been experienced by other local authorities.

Recommendation – The SRO should continue to seek clarity on the revenue implications of a new Welsh Medium primary school in Blaenau Gwent.

9.0 Next Assurance Review

OFFICIAL COMMERCIAL
OGC Gateway™ Review 5:
Operations Review & Benefits Realisation
Project Title: AH/19/35



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

It is recommended that a further Gate 0 on projects in scope for Band B (including any projects managed de facto as part of Band B) be scheduled in Spring term 2021, by which time near-term projects should be substantially advanced and uncertainty removed from longer-term projects.

ANNEX A

OFFICIAL COMMERCIAL

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This report is an evidence-based snapshot of the project's status at the time of the review. It reflects the views of the independent review team, based on information evaluated over the review period, and is delivered to the SRO immediately at the conclusion of the review.



Purposes of OGC Gateway™ Review 5: Operations review & benefits realisation

- Assess whether the Business Case justification for the project at OGC Gateway Review 3: Investment decision was realistic.
- Confirm that there is still a business need for the investment
- Assess whether the benefits anticipated at this stage are actually being delivered.
- Assess the effectiveness of the ongoing contract management processes.
- Confirm that the client side continues to have the necessary resources to manage the contract successfully.
- Confirm continuity of key personnel involved in contract management/‘intelligent customer’ roles.
- Where changes have been agreed, check that they do not compromise the original delivery strategy.
- Assess the ongoing requirement for the contract to meet business need. Ensure that if circumstances have changed, the service delivery and contract are adapting to the new situation. Changing circumstances could affect: partner management; relationship management; service management; change management; contract management; benefits management; performance management.
- Check that there is ongoing contract development to improve value for money.
- Confirm that there are plans to manage the contract to its conclusion.
- Where applicable, confirm the validity of exit strategy and arrangements for re-competition.

Purposes of the OGC Gateway Review 0: Strategic assessment:

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OGC Gateway™ Review 5:
Operations Review & Benefits Realisation
Project Title: AH/19/35



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

- Review the outcomes and objectives for the programme (and the way they fit together) and confirm that they make the necessary contribution to overall strategy of the organisation and its senior management.
- Ensure that the programme is supported by key stakeholders.
- Confirm that the programme's potential to succeed has been considered in the wider context of Government policy and procurement objectives, the organisation's delivery plans and change programmes, and any interdependencies with other programmes or projects in the organisation's portfolio and, where relevant, those of other organisations.
- Review the arrangements for leading, managing and monitoring the programme as a whole and the links to individual parts of it (e.g. to any existing projects in the programme's portfolio).
- Review the arrangements for identifying and managing the main programme risks (and the individual project risks), including external risks such as changing business priorities.
- Check that provision for financial and other resources has been made for the programme (initially identified at programme initiation and committed later) and that plans for the work to be done through to the next stage are realistic, properly resourced with sufficient people of appropriate experience, and authorised.
- After the initial Review, check progress against plans and the expected achievement of outcomes.
- Check that there is engagement with the market as appropriate on the feasibility of achieving the required outcome.
- Where relevant, check that the programme takes account of joining up with other programmes, internal and external.
- Evaluation of actions to implement recommendations made in any earlier assessment of deliverability.

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This report is an evidence-based snapshot of the project's status at the time of the review. It reflects the views of the independent review team, based on information evaluated over the review period, and is delivered to the SRO immediately at the conclusion of the review.



ANNEX B

List of Interviewees

The following stakeholders were interviewed during the review:

Interviewees:

Name	Organisation and role
Lynn Phillips	Head of Education Transformation and Performance / SRO
Lynette Jones	Corporate Director for Education
Claire Gardner	Education Transformation Manager / Programme Manager
Joanne Watts	Principal Capital Accountant
Martin Woodland	BGCBC Solicitor Commercial Services Programme Board Number
Ann Toghil	Head teacher, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg
Cath Barnard	Shared Resource Services Education Service Manager
Michael Pyatt	Morgan Sindall – Project manager Six Bells
Sharon Northall	21 st Century Schools Officer / Business Change Manager
Mike Price	Property Services Manager
Councillor Joanne Collins	Executive Member for Education
Dave Robinson	Architectural Projects Manager
Marie Lewis	ALC Former Head of Campus Queen Street and Bryngwyn Road
Louisa Tudge	ALC Former Head of Campus Queen Street and Bryngwyn Road
Kathryn Massey	Head of Capital Funding, Education and Public Services, Welsh Government



ANNEX C

Progress against previous assurance review (17th to 19th of July 2017) recommendations:

Recommendation	Progress/Status
The SRO is to engage with the Welsh Government to confirm the re-profiling of finances.	Completed: approval letter received from Welsh Government. Further re-profiling was undertaken successfully over 2018/19.
Review and update the risk register to include action owners and target closure dates and update the issue register with issue owners and target resolution date.	Termly Programme Risk Workshops have taken place throughout 2018/19, along with bi-monthly risk reviews.
The SRO is to ensure that cost control is maintained and value engineering is carried out where required.	Programme spend is monitored on a monthly basis. £150,000 additional funding was secured by a variation request, to address cost pressures on the Six Bells contract, in line with inflationary costs of materials, which impacted upon the value engineering target.
The SRO is to take measures to secure programme staff and maintain management continuity between Band A and a future Band B programme.	Existing staff have been secured, and approval has been granted by Education Department Management Team (DMT), to secure an additional member of staff in line with Project Management.

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

SYSTEMS AUDIT – 21st CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION/OBJECTIVES

- 1.1. The objective of the Audit was to conduct a review of the systems in place, report upon the soundness and adequacy of the internal controls, and ensure compliance with any relevant statutory requirements and regulations in line with the Audit Plan for 2019/20.
- 1.2. This report includes an Audit Opinion and a Risk Rating Category, further details of which are contained in Appendix A.

2. SCOPE OF THE AUDIT

- 2.1. The scope of the audit was to determine the effectiveness of the internal control procedures within the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the Authority's 21st Century Schools Programme and the Projects contained therein.
- 2.2. The audit involved confirming the current system with relevant staff and conducting 'walk through tests' on the processes carried out within the service.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The 21st Century Schools programme is a long term strategic investment in Wales' educational estate. It is a collaboration between Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), local authorities, colleges and dioceses. It included a £1.4 billion investment in education throughout all 22 Local Authority areas in Wales, resulting in the rebuild and refurbishment of over 150 schools and colleges, which have been prioritised by the delivery partners.
- 3.2. The delivery of the first investment phase (Band A) continued until March 2019 and focused on:
 - reduction of poor condition school buildings;
 - provision of the right number of places, in the right places to serve local pupil demand by reducing surplus capacity, and addressing specific Welsh-medium and Faith-based provision needs;
 - reduction of running costs so as to maximise resources available to target improvements to learner outcomes; and,
 - promoting sustainability through reducing recurrent costs, energy consumption and carbon emissions.
- 3.3. The delivery of the second investment phase (Band B) commenced in April 2019 and it focuses on:
 - addressing growth in demand for Welsh-medium education;
 - reducing surplus capacity and inefficiency in the system;
 - expansion of schools and colleges in areas of increased demand for educational services;
 - addressing condition of educational assets; and,
 - making assets available for community use where demand exists, to optimise the infrastructure and resources for public services.

- 3.4. The Council's Education Transformation Team delivers the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools and Education Capital Programme on behalf of the Authority. A number of Blaenau Gwent's key projects were commenced within Band A of the Programme, including:
- Tredegar Comprehensive School remodelling project;
 - Abertillery Primary School new build; and,
 - Six Bells Primary School new build.

4. AUDIT FINDINGS & WEAKNESSES

- 4.1. The findings and weaknesses below are in order of risk, with the first being the highest risk area.
- 4.2. In order to satisfy Welsh Government's (WG) application requirements in respect of the 21st Century Schools Programme a Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) is required providing an overview of the future education provision within the Borough and identifying projects for investment. A copy of the SOP compiled by the Authority was obtained during the audit and it was evident that it contained the information as required by WG, however it was not possible to determine the date that the SOP was submitted to WG, and therefore it was not possible to determine compliance with the applicable timescales.
- 4.3. As part of WG's application process for individual investment projects it was evident that business case documentation was required to be submitted, satisfying a number of criteria that were stipulated within published guidance. A sample of applications submitted by the Authority was selected during the audit, with the associated documentation assessed. It was evident that the business case documentation submitted by the Authority contained relevant cases to support the application; however, it was not evident that one of the documents obtained during the audit had been signed by senior management to certify approval prior to submission.

5. RISKS AND AGREED ACTIONS

Ref	Summary of Findings	Risk	Agreed Action	Client Management Comments	Person Responsible and Target Date
4.2.	It was not possible to determine the date that the SOP was submitted to WG, and therefore it was not possible to determine compliance with the applicable timescales.	Medium – Unable to verify that WG submission deadlines have been satisfied.	Evidence of submissions to WG will be retained and stored centrally where applicable.		Head of Education Transformation. Ongoing.
4.3.	It was not evident that the business case documentation obtained during the audit had been signed by senior management to certify approval prior to submission.	Medium – Lack of identification of senior accountable officer for submission. Lack of confirmation that the version submitted has been approved by senior management.	Evidence of submissions to WG will be retained and stored centrally where applicable.		Head of Education Transformation. Ongoing.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1. This audit report is compiled on an exception basis, thus the only points made are where weaknesses have been identified. The samples chosen would not be able to cover every transaction or eventuality; therefore reliance is placed in part on the information and explanations provided by the appropriate officers.

7. INTERNAL CONTROL STANDARD GRADING

- | |
|--|
| <p>7.1. In accordance with the standard gradings set out in Appendix A, systems examined indicate that the internal controls used within the 21st Century Schools Programme appear to be operating effectively. The grading is therefore assessed as ‘Reasonable Assurance’.</p> |
|--|

INTERNAL AUDIT SUMMARY REPORT

SYSTEMS AUDIT – 21st CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This audit was carried out in line with the Internal Audit Plan 2019/20, and in full consultation with operational staff and management.
- 1.2. The scope of the audit was to determine the effectiveness of the internal controls within the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the Authority's 21st Century Schools Programme and the Projects contained therein.
- 1.3. The audit was conducted by the Senior Auditor and took the form of a series of detailed tests and checks, together with discussions with operational staff and managers.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1. Two weaknesses were identified, both of which were classified as Medium Risk. The weaknesses were:
 - It was not possible to determine the date that the Strategic Outline Programme was submitted to Welsh Government (WG), and therefore it was not possible to determine compliance with the applicable timescales.
Agreed action – Evidence of submissions to WG will be retained and stored centrally where applicable.
 - It was not evident that the business case documentation obtained during the audit had been signed by senior management to certify approval prior to submission.
Agreed action – Evidence of submissions to WG will be retained and stored centrally where applicable.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1. After reviewing all documentation and the current system, it was found that the internal controls used within the 21st Century Schools Programme appear to be operating effectively.
- 3.2. The Head of Education Transformation has agreed to mitigating actions for each of the weaknesses identified.

4. INTERNAL CONTROL STANDARD GRADING

- 4.1. In accordance with the standard gradings, the systems examined indicate that internal controls within the 21st Century Schools Programme appear to be operating effectively. The grading is therefore assessed as **'Reasonable Assurance'**.

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APPENDIX A

INTERNAL CONTROL CLASSIFICATION.

The Internal control classifications are as follows: -

<u>Category</u>	<u>Classification</u>
Full Assurance	Minimal or no risks identified with controls operating as expected or a few areas identified where changes would be beneficial.
Reasonable Assurance	Controls appear to be operating effectively however a few weaknesses have been identified that requires systems to be strengthened.
Limited Assurance	A significant weakness or a number of weaknesses have been identified within internal controls, resulting in an increased risk to the Authority.
No Assurance	Unacceptable risks identified; with fundamental improvements required.

RISK RATING CATEGORIES.

The Risk Rating classifications are as follows: -

<u>Category</u>	<u>Suggested Indicators</u>
High	Action that is considered significant and ensures the Authority and the service is not exposed to considerable risks.
Medium	Action that is considered necessary to avoid exposure to risks.
Low	Action that is less significant to the overall risks of the Authority but will result in enhanced control to the service.

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21 st Century Schools Programme Band B (2019-25)	Timeline/ Milestones
New Welsh-medium Primary (Welsh Medium Grant)	<p>Business Case – Submitted and approved COVID19 Pandemic- (March-May Lockdown) unsure of impact, the team is continuing to develop documents in line with delivery and implementation, the below dates may alter slightly.</p> <p>Formal Consultation –Autumn 2020 Statutory Notice period - Spring Term 2021 Site Investigation – Autumn 2020/Spring 2021 Project Brief – Autumn 2020 Revised cost plan – Autumn 2020 Tender document preparation and detailed design –stage 1 Spring 2021 / 2 Summer 2021 (6 Months) Planning – Summer 2021 (6 months) Out to Tender – Autumn 2021 Contractor Appointment – Spring/Summer 2022 Commencement – Summer/ Autumn 2022 (14-month contract) Conclusion – Autumn 2023 Occupation – (subject to phased development /construction programme and timeline)</p>
	Band B – Bro Helyg Remodelling Project
Welsh-medium Remodelling Project (Band B)	<p>Ysgol Gymraeg Remodelling project: Business Justification Case: Submission to WG Date: 25th September 2019 (BCSG-9th October and CP 23rd October 2019) Revised Business Case Submission August 2020 (with additional condition and suitability information) . COVID19 Pandemic- (March-May Lockdown) unsure of impact, the team is continuing to develop documents in line with delivery, and implementation the below dates may alter slightly. Project brief: Spring 2020 Approval of Business Case: November 2020 Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: Autum 2020/Spring 2021 Out to tender: Autumn 2020/Spring 2021 (4-6 weeks) Contractor appointment: Autumn 2020/Spring 2021 Commencement (external works): Spring 2021 (6weeks) Commencement (internal works): Spring/Summer 2021 (16 weeks) Conclusion: October 2021</p>
	Band B – Band B Ebbw Fawr Valley Primary Redevelopment Projects
Ebbw Fawr New Build Glyncoed Primary School (EFNB) Remodelling Primary (RPM) (Band B)	<p>Business case: Outline Business Case for EFNB as well as RPM and OBC/SOC Strategic Outline Case combined: Submission WG Date: Scrutiny group 28th February 2020, Investment panel 15th April 2020 Revised Business Case Submission Addendum April 2020 - for 14th May Business Case and 18 June scrutiny panels. Approved Combined SOC/OBC: July 2020 FBC Full Business Case: Submission to WG Date: 31st October 2020, for November December considerations Project Brief: Autumn-term 2020 Glyncoed Site investigations: Commenced Spring 2020 ongoing Apporved FBC: Outstanding <u>(Proceed at risk)</u></p>

	<p>COVID19 Pandemic- (March-May Lockdown) unsure of impact, the team is continuing to develop documents in line with delivery, and implementation the below dates may alter slightly.</p> <p>Stage 1 sign off end of March 2020 Stage 2 sign off January 2021</p> <p>Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: Autumn 2020 (<u>Proceed at risk</u>) Pre Planning consultation: January 2021 Planning submission: January 2021 (potential timeframe - 6 months) (<u>at risk</u>) Out to tender: Spring/Summer term 2021 (6 - 8 weeks) Evaluation: Summer/Autumn 2021 Contractor appointment: January 2022 Commencement: January 2022 (17-month construction period) Conclusion: July 2023 Occupation: September 2023</p>
<p>Rhosyfedwen Primary School Remodelling (RPM) <u>(Pending confirmation of available funding post-delivery of the above new build)</u></p>	<p>Business case: Outline Business Case for EFNB as well as RPM and OBC/SOC Strategic Outline Case combined: Submission WG Date: Scrutiny group 28th February 2020, Investment panel 15th April 2020 Revised Business Case Submission Addendum April 2020 - for 14th May Business Case and 18 June scrutiny panels. FBC Full Business Case: Submission to WG Date: 31st August 2020, Project Brief: Spring/Summer 2020 Apporved FBC: Outstanding Site investigations: Spring/Summer 2020 (<u>Proceed at risk</u>) COVID19 Pandemic- (March-May Lockdown) unsure of impact, the team is continuing to develop documents in line with delivery, and implementation the below dates may alter slightly. Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: Summer/Autumn 2021 (<u>Proceed at risk</u>) Building Regulations/planning submission: Summer/Autumn 2021 (<u>Proceed at risk</u>) Out to tender: Summer/Autumn 2021 Evaluation: Autumn 2021 Contractor appointment: January 2022 Commencement: March 2022 (12-months contract period) Conclusion March 2023 Occupation: March 2023</p>
<p>Primary School Re-modelling Cwm & Beaufort Hill Primary <u>(Pending confirmation of available funding post-delivery of the above new build)</u></p>	<p>Business case: Outline Business Case for EFNB as well as RPM and OBC/SOC Strategic Outline Case combined: Submission WG Date: Scrutiny group 28th February 2020, Investment panel 15th April 2020 Revised Business Case Submission Addendum April 2020 - for 14th May Business Case and 18 June scrutiny panels. FBC Full Business Case: Submission to WG Date: 31st August 2020, Apporved FBC: Outstanding Brief: Summer/Autumn-term 2023 Tender document preparation/detailed design work: Spring-term 2023 Out to tender: Autumn-term 2023 Contractor appointment: Autumn 2023/Spring-term 2024 Commencement: Spring-term 2024 (depending on scope of work) Conclusion: September 2025</p>

	Band B – Band B Secondary School Remodelling Projects
Secondary School Re-modelling Brynmawr Foundation	<p>Maintenance, condition and suitability review: Summer-term 2019 Headteacher engagement: Autumn-term 2019 Business Justification Case: Submission WG Date: February 2021, Scrutiny group 11 March 2021 Investment panel 15 April 2021 Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: December 2021 – May 2022 Out to tender: June/July 2022 (4-6 weeks) Contractor appointment: Autumn 2022 Commencement: Spring-term 2022 (1-year construction period per/project) Conclusion: September 2025</p>
Secondary School Re-modelling The River Centre – Secondary Campus	<p>Maintenance, condition and suitability review: Autumn 2020 Headteacher engagement: Autumn-term 2020 Business Justification Case: Submission WG Date: April 2021, Scrutiny group 13 May 2021 Investment panel 10 June 2021 Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: May – December 2021 Out to tender: January 2022 (4-6 weeks) Contractor appointment: May 2022 Commencement: Summer-term 2022 (1-year construction period per/project) Conclusion: September 2025</p>
Secondary School Re-modelling ALC-Secondary Campus	<p>Maintenance, condition and suitability review: Summer-term 2019 Headteacher engagement: Autumn-term 2019 Business Justification Case: Submission WG Date: Aug 2021, Scrutiny group 16 September 2021 Investment panel 14 October 2021 Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: December 2021 – May 2022 Out to tender: June/July 2022 (4-6 weeks) Contractor appointment: Autumn 2022 Commencement: Spring-term 2022 (1-year construction period per/project) Conclusion: September 2025</p>
Secondary School Re-modelling Tredegar Comprehensive	<p>Maintenance, condition and suitability review: Autumn 2020 Headteacher engagement: Autumn-term 2020 Business Justification Case: Submission WG Date: October 2021, Scrutiny group 11 November 2021 Investment panel 9 December 2021 Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: May – December 2021 Out to tender: January 2022 (4-6 weeks) Contractor appointment: May 2022 Commencement: Summer-term 2022 (1-year construction period per/project) Conclusion: September 2025</p>

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21st Century Schools and Education Programme - Band B Funding Forecast

Organisation Name:				2018/19 Funding		2019/20 Funding		2020/21 Funding		2021/22 Funding		2022/23 Funding		2023/24 Funding	
Project Name	Proposed Capacity	Education Level	Education Medium Type	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support
Band B															
324755	Ysgol Bro Helyg	258	Primary	Welsh				71,840	28,160	278,160	605,590		16,250		
324751	Ebbw Fawr New Build/Primary School Redevelopment	971	Primary	English/Welsh					50,000	1,475,000	4,105,000	1,475,000	895,000	100,000	400,000
324752-4	Secondary School Remodelling	tbc	Secondary	English						70,000	130,000	280,000	520,000	1,330,000	2,470,000
Childcare Offer															
324772	Blaina ICC	tbc	Pre School	English			57,203		50,000		392,797				
324771	Glyncoed new setting	60	Pre School	English					50,000		1,450,000				
324770	Six Bells new setting	60	Pre School	English			8,777				1,491,233				
324774	Small Grant Scheme	tbc	Pre School	English											
324773	Swffryd Flying Start	tbc	Pre School	English			17,420		50,000		432,580				
	Welsh Medium Provision - Band B Seedling School & New Build WM	tbc	Pre School	Welsh							200,000				
Welsh Medium															
324750	Band B Seedling School & New Build WM	210	Primary	Welsh			10,000		100,000		590,000		5,300,000		1,500,000
				-	-	-	93,400	71,840	328,160	1,823,160	9,397,200	1,755,000	6,731,250	1,430,000	4,370,000

To be approved by Director of Finance or s151 Officer

I certify the forecast above is correct at the time of submission to the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme team, and there is full support in place for the Local Authority/Further Education Institution's element of funding.

I confirm the funding per project has been accurately profiled based on the information available at present and the Welsh Government grant element does not exceed the relevant grant rate (65/75/85%), unless otherwise approved by the Welsh Government.

Electronic Signature:



Name: Joanne Watts

Position: Principal Accountant

Date: 06/10/20

2024/25 Funding		2025/26 Funding		Total Funding			WG Grant %
Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Total	
				350,000	650,000	1,000,000	0.65
100,000	400,000			3,150,000	5,850,000	9,000,000	0.65
1,330,000	2,470,000	350,000	650,000	3,360,000	6,240,000	9,600,000	0.65
				-	-	-	
					-	-	
					500,000	500,000	1
					1,500,000	1,500,000	1
					1,500,010	1,500,010	1
					-	-	
				-	500,000	500,000	1
				-	200,000	200,000	1
				-	-	-	
				-	-	-	
				-	7,500,000	7,500,000	1
1,430,000	2,870,000	350,000	650,000	6,860,000	24,440,010	#####	
				£0.22	78.08%		

Agenda Item 13

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 09.02.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 09.02.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **24th February 2021**

Report Subject: **Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme**

Portfolio Holder: **Executive Member Cllr D Davies, Regeneration and Economic Development**

Report Submitted by: **Richard Crook, Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	09.02.21			10.02.21	24.02.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update to Members, and to:
- consider performance of the Aspire programme and associated external business engagement; and
 - provide performance information on the BGCBC internal apprenticeship programme.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Aspire Shared Apprentice Programme was initially setup in 2015, with funding from WG, as a response to identified market failure within the engineering and advanced manufacturing sector within Blaenau Gwent. It proved so successful that it was expanded to include provision in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council in 2017 and the project has been extended to September 2021 in both localities.
- 2.2 In 2018 the Aspire Team started working with internal departments to raise the profile of the programme and demonstrate how having apprentices could strengthen the workforce and fulfil future skills gaps.
- 2.3 In the last 2 years – there have been 10 apprentices recruited into the local authority within various departments and in October 2020 a designated officer was appointed through Legacy Funding to support these apprentices, internal teams and to drive recruitment.
- 2.4 In 2019 Aspire won the ‘**Large** Employer of The Year’ award at the Apprenticeship Awards Cymru 2019 (AAC), which took place at the International Convention Centre, Newport. The award category entitled ‘Large and Macro Employer of the Year’ recognises and celebrates the employer’s commitment to developing their workforce through apprenticeships, whilst also supporting their employees during training. The Programme has also been shortlisted for the 2021 awards in partnership with Merthy Tydfil.

2.5 **The Aspire Offer to Apprentices across Blaenau Gwent**

- The programme provides an accessible platform for young people to access bespoke apprenticeship opportunities in the region facilitated by a programme management team liaising with local colleges and apprenticeship learning provider.
- The Aspire Team provides a range of support from advice on their application form; to encouragement, preparatory guidance for interviews and the selection processes. Feedback will be provided to unsuccessful applicants at all stages of the application and recruitment processes and signposting will be provided to other similar advertised vacancies that may be of interest.
- The successful candidates become part of a cohort that gives them an identity and peer to peer support in the first few months of their working life as an apprentice.
- They are also supported by a mentor throughout the term of the apprenticeship helping them resolve educational and social impediments to the completion of their apprenticeship. The mentors will also act as a point of mediation between the apprentice, the employer and the educational provider.

2.6 **The Aspire Offer to Businesses across Blaenau Gwent**

- One of the main appeals of the Shared Apprenticeship Programme to businesses is that flexible approach that can be offered, depending on business needs and capacity.
- The main attributes of the Programme are:
 - The creation of 'Partnership Agreement' between industry and the Programme
 - Continued investment in business engagement building upon local level connections
 - The Aspire Team undertake the recruitment process for employers
 - Employers make final recruitment decisions
 - All apprenticeship level positions are paid for
 - Regular reports on the progress of individual apprentices
 - Short surveys are completed at the end of the apprenticeship and feedback is provided to the apprentice and employer
 - The employer has a qualified employee to help take the business forward.

2.7 **To date the Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme has:**

Externally

- Recruited and supported 84 apprentices (2015-2020)

- The Programme has engaged with over 60 manufacturing companies across the Local Authority to facilitate the apprenticeships, 20 have become host employers of which some of the companies are:
 - Continental
 - PCI Pharmaceutical
 - JC Moulding
 - GTEM
 - Cruz Engineering
 - Sogefi Filtration
 - Liberty Steel
 - TCK Electrical
 - Camtronics
- 58% of companies are SMEs
- Learning Pathways include:
 - Electrical Engineering
 - Mechanical Engineering
 - Applied Science
 - IT
 - EEP's
 - Commercial focused Business Administration
 - Quality Engineering
- 100% of apprentices on cohort 1 have been employed, of which 67% retained within host employer
- The programme can now measure the outcomes due to the first two cohorts of apprentices completing their apprenticeships:

In 2015/2016 academic year Cohort 1 and 2: -

	Number of apprentices	Completed their framework	Entered Employment	Progressed onto further learning
Cohort 1	18	15 (83%)	15(83%) 3still on programme	9 (50)%
Cohort 2	19	15 (79%)	13 (68%) 5 still on programme	10 (55%)
Totals	37	30 (81%)	28 (76%) 8 still on programme	19 (51%)

- 100% of apprentices in cohorts 1-5 have had the opportunity to rotate to another company to fulfil skills gaps
- Of the 30 apprentices currently on programme, the following information applies:
 - 91% are Male and 9% are female
 - 100% are of White ethnicity
 - 97% do not have a disability 3% have a disability

Internally

- Recruited 10 Internal Apprentices employed within BGCBC on a range of pathways.

- Community Services, Audit, Business Support and Social Services are departments who have already engaged.
- Housing and Digital pathways are being reviewed and it is hoped vacancies in these areas will be created in early 2021.

2.8 In 2020, 17 Apprentices were furloughed due to Covid. This was the largest number at any one time with some apprentices being placed longer than others. The priority during that period was to support the Apprentices and help them to continue their learning through college, usually virtual lessons and continue where possible NVQ work. In addition, the Aspire Team supported them with their health and wellbeing to guide them through uncertain times with encouragement and open communication.

2.9 No apprentices on the Aspire Programme were made redundant during this period of time and have all since returned to their work place. It is felt that the support the Aspire Programme Team offered apprentices as well as employers facilitated this outcome.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

This report will be considered by the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 10th February 2021, any feedback from Scrutiny will be provided verbally to the Executive

Option 1 – that Members consider and accept the report as provided.

Option 2 – that Members do not accept the report.

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

- Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan: Forge new pathways to prosperity through employment and skills development
- Corporate Plan: Economic Development and Regeneration
- Regeneration Priorities: employment and skills, enterprise and innovation.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

Short Term

To date there has been no confirmation of funding post 2022 and this is Welsh Government funding.

Long Term

Proposals have been submitted to Welsh Government and City Deal to expand the provision across the City Deal region. If agreed this will generate funding for the programme to continue over the next 6 years.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Demand for the service across the region doesn't materialise; mitigated through market research, early business/LA engagement and a phased approach to delivery.

Demand for the service exceeds resource available; this will be managed within the realms of the funding, some areas may not require the service and because the programme will be centrally funded the programme management team can allocate resource where required.

Duplication of provisions/lack of engagement from FEs; mitigated through early engagement with providers and colleges. Over the last few months a number of meetings have been held to discuss apprenticeship allocation and how best Aspire could potentially facilitate opportunities and support recruitment and compliment their service.

5.3 ***Legal***

Legal advice and joint contracts of employment have been agreed for the programme currently and it is expected that these will remain the same for future host employers.

In addition to contracts of employment, there are training agreements in place with the apprentice, Aspire, host employer and training provider.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

Not required for this update

6. ***Supporting Evidence***

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

To date the Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme has:

- Recruited and supported 84 apprentices placed in over 20 manufacturing companies across Blaenau Gwent in addition to employment of 10 apprentices within council departments.
- 51% of apprentices within Cohorts 1 & 2 (2015 & 2016) have progressed onto higher education / HNC.
- 100% of apprentices on cohort 1 have been employed, of which 67% retained within host employer
- Framework completed: Cohort 1 –83%, Cohort 2 – 79%
- 100% of apprentices in cohorts 1-5 have had the opportunity to rotate to another company to fulfil skills gaps

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The following are future outcomes that are based on the regional proposals submitted to City Deal and Welsh Government respectively which includes Blaenau Gwent and 9 other authorities:

- Recruit and support over 300 apprentices across the region over 6 years should the funding proposals be awarded
- 20% of apprentices to progress onto higher education / HNC.
- 70% of apprentices to be employed within host employer
- 100% of apprentices to have had the opportunity to rotate to another company to fulfil skills gaps

The Employment and Skills plan will outline specific priorities and associated actions to:

- Increase the number of employment opportunities available
- Increase the range of employment opportunities available
- Ensure appropriate employment provision to support people into work and progress once in work
- Train and upskill local residents aligned to demand or growth sectors
- Raised awareness of opportunities to support educational attainment and aspiration
- Increased employment and skills opportunities secured through community benefits.

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

To date the emerging proposals have been developed in consultation/ discussions with:

- Merthyr Tydfil Council
- Welsh Government
- City Deal
- Regional Skills Partnership
- Coleg Gwent
- Coleg Y Cymoedd
- Coleg Merthyr Tydfil
- Torfaen Council
- RCT Council

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

- The future proposals aim to meet the needs businesses; future skills planning and fulfil current skills gaps. The success within two current local authorities' (BG & MT) demonstrate the need for a coordinated approach to facilitate the recruitment for business and engagement with learning providers.
- The team are continually working with education to identify progression routes onto higher education as industry requires these higher level skills and with this apprenticeship pathway it provides alternative routes to employment for young people
- The proposals are offering employers and local authorities to demonstrate the employment opportunities within local areas providing skilled young people locally and meeting regional needs.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

- The proposals are integral to collaborative working across the city region and with individual local authorities, that is the key to its success, to date there has been RSP engagement, partner LA and FE discussions, business engagement,
- There are currently Joint Contracts of employment in place with all current employers with apprentices and these documents will be shared and part of the proposal,
- It is vital that the team works closely as they have done in the past with FE. It will be important to utilise the apprenticeship contract within individual providers for each area. Relationship with the FE to support delivery

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The contents of the plan will link closely with Education.

6.8 ***EqIA***

The plan is aimed at ensuring Blaenau Gwent Prospers, this is inclusive of all in our efforts to raise skills and employment levels for residents.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 A baseline, aligned to the proposals will be developed to measure the medium and long term impact of the programme. An annual review and update on progress will be prepared and reported through scrutiny, executive and the PSB.

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Agenda Item 14

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 09.02.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 09.02.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**
Date of meeting: **24th February 2021**
Report Subject: **Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme and Town Centre Repayable Funding Scheme**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr D Davies, Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development**
Report Submitted by: **Amy Taylor, Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
09.12.20	x	09.02.21			06.01.21	24.02.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To provide an update on the current positions with the Targeted Regeneration Investment (TRI) Programme and Town Centre Repayable Funding Scheme.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1. This progress report follows a report presented to the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 5th March 2020. The TRI programme was established in 2018 and was originally intended to be a three-year programme (2018-2021). In 2020, Welsh Government announced a one year extension of the programme for the 2021/2022 financial year.
- 2.2. For the initial three-year phase of the TRI programme a capital budget of £100million funding was made available in Wales. Allocations of the funding are dependent upon the quality of the projects, regional significant and approval of the national panel. TRI funding will not be automatically apportioned equally across each of the ten authorities. Allocation for the South East Wales region is £44million.

Targeted Regeneration Investment Thematic Projects

Property Enhancement Grants

- 2.3. Target Regeneration Investment Thematic grants cover Urban Centre Property Enhancement Fund Grants (Commercial building enhancement) and Urban Centre Living Fund Grants (Residential enhancements). They support the Council's Growth Strategy aims by improving town centres such that we achieve an increase in spend within the local economy. It will also support bringing vacant commercial properties back into use. It will also increase the

quality of commercial spaces within the Town Centres and help support town centre traders to support the foundational economy.

- 2.4. TRI Thematic grant funding has enabled the Council to work with property owners across the Borough to tackle properties held on the empty properties register and prominent, vacant or sub-standard, hard to let properties as a way of encouraging retail, housing and business opportunities.
- 2.5. The Council acts as grant administrator and this role includes the following areas of work:
 - Supporting grant applicants with grant application process;
 - Protecting grant funding by working with Property Solicitor to place legal charges on the properties;
 - Liaison with grant recipients to ensure project programme is on track;
 - Commissioning Quantity Surveyor to ensure value for money is achieved;
 - Reviewing grant claims meet funding requirements (e.g. defrayment evidence);
 - Paying grant claims to recipients; and
 - Submitting final claims to Welsh Government via Rhondda Cynon Taf as lead authority for reclaiming funds.
- 2.6. A total of £920,000 was made available to Blaenau Gwent over two financial years (2019/20 & 2020/21) for property enhancement grants. A total of £348,092 was spent in 2019/20 (TRI year one). The grants administered by the Council were used for works to 6 town centre properties with the aim of refurbishment or bringing them back into use. It resulted in 5 jobs being created and one additional housing unit being made available.
- 2.7. In 2020/21 we have spent £118,736 with the remaining £453,172 committed for projects in 2020/21. These grants will continue to be administered by the Council and will support works to a further 8 buildings across Town Centres in Blaenau Gwent. As outlined in section 6.3 these projects will support 24 jobs being created and 6 jobs being accommodated. The projects will support premises being refurbished and brought back into use for commercial purposes which will contribute to the long term viability of the Town Centres.
- 2.8. A number of the projects will also result in additional housing units being created. It is currently envisaged that as a result of the 2020/21 funding an additional 3 housing units will be brought into use.
- 2.9. All of the projects supported through the TRI Thematic funding will improve the overall attractiveness of the town centres and assist in lifting the profile of the retail cores across Blaenau Gwent. Details of the outputs already achieved and expected are outlined in Table 1 in Section 6.1 of this report.
- 2.10. In the report of 5th March 2020, it was reported that a proposal for additional £5 million Capital funding from Valleys Task Force to extend the Cardiff Capital Region TRI Thematic Project in Valleys Taskforce areas had been

successful. We were later advised that this funding would not be forthcoming from Valley's Taskforce but there would be scope to include the projects put forward for this funding within the existing TRI Thematic Programme (described above).

- 2.11. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic a number of Councils were no longer able to achieve full spend on their 2020/21 allocations and these funds would therefore be re-purposed to enable the proposals put under Valleys Taskforce to be delivered under TRI Thematic funding.
- 2.12. One project nominated for VTF funding will be accommodated within the existing TRI Thematic Urban Centre Property Enhancement Fund programme in 2020/21 and another is to be progressed as a standalone capital project (see section 2.18) due to its anticipated project costs exceeding the £250,000 upper threshold for TRI grant.
- 2.13. Officers are currently working on 11 projects from across the borough for grant assistance in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 Financial years. As outlined above the programme will be extended for a further year to cover the 2021/22 financial year but the funding allocation has not yet been confirmed.

Transforming Towns Thematic Covid-19 Recovery Grants

- 2.14. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic Welsh Government proposed a variation in the £10m Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme, diverting £3.5m for Covid-19 recovery adaptations in the 2020/21 financial year across towns in the Cardiff City Region.
- 2.15. Each Council was asked to put forward proposals for ways they would like to support their Town's in the recovery from COVID-19. One of the biggest challenges to the recovery of businesses from COVID-19 was for them to open in a safe way that protects employees, visitors and customers.
- 2.16. Blaenau Gwent therefore put forward a proposal for a new smaller grant programme. Grants would cover 80% of the costs to a maximum value of £15,000 per business.
- 2.17. The Grant was intended to support business owners with the purchase of equipment or modifications to premises to enable safe ways of working and operation along with social distancing in areas of a business where customers and members of the public congregate, are served food and drink or rest.
- 2.18. As at 7th December 2020, a total of 91 Expressions of Interest have been received and 4 applications have been progressed to the stage of delivery at a total cost of £44,731. There are a number of reasons for the low number of enquiries progressed through to delivery, these include:
 - The funding cannot be used to fund works already completed before the grant was made available or a funding approval is in place;

- The funding can only be utilised for businesses located within one of the Town Centres (Ebbw Vale, Tredegar, Brynmawr, Abertillery and Blaina); and
 - The funding can only be used for external measures to support business recovery (outdoor seating, canopies).
- 2.19. Recognising that there are businesses throughout Blaenau Gwent that have served the community for many years and during the current pandemic have had to make adjustments to the way they work in order to be safe for customers we explored other options to support them.
- 2.20. Valleys Taskforce invited applications for this type of support and from businesses in smaller retail areas who would not be eligible for the TRI funding scheme. The Valleys taskforce funds could also be used to support internal measures to make businesses safe and would accept retrospective applications. The application was submitted in November and we expect a decision in December.

Capital Projects

- 2.21. Two capital projects totalling £1,035,400 have also been awarded funding under the TRI capital funding programme. The projects will upgrade and bring town centre properties back into use. The Council's role in these projects shall be Grant Administrator (as per section 2.5) and work with grant recipients. The two projects shall receive £550,000 and £485,400 of TRI funding respectively. These projects will also be supported by match funding from the grant recipients.
- 2.22. One of the projects will support refurbishment of premises that accommodates 7 retail businesses. Without intervention the premises may fall into disrepair and could result in the loss of local and national businesses. The funding will be used to refurbish the premises and ensure that they are COVID-Safe and safeguard existing jobs of businesses within the town centre.

Development Projects

Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan

- 2.23. The Urbanists have been appointed to develop a placemaking plan for Ebbw Vale. Key strategic sites that will be considered as part of the plan will include:
- Ebbw Vale Town Rail Station
 - Station Square, The Works
 - Access from The Works to the Town Centre
 - Land at the Walk
 - Ebbw Vale Town Centre
 - Eugene Cross Park
- 2.24. The work will be delivered in two parts the first a placemaking plan which sets out the key vision and themes for the future of Ebbw Vale Town Centre

followed by a delivery plan which will outline the specific projects along with project proposals and information that can be used to support business cases for funding applications to the Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme.

Tredegar Placemaking Plan

- 2.25. Funding has also been secured to develop a place making plan for Tredegar. This will be subject to procurement over December with the commission commencing in January 2021. The plan will be delivered using the same approach as the Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan.

Repayable Town Centre Loans Fund

- 2.26. The Repayable Town centre Loans fund is a Welsh Government funded loan programme administered locally that offers repayable loans to owners of town centre properties. Funds drawn down from Welsh Government are required to be recycled at least three times before repayment to Welsh Government in 15 years' time.
- 2.27. The core aims of the scheme are to reduce the number of vacant, underutilised and redundant sites and premises in town centres and to support the diversification of town centres by encouraging more sustainable uses for empty sites and premises, such as residential, leisure and for key services.
- 2.28. Town Centre loans can be utilised as part of a package of funding and have been successfully used as the match funding for applicants eligible for a Targeted Regeneration Investment (TRI) grant. Having this option means businesses who don't have the initial match funding investment but a viable business with the ability to repay the funds they require within a five-year period can take their projects forward.
- 2.29. Town Centre Loans are offered to applicants to a maximum of £200,000 with 0% interest and flexible repayment terms - ranging from initial monthly repayments to 'repayment in full' on the 60th Month. To date we have successfully bid and received three tranches of loan funding totalling £1,954,286 with a further application for £555,000 approved in December 2020.
- 2.30. Twelve loans have been issued to date totalling £1,125,000 with an available loan balance of £1,384,000 which will be available to those progressing TRI grants in 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years. The loans have been used to support property owners in undertaking refurbishment works to their commercial premises where they may not have the full capital to outlay at the time of undertaking the works. They have been used to support acquisition of premises and are also used alongside TRI Grants to undertake property enhancement works.

- 2.31. For six of the loans, the outputs of the TRI Property Enhancement Grants will be the same outputs of the loan scheme. The remaining loans will support building owners who wish to invest in their properties and will be used for new shop fronts and internal and external refurbishments.

3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1. It is recommended that Members accept this progress update for and note the report.
- 3.2. The report was considered by the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 6th January 2021. The Committee accepted the report and the information contained within it was noted.

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

- 4.1. The project supports the Corporate Plan Outcome to support a fairer sustainable economy and community. Through these projects will work with partners to develop a new vision for our town centres ensuring their long term future.

5. Implications Against Each Option

Cost

- 5.1. The maximum Welsh Government intervention rate for TRI Building Enhancement Grants is 70% and a maximum application value of £250,000.
- 5.2. The maximum Welsh Government intervention rate per TRI Covid-19 Recovery Grants is 80% and a maximum application value of £15,000.
- 5.3. In addition to the capital funding a total allocation of £200k per region is available per annum to support project development costs. Development costs have a maximum intervention rate of 50%. At present there is no identified fund to cover the match funding costs required for the capital and development studies under the TRI Programme. Funding shall be sourced from a range of sources including internal and external funding sources where possible.
- 5.4. There are no direct financial implications against repayable town centre loans.

Risk including Mitigating Actions

- 5.5. With TRI property enhancement grants there is a risk that projects fail prior to completion and money already drawn down could be lost. To mitigate against this, legal charges are placed upon properties to cover the value of funding drawn down. This will provide security against potential loss of funding.

- 5.6. With Covid-19 recovery grants there is a risk that items purchased with grant funding will not be utilised or will be missing from their intended location. To mitigate this Periodic checks on grant funded items will take place to ensure items acquired under this grant programme are utilised for their intended purpose. Items purchased under the grant which are not in use or missing will result in the recovery of the grant award from the applicant.
- 5.7. With Repayable Town Centre Loans there is a risk of default on the repayment schedule. To mitigate against this risk, legal charges are placed upon properties to cover the value of funding drawn down. This will provide security against potential loss of funding.

Legal

- 5.8. In order to administer the grants, work has been undertaken with the Council's Property Solicitor to establish a process for grant application, due diligence and terms and conditions which enable a full audit trail to be put in place.

Personnel

- 5.9. The projects are currently project managed within the Regeneration Opportunities Team. This supported service areas including Resources, Community Services, Estates and Asset Management and Planning.

6. Supporting Evidence

Performance Information and Data

- 6.1. In order to secure the funding through TRI, projects will be required to identify how it will contribute towards meeting the outputs identified through the TRI programme. Details of the outputs already achieved and those expected are shown in the table below.

Table 1: TRI Thematic Funding (Building Enhancement Grants) - Project Outputs

Output	2019/20 (Actual)	2020/21 (Estimated)
Properties Refurbished	6	8
Jobs Created	5	24
Jobs Accommodated	0	6
Additional Housing Units	1	3

- 6.2. Table 2 shows the funding profile for projects already delivered and those which are underway during this financial year. It shows that overall the TRI projects have the potential to support investment of £6,440,205 during the two years (2019/20 and 2020/21).

Table 2: TRI Funding 2019 to 2021

Project	TRI Funding (Actual and Estimated)	Match Funding (Public and Private)	Total Investment*
TRI Thematic Projects (Commercial and Residential)	£920,000	£2,155,573	£3,075,573
COVID Recovery Grants	£44,731	£18,151	£62,882
Capital Projects	£1,525,400	£1,481,350	£3,006,750
Development Projects	£165,000	£115,000	£270,000
Revenue Funding	£25,000	£0	£25,000
Total	£2,680,131	£2,534,501	£6,440,205

*estimated total(subject to change) – final figures will be confirmed at end of March 2021

- 6.3. Estimates suggest that the TRI Thematic and Capital Projects for 2020/21 will result in 27 jobs being created and 51 Jobs being accommodated. Grant applicants are required to provide evidence of success against the projects and that outcomes are achieved.

Expected outcome for the public

- 6.4. The thematic priorities and funding opportunities available through TRI and Repayable Town Centre Loans fund will contribute towards the overall regeneration of Blaenau Gwent by improving the viability of our town centres.

Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)

- 6.5. Consultation and engagement activity was undertaken at the outset of the TRI programme. Member engagement will continue as and when project opportunities are identified.

Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)

- 6.6. The projects and work carried out through the TRI programme and repayable Town Centre Loans are aimed at improving and upgrading our physical infrastructure that will help us to meet requirements in terms of accessibility and use. The programmes will also assist in improving the long term viability of our town centres. It will enable us to bring derelict / vacant buildings and land back in to use for the benefit of our businesses, residents and visitors.

Preventative focus

- 6.7. Derelict / vacant buildings left to further deteriorate will require greater works to bring them back into use and in cases of listed buildings the liabilities for building owners will only increase more and more until works are undertaken.

Collaboration / partnership working

- 6.8. Where possible collaborative opportunities will be pursued with property owners and funding organisations.
- 6.9. Capital projects to bring sites and premises back into use may require substantial funding to enable them to proceed. The Council needs to work with partners to identify suitable uses for such sites and premises along with those who have the potential to co-invest in delivery of projects. This is especially important where TRI is the only funding source available.

Integration (across service areas)

- 6.10. The projects being delivered shall cut across a number of service areas and as they are developed appropriate governance and project management arrangements across the multi-disciplinary teams required will be established.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.1. A number of monitoring arrangements are in place to monitor performance of the projects. These include:
- Quarterly performance reporting (Business Plan internal reporting);
 - Six monthly monitoring reports to Welsh Government.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Environment, Economic Development and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Report, 12 September 2018*
- *Regeneration Scrutiny Report, 5th March 2020*

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Agenda Item 15

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 09.12.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 09.02.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **24th February 2021**

Report Subject: **Employment Park, Lime Avenue – Progress Update**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr D Davies, Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development**

Report Submitted by: **Owen Ashton, Service Manager Business & Regeneration**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	10.12.20	09.02.21			06.01.21	24.02.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a Progress Update on the Employment Park, Lime Avenue, Works Site, Ebbw Vale.

2. Scope and Background

Background

- 2.1 The Employment Park, Lime Avenue is a 4.38-acre site located at the south of the Works Site, Ebbw Vale. The site has planning permission for the construction of 6 units with a Net Development Area of approximately 17,755-sqm.
- 2.2 Funding of £2.58m has been secured from WEFO and attempts have been made to secure further funding from Welsh Government via Tech Valleys to deliver the approved scheme.
- 2.3 Following discussions with Tech Valleys and discussions with Coalfields Regeneration Trust (CRT) on other projects, CRT have made enquiries to deliver property related projects at the Works Site and expressed an interest in developing the Employment Park. Working collaboratively with the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO), Welsh Government (WG) and CRT, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) has sought to develop a deliverable scheme at the site.

Current Position

- 2.4 Under the CRT delivery model, the site would be acquired by CRT and their internal Property Team design, procure and manage the works on site and, once constructed, the units are let with a proportion of any profits reinvested locally.

- 2.5 CRT propose that they will need to re-design the current approved proposal in line with similar developments that they have successfully delivered elsewhere. Detailed costs are currently being established, with an outline cost estimate in the region of around £8m. CRT are in discussions with Welsh Government to secure a Property Development Grant and utilising the WEFO funding to deliver the scheme.
- 2.6 Further work is needed to ensure a suitable and appropriate design at a gateway to the Works Site; this will be facilitated through the Planning process. Along with the designs of the buildings themselves, additional site investigation work will be required to inform the type of foundation required, both of which will have an impact on the cost of the scheme.
- 2.7 The parcel of land is owned freehold by BGCBC and discussions are ongoing with CRT to confirm the nature of the disposal. Likewise, further work is being undertaken to ensure that CRT activities complement the work of BGCBC Regeneration in relation to skills training and support for businesses
- 2.80 Fundamentally, the project represents an excellent opportunity to continue the development of the Works Site, delivering a collaborative project which will support local businesses and residents.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 Option 1 – Members to accept the content of the report.
- 3.2 Option 2 – Members to not accept the content of the report

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

- 4.1 This project supports the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-22 Outcome Statements:
- Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities
 - Support a fairer sustainable economy and community
- 4.2 The Council's Well-being Plan for 2018-23 includes 5 Objectives. This project directly supports the objectives of creating 'safe and friendly communities' and 'forge new pathways to prosperity'.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget***

BGCB has already undertaken design work and site investigations and it is proposed that the costs which have already been incurred will be absorbed into the funding package for the project – this has been accepted in principle by CRT.

5.3 **Risk**

Officers will continue to work with CRT, WEFO and the WG to mitigate risks to BGCBC, much of which will be worked through the Planning approval process (as the current designs are proposed to be revised). Should the scheme not proceed, the expenditure which has already been incurred, including design work and site investigations, will need to be covered by existing budgets and the site will likely remain undeveloped for some time and the loss of the £2.58m from the area. Running alongside this, there is potential risk of reputational damage to the Council should the scheme not proceed, with the Council seen to be not 'delivering' a project – this could have implications for future funding for projects.

5.4 **Legal**

A disposal agreement will need to be entered into with CRT which will be overseen by the BGCBC Estates team.

5.5 **Human Resources**

Staff within the Regeneration and Estates will work collaboratively to bring the scheme to fruition.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

The project is based on a robust analysis of data and information which has established a demand for the project.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

The project provides an excellent opportunity for existing and new businesses within Blaenau Gwent to establish and grow on the Works Site and for residents to access training locally.

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

The project has the potential to deliver a key site forming part of the Works Masterplan, working with a Third Sector partner to provide premises for local businesses.

6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**

The project has the ability to increase the range of premises available to local businesses and a pathway for growth in the area.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

The project will ensure that WEFO funding of £2.58m is not lost to the area and a range of new premises are created for businesses and social enterprises.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

The project can be seen as an excellent example of collaborative and partnership working between BGCBC, WEFO, Welsh Government and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust in delivering high quality premises that supports the regeneration of the county borough.

6.7 Integration (across service areas)

Consultation has been undertaken across Planning and Regeneration and the initial designs and development work has been completed by Tech Services.

6.8 EqIA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)

An Equalities Impact Assessment screening is currently being undertaken.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 To be confirmed.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

N/A

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