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THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

7th April 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Executive Committee will be held in Virtually Via Microsoft Teams (if you would like to attend this meeting live via Microsoft Teams please contact committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) on Wednesday, 14th April, 2021 at 10.00 am.

Yours faithfully

Michelle Morris
Managing Director

AGENDA

Pages

1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided if requested.

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

Municipal Offices
Civic Centre
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6XB

Swyddfeydd Bwrdeisiol
Canolfan Dinesig
Glyn Ebwy
NP23 6XB

a better place to live and work
lle gwell i fyw a gweithio

2. APOLOGIES

To receive.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND
DISPENSATIONS**

To receive.

MINUTES

4. SPECIAL EXECUTIVE

7 - 10

To consider the Minutes of the Special Executive held on 24th March, 2021.

DECISION ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS

5. GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS

To receive the report.

**6. PUBLIC SPACE CCTV SYSTEM ANNUAL
MONITORING REPORT 2020**

11 - 98

To consider the report of the Chief Officer Resources, Head of Community Services and Interim Chief Officer Commercial.

DECISION ITEMS - EDUCATION MATTERS

**7. EAS BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2022
(DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION)**

99 - 132

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Education.

**8. BLAENAU GWENT EDUCATION ADMISSIONS
POLICY FOR NURSERY AND
STATUTORY EDUCATION 2022/23**

133 - 166

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Education.

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

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----------|
| 9. | <u>DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE</u> | 167 - 198 |
| | To consider the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services. | |
| 10. | <u>CIVIC CROWDFUNDING</u> | 199 - 210 |
| | To consider the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services. | |
| 11. | <u>ADVANCED ENGINEERING CENTRE & MTC REPORT</u> | 211 - 232 |
| | To consider the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services. | |

DECISION ITEMS - SOCIAL SERVICES MATTERS

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----------|
| 12. | <p><u>REVISED SAFE REDUCTION OF CHILDREN
LOOKED AFTER STRATEGY 2020 - 2025</u></p> <p>To consider the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.</p> | 233 - 254 |
|-----|--|-----------|

DECISION ITEMS - ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----------|
| 13. | <u>POSITION REPORT FLY GRAZING HORSES</u> | 255 - 264 |
| | To consider the report of the Corporate Director
Regeneration and Community Services. | |

MONITORING ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES

- | | | |
|---|--|-----------|
| 14. | <u>REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING -2020/2021,</u>
<u>FORECAST OUTTURN TO 31 MARCH 2021</u>
<u>(AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2020)</u> | 265 - 318 |
| <p>To consider the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> | | |

15. **CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, FORECAST FOR
2020/2021 FINANCIAL YEAR
(AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020)** 319 - 340

To consider the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

16. **USE OF GENERAL AND EARMARKED RESERVES
2020/2021** 341 - 350

To consider the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

MONITORING ITEMS - EDUCATION

17. **ESTYN THEMATIC REVIEW –
BLAENAU GWENT'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19** 351 - 370

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Education.

18. **WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS (WPLS)
ANNUAL RETURN 2019/20** 371 - 384

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Education.

MONITORING ITEMS - SOCIAL SERVICES

19. **CHILDREN'S SERVICES RESPONSE TO
VULNERABLE CHILDREN DURING THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC** 385 - 390

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.

20. EXEMPT ITEM

To receive and consider the following report which in the opinion of the proper officer is/are an exempt item taking into account consideration of the public interest test and that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting (the reason for the decision for the exemption is available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).

DECISION ITEM - SOCIAL SERVICES

21. UPDATE ON LEGAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH CHILDRENS SERVICES 391 - 398

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.

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

All other Members (for information)
Manager Director
Chief Officers

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT: SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 24TH MARCH, 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: Chief Officer Resources
 Corporate Director Education
 Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	

No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>No apologies for absence were received.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor J. Mason – Item No. 6 – Minutes of the Grants Working Group (Welsh Church Fund) (Winchestown OAP Association)</p>	
	<p><u>MINUTES</u></p>	
No. 4	<p><u>SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd February, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 24th February, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	

	<u>DECISION ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS</u>	
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No. 6	<u>MINUTES OF THE GRANTS WORKING GROUP</u>	
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Consideration was given to the minutes of the Grant Working Group held on 10th March, 2021.

The Leader referred to the Minutes and advised that the Working Group had agreed a consistent approach in terms of grant allocations be undertaken across the various applicant groups unless a lower specific amount had been requested by an organisation. This rationale was used for Churches, Chapels and Museums and the OAPs, Community Centres and Tenants and Residents accordingly

The Leader advised that a grant application had been declined for a sporting association as it was felt if sport groups were supported via this route it would impact the beneficiaries such as churches, chapels, etc.

The Leader wished to express his thanks to the officers on the good work undertaken in ensuring these grants were agreed prior to the 31st March in line with deadlines.

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

No. 7	<u>GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS</u>	
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Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

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

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Agenda Item 6

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 26.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 29.03.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th April 2021**

Report Subject: **Public Space CCTV System Annual Monitoring Report 2020**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr N Daniels, Leader of the Council**

Report Submitted by: **Rhian Hayden, Chief Officer Resources (SIRO CCTV)**
Clive Rogers, Head of Community Services
Bernadette Elias, Interim Chief Officer Commercial

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
X	X	23.03.21			5 Mar 21	14 Apr 21		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
To present the Council's draft Public Space CCTV Annual Monitoring Report 2020 covering the period 1 September 2019 – 31 December 2020.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Council operates a Public Space Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) system as part of its lead responsible authority role for Community Safety.
 - 2.2 Since 2018, Blaenau Gwent Council has utilised the [12 guiding principles](#) contained within the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's Code of Practice, to support the development of a holistic approach to raising its standards and compliance. Part of these expectations include responsible authorities carrying out a regular reporting process (annually).
 - 2.3 The Report attached at Appendix 1, is the first Council report in-line with the above expectations and covers the period 1st September 2019 to 31st December 2020.
 - 2.4 The report demonstrates the Council's progress made on the journey to compliance with the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's CCTV Codes of Practice, and includes:
 - An overview of the legal and policy framework for CCTV, including the work progressed for the local Code of Practice (Appendix 2);
 - Progress made to comply with the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's expectations, and their recent recommendations for local authorities in England and Wales from a 2020 compliance exercise
 - An assessment of the effectiveness of the current public space CCTV camera scheme; and
 - a forward work programme to further raise standards and compliance (provided at Appendix J of the Annual Monitoring Report).

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1**

That the Committee considers and approves the Annual Monitoring Report (including its supporting appendices). Following which the report will be published and sent to the Surveillance Camera Commissioner.

3.2 **Option 2**

That the Committee considers the Annual Monitoring Report (including its supporting appendices) and provides specific comments prior to approval. Following which the report will be published and sent to the Surveillance Camera Commissioner.

3.3 This report was considered by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on 5th March 2021, the committee support Option 2 and also added the following recommendation for consideration by the Executive Committee:

the Committee further recommend that the Executive Committee investigate the possibilities of extra funding for the system in liaison with the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and a paper be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee to review the equality of provision across the County Borough.

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

Key progress and activity outlined in the report make valued contributions to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities
- Support a fairer sustainable economy and community
- To enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities
- An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities

This report is informed and shaped by statutory requirements under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and its amending legislation, the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (PoFA), which introduced the regulation of public space surveillance cameras and the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's 'Surveillance Camera Code of Practice'.

The report articulates the ways that CCTV is used by the Council and its Partners that make valued contributions to a number of the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan objectives, with a sharp focus on 'Safe and friendly communities'.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 ***Impact on Budget***

The 2020/21 revenue budget set aside for CCTV was £84,000. The budget is committed, and was used to part fund a CCTV Policy Officer to support the compliance review process and the purchase of additional IT equipment to support home working.

5.1.1 Further the maintenance for the CCTV system has proven to be more time consuming than predicted, particularly at the early stages of the system being operational. This has been due to a number of different factors, such as the integration of newer technology on old existing infrastructure (water ingress etc.), damage to Wi-Fi transmitting equipment, necessary reconfigurations of electrical supplies to alternative sources as a consequence of change of ownership of the buildings. These matters were resolved within budget.

5.1.2 Technical Services have identified broadband connectivity to the main viewing centre does drop out on occasion due to issues with local router. Exploratory work is being undertaken to investigate feasibility and costs of increasing data speeds to local hub sites.

5.1.3 Over and above the above noted challenges, there are a number of further technical issues that affect performance of the CCTV system, most notably:

- Broadband connectivity of the Council's Designated CCTV Operator accessing the network to view live feed of cameras.
- Transient Wi-Fi and power fluctuations issues affecting reliability of CCTV units and the system.
- Wi-Fi connection download speeds are slower compared to a hardwire broadband system which hinders the speed of downloading footage for the user.

5.1.4 As a result of the technical issues, some of which are ongoing, Technical Services are increasingly reliant on the maintenance contractor to manually download footage directly from cameras in order to provide footage promptly upon receipt of a lawful request, which come with cost implication. These matters were resolved within budget.

5.2 ***Risk***

There are many risks associated with being a public sector 'CCTV System Owner' of a public space surveillance camera scheme. The Local Authority as a 'relevant authority' must have regard to the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice. Should any criminal or civil proceedings arise, a court or tribunal may, in particular, may take into account a failure by a relevant authority to have regard to the surveillance camera code in determining a question in any such proceedings.

5.2.1 The legislative landscape that surveillance cameras occupy is very complex. The known risks are mitigated by the Council as they prioritise delivery of key requirements identified in the Surveillance Camera

Commissioner's 'Surveillance Camera Code of Practice', which was developed in partnership with the Information Commissioner's Office.

- 5.2.2 The Code draws all relevant legislation governing the use of surveillance cameras into one place, and therefore also acts as a good practice guide. In taking this holistic policy to practice approach, the progress made on its journey to raise its standards and compliance are set out in the Report.

5.3 **Legal**

The Annual Monitoring Report sets out the ways in which the Council is complying with the legal requirements arising from the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice.

- 5.3.1 Where necessary the Council considers the use of intrusive overt surveillance cameras in public places, whenever it evidences that use is:

- in pursuit of a legitimate aim;
- necessary to meet a pressing need;
- proportionate;
- effective, and compliant with any relevant legal obligations

- 5.3.2 To guide the Council through the legal and practical requirements to comply with the above, the Council completed the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) for each of its seven CCTV Zones, which are reviewed annually or at any point when changes to the CCTV system are deemed necessary.

- 5.3.3 However, it is noted that COVID-19 pressures also impacted on the Council's CCTV journey to compliance, which led to a delay in the production of this CCTV Annual Monitoring Report and a delay in the annual review of the DPIAs, which were finally reviewed and signed off by the SIRO in January 2020.

5.4 **Human Resources**

The senior responsible officer for the Council is the Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO), the Chief Officer Resources, who is responsible for authorising the use of the public space surveillance cameras and for authorising any changes to the function of the CCTV Scheme.

- 5.4.1 The Council's Technical Services Team has project managed the tendering, design, and implementation of the Council's CCTV's system, and continues to provide the full technical expertise and support required to maintain the effective operational functioning of the CCTV system.

- 5.4.2 The Policy Team (Community Safety) has led on the development of the policy to practice framework to ensure the Council's compliance with the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice. The Team has further provided 24/7 operational support to manage all 'lawful requests' received for CCTV data, ensuring the Police receive evidence bags to support their investigations.

- 5.4.3 COVID-19 regulations for Wales, have seen a number of local and national lockdowns and significant business restrictions, given Blaenau Gwent's reported high COVID rates when compared against other Welsh Local Authorities.
- 5.4.4 In light of COVID-19, like many of the public sectors including those across the criminal justice system, the Council experienced significant disruption in terms of staffing and delivery of its services during most of 2020. In response, the Community Safety Team worked from home throughout, which impacted of the effectiveness of delivering a CCTV service (i.e. home broadband issues etc.). On two occasions during the COVID period, it became necessary for only very serious criminality or disorder to be dealt with by the designated CCTV Operators.
- 5.4.5 Further the Council experienced technical issues arising outside of their control, which reduced the availability of other Council staff and contractual staff to address such issues, though every effort was taken to minimize any disruption.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

The following performance information and data, unless stated otherwise, covers the period 1 September 2019 to 31 December 2020.

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

- 6.1.1 **Elected Member Engagement:** Between September 2019 and September 2020 there were five occasions where CCTV was considered within the meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

On the 3 & 5 February 2021 Member engagement sessions were attended by thirty-five elected members, providing the opportunity for them to have their say on the Council's journey towards compliance with the SCC's Camera Code of Practice. The responses to the subsequent member consultation are contained in the CCTV Annual Monitoring Report, however some of the key points raised were:

- Consideration whether the Council has sufficient number of CCTV cameras.
- Queries about the perceived effectiveness of the current CCTV camera system and the perceived benefits of monitoring 24/7.
- A need to understand how the Council's deployable cameras will be used.
- Queries in relation to how some council service areas are dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour, and how CCTV could be used
- Broadly accepted that CCTV is not the panacea and should be part of a wide-ranging community safety partnership response to crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Members recognising the value of more engagement sessions on the journey to compliance.

- 6.1.2 **CCTV Evidence Requests:** Between 1st September 2019 – 31st December 2020 the Council received 103 requests for CCTV footage. Of the 103 requests for footage, 85 were lawful requests made by the Police, and of the 85 requests the Council provided 34 evidence packets to the Police to support their investigation.

Overall, of the 103 requests, there were 66 occasions when CCTV footage was unavailable.

- 6.1.3 During the elected member engagement sessions, it was acknowledged that the Council could explore the opportunity to broaden the intelligence and evidence base, to include Local Authority recorded crime and anti-social behaviour and community intelligence alongside the Police recorded data. This would place the Council in a better place to understand that richer picture of community safety across Blaenau Gwent.

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

The Council uses its CCTV system as a valued resource to create 'Safe and friendly communities' by working in partnership with the public, Police and partners to reduce crime and disorder and increase public safety.

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

When the Council brought its CCTV system back in-house, there was extensive involvement and consultation with Gwent Police who also represented views from town centres traders, to determine the pressing need and identify the most appropriate CCTV Camera Zones.

Gwent Police were fully engaged in the service provision arrangements for CCTV imagery requests during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As noted earlier in the report, on the 3 & 5 February 2021 Member engagement sessions were attended by thirty-five elected members, providing the opportunity for them to have their say on the Council's journey towards compliance with the SCC's Camera Code of Practice.

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

The new CCTV system utilises up-to-date hi-tech equipment and software which will provide a long-term CCTV solution, as long as there is appropriate investment in the running, upkeep and maintenance of the overall system.

The ongoing SIRO oversight and the preparation of a CCTV Annual Monitoring Report will allow for forward planning and technological advancement to be regularly considered.

6.5 ***Preventative***

The Council in delivering its core business and through its contribution to Partnership working, employs a strong focus on early intervention and prevention strategies and working practices. Whilst its CCTV system records passively, its presence may act as a crime deterrent in some cases.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Council's passive overt surveillance camera system relies on strong partnership working between the public, the Police and the Council: The public to report crime and anti-social behaviour, the Police to investigate and the Council to support those investigations. However, CCTV is merely one resource the Council has at its disposal to address any public safety matter that arises and there are an extensive network of partnerships and collaborations that make significant contributions to community safety in Blaenau Gwent.

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

The effective delivery of the CCTV system is supported by a number of departments of the Council. As noted CCTV is not a panacea, but a valued resource that can be utilised when we have exhausted the less intrusive methods of addressing public safety issues.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act, created the opportunity for the Council to undertake an extensive review of its departmental contributions to public and community safety. These contributions are integrated into our strategies, policies, service design and working practices.

6.8 ***EqIA***

As this is an annual report there is no requirement to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment. Equality Issues are considered as part of the operational delivery of the service.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The SIRO, Chief Officer Resources, has an established officer group who will continue to monitor the Council's progress on its journey to compliance with the Codes of Practice.

The CCTV Annual Monitoring Report will form part of the Committee's forward work programme for 2021.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix One: Public Space CCTV System: Annual Monitoring Report
Appendix Two: Public Space CCTV System: Code of Practice

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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Public Space CCTV System

Annual Monitoring Report
2020

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Public Space CCTV System

Annual Monitoring Report *2020*

Key Note: *This report covers the period 1 September 2019 to 31 December 2020, and takes into account the period of time of the COVID-19 Pandemic when policies, operations and practices were significantly affected.*

For further details in relation to this Annual Report please contact:

Policy Team

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Municipal Offices

Civic Centre

Ebbw Vale

Blaenau Gwent

NP23 6XB

CCTV@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Executive Summary

Senior Information Risk Officer Assurance Statement

As the Senior Information Risk Officer for Blaenau Gwent County Borough I am pleased to present this CCTV Annual Monitoring Report. The Report demonstrates the Council's progress made on our journey to compliance with the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's CCTV Codes of Practice.

The Council wholly funds, manages and operates fifty-seven CCTV cameras (53 fixed and 4 deployable units), in seven zones across the County Borough. We recognise that CCTV is not a panacea, but is a valued tool that we have at our disposal to make a significant contribution to public safety.

The effectiveness of CCTV relies on partnership working between the public, the Police and the Council. Where crimes or anti-social behaviour occur, the public must have the confidence to report these incidents to the Police and where appropriate the Council. The Police and Council will work in partnership with the public and other partners to consider the most appropriate, proportionate and necessary response to the community safety matters being reported, which may include the use of the Council's CCTV system. However, the law-abiding public should have confidence that the Council may need to legitimately record them going about their daily business in specified locations.

This report seeks to be more open and transparent about our compliance journey and to highlight the effectiveness of the Council's overt Public Space CCTV system as a valued resource to support partnership working.

The report also highlights key areas of future development on our continuous journey of improvement set out Appendix J.

Rhian Hayden
Chief Finance Officer (SIRO)
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Introduction

In response to the introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and its amending legislation, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council became a lead responsible authority for Community Safety. As such they are required to work in partnership with other key public services to do all they reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder, anti-social, other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment, address the misuse of drugs, alcohol or other substances, and reoffending. To support the broader commitment to work in partnership to address such matters, the Council became the 'system owner' of an overt public space surveillance camera scheme.

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (PoFA) introduced the regulation of public space surveillance cameras in England and Wales and the Home Office appointed a Surveillance Camera Commissioner, a role that is independent of government.

The Council must have due regard to, and comply with, the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's 'Surveillance Camera Code of Practice', developed in partnership with the Information Commissioner's Office, which aims to balance the need for cameras in public places with individual's right to privacy. The legislative landscape that surveillance cameras occupy is complex, however the Code draws all relevant legislation governing the use of surveillance cameras into one place, and therefore also acts as a good practice guide.

In June 2014, the Council commissioned Newport City Council to manage their CCTV surveillance camera scheme, which was then physically monitored 24/7 from the Newport CCTV Control Room.

In October 2018, the Council agreed to bring its camera surveillance scheme back 'in-house' early 2019 following the termination of a Service Level Agreement. However, this meant that for the first time, the CCTV scheme was reduced from a 24/7 monitored system, to a 'record only' system. The initial, and current locations of the CCTV cameras and zones were agreed in consultation with Gwent Police.

Since 2018, the Council has utilised the 12 guiding principles (Appendix A) contained within the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's Code of Practice, to support the development of a holistic approach to raising its standards and compliance. In taking this approach, the Council anticipates that individuals and wider communities have confidence that any deployment of its surveillance cameras are to deemed a necessary and proportionate response to protect and support them.

This CCTV Annual Monitoring Report covers the period 1 September 2019 to 31 December 2020 and covers the Council's journey to compliance. The report will:

- Provide an overview of the legal and policy framework for CCTV;
- Assess progress made to comply with the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice;
- Undertake an assessment of the effectiveness of the current CCTV overt fixed camera scheme; and
- Establish the forward work programme to further raise standards and compliance with the Codes of Practice.

Blaenau Gwent Public Space CCTV Surveillance Camera Scheme

The senior responsible officer for the Council is the Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO), who is responsible for authorising the use of the public space surveillance cameras and for authorising any changes to the function of the CCTV Scheme.

The Council's Community Safety Team is responsible for the policy and operational management of the CCTV Scheme; supported by Technical Services. The Team works very closely with the Office of the Gwent Police Crime Commissioner to support the delivery of the Gwent Police and Crime Plan. Further, key departments of the Council work with Gwent Police as part of the local multi-agency Community Safety Hub, monitoring all matters relating to public safety.

Partners within the Hub use many sources of intelligence and evidence to inform the problem-orientated approach to deal with public safety matters. Information is shared safely and legally under the Wales Accord of the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI) 'Information Sharing Protocol'. This approach involves assessment of vulnerability, threat, risk and harm and need, which is used to inform a series of holistic action plans. This bespoke arrangement could include, proactive education and prevention, intervention and support, which could include sign-posting to treatment. Only where necessary and proportionate, the Council and its partners will consider a broader range of legal powers and more intrusive means to manage the situation.

In the vast majority of cases, through proactive engagement with victims and their families, members of the community, elected members and offenders themselves, the partners are able to make more informed decisions on the employment of resources to resolve or address the community safety concerns. For this reason, it should be noted that CCTV is not a panacea, and is merely one tool in the extensive toolkit that the Council, Police and partner agencies can use to address public safety. However, there are times when the matters that need to be resolved, require legitimate consideration of more intrusive means through the use of CCTV, which in certain circumstances can make a valued contribution to public safety and security in protecting people and property.

Such circumstances rely on good partnership working between the public, the Police and the Council. For instance, the Council, wholly funds and manages all aspects of its CCTV security and system and operationally deploys them in agreed crime 'hotspot' locations; members of the public or local businesses report crime and anti-social behaviour incidents to the Police; and the Police determine what actions to take to investigate such issues. If the crimes and anti-social behaviour occur in areas where CCTV operate the Police will make lawful requests to the council for the CCTV footage to aid their investigations, and bring offenders to justice. For an example of how this works in practice, see Appendix I 'A Case Study'.

It is noted that a lawful request can also be received from other Public Authorities, legal and insurance companies or from members of the public under a Subject Access Request process. Under the current arrangements, subject to meeting the requirements, designated Council CCTV Operators from the Community Safety Team access the CCTV System, downloads the specified data and safely and legally shares the data with the approved parties.

Where CCTV is proposed as a potential option, the Council will consider the use of overt surveillance cameras in public places, whenever it evidences that use is:

- in pursuit of a legitimate aim;
- necessary to meet a pressing need;
- proportionate;
- effective, and compliant with any relevant legal obligations.

To guide the Council through the legal and practical requirements to comply with the above, the Council completes the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) for each CCTV Zone. The DPIAs will be published on the Council website and are reviewed annually or at any point when changes to the CCTV system are deemed necessary.

Blaenau Gwent Council currently operates fifty-three High Definition (up to 4K quality), fixed overt public space surveillance cameras, installed on 32 columns, in the following seven zones (Appendix B):

- Abertillery – 15
- Llanhilleth Train Station – 3
- Blaina – 2
- Brynmawr – 6
- Ebbw Vale – 12
- Cwm – 3
- Tredegar and Cefn Golau – 12

The CCTV system is operational 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The system is not 'live' monitored by staff and functions as a 'record-only' system. Images from each hub are transmitted by standard broadband lines to the Main viewing facility located within the Civic Centre; which allows footage to be reviewed and downloaded when requested by the Council's designated CCTV Operators.

The dedicated wireless system consists of wireless mesh network. Where wireless network is unavailable due to location of the CCTV camera, a 4G mobile data network has been utilised for data transmission. The Council's 4G camera locations are:

- Blaina
- Cefn Golau, Tredegar
- Armoury Terrace, Ebbw Vale.

The 53 cameras have no pan, zoom or tilt facility and are therefore passive in respect of recording whatever is within the field of view. For this reason, public confidence to report crimes and significant anti-social behaviour within the CCTV zones, is essential to support the Police or enforcement agency investigations.

As well as the fixed 53 CCTV cameras, the Council has four deployable cameras. These are currently in test phase with Technical Services.

Each CCTV Zone is covered by the presence of bi-lingual signs (Welsh and English). The signs are placed so that the public are aware that they are entering a zone which is covered by surveillance cameras. The signs state the organisation responsible for the scheme, the purposes of the scheme and a contact telephone number.

The current DPIAs identifies that the specified purpose for the current CCTV system is to assist with the following objectives:

- The preservation of life and limb, to minimise the risk of harm to the vulnerable and public at large.
- The prevention and detection of crime.
- The investigation of crime by identifying offenders, potential victims and witnesses.
- The prosecution of offenders.
- The tendering of video and still images in evidence to the Police, other Law Enforcement Agencies and relevant Local Authority Departments for use in the Criminal Justice System.
- To reduce Anti-Social Behaviour.
- To promote the objectives of Gwent's Police and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan 2017-2021 and the Blaenau Gwent Community Safety Hub, to make Blaenau Gwent a safer place to live, work and visit.

The current DPIAs predominant lawful 'pressing-need' and operational requirement was evidenced from published Police crime data on <https://www.police.uk/>.

SCC's Survey of Local Authorities [England and Wales] Compliance with the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

In early 2020 the Surveillance Camera Commissioner undertook a Survey of LA compliance, the findings of which were published in October 2020¹. The SCC noted "I unequivocally support LAs having the right to legitimately use surveillance camera technologies where it's both necessary and proportionate for them to do so. The caveat to my support however is that any such use must be lawful, ethical and conducted within a clear and transparent framework of legitimacy which can be held to effective and independent account".

The Survey was to gain a better understanding as to the extent to which Local Authorities were complying with their statutory responsibilities arising from Section 33(1) of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (PoFA) and the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice, in connection with their use of overt surveillance camera systems in public places.

¹ <https://videosurveillance.blog.gov.uk/2020/10/20/survey-of-local-authorities-compliance-with-the-protection-of-freedoms-act-2012/>

In the published report the SCC made three recommendations for Local Authorities:

1. LAs should conduct a review of all surveillance camera systems they operate to establish whether those systems fall within the remit of section 29(6) PoFA. There should be processes in place that enable the LA to discharge their responsibilities effectively under the PoFA in respect of those systems and ensure they comply with the legislation.
2. LAs should ensure that effective governance arrangements are in place with all surveillance cameras they operate in public places across the breadth of their organisation.
3. LAs should consider whether there are sufficiently robust governance and oversight arrangements across the authority [...]

The above recommendations are being addressed as part of the Council's journey to compliance and progress made, contained in this Annual Monitoring Report.

CCTV Policy Developments

On our journey to compliance the Council has continued to strengthen its CCTV Policy framework. A key development during the scope of the reporting period has been the preparation of Blaenau Gwent's Public Space CCTV Code of Practice (Appendix C).

The Council's Code of Practice will be supplemented by a separate Public Space CCTV Procedure Manual, which will provide more detailed guidelines on all aspects of the day-to-day operation of the CCTV System. The Procedural Manual will be developed during 2021.

The Council currently has four deployable CCTV camera units and is working with Gwent Police and partners to implement a Problem-Orientated Partnerships model that will strengthen its partnership approach. Further the Council will develop a Deployable CCTV Camera Protocol, to aid the appropriate joint assessment of 'pressing need' to inform where justified, necessary and proportionate, the rapid deployment of deployable CCTV to address significant public safety concerns.

In the spirit of principle 3 of the SCC's Code of Practice, the Council will develop a CCTV webpage to increase the transparency around the governance of CCTV. This will build on the existing published information.

Annual Performance Monitoring Review

COVID-19 regulations for Wales, have seen a number of local and national lockdowns and significant business restrictions, given Blaenau Gwent's reported high COVID-19 rates when compared against other Welsh Local Authorities. In light of COVID-19, like many of the public sectors including those across the criminal justice system, the Council experienced significant disruption in terms of staffing and delivery of its services during most of 2020.

In response, the Community Safety Team worked from home throughout, which impacted the effectiveness of delivering a CCTV service. On two occasions during the COVID period, it became necessary for only very serious criminality or disorder to be dealt with by the designated CCTV Operators.

Further the Council experienced technical issues arising outside of their control, which reduced the availability of other Council staff and contractual staff to address such issues, though every effort was taken to minimize any disruption.

The breadth of the impact of COVID-19 within the field of public safety is yet to be determined. It is evident that the usual business model for public services was refocussed to respond to the global pandemic crisis during the response phase, and impacts will continue to affect public services going into the recovery phase.

COVID pressures also impacted on the Council's CCTV journey to compliance, which led to a delay in the production of this Annual Monitoring Report and a delay in the annual review of the DPIAs, which were finally reviewed and signed off by the SIRO in January 2020.

SIRO CCTV Meetings

The SIRO holds regular meetings with key authority leads involved in the provision or support of the policy, technical and operational aspects of the Council's CCTV system. There were four such meetings during the reporting period. The meetings allow for effective review and audit discussions of the DPIAs, and ensure we continue to make progress towards compliance and address any arising issues. The SIRO ensures timely submission of reports into the professional and political processes.

Elected Member Engagement

4 September 2019: Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee under the item Forward Work Programme agreed for a joint position statement on CCTV to be presented at a future meeting. The Agenda and Papers are published on the Council website.

19 November 2019: In response to the agreed action from the meeting of the 4 September 2019, a progress update was provided to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that a further progress report would be provided in January 2020. The Agenda and Papers are published on the Council website.

5 December 2019: Corporate Overview and Scrutiny considered the response of an action from their November meeting, 'Members requested that officers seek advice on whether a demonstration could be provided to Members'. In response the Head of Partnerships and Governance advised that this could be arranged.

12 February 2020: It is noted that the scheduled meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for January 2020 was cancelled and taken forward in February. The Committee received a 'Position Statement on the Council's CCTV system'.

11 September 2020: The Council's Overview and Scrutiny meeting received a report entitled 'Position Statement on the Council's CCTV' covering the period during the Covid-19 Pandemic from April to August 2020, which is published on the Council's website.

3 & 5 February 2021: Member engagement sessions were offered to elected members, providing the opportunity for them to have their say on the Council's journey towards compliance with the SCC's CCTV Codes of Practice. There were four sessions covering the CCTV zones within the areas of Ebbw Fach North, Ebbw Fach South, Ebbw Fawr and Sirhowy. Councillors from each of these areas attended their respective session; with total of 37 of the 42 elected members taking part.

The member engagement session included a consultation on the following questions:

- Within your area, what are the community safety issues you are experiencing?
- Looking at the current CCTV Zones, can you describe the more specific community safety issues in those areas?
- Thinking about those Zones, how would you describe the effectiveness of the CCTV to address those community safety concerns?
- Thinking about the Council's journey to compliance, can you let us know what further information on CCTV you would like to receive and in what format?

Some of the key points raised relating to the Council's journey to compliance across these sessions were:

- Consideration whether the Council has sufficient number of CCTV cameras.
- Queries about the perceived effectiveness of the current CCTV camera system and the perceived benefits of monitoring 24/7.
- A need to understand how many times the Council provided CCTV footage to the Police to help their investigations.
- A need to understand how the Council's deployable cameras will be used and how will the Police and Council departments will be able to access these.
- Queries in relation to how some council service areas are dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour, and how CCTV could be used to deal with these matters.
- A broad consensus that the Council should balance the evidence base for deployment of CCTV with Police crime data, local authority data and community intelligence.
- Broadly accepted that CCTV is not the panacea and should be part of a wide-ranging community safety partnership response to crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Members recognising the value of more engagement sessions on the journey to compliance.

It is noted that most of the above points of note are addressed within this Annual Monitoring Report, though some points will be addressed as part of the on-going compliance journey and will be subject to future member engagement sessions and formal reporting through the democratic processes.

Subject Access Requests

There have been two subject access requests during the period of evaluation, which were dealt with in a timely manner. The Council's CCTV system records personal data i.e. images of individuals, or images, which gives away information about an individual. The Council is obligated to consider any subject access request by a member of the public, for CCTV images of the individual, subject to certain conditions being met. The process for Subject Access Request is published on the Council's website.

Freedom of Information Requests

There have been no Freedom of Information (FOI) requests in relation to the CCTV scheme during the period of evaluation. The FOI process is published on the Council's website.

Complaints

During the period of evaluation there have been no recorded complaints concerning the CCTV scheme. The Council has a corporate complaints process, which is published on the Council's website.

Training

During the reporting period, two members of staff from the Policy Team have successfully completed the 5-day CCTV Industry Standard Training Course, to operate the Council's CCTV System. The Council will ensure that all designated CCTV operators will receive appropriate training to ensure minimum requirements are met.

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Statistics

In order to inform a future strategic policy direction and any proposed changes to the current CCTV camera zones, we recognise that there are limitations in only considering Police reported crime statistics.

During the elected member engagement sessions, it was acknowledged that the Council could explore the opportunity to broaden the intelligence and evidence base, to include both Local Authority recorded crime and anti-social behaviour and consider community intelligence alongside the Police recorded data. This would place the Council in a better place to understand that richer picture of public safety and community concerns across Blaenau Gwent.

Such analysis could then be used by the Council to make more informed decisions on proposed changes to the current CCTV zones. Given the tight timescales, it was recognised that this improvement in the intelligence framework would be carried into a CCTV Forward Work Programme.

Crime

At the time of preparing this report, the latest available published Police crime and anti-social behaviour data extracted from Police.UK was only available to November 2020. Therefore, the below overview focuses on crime from January 2020 to November 2020. However, in order to provide a viable comparison between calendar years 2020 and 2019, an estimate was derived for December 2020 by applying the rate of crime and ASB over the previous 11 months.

Figure 1: Crime by 'Type', 2020 Estimate Compared to 2019

Figure 1 below shows an estimate for the volume of crime in 2020, (see note above) compared to the actual volume of crime in 2019. There is an estimate reduction of 6% in overall crime in 2020 compared to 2019. The largest potential reductions are for 'vehicle crime', 'other theft' and 'shoplifting'. However, be aware this is for provisional guidance only, based on estimates and the actual differences can't be discerned at this point in time.

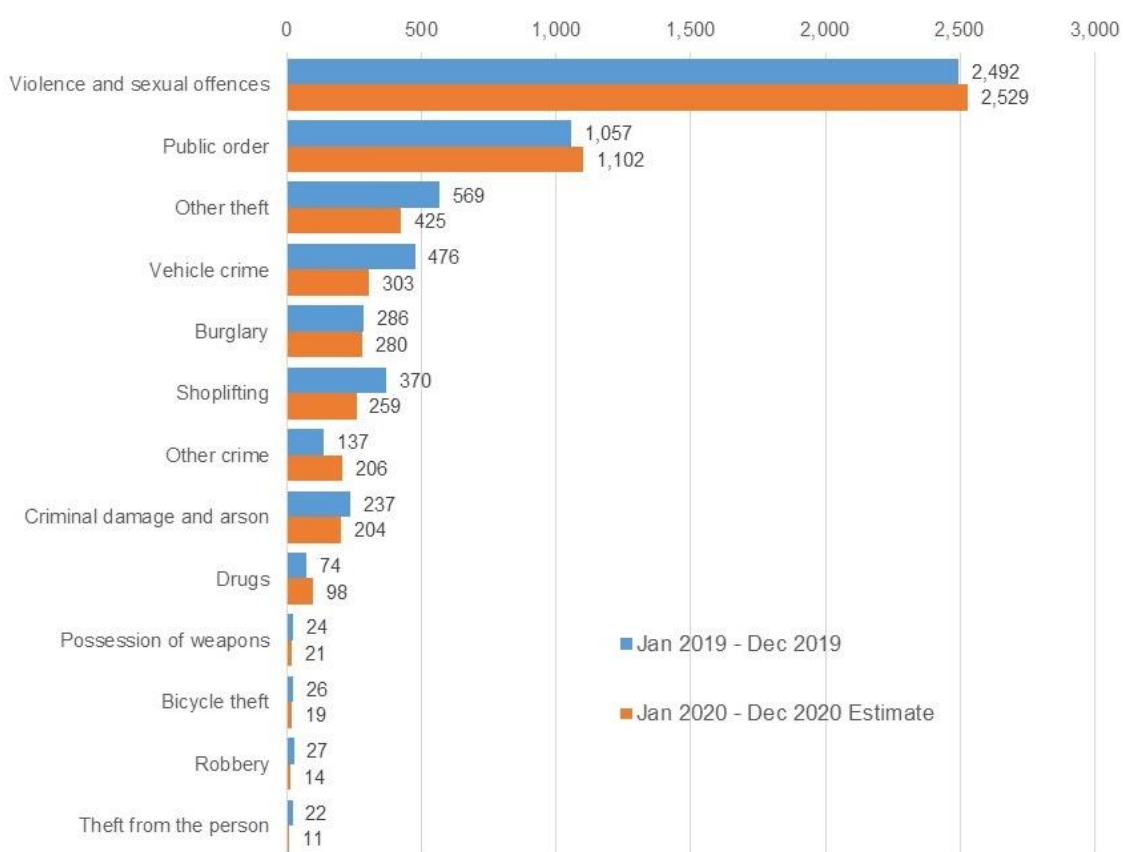
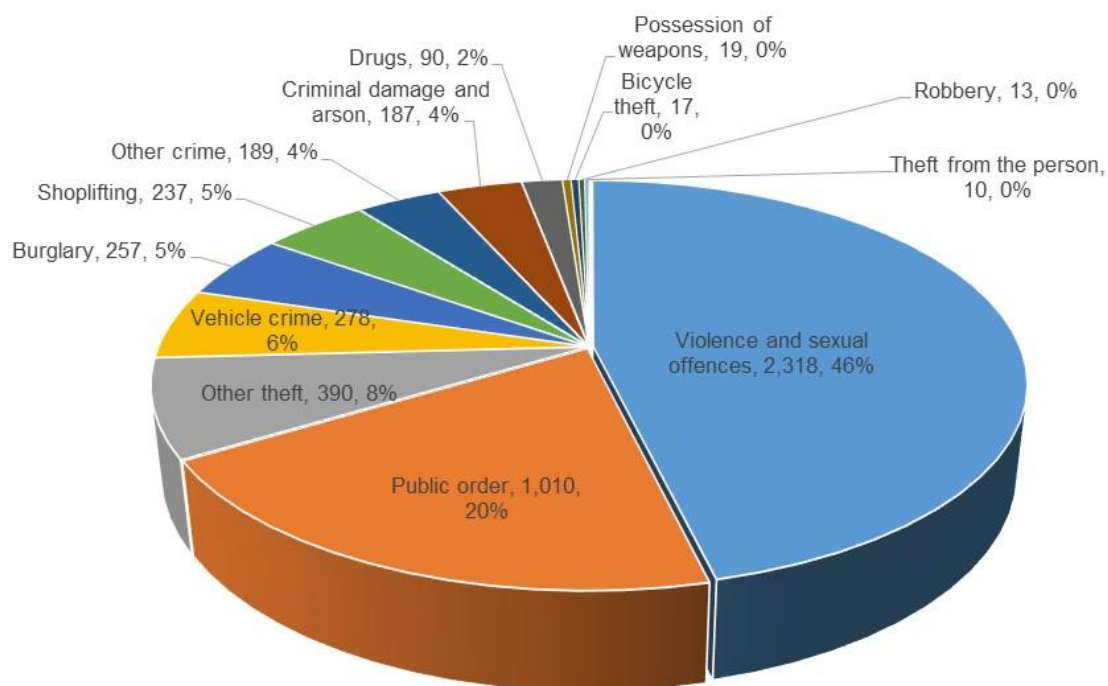


Figure 2: Crime by Type, Jan 2020 – Nov 2020

Figure 2 below shows the volume of crime by main offence type. 'Violence and sexual offences' accounted for 46% of crime (almost half) and 'public order offences' accounted for 20%. These two offence types alone accounted for 66% or two thirds of all crime.



Requests for Council CCTV Per Incident Type

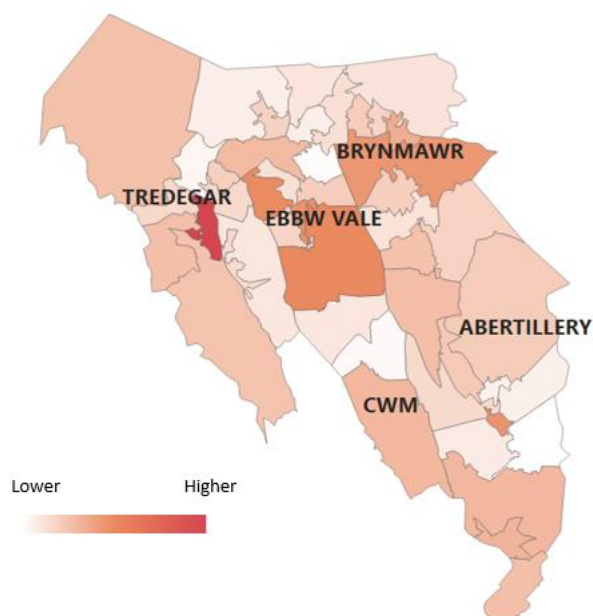
Table 1 below shows the number of times a lawful request was made the Council to CCTV to support an investigation across a number of crime and ASB incidents.

Incident Type	1 st September 2019 – 31 st December 2020
Violence and Sexual Offences	17
Public Order Offences	11
Theft Other	3
Vehicle Crime	5
Burglary	12
Shoplifting	1
Other Crime	4
Criminal Damage and Arson	17
Drugs	0
Offensive Weapons	1
Robbery	1
Theft from person	2
Road Traffic Collisions	13
Unspecified Suspicious incident	7
Anti-Social Behaviour	3
Missing Persons	3
Subject Access Request	2
Dangerous Driving	1

Figure 3: Crime by LSOA (lower super output area), Jan 2020 – Nov 2020

Figure 3 right shows the level of crime by LSOA. (lower super output area). There are 47 LSOA's in Blaenau Gwent. See Appendix D for full list of LSOA level crime and Appendix E for locations with 20 or more crimes. The LSOA's with the 6 highest number of crimes are:

- 'Tredegar Central and West 4' which experienced 341 crimes or almost 7% of all crime;
- 'Ebbw Vale South 2' (190 crimes, 3.8%);
- 'Ebbw Vale North 2' (187 crimes, 3.7%);
- 'Ebbw Vale South 3' (177 crimes, 3.7%);
- 'Abertillery 2' (177 crimes, 3.7%) and
- 'Nantyglo 1' (172 crimes, 3.4%).



Anti-Social Behaviour

There were 3,034 ASB incidents between January and November 2020 (11 months) compared to 1,513 over the full calendar year in 2019, in increase of 101% despite the shorter reporting period. Using an estimate of ASB for the full calendar year 2020 (by applying the rate of ASB over the previous 11 months) there are 3,310 incidents, a potential increase of 119% compared to 2019.

Figure4: ASB by LSOA (lower super output area), Jan 2020 – Nov 2020

Figure 4 right shows the level of ASB by LSOA (lower super output area). See Appendix F for full list of LSOA level ASB and Appendix G for locations with 20 or more ASB incidents. The LSOA's with the 5 highest number of ASB incidents account for almost one quarter (23%) of ASB. The five LSOAs are:

- 'Tredegar Central and West 4' which experienced 185 incidents or 6.1% of all ASB;
- Nantyglo 1' (144 incidents, 4.7%);
- 'Blaina 2' (129 incidents, 4.3%)
- 'Brynmaur 3' (125 incidents, 4.1%) and
- 'Ebbw Vale South 2' (114 incidents, 3.8%).

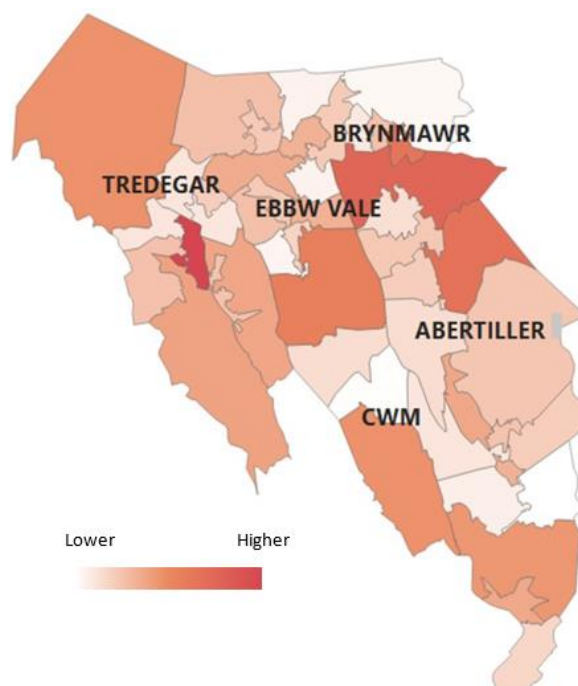


Figure 5: Anti-Social Behaviour – January 2019 to November 2020

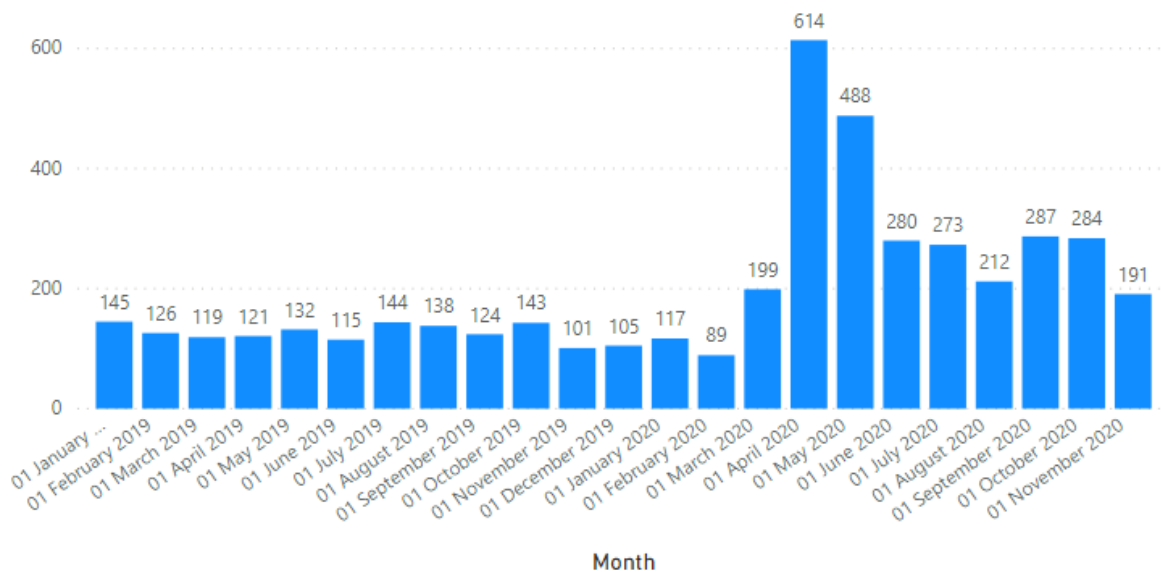


Figure 5 above shows ASB by month from January 2019 to November 2020. This shows a significant increase from March 2020 with highest numbers experienced in April 2020. Allied to the excellent weather conditions, some of this increase could be attributed to the significant changes on people's lives brought about by COVID-19 and subsequent non-compliance with regulations during lockdowns, firebreaks and local restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic - the timing of which coincides with the increased incidents.

Figure 6: Crime by 'Last Outcome Category', Jan 2020 – Nov 2020

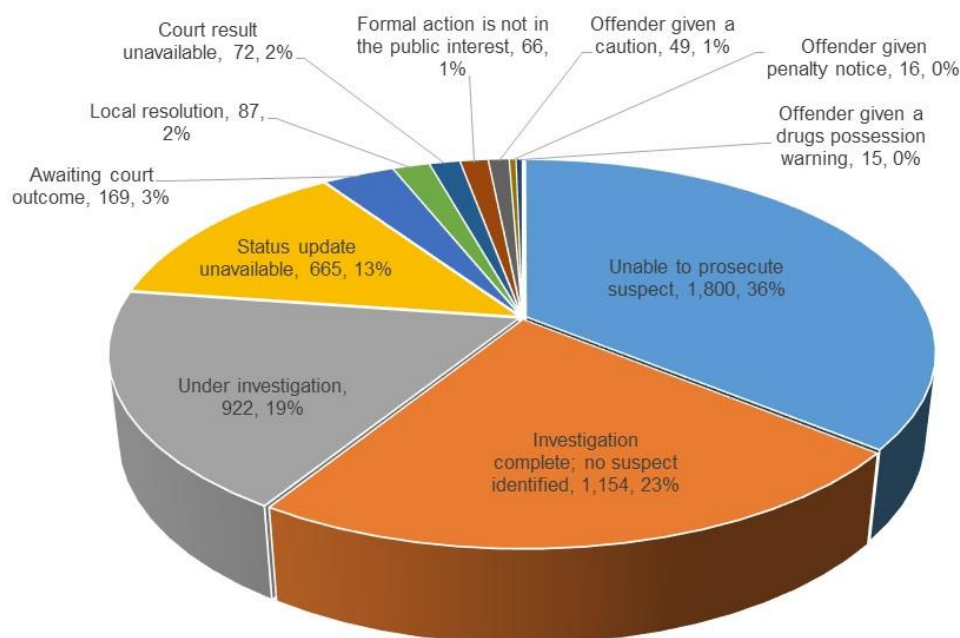


Figure 6 above shows 'last outcome category' of crime. For over a third of crimes (36%), it was not possible to prosecute the suspect, while for 23% of crimes no suspect was identified. Although at this stage, 19% of crimes were still under investigation and 3% were awaiting court outcome.

Council CCTV Provided to Aid Investigations

Table 2 below relates to the period 1 September 2019 – 31 December 2020 and the number of occasions a request was made to the Council for CCTV data, and the number of times evidence bags were provided.

Request Received From:	Number of Requests Received	Number of CCTV Evidence Bags provided
Police	85	34
Member of Public	13	1 (Subject Access Request)
Insurance	4	1
Court	1	1
Total	103	37

Note: Number presented in Appendix B will not match the figure presented above as some requests call on multiple cameras.

Occasions When Council CCTV Data Could Not Be Provided

Table 3 below identifies the number of times and reason CCTV was unavailable to share, following a request for footage. Of 103 requests, CCTV footage was unavailable on 66 occasions.

Reason	Number
The footage was not available or could not be provided for technical reasons (See below Technical Issues)	29
The request was out of the range of the CCTV cameras	13
The request was made but not pursued further by the requester - No further action	10
The footage was checked but contained nothing of evidential value	9
The request was received too late (the system had overwritten any available footage)	2
Unable to provide CCTV due to significantly reduced service during COVID	2
Request to 'live' view multiple cameras - no capacity or facility to do so.	1
Total	66

Technical Issues

Since the system has been installed the following technical issues have occurred:

- Wireless networks in each town centre needed reconfiguration to avoid interference from external Wi-Fi networks. To mitigate this the contractor proactively with the Council's Technical Services involvement arranged for the Manufacturer to attend site to advise on set-up.
- Due to age of existing CCTV columns some water ingress has occurred resulting in electrical faults. Water ingress has since been prevented and faults rectified.
- Premature failure of power supplies to Wi-Fi equipment due to manufacturing defect occurred, replacement power supplies were provided and installed.
- Broadband connectivity to main viewing centre does drop out on occasion due to issues with local router, Technical Services regularly monitor system and reset router when required. Technical Services have engaged with SRS to investigate feasibility and costs of increasing data speeds to local hub sites.
- 1 Camera fault occurred, contractor resolved during implantation.

- Damage to Wi-Fi transmitting equipment occurred in Cwm, replacement unit has been installed.
- Brynmawr, CCTV cameras electrical supply derived from old Library which has been transferred to the Brynmawr Cinema therefore electrical supply needed reconfiguration to be supplied from other source.
- Deployable required customised fabricated bracketry to allow universal mounting.
- Blaina CCTV cameras electrical supply was derived from an old council building which was sold to a third party; this resulted to a loss of supply for the cameras. Therefore, a new electrical supply was configured from a separate public supply via a feeder pillar.
- 4G (mobile transmission) cameras Cefn Golau, Tredegar.

Over and above the noted challenges, there are a number of further technical issues that affect performance of the CCTV system, most notably:

- Broadband connectivity of the Council's Designated CCTV Operator accessing the network to view live feed of cameras.
- Transient Wi-Fi and power fluctuations issues affecting reliability of CCTV units and the system.
- Wi-Fi connection download speeds are slower compared to a hardwire broadband system which has a consequence on the speed of downloading footage.

As a result of the technical issues, some of which are on-going, Technical Services are increasingly reliant on the maintenance contractor to manually download footage directly from cameras in order to provide footage promptly upon receipt of a lawful request.

Technical Services Maintenance

The maintenance for the CCTV system has proven to be more time consuming than predicted, particularly at the early stages of the system being operational. This has been due to a number of different factors, however, the main factor has been the integration of newer technology on old existing infrastructure (water ingress etc.)

Technical Services are carrying out weekly checks of all CCTV cameras to ensure units are fully powered and are in recording mode. (See attached Appendix H for weekly schedule commencing 4th January).

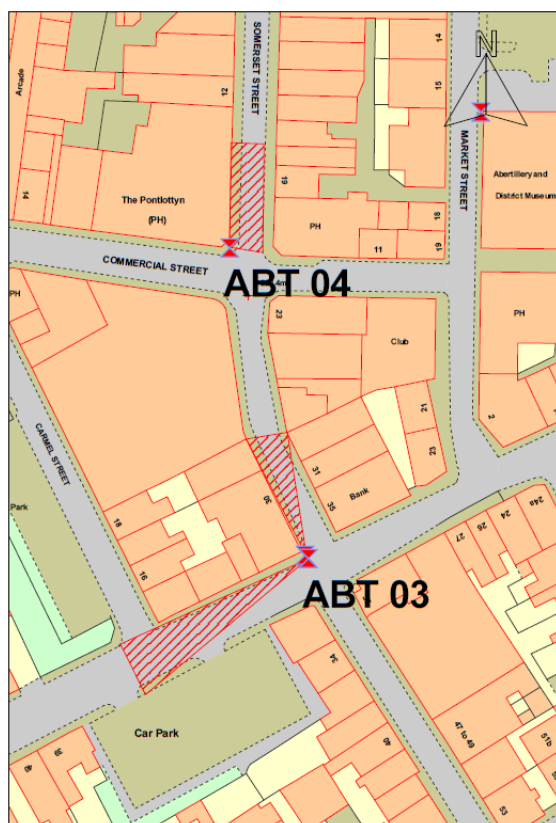
The current CCTV Contractor has been appointed to carry out an annual inspection of the system and the reactive repair and reactive maintenance of the whole system until September 2022.

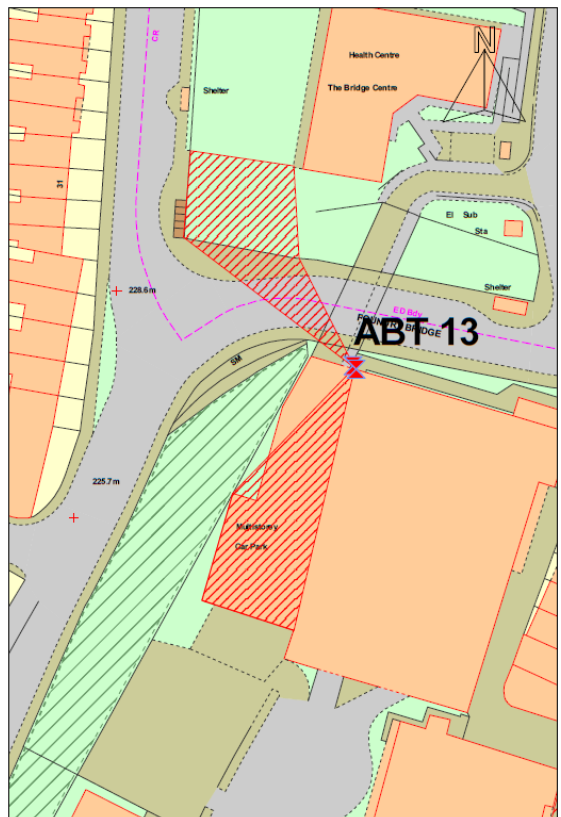
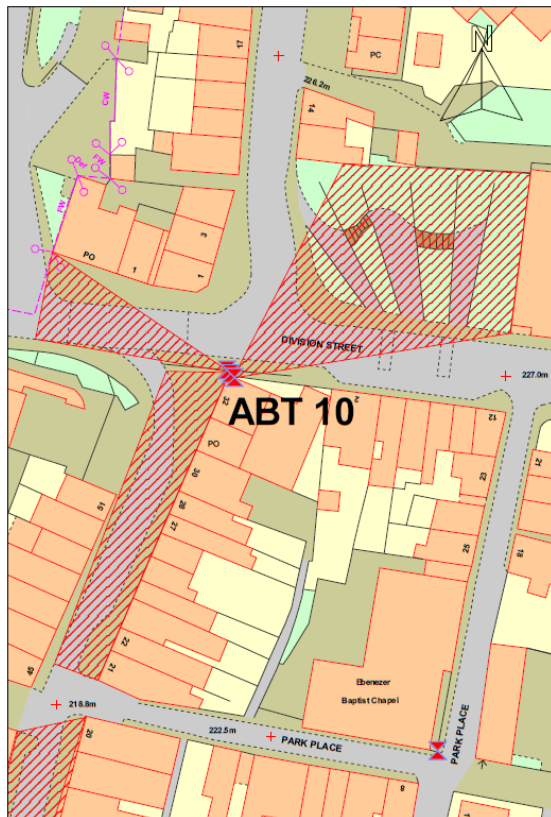
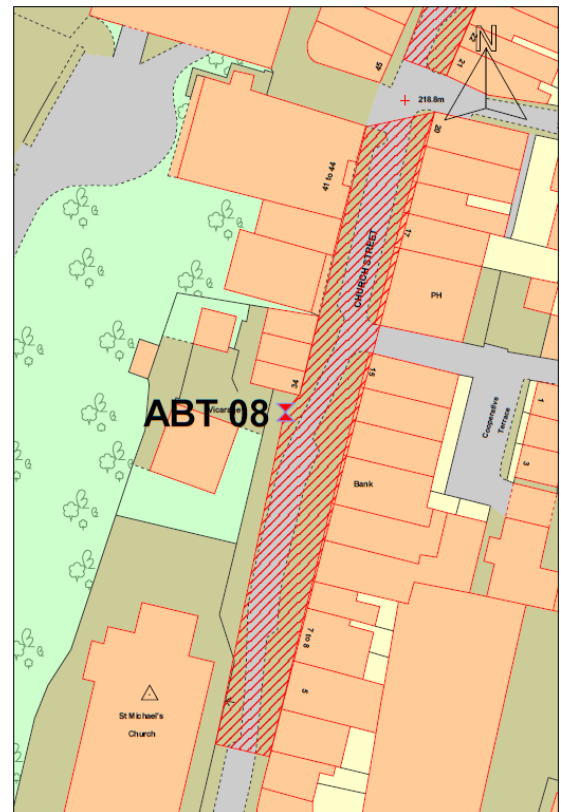
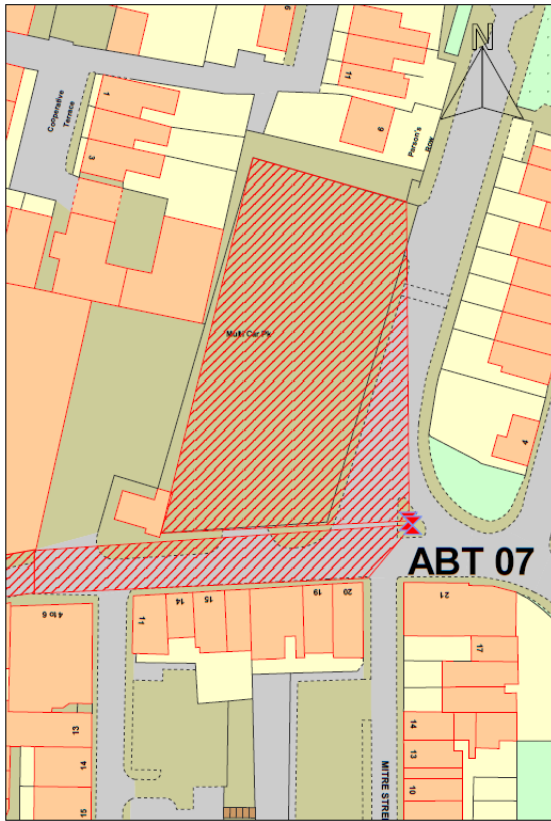
Appendix A: 12 Principles of the Code of Practice

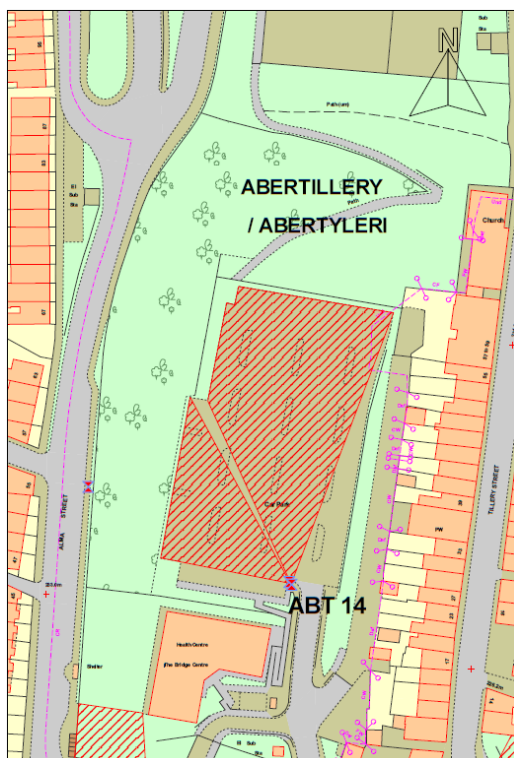
1. Use of a surveillance camera system must always be for a specified purpose which is in pursuit of a legitimate aim and necessary to meet an identified pressing need.
2. The use of a surveillance camera system must take into account its effect on individuals and their privacy, with regular reviews to ensure its use remains justified.
3. There must be as much transparency in the use of a surveillance camera system as possible, including a published contact point for access to information and complaints.
4. There must be clear responsibility and accountability for all surveillance camera system activities including images and information collected, held and used.
5. Clear rules, policies and procedures must be in place before a surveillance camera system is used, and these must be communicated to all who need to comply with them.
6. No more images and information should be stored than that which is strictly required for the stated purpose of a surveillance camera system, and such images and information should be deleted once their purposes have been discharged.
7. Access to retained images and information should be restricted and there must be clearly defined rules on who can gain access and for what purpose such access is granted; the disclosure of images and information should only take place when it is necessary for such a purpose or for law enforcement purposes.
8. Surveillance camera system operators should consider any approved operational, technical and competency standards relevant to a system and its purpose and work to meet and maintain those standards.
9. Surveillance camera system images and information should be subject to appropriate security measures to safeguard against unauthorised access and use.
10. There should be effective review and audit mechanisms to ensure legal requirements, policies and standards are complied with in practice, and regular reports should be published.
11. When the use of a surveillance camera system is in pursuit of a legitimate aim, and there is a pressing need for its use, it should then be used in the most effective way to support public safety and law enforcement with the aim of processing images and information of evidential value.
12. Any information used to support a surveillance camera system which compares against a reference database for matching purposes should be accurate and kept up to date.

Appendix B: CCTV Cameras in each Camera Zone and Requests for Footage between 1st September 2019 – 31st December 2020

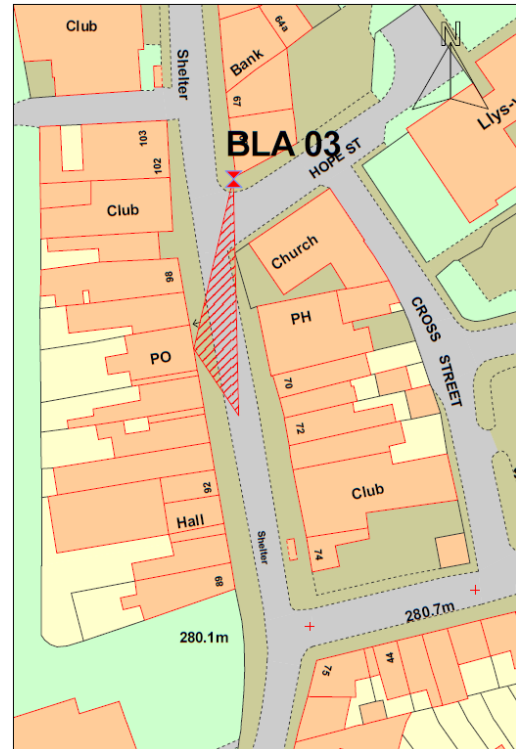
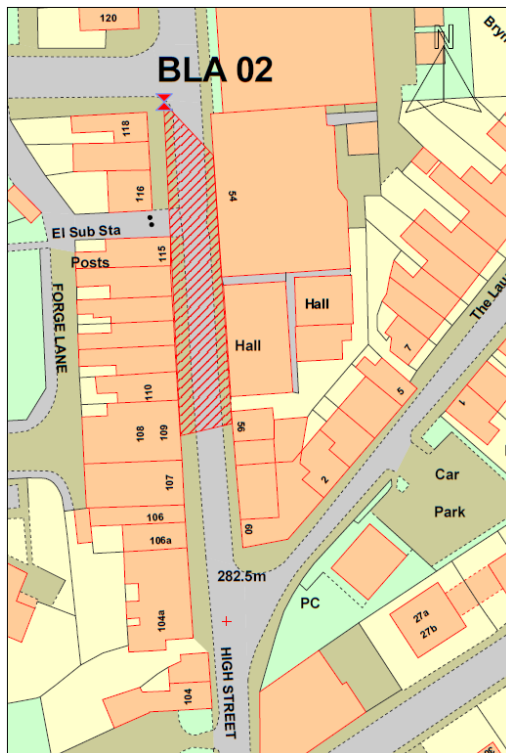
Abertillery Zone			
#	Camera Location number	Street Location	No. of Incidents
1	ABT 03	Junction Somerset Street and King Street	15
2	ABT 03		
3	ABT 04	Somerset Street	
4	ABT 06	High Street	6
5	ABT 06		
6	ABT 07	Intersection of High Street and Division Street	5
7	ABT 07		
8	ABT 08	Church Street Central	7
9	ABT 10	Outside Trinity Chapel, Division Street	1
10	ABT 10		
11	ABT 10		
12	ABT 13	Anvil Court / Foundry Bridge	2
13	ABT 13		
14	ABT 14	Foundry Bridge Car Park	6
15	ABT 14		



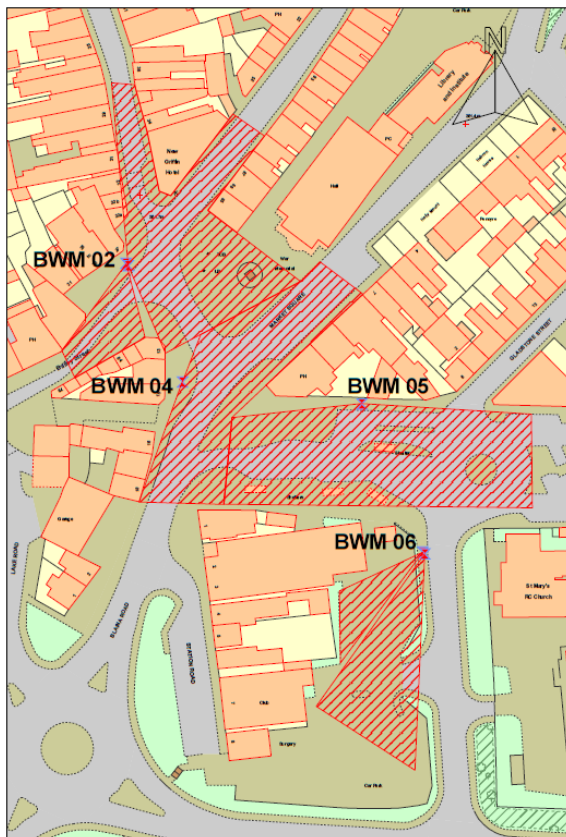




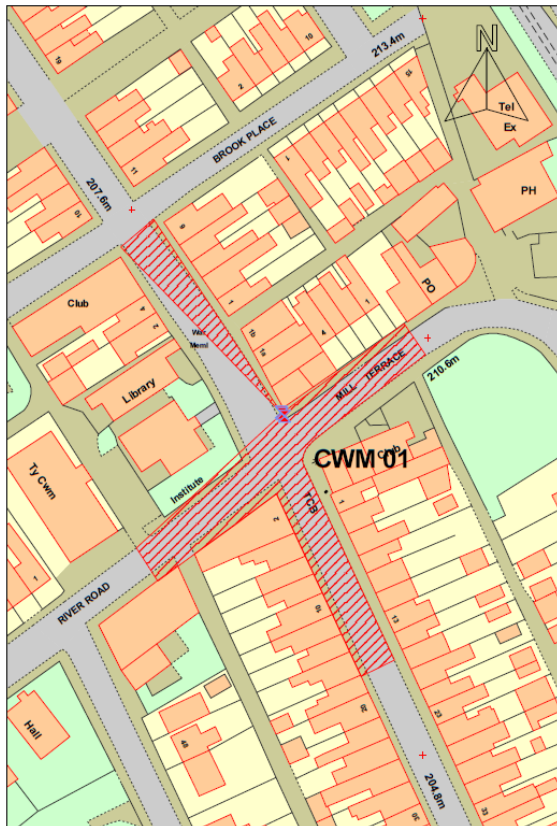
Blaina Zone			
#	Camera Location number	Street Location	No. of Incidents
1	BLA02	High Street	5
2	BLA03		



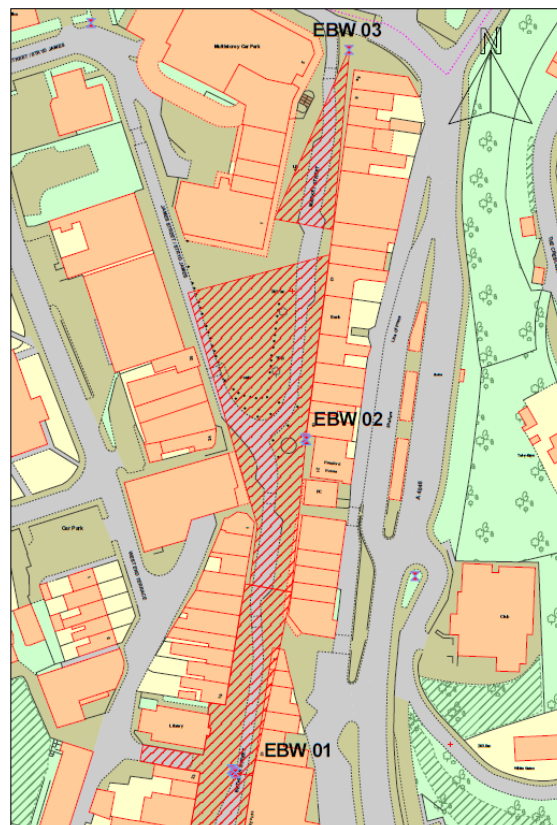
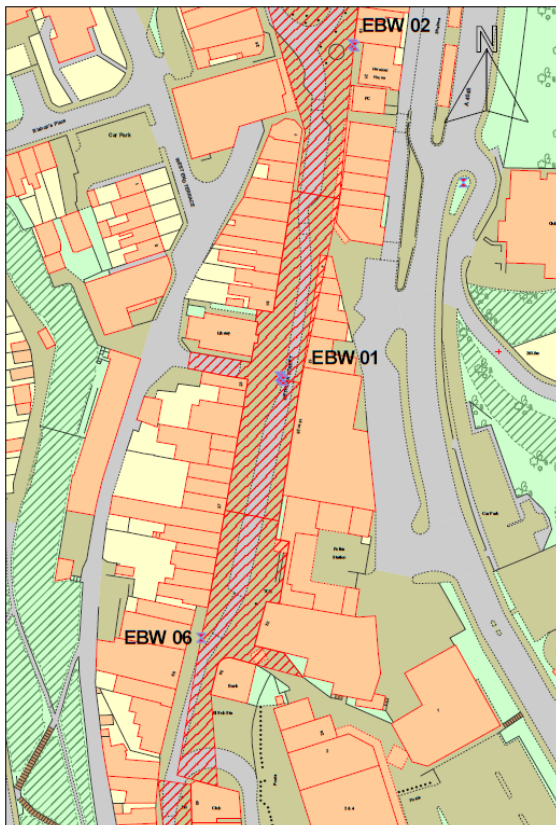
Brynmawr Zone			
#	Camera Location number	Street Location	No. of Incidents
1	BMW 02	Bailey Street	6
2	BMW 02		
3	BWM 04	Market Street and Bailey Street	4
4	BWM 05	Bus Station	2
5	BMW 06	Opposite St Marys Roman Catholic Church	0
6	BWM 06		

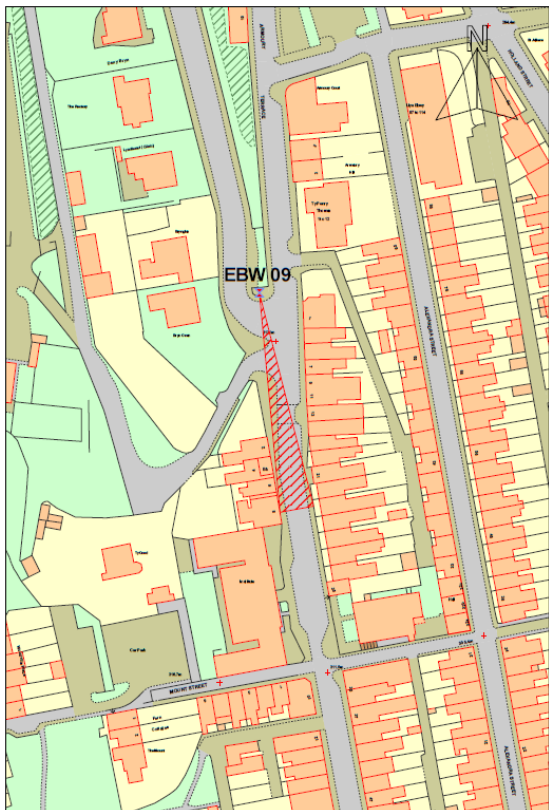
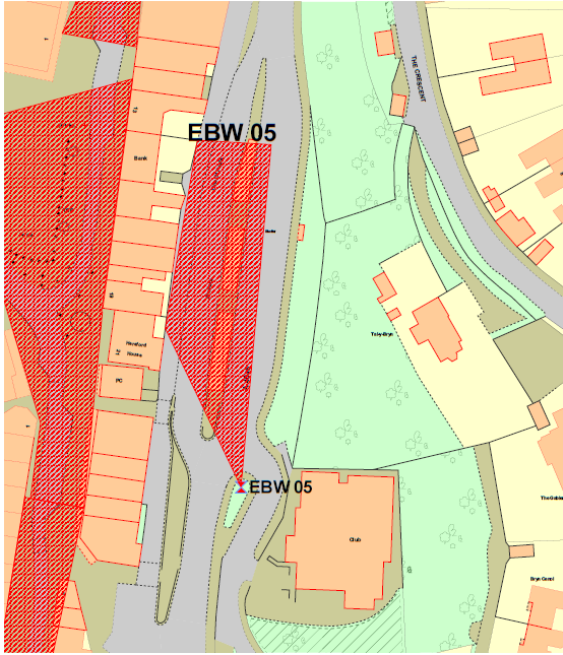


Cwm Zone			
#	Camera Location number	Street Location	No. of Incidents
1	CWM 01	Junction Mill Street and Canning Street	4
2	CWM 01		
3	CWM 01		

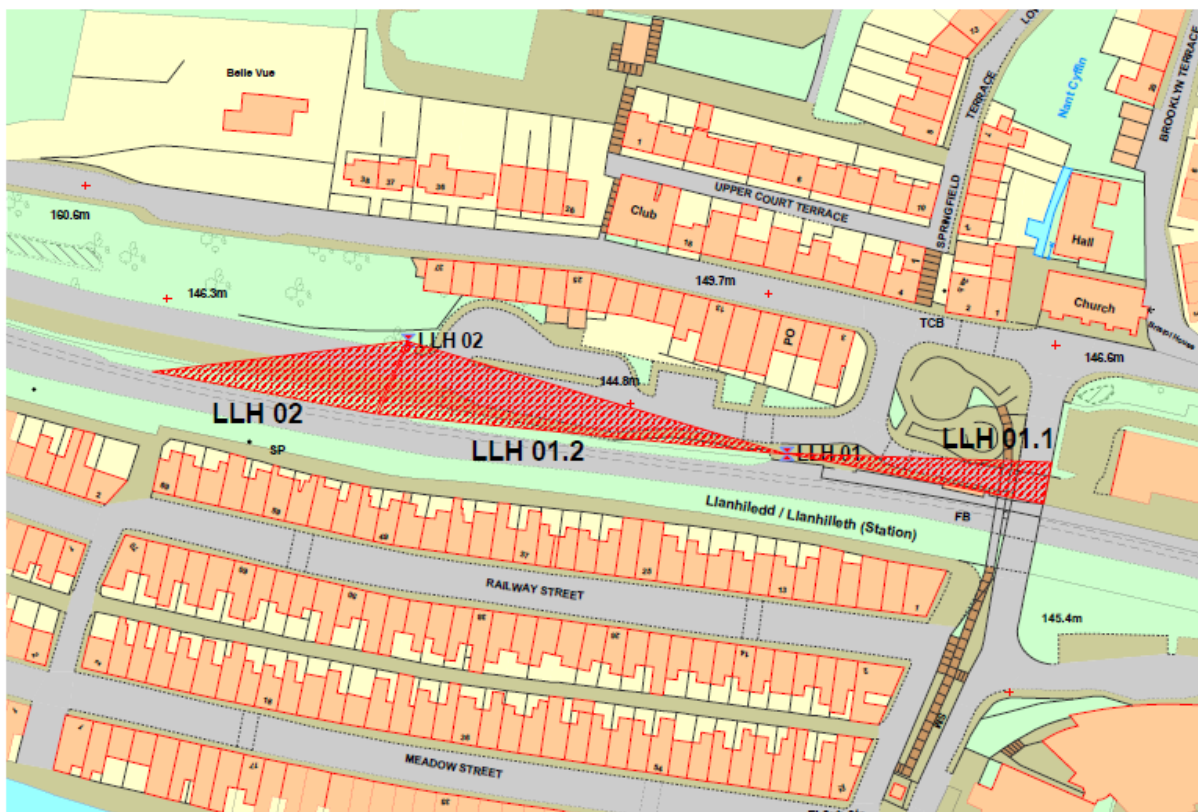


Ebbw Vale Zone			
#	Camera Location number	Street Location	No. of Incidents
1	EBW 01	Bethcar Street, opposite Library	8
2	EBW 01		
3	EBW 01		
4	EBW 02	Intersection of Market Street and Bethcar Street	8
5	EBW 02		
6	EBW 03	Market Street	5
7	EBW 05	A4046 outside Ex-Servicemen's Club	2
8	EBW 06	Bethcar Street	3
9	EBW 07	Bethcar Street	5
10	EBW 07		
11	EBW 07		
12	EBW 09	Armoury Terrace	2

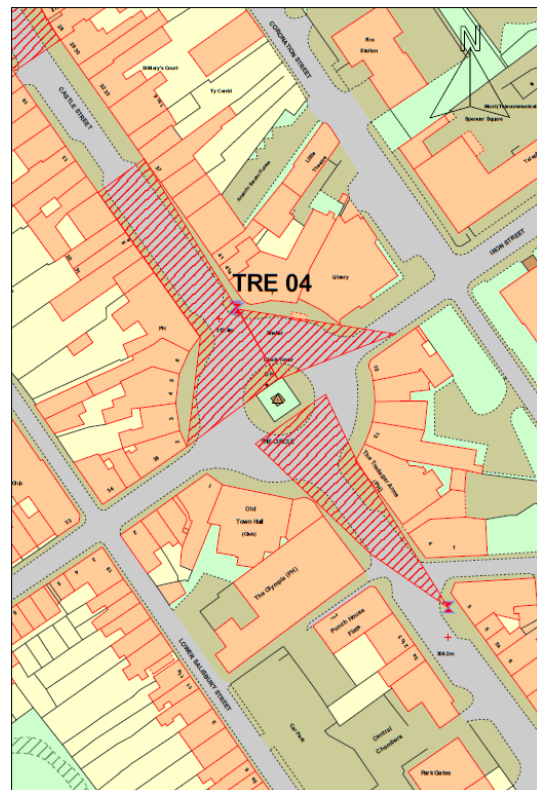
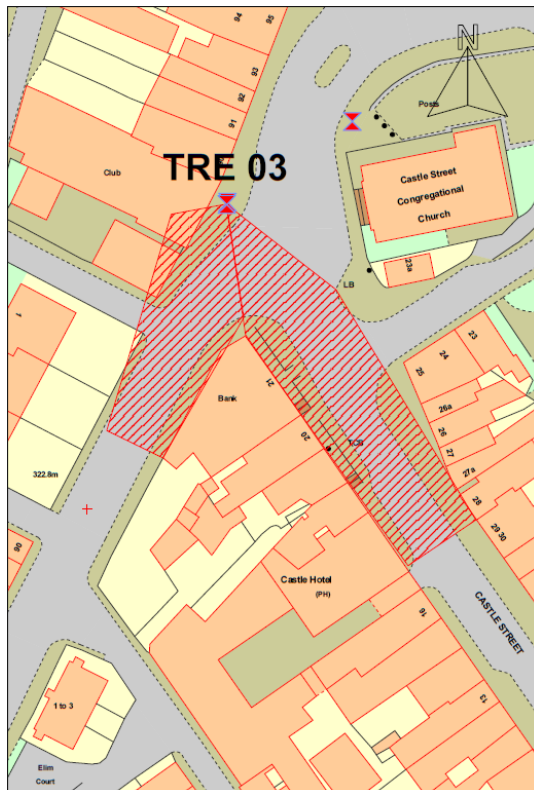


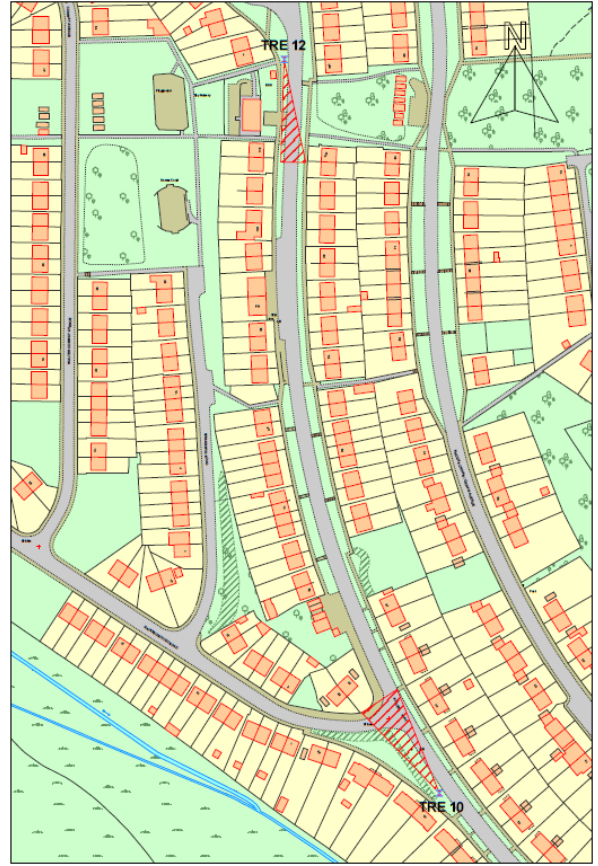
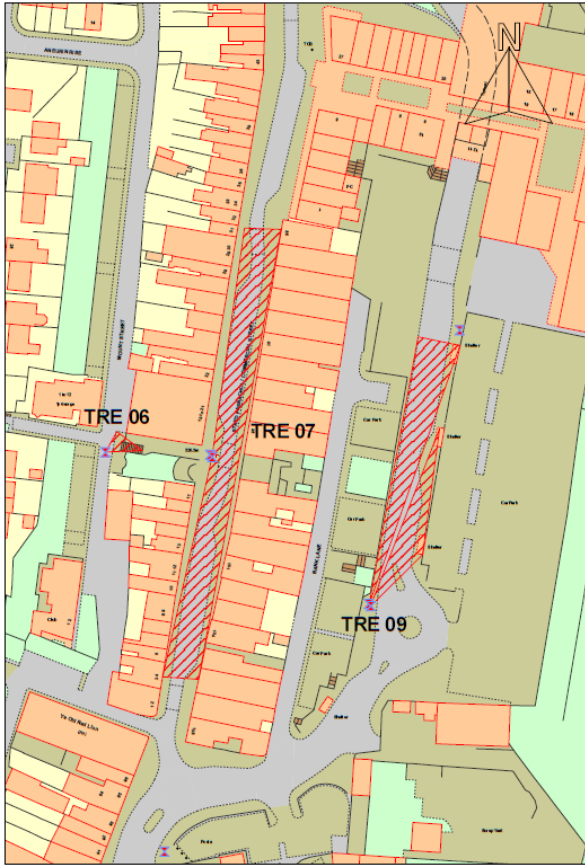


Llanhilleth Zone			
#	Camera Location number	Street Location	No. of Incidents
1	LLH 01	Llanhilleth Railway Station	2
2	LLH 01		
3	LLH 02		



Tredegar Zone			
#	Camera Location number	Street Location	No. of Incidents
1	TRE 03	Junction of Castle Street - Queen Victoria Street	8
2	TRE 03		
3	TRE 04	Corner of Castle Street - The Circle – Morgan Street	4
4	TRE 04		
5	TRE 04		
6	TRE 06	Mount Street steps leading to Commercial Street	1
7	TRE 07	Commercial Street	8
8	TRE 07		
9	TRE 09	Bus Stops – Roundabout to shopping centre	2
10	TRE 09		
11	TRE 10	Attlee Way adjacent junction Gainsborough Road	3
12	TRE 12	Junction of Attlee Way and Attlee Close	2





Appendix C: Blaenau Gwent's Public Space CCTV Code of Practice

The web link will be provided.

Appendix D: Crime by LSOA (lower super output area), Jan 2020 – Nov 2020

LSOA Name	Jan 20 - Nov 20	Pct of total	Rank
Tredegarr Central and West 4	341	6.8%	1
Ebbw Vale South 2	190	3.8%	2
Ebbw Vale North 2	187	3.7%	3
Ebbw Vale South 3	177	3.5%	4
Abertillery 2	177	3.5%	5
Nantyglo 1	172	3.4%	6
Brynmaur 3	143	2.9%	7
Llanhilleth 3	135	2.7%	8
Llanhilleth 2	131	2.6%	9
Cwm 2	131	2.6%	10
Badminton 1	127	2.5%	11
Blaina 3	123	2.5%	12
redegar Central and West 2	121	2.4%	13
Llanhilleth 1	121	2.4%	14
Sirhowy 3	120	2.4%	15
Blaina 1	119	2.4%	16
Tredegarr Central and West 1	116	2.3%	17
Cwmtilery 1	109	2.2%	18
Cwmtilery 2	106	2.1%	19
Brynmaur 2	104	2.1%	20
Ebbw Vale North 1	103	2.1%	21
Nantyglo 2	102	2.0%	22
Sirhowy 2	101	2.0%	23
Blaina 2	97	1.9%	24
Rassau 2	97	1.9%	25
Brynmaur 4	94	1.9%	26
Ebbw Vale South 1	94	1.9%	27
Tredegarr Central and West 3	89	1.8%	28
Sirhowy 4	89	1.8%	29
Georgetown 2	87	1.7%	30
Abertillery 1	87	1.7%	31
Beaufort 1	81	1.6%	32
Ebbw Vale North 3	79	1.6%	33
Nantyglo 3	77	1.5%	34
Brynmaur 1	76	1.5%	35
Beaufort 2	74	1.5%	36
Georgetown 1	72	1.4%	37
Cwm 3	71	1.4%	38
Six Bells 1	66	1.3%	39
Rassau 1	63	1.3%	40
Beaufort 3	63	1.3%	41
Abertillery 3	60	1.2%	42
Cwmtilery 3	57	1.1%	43
Sirhowy 1	52	1.0%	44
Cwm 1	48	1.0%	45
Badminton 2	45	0.9%	46
Six Bells 2	41	0.8%	47
Total	5,015	100.0%	

Appendix E: Crime Location (within LSOA), January 2020 – November 2020 For locations with 20 or more crimes

Crime - Location within LSOA	Jan 20 - Nov 20	Pct of total	Rank
On or near Parking Area within Tredegar Central and West 4	47	0.9%	1
On or near Supermarket within Tredegar Central and West 4	44	0.9%	2
On or near Parking Area within Ebbw Vale South 2	40	0.8%	3
On or near Waundeg within Sirhowy 3	39	0.8%	4
On or near Attlee Close within redegar Central and West 2	38	0.8%	5
On or near Pedestrian Subway within Tredegar Central and West 4	36	0.7%	6
On or near Barley Field Road within Brynmawr 3	36	0.7%	7
On or near A4047 within Badminton 1	36	0.7%	8
On or near Waunheulog within Nantyglo 1	33	0.7%	9
On or near Park Row within Tredegar Central and West 1	32	0.6%	10
On or near Nightclub within Tredegar Central and West 4	32	0.6%	11
On or near Petrol Station within Badminton 1	31	0.6%	12
On or near Glan Ebbw within Blaina 3	31	0.6%	13
On or near Supermarket within Abertillery 2	30	0.6%	14
On or near St James Way within Georgetown 1	30	0.6%	15
On or near Bus/Coach Station within Nantyglo 1	30	0.6%	16
On or near Mount Pleasant Estate within Llanhilleth 2	29	0.6%	17
On or near Bethcar Street within Ebbw Vale South 2	28	0.6%	18
On or near Hospital within Ebbw Vale South 3	28	0.6%	19
On or near Brynawelon within Nantyglo 1	28	0.6%	20
On or near East Pen-Twyn within Blaina 2	26	0.5%	21
On or near Bryn Pica within Sirhowy 2	25	0.5%	22
On or near Eureka Place within Ebbw Vale South 3	25	0.5%	23
On or near Parking Area within Abertillery 1	24	0.5%	24
On or near Tredegar Road within Ebbw Vale South 1	24	0.5%	25
On or near Gwaun Helyg Road within Ebbw Vale North 2	24	0.5%	26
On or near Upper Salisbury Street within Tredegar Central and West 4	23	0.5%	27
On or near Parking Area within Blaina 1	23	0.5%	28
On or near Petrol Station within Sirhowy 4	23	0.5%	29
On or near Heol Helig within Brynmawr 2	23	0.5%	30
On or near Graig Terrace within Cwm 2	23	0.5%	31
On or near Valley View Road within Cwmtillery 2	22	0.4%	32
On or near Supermarket within Ebbw Vale North 3	21	0.4%	33
On or near Peacehaven within Georgetown 2	21	0.4%	34
On or near Rhoslan within Sirhowy 2	21	0.4%	35
On or near Arael View within Cwmtillery 1	21	0.4%	36
On or near Porters Road within Nantyglo 1	20	0.4%	37
On or near Libanus Road within Ebbw Vale North 1	20	0.4%	38
On or near Railway Street within Llanhilleth 3	20	0.4%	39
On or near Heol-Yr-Ysgol within Ebbw Vale North 2	20	0.4%	40
On or near Heol Gwyn Lliw within Beaufort 1	20	0.4%	41
On or near Garden Street within Ebbw Vale South 3	20	0.4%	42
On or near A4046 within Badminton 1	20	0.4%	43

Appendix F: Anti-Social Behaviour by LSOA (lower super output area), Jan 2020 – Nov 2020

LSOA	Jan 20 - Nov 20	Pct	Rank
Tredegar Central and West 4	185	6.1%	1
Nantyglo 1	144	4.7%	2
Blaina 2	129	4.3%	3
Brynmawr 3	125	4.1%	4
Ebbw Vale South 2	114	3.8%	5
Cwm 2	96	3.2%	6
Sirhowy 3	96	3.2%	7
Llanhilleth 2	92	3.0%	8
Tredegar Central and West 1	84	2.8%	9
Georgetown 1	82	2.7%	10
Cwmtillery 1	81	2.7%	11
Llanhilleth 3	80	2.6%	12
Badminton 1	78	2.6%	13
Abertillery 2	74	2.4%	14
Beaufort 3	74	2.4%	15
Ebbw Vale North 1	74	2.4%	16
Rassau 1	64	2.1%	17
Ebbw Vale North 2	64	2.1%	18
Brynmawr 4	63	2.1%	19
redegar Central and West 2	63	2.1%	20
Georgetown 2	62	2.0%	21
Cwmtillery 3	61	2.0%	22
Cwmtillery 2	60	2.0%	23
Nantyglo 3	58	1.9%	24
Rassau 2	57	1.9%	25
Ebbw Vale North 3	57	1.9%	26
Beaufort 1	56	1.8%	27
Abertillery 3	55	1.8%	28
Blaina 1	54	1.8%	29
Sirhowy 2	54	1.8%	30
Ebbw Vale South 3	50	1.6%	31
Llanhilleth 1	48	1.6%	32
Cwm 3	44	1.5%	33
Blaina 3	44	1.5%	34
Nantyglo 2	42	1.4%	35
Tredegar Central and West 3	38	1.3%	36
Abertillery 1	38	1.3%	37
Sirhowy 1	38	1.3%	38
Sirhowy 4	37	1.2%	39
Brynmawr 2	36	1.2%	40
Six Bells 1	32	1.1%	41
Beaufort 2	29	1.0%	42
Badminton 2	29	1.0%	43
Ebbw Vale South 1	27	0.9%	44
Brynmawr 1	25	0.8%	45
Cwm 1	21	0.7%	46
Six Bells 2	20	0.7%	47
Total	3,034	100.0%	

Appendix G: Anti-Social Behaviour by LSOA (lower super output area), Jan 2020 – Nov 2020 for locations with 20 or more ASB incidents.

Location within LSOA - Anti Social Behaviour	Jan 20 - Nov 20	Pct	Locations
On or near Barley Field Road within Brynmawr 3	39	1.3%	1
On or near Aubrey Terrace within Cwm 2	39	1.3%	2
On or near Sports/Recreation Area within Sirhowy 3	38	1.3%	3
On or near St James Park within Georgetown 1	32	1.1%	4
On or near United Way within Tredegar Central and West 4	31	1.0%	5
On or near A4046 within Badminton 1	29	1.0%	6
On or near Bus/Coach Station within Nantyglo 1	27	0.9%	7
On or near Lakeside Close within Nantyglo 1	27	0.9%	8
On or near Park/Open Space within Tredegar Central and West 1	26	0.9%	9
On or near Supermarket within Ebbw Vale North 3	25	0.8%	10
On or near Parking Area within Tredegar Central and West 4	24	0.8%	11
On or near East Pen-Twyn within Blaina 2	24	0.8%	12
On or near Supermarket within Tredegar Central and West 4	24	0.8%	13
On or near Park/Open Space within Blaina 2	23	0.8%	14
On or near Petrol Station within Badminton 1	22	0.7%	15
On or near Parking Area within Ebbw Vale South 2	21	0.7%	16
On or near Attlee Close within redegar Central and West 2	21	0.7%	17
On or near Nightclub within Tredegar Central and West 4	20	0.7%	18
On or near York Terrace within Cwm 2	19	0.6%	19
On or near Victor Road within Cwmtillery 3	19	0.6%	20
On or near Parking Area within Georgetown 2	18	0.6%	21
On or near Bethcar Street within Ebbw Vale South 2	18	0.6%	22
On or near Parking Area within Cwmtillery 1	17	0.6%	23
On or near Sports/Recreation Area within Cwmtillery 1	17	0.6%	24
On or near Park/Open Space within Cwmtillery 2	17	0.6%	25
On or near Heol Gwyn Lliw within Beaufort 1	17	0.6%	26
On or near Roundhouse Close within Nantyglo 1	17	0.6%	27
On or near Stonebridge Road within Rassau 1	17	0.6%	28
On or near Nant-Y-Cwm within Llanhilleth 2	17	0.6%	29
On or near Tillery Street within Abertillery 3	16	0.5%	30
On or near Parking Area within Brynmawr 3	16	0.5%	31
On or near Mount Pleasant Estate within Llanhilleth 2	16	0.5%	32
On or near Phillips Close within Rassau 2	16	0.5%	33
On or near Waundeg within Sirhowy 3	16	0.5%	34
On or near St James Way within Georgetown 1	16	0.5%	35
On or near Gladstone Street within Brynmawr 3	16	0.5%	36
On or near Parking Area within Llanhilleth 3	16	0.5%	37
On or near Supermarket within Abertillery 2	15	0.5%	38
On or near Rhoslan within Sirhowy 2	15	0.5%	39
On or near Club Row within Blaina 2	15	0.5%	40

Appendix H: Maintenance Schedule 4 January 2021

CAMERA NUMBER	LOCATION	Street Name	On/Off	Comment
Tre01.1	Tredegar Town Centre	Corner of Castle Street and The Circle	On	
Tre01.2			On	
Tre02.1	Tredegar Town Centre	Morgan Street	On	
Tre03.1	Tredegar Town Centre	Top of Castle Street & Queen Victoria Street Opposite	On	
Tre03.2		Barclays Bank	On	
Tre05.1	Tredegar Town Centre	Midway Commercial Street at seating area	On	
Tre05.2			On	
Tre06.1	Tredegar Town Centre	Mount Street Steps leading to Commercial Street	Off	Under IDS investigation
Tre09.1	Tredegar Town Centre	Roundabout to Shopping Centre Car Park	On	
Tre09.2			On	
Tre10.1	Tredegar Cefn Golau	Atlee Way adj Gainsborough Rd Junction	On	No Access to 4G cameras
Tre12.1	Tredegar Cefn Golau	Junction of Atlee Close & Atlee Way	On	No Access to 4G cameras
Ebw01.1	Ebbw Vale	Bethcar Steet Opposite Library	On	
Ebw01.2			On	
Ebw01.3			On	
Ebw02.1	Ebbw Vale	Intersection of Market Street and Bethcar Street	On	
Ebw02.2			On	
Ebw03.1	Ebbw Vale	Market Street	On	
Ebw05.1	Ebbw Vale	A4046 Outside Club	On	
Ebw06.1	Ebbw Vale	Bethcar Street	On	
Ebw07.1	Ebbw Vale	Bethcar Street	On	
Ebw07.2			On	
Ebw07.3			On	
Ebw09.1	Ebbw Vale	Armoury Terrace	On	No Access to 4G cameras
Abt03.1	Abertillery	Junction of Somerset Street and King Street	On	
Abt03.2			On	
Abt04.1	Abertillery	Junction of Somerset Street and King Street	On	
Abt06.1	Abertillery	High Street	On	
Abt06.2			On	
Abt07.1	Abertillery	Intersection High Street & Division Street	On	
Abt07.2	Abertillery		On	
Abt08.1	Abertillery	Church Street	On	
Abt10.1	Abertillery	Outside Trinity Chapel Division Street	On	
Abt10.2			On	
Abt10.3			On	
Abt13.1	Abertillery	New Camera Mounted to Anvil Court BGCBC Offices	On	
Abt13.2			On	
Abt14.1	Abertillery	Foundry Bridge Car Park	On	
Abt14.2		Foundry Bridge Car Park	On	
Bwm02.1	Brynmawr	Bailey Street	On	
Bwm02.2		Bailey Street	On	
Bwm04.1	Brynmawr	Junction of Market Street & Bailey Street	On	
Bwm05.1	Brynmawr	Bus Station	On	
Bwm06.1	Brynmawr	Opposite St Marys Roman Catholic Church	On	
Bwm06.2			On	
	Brynmawr	Car Park opposite bus stop	On	
Bla02.1	Blaina	High Street	On	
Bla03.1	Blaina	High Street	On	
Cwm01.1	Cwm	Junction Mill Street & Canning Street	On	
Cwm01.2			On	
Cwm01.3			On	
7.01	Llanhilleth	Railway Station	On	
7.01a			On	
7.02	Llanhilleth	Railway Station	On	
8.01	Deployable Camera	Office	On	No Access to 4G cameras
8.02	Deployable Camera	Office	On	No Access to 4G cameras
8.03	Deployable Camera	Abertillery	On	No Access to 4G cameras
8.04	Deployable Camera	Abertillery	On	No Access to 4G cameras

Appendix I: A Case Study

Community Safety Incident: In the very early hours of New Year's Day 2020, a 25-year-old man deliberately drove his Volkswagen Golf at another man outside the Blaina Constitution Club, High Street, Blaina. The victim received life-threatening injuries as a result of the collision and the offender drove off.

Camera Zone: The incident was captured on the authority's CCTV camera on Blaina High Street (Blaina Zone).

Public Support: Members of the public immediately reported the incident to Gwent Police via 999.

Police Investigation: As the Police began their investigation, they were aware of the Council's CCTV, and subsequently made a lawful request to the Council for the CCTV footage.

Council Support: The recorded evidence from the Council's CCTV system was downloaded, and provided to the Police as an evidence package, to support their investigations.

Back Story

According to press reports, it transpired that the offender had mistakenly identified the victim as being responsible for assaulting him earlier in the evening.

The footage captured by the CCTV proved invaluable to the investigation, providing crucial evidence of the attack including the collision itself and saving the Police significant investigation time. The strength of the evidence helped the Police to arrest and then charge the offender with attempted murder.

By providing high-quality footage to the Police at a very early stage, the Police and the Crown Prosecution Service were assisted in swiftly bringing the offender to justice. The CCTV footage enabled the Police to expedite the investigation which helped to reassure the victim's family and the local community.

The strength of the evidence convinced the offender to plead guilty to causing Grievous Bodily Harm with Intent, therefore a costly trial was avoided. This also prevented the victim and his family suffering the further stress associated with a Crown Court trial.

Outcome:

The offender was sentenced to six years and nine months in prison at Cardiff Crown Court.

Appendix J: Proposed Forward Work Programme 2021/22

Further Action Required	Rationale Taken from the Annual Report and the BG Code of Practice	Lead Department
Develop an Intelligence Framework to broaden the scope of the 'pressing need'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current DPIAs predominant lawful 'pressing-need' and operational requirement was evidenced from published Police crime data on https://www.police.uk/. <p>Elected Member feedback included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern that some council service areas are dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour, and how CCTV could be used to deal with these matters. A broad consensus that the Council should balance the evidence base for deployment of CCTV with Police crime data, Local Authority data and Community intelligence. 	Policy Team
Develop a BG CCTV Procedure Manual	Blaenau Gwent Council's CCTV Code of Practice will be supplemented by a separate Public Space CCTV Procedure Manual, which will provide guidelines on all aspects of the day-to-day operation of the PS CCTV System. To ensure the purpose and principles of the PS CCTV system are realised, the PS CCTV Procedure Manual will be based upon and expands the contents of the Code of Practice. (This will not be a public document.)	Policy Team
Develop a BG Deployable CCTV Camera Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Member feedback included: A need to understand how the Council's deployable cameras will be used and how will the Police and Council departments will be able to access these. The Council currently has a number of deployable CCTV camera units and will work with Gwent Police to develop a Deployable CCTV Camera Protocol, to aid the appropriate assessment of need and rapid deployment to address significant emerging public safety concerns. 	Policy Team
Explore further opportunities to develop elected member engagement on the journey to compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Member feedback included: Members would welcome more engagement sessions on our journey to compliance. 	SIRO / Democratic Services

<p>Explore the opportunity to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CCTV support technology and infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband connectivity to main viewing centre does drop out on occasion due to issues with local router, technical services regularly monitor system and reset router when required. Technical services have engaged with SRS to investigate feasibility and costs of increasing data speeds to local hub sites. • Over and above the noted challenges, there are a number of further technical issues that affect performance of the CCTV system, most notably: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Broadband connectivity of the Council's Designated CCTV Operator accessing the network to view live feed of cameras. ○ Transient Wi-Fi and power fluctuations issues affecting reliability of CCTV units and the system. ○ Wi-Fi connection download speeds are slower compared to a hardwire broadband system which hinders the speed of downloading footage for the user. • As a result of the technical issues, some of which are ongoing, Technical Services are increasingly reliant on the maintenance contractor to manually download footage directly from cameras in order to provide footage promptly upon receipt of a lawful request. 	<p>Technical Services</p>
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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Public Space CCTV System

Code of Practice

<Final Working Draft>

To be considered for review: March 2022

Contents

	Certificate of Agreement	3
Section 1	Introduction & Objectives	4
Section 2	Statement of Purpose and Principles	6
Section 3	Privacy and Data Protection	10
Section 4	Accountability and Public Information	17
Section 5	Assessment of the Public Space CCTV System and Code of Practice	19
Section 6	Human Resources	21
Section 7	Control and Operation of Public Space CCTV System	22
Section 8	Access to, and Security of, Public Space CCTV Control Room and Associated Equipment	25
Section 9	Management of Recorded Material	26
Section 10	Digital Still Photographs	28
Section 11	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)	29
Appendix A	System Owner and responsibilities	30
Appendix B	Declaration of Confidentiality	32
Appendix C	National Standard for the Release of Data to Third Parties	34
Appendix D	Confidentiality Agreement Lay Visitors	40
Appendix E	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) Guiding Principles	41

Certificate of Agreement

The content of this Code of Practice is hereby approved in respect of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Public Space Closed Circuit Television System and, as far as is reasonably practicable, will be complied with by all who are involved in the management and operation of this System.

Signed for and on behalf of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, the 'System Owner'

Signature:

Name:

Position held: Chief Finance Officer

Section 1 Introduction & Objectives

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council operates a Public Space Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) system (hereafter called the PS CCTV System). The PS CCTV System comprises of a number of cameras installed at strategic locations in the county borough. All the cameras are fixed cameras with no facility to pan, zoom or tilt. The system is currently 'record-only' with no 'live' monitoring taking place. The footage is normally accessed via the CCTV Control Room in the Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale.
- 1.1.2 For the purposes of this document, the PS CCTV System is owned and managed by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. The responsibility for the overall management of the PS CCTV System lies with the Nominated Chief Officer who oversees the effective day-to-day management of the control room and the PS CCTV System.
- 1.1.3 For the purposes of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018 the 'data controller' is Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.
- 1.1.4 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) under registration reference Z6623658.
- 1.1.5 Details of the telephone numbers of the owners of the PS CCTV System, together with their respective responsibilities, are shown at Appendix A to this Code.

1.2 Statement in respect of The Human Rights Act 1998

- 1.2.1 The Council recognises that Public Authorities and those organisations carrying out the functions of a public service are required to observe the obligations imposed by the Human Rights Act 1998. The Council considers that the use of CCTV in Blaenau Gwent is a necessary, proportionate and appropriate measure to help reduce crime, deter anti-social behaviour and to improve public safety.
- 1.2.2 Section 163 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 creates the power for local authorities to provide closed circuit television coverage of any land within their area for the purposes of crime prevention or victim welfare. Closed circuit television is also considered a necessary initiative by the Council under their duty to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- 1.2.3 It is recognised that the operation of the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council PS CCTV System may infringe on the privacy of individuals. The Council recognises that it is their responsibility to ensure that the PS CCTV

System should always comply with all relevant legislation, to ensure its legality and legitimacy.

- 1.2.4 The PS CCTV System will only be used as a proportionate response to identified problems and be used only insofar as it is necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, public safety, the economic wellbeing of the area, for the prevention and detection of crime or disorder, for the protection of health and morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.
- 1.2.5 Observance of this Code and the accompanying PS CCTV Procedure Manual shall ensure that evidence is secured, retained and made available as required with due regard to the rights of the individual.
- 1.2.6 The Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council PS CCTV System shall be operated with respect for all individuals, recognising the individual right to be free from inhuman or degrading treatment and avoiding any form of discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

1.3 Objectives of the System

- 1.3.1 The objectives of the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council PS CCTV System, which form the lawful basis for the processing of data, are:
 - The preservation of life and limb, to minimise the risk of harm to the vulnerable and public at large.
 - The prevention and detection of crime.
 - The investigation of crime by identifying offenders, potential victims and witnesses.
 - The prosecution of offenders.
 - The tendering of video and still images in evidence to the Police, other Law Enforcement Agencies and relevant Local Authority Departments for use in the Criminal Justice System.
 - To reduce Anti-Social Behaviour.
 - To promote the objectives of Gwent's Police and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan 2017-2021 and the Blaenau Gwent Community Safety Hub, to make Blaenau Gwent a safer place to live, work and visit.

1.4 Public Space CCTV Procedure Manual

- 1.4.1 This Code of Practice will be supplemented by a separate Public Space CCTV Procedure Manual, which will provide guidelines on all aspects of the day-to-day operation of the PS CCTV System. To ensure the purpose and principles (see Section 2) of the PS CCTV system are realised, the PS CCTV Procedure Manual is based upon and expands the contents of this Code of Practice. (This will not be a public document.)

Section 2 Statement of Purpose and Principles

2.1 Purpose

- 2.1.1 The purpose of this document is to state the intention of the PS CCTV System owners and managers, as far as is reasonably practicable to support the objectives of the Blaenau-Gwent County Borough Council PS CCTV System and to outline how it intends to do so.

2.2 The General Principles of Operation

- 2.2.1 The PS CCTV System will be operated in accordance with the principles and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 2.2.2 The operation of the PS CCTV System will also recognise the need for formal authorisation of any covert 'directed surveillance', as required by the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000.
- 2.2.3 The PS CCTV System will be operated with due regard to the relevant definitions, rules and procedures in the Home Office Code of Practice "Covert Surveillance and Property Interference" including updates published from time to time.
- 2.2.4 Covert surveillance conducted by the Council is outside the scope of this Code and is dealt with by a separate policy statement.
- 2.2.5 The PS CCTV System will be operated in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016, the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.
- 2.2.6 The PS CCTV System will be operated fairly and within the law. It will only be used for the purposes for which it was established and which are identified within the Code of Practice, or which may be subsequently be agreed in accordance with the Code of Practice.
- 2.2.7 The PS CCTV System will be operated with due regard to the principle that everyone has the right to respect for his or her private and family life and home.
- 2.2.8 The public interest in the operation of the PS CCTV System will be recognised by ensuring the security and integrity of operational procedures.
- 2.2.9 Throughout this Code of Practice, it is intended, as far as reasonably possible, to balance the objectives of the PS CCTV System with the need to safeguard the rights of the individual. The owners of the PS CCTV System operate a corporate complaints procedure, and have in place the

appropriate checks and balances with clear lines of accountability for the PS CCTV System.

- 2.2.10 Involvement with the PS CCTV System by any organisation, individual or authority assumes an agreement by all such participants to comply fully with this Code of Practice and to be accountable under the Code of Practice.

2.3 The Surveillance Camera Commissioner's Code of Practice

- 2.3.1 As per Section 30 (1) (a) of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, the PS CCTV System owners and operators must follow a duty to have regard to the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's Code of Practice and the 12 guiding principles contained within:

1. Use of a surveillance camera system must always be for a specified purpose which is in pursuit of a legitimate aim and necessary to meet an identified pressing need.
2. The use of a surveillance camera system must take into account its effect on individuals and their privacy, with regular reviews to ensure its use remains justified.
3. There must be as much transparency in the use of a surveillance camera system as possible, including a published contact point for access to information and complaints.
4. There must be clear responsibility and accountability for all surveillance camera system activities including images and information collected, held and used.
5. Clear rules, policies and procedures must be in place before a surveillance camera system is used, and these must be communicated to all who need to comply with them.
6. No more images and information should be stored than that which is strictly required for the stated purpose of a surveillance camera system, and such images and information should be deleted once their purposes have been discharged.
7. Access to retained images and information should be restricted and there must be clearly defined rules on who can gain access and for what purpose such access is granted; the disclosure of images and information should only take place when it is necessary for such a purpose or for law enforcement purposes.
8. Surveillance camera system operators should consider any approved operational, technical and competency standards relevant to a system and its purpose and work to meet and maintain those standards.
9. Surveillance camera system images and information should be subject to appropriate security measures to safeguard against unauthorised access and use.
10. There should be effective review and audit mechanisms to ensure legal requirements, policies and standards are complied with in practice, and regular reports should be published.
11. When the use of a surveillance camera system is in pursuit of a legitimate aim, and there is a pressing need for its use, it should then be used in the most effective way to support public safety and law enforcement with the aim of processing images and information of evidential value.

12. Any information used to support a surveillance camera system which compares against a reference database for matching purposes should be accurate and kept up to date.

2.4 Copyright and Data Controller

- 2.4.1 Copyright and ownership of all material recorded by virtue of the PS CCTV System will remain with the Data Controller – the Council.
- 2.4.2 The PS CCTV System owner (the Council) is the data controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Legislation. Once recorded data has been disclosed to another party, such as the Police, they may then become a ‘controller in common’ for the processing of that data independently of the CCTV System owner. Both parties should exercise all due diligence in ensuring compliance with the Data Protection legislation.

2.5 Cameras and Area Coverage

- 2.5.1 The areas covered by PS CCTV to which this Code of Practice refers are the public areas within Blaenau Gwent County Borough. The System is currently divided into 7 distinct zones - Ebbw Vale, Tredegar and Cefn Golau, Brynmawr, Abertillery, Blaina, Cwm, and Llanhilleth Railway Station. The System may be expanded to cover any area within the boundaries of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.
- 2.5.2 Deployable or mobile cameras may be temporarily sited within Blaenau Gwent. The use of such cameras, and the data produced by virtue of their use, will always accord with the objectives of the System and is governed by this PS CCTV System Code of Practice and the PS CCTV System Procedure Manual.
- 2.5.3 All of the PS CCTV System cameras offer a full colour and fixed view capability, using a variety of ‘bullet’ cameras, 180° Panoramic, Turret and 4G Mobile cameras some of which may automatically switch to monochrome in low light conditions.
- 2.5.4 None of the cameras forming part of the PS CCTV System will be installed in a covert manner. Some cameras may be enclosed within ‘all weather domes’, for aesthetic or operational reasons, but appropriate bi-lingual signage will identify the presence of all cameras.
- 2.5.5 The locations of all cameras within the PS CCTV System are published on the Blaenau Gwent Council website at www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

2.6 Monitoring and Recording Facilities

- 2.6.1 The footage is normally accessed via the Public Space CCTV Control Room which is located in the Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale. It can also be accessed remotely in extenuating circumstances or for technical and maintenance purposes.

- 2.6.2 The PS CCTV System equipment has the capability of recording all cameras simultaneously throughout every 24-hour period.
- 2.6.3 PS CCTV System operators are able to record images from selected cameras, produce hard copies and digital copies of recorded images, replay or copy any pre-recorded data at their discretion and in accordance with the Code of Practice. Only trained and authorised users shall operate viewing, recording equipment and handle any downloaded data.

2.7 Human Resources

- 2.7.1 A register of all designated PS CCTV System Operators will be maintained by the SIRO.
- 2.7.2 All Designated PS CCTV System Operators shall receive relevant training and should have requisite knowledge in the requirements of the:
- Human Rights Act 1998,
 - General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016,
 - Data Protection Act 2018,
 - Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000,
 - Surveillance Camera Commissioner's Code of Practice, and this
 - Code of Practice and the PS CCTV Procedure Manual.
- 2.7.3 Further training will be identified and provided as necessary.

2.8 Processing and Handling of Recorded Material

- 2.8.1 All recorded material will be recorded in digital format and will be processed and handled strictly in accordance with the Code of Practice and the PS CCTV System Procedure Manual.

2.9 CCTV Operators' Instructions

- 2.9.1 Technical instructions on the use of equipment housed within the PS CCTV Control Room are contained in a separate manual provided by the equipment suppliers.

2.10 Changes to the Code of Practice or the Procedure Manual

- 2.10.1 Any major changes to this Code of Practice or the PS CCTV System Procedure Manual, i.e. changes that have a significant impact upon the Code of Practice or upon the operation of the PS CCTV System, will be considered and authorised by annual review process.
- 2.10.2 Minor changes, such as may be required for clarification and which will not have a significant impact, will be included in this Code of Practice and the PS CCTV System Procedures Manual without requiring higher authorisation.

Section 3 Privacy and Data Protection

3.1 Public Concern

- 3.1.1 Although members of the public have become accustomed to being observed, those who do express concern do so mainly over matters relating to the processing of the information, or data, i.e. what happens to information that is obtained?

Note: 'Processing' means any operation or set of operations which is performed on personal data or on sets of personal data, whether or not by automated means, such as collection, recording, organisation, structuring, storage, adaptation or alteration, retrieval, consultation, use, disclosure by transmission, dissemination or otherwise making available, alignment or combination, restriction, erasure or destruction of the information or data.

- 3.1.2 All personal data obtained by virtue of the PS CCTV System shall be processed fairly and lawfully and, in particular, shall only be processed in the exercise of achieving the stated objectives of the PS CCTV System. When processing personal data, the individual right to privacy in their private and family life and home will be respected. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's lawful basis for processing data is for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest.
- 3.1.3 Data will be stored securely in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 3.1.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments will be completed for the respective PS CCTV zones, and will be reviewed annually to ensure that privacy and data protection concerns are appropriately addressed.
- 3.1.5 Cameras will not be used to look into private residential property. 'Privacy zones' are programmed into the PS CCTV System which prevent the cameras from looking in private residence. In addition, all operators will be specifically trained on issues in relation to privacy.
- 3.1.6 A member of the public wishing to register a complaint about any aspect of the PS CCTV System may do so by contacting Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. All complaints shall be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. Any disciplinary issue identified will be considered under the Council's disciplinary procedures.
- 3.1.7 All contracted or directly employed PS CCTV System staff are contractually bound by regulations governing confidentiality and discipline.

3.2 Data Protection Legislation

3.2.1 For the purposes of the Data Protection Act 2018 the 'Data Controller' is the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

3.2.2 All personal data will be processed in accordance with the six principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016, which must be:

- 1) All personal data will be obtained and processed fairly and lawfully.
- 2) Personal data will be held only for purposes specified.
- 3) Personal data held will be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose for which the data is processed.
- 4) Steps will be taken to ensure that personal data is accurate and where necessary, kept up to date.
- 5) Personal data will be held for no longer than is necessary.
- 6) Personal data will be processed in accordance with the rights of the individual data subject.

3.2.3 In addition – appropriate measures will be taken to ensure against unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data and against accidental loss or destruction of, or damage to personal data.

Personal data will not be transferred to countries outside the European Economic Area unless there is an adequate level of protection for the rights and freedom of data subjects in place in the intended destination.

3.3 Disclosing personal information – exemptions under the Data Protection legislation

3.3.1 Certain exemptions allow for the disclosure of personal data in situations where there would otherwise be a breach of the Data Protection legislation, or allow information to be withheld from Data Protection legislation, or allow information to be withheld from data subjects in circumstances in which it would otherwise need to be disclosed.

3.3.2 The more commonly deployed exemptions are:

- 1) the disclosure is necessary for the purposes of preventing or detecting crime and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders;
- 2) the disclosure is necessary for the purposes of maintaining effective immigration control, or the investigation or detection of activities that would undermine the maintenance of effective immigration control;
- 3) the disclosure is required by an enactment, rule of law or court/tribunal order;
- 4) the disclosure is necessary for the purposes of actual or prospective legal proceedings, or obtaining of legal advice or establishing, exercising or defending of legal rights.

- 3.3.3 Processing personal data is exempt from the subject access provisions to the extent to which the application of those provisions to the data would be likely to prejudice any of the purposes referred to above.

3.4 Disclosure to the Police

- 3.4.1 The disclosure of recorded data will be on the authority of the Nominated Chief Officer and dealt with in accordance with the PS CCTV Procedure Manual.
- 3.4.2 Disclosure will be in accordance with the Information Sharing Agreement with Gwent Police (when arranged), including the submission of Gwent Police Form - "Request to external organisation for the disclosure of personal data to the Police", which will cite a specified, explicit and legitimate purpose for the disclosure/sharing of data. This means that the reason(s) for each instance of a disclosure (including viewing)/sharing of data must be set out clearly by the Police, including their reliance on any Data Protection legislation exemptions and justification for reliance on the exemptions.
- 3.4.3 Once an image or images has been disclosed to a partner agency such as the Police, then they become the Data Controller for the copy of that image(s). It is then the responsibility of that partner to comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018 in relation to any further disclosures.

3.5 Criminal Procedures and Investigations Act 1996 (CPIA)

- 3.5.1 The Criminal Procedures and Investigations Act 1996 introduced a statutory framework for the disclosure to defendants of material that the prosecution would not intend to use in the presentation of its own case. This material is known as 'unused material'. A summary of the provisions of the Act is contained within the PS CCTV Procedure Manual, but disclosure of unused material under the provisions of this Act should not be confused with the obligations placed on the data controller by Section 45 of the Data Protection Act 2018, known as subject access.

3.6 Disclosure to Insurance Companies

- 3.6.1 The disclosure of recorded data will be on the authority of the PS CCTV Supervisor and dealt with in accordance with the PS CCTV Procedure Manual.
- 3.6.2 A request can be made by emailing cctv@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk. The relevant form will be forwarded and the request will be dealt with once payment for disbursements (a minimum fee of £50) is received by the PS CCTV System Owner. All information regarding the footage will be logged in the PS CCTV Control Room Data log.

3.7 Disclosure to the Media

- 3.7.1 The Data Protection legislation exemption (Schedule 2, part 5, para 26(3) of the Data Protection Act 2018) applies to journalism but this should not be construed as an automatic blanket exemption from the Data Protection legislation -the media must still ensure they give consideration to the data protection rights of individuals.
- 3.7.2 The CCTV System Owner must be satisfied that the disclosure is lawful, sufficiently justified in the public interest and would be fair and meet the 'legitimate interests' condition. If the information in question is sensitive personal data (someone's health, sex life or allegations of criminal activity), there is a specific Data Protection legislation condition to allow a public interest disclosure to journalists if it is related to wrongdoing or incompetence, but otherwise, the CCTV System Owner will need to be satisfied that one of the conditions for processing sensitive data applies. The key is proportionality. It is a balancing act – if there is a serious privacy intrusion or risk of harm, the media will need to demonstrate/establish a significant public interest to justify the disclosure.
- 3.7.3 The Data Protection legislation does not oblige the CCTV System Owner to disclose information to the media, if it disagrees with the media's view of the public interest, or if the CCTV System Owner has other overriding legal, professional or reputational reasons to refuse to disclose the information.
- 3.7.4 *Before disclosing information to the media, the CCTV System Owner must ensure that the request cites an appropriate public interest justification.*

3.8 Request for information (Subject Access Requests)

- 3.8.1 Personal data includes CCTV images of an individual, or images, which gives away information about an individual, such as their car number plate.
- 3.8.2 An individual is only entitled to their own data, and not to information relating to other people, (unless the information is also about them or they are acting on behalf of someone). Therefore, it is important that the PS CCTV System owner establishes whether the information requested falls within the definition of personal data. For further information about the definition of personal data please see the ICO Right of Access Guidance on what is personal data.
- 3.8.3 The Data Protection legislation does not prevent an individual making a subject access request via a third party such as a solicitor. In these cases, the PS CCTV System owner will need to satisfy itself that the third party making the request is entitled to act on behalf of the individual, but it is the third party's responsibility to provide evidence of this entitlement. This might be a written authority to make the request or it might be a more general power of attorney.

- 3.8.4 A child can also request access to information held and shared. Even if a child is too young to understand the implications of subject access rights, it still has the right rather than anyone else such as parent or guardian. So, it is the child who has a right of access to the information held about them, even though in the case of young children, these rights are likely to be exercised by those with parental responsibility for them.
- 3.8.5 Responding to a subject access request may involve providing information that relates both to the individual making the request and to another individual (perhaps a perpetrator). The PS CCTV System owner can refuse to comply with the request if it would mean disclosing information about another individual who can be identified from that information, except if:
- a) the other individual has consented to the disclosure, or
 - b) it is reasonable to comply with the request without that individual's consent.
- 3.8.6 In determining whether it is reasonable to disclose the information, the PS CCTV System owner must consider all the relevant circumstances including:
- the type of information that it would disclose;
 - any duty of confidentiality owed to the other individual;
 - any steps taken to seek consent from the other individual;
 - whether the other individual is capable of giving consent and
 - any express refusal of consent by the other individual.
- 3.8.7 This means that although the PS CCTV System owner may sometimes be able to disclose information relating to a third party, it needs to decide whether it is appropriate to do so in each case. The decision will involve balancing the data subject's rights of access against the other individual's rights. If the other person consents to the disclosure of information about them, then it would be unreasonable not to do so. However, if there is no such consent, the PS CCTV System owner must decide whether to disclose the information anyway.
- 3.8.8 Under Data Protection legislation, it is an offence to make any amendment with the intention of preventing its disclosure.
- 3.8.9 Any personal access request from an individual for the disclosure of their personal data, which they believe is recorded by virtue of the PS CCTV System, will be directed in the first instance to the Nominated Chief Officer and dealt with by an appropriate Designated CCTV Officer, in accordance with the Data Protection legislation.
- 3.8.10 In supplying the footage, care must be taken not to disclose any personal data of another individual. This may involve 'blurring' or 'pixilating' parts of the footage such as figures or licence plates.

- 3.8.11 The information will be provided free of charge. However, a reasonable fee based on the administrative cost of providing the information may be charged when a request is manifestly unfounded or excessive, particularly if it is repetitive. A reasonable fee may also be charged to comply with requests for further copies of the same information.
- 3.8.12 Any person making a subject access request must be able to prove their identity and provide sufficient information to enable the data to be located.
- 3.8.13 When responding to a subject access request, the Council cannot apply a policy of blanket non-disclosure. There must be a selected and targeted approach to non-disclosure based on the circumstances of the particular case.
- 3.8.14 The rights of data subjects are qualified rights and are not absolute. The Data Protection legislation recognises that in some circumstances, the Council might have a legitimate reason for not complying with a subject access request, so it provides a number of exemptions & restrictions from the duty to do so.

The most commonly deployed exemptions are:

- where the information is subject to legal or litigation privilege;
 - where the information contains the personal data of a third party;
 - where the information is of the type, which would be likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime, or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders if disclosed.
- 3.8.15 Where an exemption or restriction applies to the facts of a particular request, the Council may refuse to provide all or some of the information requested, depending on the circumstances. The application of exemptions/restrictions must be undertaken in consultation with Legal Services.
- 3.8.16 Requests by third parties for disclosure of personal data third may include, but are not limited to:
- Police (civil police, British Transport Police, Ministry of Defence Police, or Military Police)
 - Statutory authorities/bodies with powers to prosecute, (e.g. H.M Customs and Excise, Trading Standards etc.)
 - Solicitors
 - Insurance agencies.
- 3.8.17 Requests by third parties are dealt with in accordance with Section 9 and Appendix C of this Code.

3.9 Requests by Council employees and members of the public – alleged incidences on PS CCTV System Owner’s premises

- 3.9.1 Requests may be made by the PS CCTV System Owner’s employees and members of the public for CCTV footage of activity in/on the PS CCTV System Owner’s premises e.g. car parks where criminal damage to vehicles is being alleged.
- 3.9.2 The ICO advises that consideration should be given to whether the request is genuine and whether there is any risk to the safety of the other people involved.
- 3.9.3 The Council is in no position to accurately assess the risk posed to individuals when PS CCTV footage is requested by a private person or group. Routinely the council will only disclose to approved and authorised third parties such as Police and Insurance Companies and will only consider requests by other parties in rare circumstances where it is clear there is no risk to others. This has no effect on the policy in regards to Data Subject Access Requests.
- 3.9.4 Vehicle crime should be reported by the individual to Gwent Police and/or to their insurance agency.
- 3.9.5 Any request from an individual for confirmation as to whether or not personal data concerning them is being processed and, where that is the case, access to the personal data will be directed in the first instance to the Data Protection Officer. Each request will be assessed on its own merits.
- 3.9.6 The principles of Sections 45 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 Article 15 (Rights of Data Subjects and others) shall be followed in respect of every request.
- 3.9.7 Any person making a request must be able to prove his identity and provide sufficient information to enable the data to be located. For further information on Subject Access Requests please see [here](#).

Section 4 Accountability and Public Information

4.1 The Public

4.1.1 Public access to the PS CCTV Control Room will be prohibited. However, in the interest of openness and accountability anyone wishing to visit the Control Room may make a request to the Nominated Chief Officer for written authority to do so. Visitors will always be accompanied by one of the Designated CCTV Officers. Although a visit will only take place in the presence of a designated CCTV Operator, he or she will not be expected to take responsibility for such a visit but will record the visit as follows:

- Date, time and duration of visit
- Names and status of visitors
- Purpose and/or justification of visit.

4.1.2 All visitors will be entered into the Log book by the PS CCTV Operator on duty who will inform visitors of the requirement for a Declaration of Confidentiality. No visits will take place or continue whilst a live incident is running.

4.2 Public Space CCTV System Owner

4.2.1 The CCTV System owner is Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

4.3 The Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO)

4.3.1 The Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO) will perform the role of Senior Responsible Officer (SRO).

4.3.2 The SIRO is responsible for authorising overt surveillance utilising the PS CCTV System and the Deployable mobile cameras. They are also responsible for authorising any changes to the PS CCTV System affecting the views or scope of the PS CCTV System via the submission of a Data Protection Impact Assessment.

4.3.3 The SIRO is responsible for agreeing any significant changes to this Code of Practice and the PS CCTV Procedure Manual.

4.4 Data Controller

4.4.1 The Data Controller means a person who (either alone or jointly or in common with other persons) determines the purposes for which and the manner in which any personal data are, or are to be processed.

4.4.2 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Data Controller.

4.5 Nominated Chief Officer (CCTV)

4.5.1 The Nominated Chief Officer is the nominated representative on behalf of the Owner whose role will include responsibility to:

- Have unrestricted access to the Control Room and will receive reports at agreed periods from the CCTV System Manager.
- Liaise with the SIRO to consult with regard to changes to any of its aspects of the CCTV System, including this Code of Practice and the PS CCTV Procedure Manual.
- Ensure that statistical and other relevant information, including any complaints made, will be included in the Annual Report of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, and will be made available to the public, Elected Members and other relevant stake holders.

4.6 CCTV System Manager

4.6.1 The Nominated Chief Officer will identify a CCTV System Manager. The System Manager will have delegated authority for data control on behalf of the Data Controller, who will:

- Maintain day to day management of the System as a whole.
- Accept overall responsibility for the System and for ensuring that the Code and requirements of the Procedural Manual are complied with.
- Ensure that every complaint is dealt with in line with the Corporate Complaints Policy.

4.7 Designated CCTV Officers

4.7.1 The designated CCTV Officers will have day-to-day access to the PS CCTV System. They will consist of suitably trained staff as identified by the Nominated Chief Officer.

4.8 Public Information

4.8.1 This Code of Practice - A copy shall be published on the Council's website and will be made available to anyone on request.

4.8.2 Annual Report - A copy of the Annual Report shall be published on the Council's website and will be made available to anyone requesting it.

4.8.3 Signs – Bilingual (Welsh and English) signs will be placed in the locality of the cameras and at main entrance points to the relevant areas, e.g. pedestrian precincts. The signs will indicate:

- The presence of CCTV recording;
- The 'owners' of the CCTV System;
- The contact telephone number; and
- The purpose of the CCTV System.

Section 5 Assessment of the Public Space CCTV System and Code of Practice

5.1 Evaluation

5.1.1 The PS CCTV System will be evaluated periodically to establish whether the objectives of the PS CCTV System are being met. The evaluation will normally include, but not be limited to the following:

- An assessment of the impact upon crime and Anti-Social Behaviour;
- An assessment of the incidents recorded by the System, to include where possible an assessment of the value of evidence provided, and the outcomes of investigations;
- An assessment of the impact on town centre businesses;
- An assessment of neighbouring areas without PS CCTV;
- A review of the Code of Practice and PS CCTV Procedure Manual;
- A review of the continuing relevancy of the objectives of the PS CCTV System; and
- Any other factors - such as PS CCTV System security checks.

5.1.2 The results of any evaluation will be published as part of the Annual Report and will be used to review, develop and make any alterations to the specified purposes and objectives of the scheme as well as the functioning, management and operation of the System.

5.2 Monitoring

5.2.1 The Nominated Chief Officer will be responsible for the operation and evaluation of the PS CCTV System, and the implementation of this Code of Practice.

5.2.2 The Designated Officers shall be responsible for maintaining full management information of incidents dealt with by the PS CCTV Control Room, for use in managing the PS CCTV System and in future evaluations. These and any other issues with the PS CCTV System will be logged and reported to the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO).

5.3 Audit

5.3.1 Blaenau Gwent Council's Audit Managers, or nominated deputies, who are not Designated Officers, will be given full access to the System when requested.

5.4 Lay Visitors

5.4.1 An independent panel of community volunteers, may be appointed to carry out periodic visits to the PS CCTV Control Room. Accredited lay visitors will be allowed access to the Control Room at all times unless operational conditions prohibit this.

- 5.4.2 The purpose of such lay visits is to ensure that, within the constraints of the Data Protection legislation and other relevant legislation, the PS CCTV System and its management and operation remain as open as possible to public scrutiny.
- 5.4.3 Lay visitors will be required to be conversant with this Code of Practice and the PS CCTV Procedure Manual.
- 5.4.4 Accredited lay visitors will be asked to monitor PS CCTV Operators' and managers' adherence to this Code of Practice and the PS CCTV Procedure Manual and to report any contravention to the Designated Officers.
- 5.4.5 Lay visitors will be required to sign a Declaration of Confidentiality and to abide by this Code of Practice at all times. (See Appendix D)
- 5.4.6 Normally, no more than two lay visitors will visit the PS CCTV Control Room at any one time. They will be required to have their personal details entered into the PS CCTV Control Room Log book and will, as far as practicable, be accompanied by a Designated CCTV Officer.

Section 6 Human Resources

6.1 The Public Space CCTV Control Room and those responsible for the operation of the System

- 6.1.1 Only authorised personnel who have been trained to use the PS CCTV System's equipment and in the PS CCTV Control Room procedures will operate the PS CCTV System.
- 6.1.2 Every person involved in the management and operation of the PS CCTV System will be personally issued with a copy of both the Code of Practice and the PS CCTV Procedure Manual. They will be required to sign to confirm understanding of and adherence to the obligations that these documents place upon them and that any breach will be considered a disciplinary offence contrary to the Code of Conduct. He or she will be fully conversant with the contents of both documents, which may be updated from time to time. They will comply with both documents as far as is reasonably practicable.
- 6.1.3 All persons involved with the PS CCTV System shall receive training in respect of the PS CCTV Code of Practice, the PS CCTV Procedure Manual and legislation relevant to their role. Such training will be updated as and when necessary.

6.2 Discipline

- 6.2.1 Each individual having responsibility under the terms of the Code of Practice, who has any involvement with the PS CCTV System to which it refers, will be subject to the Authority's Disciplinary Code. Any breach of the Code of Practice, or of any aspect of confidentiality, will be dealt with in accordance with that Authority's Disciplinary Code.
- 6.2.2 The Designated Officers will have primary responsibility for ensuring that there is no breach of security and that the Code of Practice is complied with. The Designated Officers will have day-to-day responsibility for the PS CCTV Control Room and for adhering to the Code of Practice. Non-compliance with the Code of Practice by any person will be considered a breach of conduct and will be dealt with accordingly, including, if appropriate, by criminal proceedings.

6.3 Declaration of Confidentiality

- 6.3.1 Every individual with responsibility under the terms of this Code of Practice, who has any involvement with the PS CCTV System to which it refers, will be required to sign a separate declaration of confidentiality. See Appendix B.
- 6.3.2 Police Officers visiting the PS CCTV Control Room for operational purposes must agree to the declaration of confidentiality by completing and signing the Visitor Log Book.

Section 7 Control and Operation of Public Space CCTV System

7.1 Guiding Principles

- 7.1.1 All persons operating the PS CCTV System must act with the utmost probity and integrity at all times.
- 7.1.2 Only persons, who have been trained in their use and the legislative implications of such use, will operate the cameras and the recording and reviewing equipment.
- 7.1.3 Every use of the cameras will accord with the purposes and key objectives of the PS CCTV System and shall be in compliance with this Code of Practice.
- 7.1.4 Cameras will not be used to look into private residential properties. 'Privacy zones' have been programmed into the PS CCTV System, whenever practically possible, in order to ensure that any interior of any private residential property is not surveyed by the cameras.
- 7.1.5 The PS CCTV System has been set up on a 'record only' basis with no 'live-monitoring' taking place, however the PS CCTV System has the facility to 'live-monitor' all cameras but this will only be used in the event of exceptional and emergency circumstances.
- 7.1.6 Temporary 'Live- monitoring' may take place and be unavoidable when conducting essential maintenance or testing of the PS CCTV System.
- 7.1.7 In the event of any 'live-monitoring' having to taking place camera operators will have no ability to pan, zoom or tilt any cameras on the System. All cameras have a fixed view which cannot be moved by the operator.
- 7.1.8 Camera operators must always be mindful of exercising prejudices, which may lead to complaints of the PS CCTV System being used for purposes other than those for which it is intended. The operators may be required to justify their interest in, or recording of, any particular individual or group of individuals or property.

7.2 Public Space CCTV Control Room

- 7.2.1 Only staff that are trained and authorised to use the CCTV equipment will have access to the PS CCTV System.

7.3 Operation of the Public Space CCTV System by the Police

- 7.3.1 Under some circumstances the Police may make a request to assume direction of the PS CCTV System to which this Code of Practice applies. Any requests must be made in writing by a police officer not below the rank of Superintendent. Any such request will only be allowed on the written authority of the Managing Director, or the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO).
- 7.3.2 In the event of such a request being allowed, the PS CCTV Control Room will be operated by those personnel who are authorised to do so and who fall within the terms of Sections 6 and 7 of this Code of Practice. They will then operate under the direction of the Police Officer designated in the written authority.
- 7.3.3 In extreme circumstances a request may be made by the Police to take total control of the PS CCTV System, including the staffing of the PS CCTV Control Room and control of all associated equipment, to the exclusion of all representatives of the PS CCTV System owners. Any such request must be made to the Designated Officers in the first instance, who will consult personally with the Nominated Chief Officer and SIRO. A request for total exclusive control must be made in writing by a Police Officer not below the rank of Superintendent or person of equal standing. A member of the PS CCTV team will be present at all time during the takeover of the facility.

7.4 Maintenance of the PS CCTV System

- 7.4.1 To ensure compliance with the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's Code of Practice and to ensure that images recorded continue to be of an appropriate evidential quality, the PS CCTV System shall be maintained in accordance with the requirements of the PS CCTV Procedural Manual under a maintenance Service Level Agreement.
- 7.4.2 The maintenance Service Level Agreement will make provision for regular or periodic service checks on the equipment. This will include cleaning of any all-weather domes or housings, checks on the functioning of the equipment, and any minor adjustments that need to be made to the equipment settings to maintain picture quality.
- 7.4.3 The maintenance Service Level Agreement will also include provision for regular periodic review and overhaul of all the equipment and replacement of equipment, which is reaching the end of its serviceable life.
- 7.4.4 The maintenance Service Level Agreement will also provide for 'emergency' attendance on site by a specialist CCTV engineer to rectify any loss or severe degradation of image or camera control.

- 7.4.5 The maintenance Service Level Agreement will define the maximum periods of time permitted for attendance by the engineer and for rectification of the problem, depending upon the severity of the event, and the operational requirements of that element of the PS CCTV System.
- 7.4.6 It is the responsibility of the Nominated Chief Officer to ensure appropriate records are maintained in respect of the functioning of the cameras and the response of the contracted maintenance organisation.

Section 8 Access to, and Security of the CCTV Control Room and Associated Equipment

8.1 Authorised Access

- 8.1.1 Only trained and authorised personnel will operate the equipment located within the PS CCTV Control Room or equipment associated with the System.

8.2 Public access

- 8.2.1 Public access to the monitoring and recording facility will be prohibited except for lawful, proper and sufficient reasons, and only then with the personal authority of the Managing Director or Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO). Any such visits will be conducted and recorded in accordance with the PS CCTV Procedure Manual.

8.3 Authorised Visits

- 8.3.1 Visits by lay visitors or inspectors or auditors do not fall within the scope of the above paragraph and may take place at any time, without prior warning. No more than two inspectors or auditors may visit at any one time. Inspectors or auditors will not influence the operation of any part of the PS CCTV System during their visit. The visit will be suspended in the event of it being operationally inconvenient. Any such visit should be recorded in the same way as that described above.

8.4 Declaration of Confidentiality

- 8.4.1 Regardless of their status, all visitors to the PS CCTV Control Room, including inspectors and auditors, will be required to have their personal details entered into the Visitor's Book and read and sign a declaration of confidentiality.

8.5 Security

- 8.5.1 In the event of the PS CCTV Control Room having to be evacuated for safety or security reasons, the provisions of the Procedure Manual will be complied with. The PS CCTV Control Room will be secure at all times by 'Magnetic-Locks' and access will only be gained via a Designated Officer's unique electronic identification card and its authorised permission.

8.6 Airwaves Radio

- 8.6.1 Due to the PS CCTV System being a 'record-only' system with no 'live-monitoring' (except in exceptional circumstances) Designated Officers are not currently issued with Airwaves Radio to communicate directly with the Police. No Airwaves Radios will be stored at the PS CCTV Control Room. The Code of Practice and PS CCTV Procedure Manual can be adapted should this change in the future.

Section 9 Management of Recorded Material

9.1 Guiding Principles

- 9.1.1 For the purposes of this Code of Practice 'recorded material' means any material recorded by, or as the result of, technical equipment, which forms part of the PS CCTV System. This specifically includes images recorded digitally or by way of data copying, including still prints.
- 9.1.2 Every video or digital recording obtained using the PS CCTV System has the potential of containing material that can be admitted in evidence in proceedings in the Criminal Justice System.
- 9.1.3 Members of the community must have complete confidence that information about their ordinary, everyday activities recorded on the PS CCTV System, will be treated with due regard to their individual right to respect for their private and family life.
- 9.1.4 It is of the utmost importance that, irrespective of the means or format of the images obtained from the PS CCTV System, e.g. Paper Copy, Hard Copy Disc Drive, DVD, CD or any form of electronic processing and storage is treated strictly in accordance with the PS CCTV Code of Practice and the PS CCTV Procedure Manual. This applies from the moment they are recorded until their final destruction. Every movement and usage will be recorded.
- 9.1.5 Recorded material will not be copied, sold, otherwise released or used for commercial purposes of any kind other than for legitimate third party/insurance requests.

9.2 Disclosure of Data to a Third Party

- 9.2.1 Every request for the release of personal data generated by the PS CCTV System will be channelled through the CCTV System Manager, who will ensure that the principles contained within Appendix C to this PS CCTV Code of Practice are followed at all times.

The disclosure of personal data for commercial or entertainment purposes is specifically prohibited.

- 9.2.2 In complying with the National Standard for the Release of Data to Third Parties, it is intended, as far as is reasonably practicable, to safeguard the rights of the individual to privacy and to give effect to the following principles:
- recorded material shall be processed lawfully and fairly, and be used only for the purposes defined in this Code of Practice;
 - access to recorded material will only take place in accordance with the standards outlined in Appendix C and this Code of Practice; and
 - The release or disclosure of Personal Data for commercial or entertainment purposes is specifically prohibited.

- 9.2.3 Members of the Police Service or other Law Enforcement Agency having a statutory authority to investigate and/or prosecute offences may, subject to compliance with Appendix C, release details of recorded information to the media in an effort to identify alleged offenders or potential witnesses. Under such circumstances, full details will be recorded in accordance with the PS CCTV Procedure Manual.

Note: The Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984, covers release to the media of recorded information, in any format, which may be part of a current investigation. Any such disclosure should only be made after due consideration of the likely impact on a criminal trial. Full details of any media coverage must be recorded and brought to the attention of both the prosecutor and the defence.

- 9.2.4 It may be beneficial to make use of 'real time' video footage for the training and education of those involved in the operation and management of PS CCTV systems, and for those involved in the investigation, prevention and detection of crime. Any material recorded by virtue of the PS CCTV System may be used for such bona fide training and education purposes.

9.3 Digital System- Provision & Quality

- 9.3.1 To ensure the quality of footage, and that recorded information meets the criteria outlined by current Home Office guidelines, only media of good quality are used on the PS CCTV System.

9.4 Information – Retention

- 9.4.1 Recorded media which has been preserved after a lawful request will be retained for a maximum period of 6 months for collection, or to establish if "non-evidential" or similar. Deletion or destruction will take place in accordance with the manufacturer's requirements and full details of all material deleted or destroyed will be logged.

9.5 Recording Policy

- 9.5.1 Subject to the equipment functioning correctly, images from most cameras will be recorded throughout every 24-hour period for a period of 31 days after which the data is automatically overwritten unless requested and preserved for a lawful purpose.
- 9.5.2 Subject to the equipment functioning correctly, images from a few cameras on the PS CCTV System will be recorded for a period of no longer than 7 days after which the data is automatically overwritten. The locations of these cameras presents technical difficulties preventing the data being retained for longer periods without it being downloaded and preserved.

9.6 Evidence Provision

- 9.6.1 In the event of images being required for evidential purposes the procedures outlined in the PS CCTV Procedure Manual will be strictly complied with.

Section 10 Digital Still Photographs

10.1 Guiding Principles

- 10.1.1 A digital still photograph is a copy of an image or images which already exist on a computer disc. Such still images are within the definitions of 'data' and 'recorded material'.
- 10.1.2 Digital still photographs will not be taken as a matter of routine. When a still image is recorded, it must be capable of justification by the originator, who will be responsible for recording the full circumstances under which the still is taken, in accordance with the PS CCTV Procedure Manual and including them being individually numbered.
- 10.1.3 Digital still photographs contain personal data and will therefore only be disclosed under the terms of Appendix C of this Code of Practice- 'Disclosure of data to third parties'. If stills are released to the media, in compliance with Appendix C, in an effort to identify alleged offenders or potential witnesses, full details will be recorded in accordance with the PS CCTV Procedure Manual.
- 10.1.4 A record will be maintained of all digital still photograph productions, in accordance with the PS CCTV Procedures Manual. The recorded details will include a sequential number, the date, time and location of the incident, the date and time of the production of the print, the identity of the person requesting the print, (if relevant) and the purpose for which the print was taken.
- 10.1.5 The records of the digital still photographs taken will be subject to audit in common with all other records in the PS CCTV System.

Section 11 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)

11.1 Guiding Principles

- 11.1.1 The Public Space CCTV System Owner has adopted a Policy Statement in relation to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. This Policy Statement complies with the Home Office Covert Surveillance Codes of Practice and is periodically audited by the IPCO (Investigatory Powers Commissioner). An annual report on the use of RIPA is submitted by the Council to the IPCO.
- 11.1.2 The PS CCTV System Owner does not currently have a joint working protocol in place with Gwent Police with regard to the use of the Public Space CCTV Systems for surveillance authorised by the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).
- 11.1.3 Advice and guidance for Designated CCTV Officers and Police Officers in respect of Public Space CCTV Systems and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act of 2000 (RIPA) is reproduced in Appendix E.

Appendix A

Key Personnel and Responsibilities

1. **System Owner**

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is the 'System Owner' of the Public Space CCTV system.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council,
Municipal Offices, Civic Centre,
Ebbw Vale, NP23 6XB
Tel: 01495 311556

2. **Nominated Chief Officer**

The Nominated Chief Officer is the nominated representative on behalf of the 'System Owner'; this role is performed by the Head of Governance and Partnerships.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council,
Municipal Offices, Civic Centre,
Ebbw Vale, NP23 6XB
Tel: 01495 311556

The Nominated Chief Officer role will include responsibility to:

- a) Ensure the provision and maintenance of all equipment forming part of the PS CCTV System in accordance with contractual arrangements, which the owners may from time to time, enter into.
- b) Maintain close liaison with the CCTV System Manager.
- c) Ensure the interests of the 'System Owners' and other organisations are upheld in accordance with the terms of this Code of Practice.
- d) Agree to any proposed alterations and additions to the system, this Code of Practice and/or the Public Space CCTV Procedural Manual.

3. **Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) - Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO)**

The role of (SIRO) is performed by the Chief Officer Resources.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council,
Municipal Offices, Civic Centre,
Ebbw Vale, NP23 6XB
Tel: 01495 311556

The Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO) will perform the role of Senior Responsible Officer (SRO), and will be responsible to:

- a) complete the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's Self-Assessment Toolkit. Through the questionnaire they should identify any changes to the system, whether the system remains fit for purpose and whether a maintenance contract is still in place for the system.
- b) Authorise overt surveillance utilising the PS CCTV System and the Deployable mobile cameras.
- c) Authorise any changes to the PS CCTV System.
- d) Agree any significant changes to this Code of Practice and the PS CCTV Procedure Manual.

4. CCTV System Manager

The CCTV System Manager is the 'manager' of the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council PS CCTV System. They have delegated authority for data control on behalf of the 'data controller'.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council,
Municipal Offices,
Civic Centre,
Ebbw Vale,
NP23 6XB
Tel: 01495 311556

The CCTV System Manager is responsible for the integrity, security, procedural efficiency and methods of operation of the System, including the gathering, retention and release of CCTV data.

Their role also includes responsibility to

- a) accept overall responsibility for the system and for ensuring that this Code of Practice and the Procedure Manual is complied with;
- b) provide supervision and training of all Designated CCTV Operators authorised to assist in the operation of the System; and
- c) to maintain direct liaison with partners.

5. Designated CCTV Operators

The Nominated Chief Officer and SIRO will identify Designated CCTV Operators to support the CCTV System Manager. The Designated CCTV Operators will be appropriately trained and will be responsible for the integrity, security, procedural efficiency and methods of operation of the System.

Appendix B

Public Space CCTV Control Room System - Declaration of Confidentiality/ Non-Disclosure Agreement

This confidentiality agreement acknowledges that my duties allow me access to the Public Space CCTV Control Room or data processed by the Public Space CCTV System.

I agree that I have read the Code of Practice in respect of the operation and management of the Public Space CCTV System, and hereby declare that I have familiarised myself with the content of that Code of Practice and understand that all duties, which I undertake in connection with the Blaenau-Gwent County Borough Council Public Space CCTV System, must not contravene any part of the current Code of Practice, or any future amendments of which I am made aware. If now, or in the future, I am or become unclear of any aspect of the operation of the PS CCTV System or the content of the Code of Practice, I undertake to seek clarification of any such uncertainties.

I understand that my part in fulfilling the duties of my role means that I may have access to sensitive and personal information and that such access shall include:

- reading or viewing of information held on computer or displayed by some other electronic means,
- reading or viewing manually held information in written, printed or photographic form, or
- overhearing any telephone or verbal communication.

I undertake that:

- I shall not communicate to nor discuss with any other person the contents of the information except to those persons authorised by the Data Controller as is necessary.
- I shall not retain, extract, copy or in any way use any information to which I have been afforded access during the course of my duties for any other purpose.
- I will only operate computer applications or manual systems that I have been instructed to use or given access permissions to access in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 which prescribes the way in which personal data may be obtained, stored and processed.
- I will act only under instruction from Senior Management or other relevant officials in the processing of any Data.
- I will comply with the appropriate physical and system security procedures made known to me by the Data Controller.

I understand that any Information is subject to the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 and that by knowingly or recklessly acting outside the scope of this Agreement I may incur criminal and/or civil liabilities and subject to the internal disciplinary procedures.

I undertake to seek advice and guidance from Senior Management or other relevant official of the Data Controller in the event that I have any doubts or concerns about my responsibilities or the authorised use of the Data defined in the Agreement.

I have read, understood and accept the above.

In appending my signature to this declaration, I agree to abide by the Code of Practice at all times. I also understand and agree to maintain confidentiality in respect of all information gained during the course of my duties, whether received verbally, in writing or any other media format - now or at any in the future (including such time that I have ceased to be employed by Blaenau-Gwent County Borough Council).

Name:.....

Signature:

Witness:

Position:

Date:

Appendix C

National Standard for the Release of Data to Third Parties

1. Introduction

- 1.1 CCTV is one of the most powerful tools to be developed during recent years to assist with efforts to combat crime and disorder, whilst enhancing community safety. Equally, it may be regarded by some as the most potent infringement of people's liberty. If users, owners and managers of such systems are to command the respect and support of the general public, CCTV systems must be used with the utmost probity at all times and in a manner, which stands up to scrutiny by the people they are aiming to protect.
- 1.2 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council believes that everyone has the right to respect for their private and family life and home. Although the use of CCTV cameras has become widely accepted in the UK as an effective security tool, those people who do express concern tend to do so over the handling of the information (data) which the CCTV System gathers. The PS CCTV System Owners are aware of the nationally recommended standard of The CCTV User Group. <https://www.cctvusergroup.com/>

2. General Policy on disclosure/sharing

- 2.2 All requests for the release of data shall be processed in accordance with the PS CCTV Procedure Manual. All such requests shall be channelled through the data controller.

3. Primary Request to View Data

- a) Primary requests to view data generated by a CCTV System are likely to be made by third parties for any one or more of the following purposes:
- i) Providing evidence in criminal proceedings (e.g. Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, Criminal Procedures & Investigations Act 1996, etc.);
 - ii) Providing evidence in civil proceedings or tribunals;
 - iii) The prevention of crime;
 - iv) The investigation and detection of crime (may include identification of offenders); and
 - v) Identification of witnesses.
- b) Third parties, who are required to show adequate grounds for disclosure of data within the above criteria, may include, but are not limited to:
- i) Police (Note 1 below);
 - ii) Statutory authorities with powers to prosecute, (e.g. Customs and Excise, Trading Standards, etc.);
 - iii) Solicitors (Note 2 below);
 - iv) Plaintiffs and defendants in civil proceedings (Note 3 below);

- v) Accused persons or defendants in criminal proceedings (Note 3 below); and
 - vi) Other agencies, (which should be specified in the Code of Practice) according to purpose and legal status. (Note 4 below)
- c) Upon receipt from a third party of a bona fide request for the release of data, the data controller shall:
- i) Not unduly obstruct a third party investigation to verify the existence of relevant data; and
 - ii) Ensure the retention of data which may be relevant to a request, but which may be pending application for, or the issue of, a court order or subpoena. A time limit shall be imposed on such retention, which will be notified at the time of the request.
- d) In circumstances outlined at note 3 below, (requests by plaintiffs, accused persons or defendants) the data controller, or nominated representative, shall:
- i) Be satisfied that there is no connection with any existing data held by the police in connection with the same investigation; and
 - ii) Treat all such enquiries with strict confidentiality.

Notes:

(1) The release of data to the police is not to be restricted to the civil police but could include, for example, British Transport Police, Ministry of Defence Police, or Military Police. (It may be appropriate to put in place special arrangements in response to local requirements).

(2) Aside from criminal investigations, data may be of evidential value in respect of civil proceedings or tribunals. In such cases a solicitor, or authorised representative of the tribunal, is required to give relevant information in writing prior to a search being granted. In the event of a search resulting in a requirement being made for the release of data, such release will only be facilitated on the instructions of a court order or subpoena. A charge may be made for this service to cover costs incurred. In all circumstances data will only be released for lawful and proper purposes.

(3) There may be occasions when an enquiry by a plaintiff, an accused person, a defendant or a defence solicitor, falls outside the terms of disclosure or subject access legislation. An example could be the investigation of an alibi. Such an enquiry may not form part of a prosecution investigation. Defence enquiries could also arise in a case where there appeared to be no recorded evidence in a prosecution investigation.

(4) The data controller shall decide which (if any) 'other agencies' might be permitted access to data. Having identified those 'other agencies', such access to data will only be permitted in compliance with this Standard.

(5) The data controller can refuse an individual request to view if insufficient or inaccurate information is provided. A search request should be reasonably specific, for example, specified to the nearest half-hour.

4. Secondary Request to View Data

- a) A 'secondary' request for access to data may be defined as, 'any request being made, which does not fall into the category of a primary request'. Before complying with a secondary request, the data controller shall ensure that:
 - i) The request does not contravene, and that compliance with the request would not breach, current relevant legislation, (e.g. GDPR and The Data Protection Act 2018, Human Rights Act 1998, section 163 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, etc.);
 - ii) Any legislative requirements have been complied with, (e.g. the requirements of GDPR and The Data Protection Act 2018);
 - iii) Due regard has been taken of any known case law (current or past) which may be relevant, (e.g. R v Brentwood BC ex p. Peck); and
 - iv) The request would pass a test of 'disclosure in the public interest' (Note 1 below)
- b) If, in compliance with a secondary request to view data, a decision is taken to release material to a third party, the following safeguards shall be put in place before surrendering the material:
 - i) in respect of material to be released under the auspices of 'crime prevention', written agreement to the release of the material should be obtained from a police officer, not below the rank of Inspector. The officer should have personal knowledge of the circumstances of the crime/s to be prevented and an understanding of this Code (Note 2 below); and
 - ii) if the material is to be released under the heading of 'public wellbeing, health or safety', written agreement to the release of material should be obtained from a senior officer within the Local Authority. The officer should have personal knowledge of the potential benefit to be derived from releasing the material and an understanding of this Code.
- c) Recorded material may be used for bona fide training purposes such as for police or staff training. Under no circumstances will recorded material be released for commercial sale or entertainment purposes.

Notes:

- (1) 'Disclosure in the public interest' could include the disclosure of personal data that:
 - i) Provides specific information, which would be of value or interest to the public well-being;
 - ii) Identifies a public health or safety issue; and
 - iii) Assists in the prevention of crime.

- (2) The disclosure of personal data, which is the subject of a 'live' criminal investigation, would always come under the terms of a primary request, (see iii above).

5. Individual Subject Access under Data Protection legislation

- a) Under the terms of Data Protection legislation, individual access to personal data, of which that individual is the data subject, must be permitted providing:
- i) The request is made in writing;
 - ii) No fees will be charged for subject access requests.
 - iii) The data controller is supplied with sufficient information to satisfy him as to the identity of the person making the request;
 - iv) Sufficient and accurate information is provided about the time, date and place to enable the data controller to locate the information that the person seeks. It is recognised that a person making a request is unlikely to know the precise time. In such circumstances it is suggested that accuracy to within one hour would be a reasonable requirement; and
- b) In the event of the data controller complying with a request to supply a copy of the data to the subject, only data pertaining to the individual should be copied. All other personal data, which may facilitate the identification of any other person, should be concealed or erased. Under these circumstances an additional fee may be payable.
- c) The data controller is entitled to refuse an individual request to view data under these provisions if insufficient or inaccurate information is provided. However, every effort should be made to comply with subject access procedures and each request should be considered on its own merits.
- d) In addition to the principles contained within the Data Protection legislation, the data controller should be satisfied that the data is:
- i) Not currently and, so far as can be reasonably ascertained, not likely to become part of a 'live' criminal investigation;
 - ii) Not currently and, so far as can be reasonably ascertained, not likely to become relevant to civil proceedings;
 - iii) Not the subject of a complaint or dispute, which has not been actioned;
 - iv) The original data and that the audit trail has been maintained;
 - v) Not removed or copied without proper authority; and
 - vi) For individual disclosure only (i.e. to be disclosed to a named subject).

6. Process of Disclosure

- a) Verify the accuracy of the request.
- b) Replay the data to the requester only, or responsible person acting on behalf of the person making the request.
- c) The viewing should take place in a separate room and not in the control or monitoring area. Only data that is specific to the search request shall be shown.
- d) It must not be possible to identify any other individual from the information being shown, (any such information will be blanked-out, either by means of electronic screening or manual editing on the monitor screen).
- e) If a copy of the material is requested and there is no on-site means of editing out other personal data, the material shall be sent to an editing house for processing prior to being sent to the requester.

7. Media disclosure

7.1.1 Set procedures for release of data to a third party must be followed. If the means of editing out other personal data does not exist on-site, measures should include the following:

- a) In the event of a request from the media for access to recorded material, the procedures outlined under 'secondary request to view data' shall be followed. If material is to be released the following procedures shall be adopted:
 - i) The release of the material must be accompanied by a signed release document that clearly states what the data will be used for and sets out the limits on its use;
 - ii) The release document shall state that the receiver must process the data in a manner prescribed by the data controller, e.g. specific identities or data that must not be revealed;
 - iii) The release document shall require that following editing and prior to its use by the media, the data must be passed back to the data controller, either for final approval or consent to its use. This protects the position of the data controller who would be responsible for any infringement of Data Protection legislation and the System's Code; and
 - iv) The release document shall be considered a contract and signed by both parties as such. The signatories must have the requisite standing to sign in that capacity on behalf of their respective organisations.

8. Principles

8.1.1 In adopting this national standard for the release of data to third parties, it is intended, as far as reasonably practicable, to safeguard the individual's rights to privacy and to give effect to the following principles:

- a) Recorded material shall be processed lawfully and fairly and used only for the purposes defined in the Code for the CCTV scheme;
- b) Access to recorded material shall only take place in accordance with this Standard and the Code; and
- c) The release or disclosure of data for commercial or entertainment purposes is specifically prohibited.

Appendix D

Confidentiality Agreement Lay Visitors

I am a Lay Visitor of the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Public Space CCTV System with a responsibility to monitor the operation of the System and adherence to the Code of Practice. I have received a copy of the Code in respect of the operation and management of that CCTV System.

I confirm that I am fully conversant with my voluntary duties and the content of the Code of Practice. I undertake to inform the Designated CCTV Officers of any apparent contravention of the Code of Practice that I may note during the course of my visits to the Public Space CCTV Control Room.

If now, or in the future I am, or I become unclear of any aspect of the operation of the CCTV System or the content of the Code of Practice, I undertake to seek clarification of such uncertainties.

I understand that it is a condition of my duties that I do not disclose or divulge any information which I have acquired in the course of, or in connection with, my position as a Lay Visitor to any company, authority, agency, other organisation or any individual. This includes information obtained verbally, in writing or by any other media, now or in the future. I understand that this prohibition remains binding after I have ceased to perform duties as a Lay Visitor.

In signing this declaration, I agree to abide by, and be bound by, the Code of Practice. I understand and agree to maintain confidentiality in respect of all information gained during the course of my voluntary duties, now, or in the future.

Signed:.....

Print Name:

Witness:

Position:

Dated the (day) of(month) 20.....

Appendix E

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) Guiding Principles

Advice and Guidance for Control Room Staff and Police in respect of CCTV and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) relates to surveillance by the Police and other agencies with investigatory powers, and deals in part with the use of directed covert surveillance. Section 26 of this Act sets out what is Directed Surveillance. It defines this type of surveillance as:

‘Subject to subsection (6), surveillance is directed for the purposes of this Part if it is covert but not intrusive and is undertaken:

- a) for the purposes of a specific investigation or a specific operation
- b) in such a manner as is likely to result in the obtaining of private information about a person (whether or not one specifically identified for the purposes of the investigation or operation) and
- c) otherwise than by way of an immediate response to events or circumstances the nature of which is such that it would not be reasonably practicable for an authorisation under this Part to be sought for the carrying out of the surveillance.

The impact for staff in the Public Space CCTV Control Room is that there might be cause to monitor for some time a person or premises using the cameras. In most cases, this will fall into sub section (c) above, i.e. it will be an immediate response to events or circumstances. In this case, it would not require authorisation unless it were to continue for some time. The Code says some hours rather than minutes.

In cases where a pre-planned incident or operation wishes to make use of CCTV for such monitoring, an RIPA authority will almost certainly be required.

Slow time requests are authorised by a Police Superintendent or above.

If an authorisation is required immediately, a Police Inspector may do so. The forms in both cases must indicate the reason and should fall within one of the following categories:

An authorisation is necessary on grounds falling within this subsection if it is necessary:

- a) in the interests of national security
- b) for the purpose of preventing or detecting crime or of preventing disorder
- c) in the interests of the economic well-being of the United Kingdom
- d) in the interests of public safety
- e) for the purpose of protecting public health
- f) for the purpose of assessing or collecting any tax, duty, levy or other imposition, contribution or charge payable to a government department or
- g) for any purpose (not falling within paragraph (a) to (f)) which is specified for the purposes of this subsection by an order made by the Secretary of State.

In cases where there is doubt as to whether an authorisation is required or not, it may be prudent to obtain the necessary authority verbally, followed by written confirmation using the forms. Any authority given should be recorded appropriately for later reference. This should include the name of the officer authorising.

Forms should be available at the CCTV Control Room and are included in the PS CCTV Procedure Manual and available from the CCTV User Group Website.

Examples:

Inspector's Authorisation

An example of a request requiring an Inspector's authorisation might be where a car is found in a car park late at night and is known to belong to drug dealers. The officers might task CCTV to watch the vehicle over a period of time to note who goes to and from the vehicle.

Superintendent's Authorisation

An example here might be where it is suspected that shop premises are being utilised for dealing stolen goods and officers wish to use the Public Space CCTV to monitor the premises from outside for a period of days.

No Authorisation Required

An example might be where Police Officers chance upon local drug dealers sitting in the town centre and, in order not to divulge that they are being observed they ask CCTV operators to monitor them.

Agenda Item 7

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 26.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 29.03.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14 April 2021**

Report Subject: **EAS Business Plan 2021-2022 (Draft for consultation)**

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

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

Report Written by: **Debbie Hartevelde, Managing Director, EAS**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
√	√	23.03.21			9.3.21	14.4.21		

1. **Purpose of the Report**

This report asks for members to consider the full contents of the draft EAS Business Plan 2021-2022, as part of the regional consultation process. Through this activity members will ensure that the plan enables appropriate support for schools and settings in Blaenau Gwent.
- 2 **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The EAS delivers, through an agreed Business Plan, a wide range of school improvement services to all schools (all key stages, including all through schools and special schools), pupil referral units and funded non-maintained nursery settings on behalf of each LA. This plan supports the role LAs have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.
 - 2.2 In previous years the Business Plan has been accompanied by a LA Annex document. At a recent meeting of the Joint Executive Group it was agreed that the production of LA Annex documents would be paused for this year (2021/2022) as a result of changes to the accountability arrangements and the lack of available data / information e.g. categorisation, target setting. However, the main Business Plan will continue to contain LA specific priorities.
 - 2.3 The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan. This document contains the main priorities that the EAS believe will be relevant to focus upon in the next iteration of the regional Business Plan for 2021-2022. It is challenging to try to predict the way in which society will be operating from summer 2021 with regards to managing the spread of coronavirus. The priorities contained within this document assume that the EAS will build upon the learning and momentum from the past few months.
 - 2.4 However, this plan will also need to consider how schools and settings will operate in a COVID-19 recovery phase and the support that will be required. Consideration will also be given to the priorities that were set and agreed prior to the pandemic in

- 2.5 the previous Business Plan 2020-2021 depending on their relevance in the current climate.
The EAS will work collaboratively with local authority partners, schools and settings to implement the Business Plan. It is critically important that the EAS remains sensitive and responsive to the needs of the school workforce and will continue to be a highly supportive, reflective and responsive organisation.
- 2.6 The EAS will build upon what has worked well during this period, particularly the aspects of our role that have been successful within the virtual environment. The support that the EAS will offer will fully align to the expectations set by local authorities, Welsh Government (WG) and links to emerging research.
- 2.7 The EAS understands the need to over communicate with clarity to provide reassurance regarding advice, guidance, support and expectations. As a result, the EAS will work with local authorities to minimise any unnecessary bureaucracy for schools and settings to ensure they are able to focus on their important priorities and their support for learners.
- 2.8 The timing, delivery and focus of the support will be carefully considered, considering the challenges that are likely to continue into the summer and autumn terms 2021.
- 2.9 Members are asked to take the opportunity to comment on the contents of the Business Plan as part of the consultation process and provide a written response as appropriate.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 This report has been approved by Education DMT, CLT following submission to and feedback from Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee.

Option 1:

To accept the report.

Option 2:

To offer further feedback/contributions for discussion.

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

4.1 **Statutory Responsibility**

- 4.1.1 The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan.

Corporate Improvement Plan

4.1.2 **Education Aims**

- Minimise the impact of COVID-19 on learner development and progress, including improving the digital competency of all learners and staff in the wider Blaenau Gwent school community.

- Ensure high quality leadership and teaching that secures good progress for all learners, particularly the vulnerable and those who are eFSM.
- Improve wellbeing for learners at all stages of development.
- Secure strong progress in skills, particularly in English and mathematics at key stages 3 and 4.
- Support schools who are identified as causing concern through regional protocols to secure improvement, in conjunction with the EAS.

4.1.3

Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan

The content of the EAS business plan is clearly aligned to the objectives in the Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan which aims for everyone to have the best start in life. Through this plan it seeks to ensure that the education provision is appropriate and able to meet the needs of children and young people so that their progress is as good as it ought to be.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

- 5.1.1 The EAS is subject to a robust governance model that is underpinned by a Collaboration and Members agreement (CAMA) and Articles of Association. Ensuring that the EAS provides value for money is of utmost importance. As recipients of public funding, it is important that budgets are allocated wisely. We will endeavour to deliver even better value for money through achieving financial balance and delivering services within the constraints of our budget, making further efficiency savings wherever possible and ensuring delegation rates to schools are maximised.
- 5.1.2 The EAS is funded on an annual basis from three sources: Local authority core contributions, regional school improvement grants and a service level agreement for governor support services. A spending plan will accompany the Business Plan and will be intrinsically linked to all actions contained within it. A detailed overview of the regional distribution of all grants will be available for all schools to view and compare allocations and rates of delegation through the regional grant monitoring tool.
- 5.1.3 Delegation rate to schools has increased to 94.4%, whilst the EAS staff profile has reduced by 53.1% since 2012.
- 5.1.4 The local authority's indicative core contribution for 2021/22 are as follows: Blaenau-Gwent LA's contribution for 2021/22 is £351,806 compared with £358,985 in 2020/21 and £364,452 in 2019/20.
- 5.1.5 At the time of writing this report, there is uncertainty with regards to the regional grant funding from WG for 2021/2022. As a result of the pandemic, it is likely that there will be reductions in the regional grant profile. When the grant position has been confirmed the EAS detailed delivery plan will be updated accordingly.
- 5.2 ***Risks***
EAS Regional Risks: As part of the internal EAS risk management process several aspects have been identified as potential barriers to the successful implementation

of this Business Plan. These clearly set out the elements that will be important to ensuring optimum impact of the work of the EAS in partnership with LAs. These are:

- Full use is not made of consultation events to help shape the direction of the Business Plan to ensure collective regional ownership of priorities and actions for improvement.
- Uncertain financial grant projections may destabilise the ability to deliver the agreed business plan.
- The uncertainty surrounding the pandemic and the effect this will have on schools and settings.

5.3 These risks are mitigated through the identification of priorities as seen in the priority areas above and within the detailed within the EAS Business Plan, Blaenau Gwent LA Plans and the Education Strategic Plan.

5.4 Blaenau Gwent will have its own risks linked to the delivery of the strategic objectives within their corporate plans.

5.4 ***Legal***

The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan.

5.5 ***Human Resources***

None for this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.1 Please note that a mid-year evaluation of the current revised Covid Business Plan (2019/20) has been submitted to each of the EAS governance groups and has been available for local authorities to share as appropriate within their own democratic processes (created in January 2021).

6.1.2 The delivery model for the Business Plan is on a regional basis, the needs of each school and settings within Blaenau-Gwent will continue to be met through bespoke work in line with their improvement priorities, both virtually and when safe to do so physically.

6.1.3 The EAS will offer an evolving Professional Learning Offer (PLO) to all schools and settings across the region, in order to meet development needs as we emerge from the pandemic. We will continue to fund schools (grant permitting) to deliver a large proportion of the professional learning activity, where appropriate virtually

6.1.4 All schools will continue to be provided with a bespoke support package that compliments the priorities identified within their own School Development Plans (SDPs) in line with the levels of support they require. There is a degree of flexibility within the deployment model to allow for in-year changes in circumstances and to allow for changes in light of the pandemic.

6.1.5 The talent and expertise that resides in schools within and beyond the region is incentivised and used effectively to support professional learning and school

improvement activity. There has been inevitable fragility in the ability of schools to offer support beyond their own settings because of the pandemic, this situation will be managed with sensitivity and will be constantly reviewed.

- 6.1.6 For sustained school improvement to happen it is essential that all partners work together more closely than ever recognising that each partner (school, LA and EAS) has its role to play in providing support to secure improvements.
- 6.1.7 The Business Plan has been through a consultation process. The Consultees are noted below:
- EAS staff
 - Directors of Education (within South East Wales) and Diocesan Directors
 - Regional Joint Executive Group
 - EAS Company Board
 - EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
 - Individual local authority education scrutiny committees
 - All Headteachers from within the region
 - All Chairs of Governors from within the region
 - School Councils from within the region
 - All school based Professional Learning Leads
 - EAS Supporting School Trade Union Group (SSTU Group)
- 6.1.7 The final version of the Business Plan will be supported by a range of supporting documents:
- Detailed Business Plan 2021–2022
 - Regional Grant Mapping Overview 2021–2022
 - Regional Self-Evaluation Report (Executive Summary)
 - EAS Risk Register (Executive Summary)
 - Regional Professional Learning Offer 2021–2022
 - Local Authority Strategic Education Plans
- 6.1.8 The regional priorities and actions contained within this plan will support the implementation of each of the strategic priorities (that fall within the remit of the EAS) that have been identified by Newport City Council. The EAS will continue to work in partnership with local authorities to support additional local priorities, as appropriate, and those that arise from the changing local and national situation.
- 6.1.9 The improvements that are required at regional and local authority level require a strong commitment of partnership-working to be successful. Where local authorities and the EAS work in close partnership, there is evidence, that rapid and sustainable school improvement can be achieved. This joined up approach will be even more critical as we work in partnership to support schools and settings during this challenging time.
- 6.1.10 Blaenau-Gwent Strategic Priorities 2021-22 (as provided by the LA):

Strategic priorities for 2021/2022

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the impact of COVID-19 on learner development and progress, including improving the digital competency of all learners and staff in the wider Blaenau Gwent school community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure high quality leadership and teaching that secures good progress for all learners, particularly the vulnerable and those who are eFSM.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve wellbeing for learners at all stages of development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure strong progress in skills, particularly in English and mathematics at key stages 3 and 4.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support schools who are identified as causing concern through regional protocols to secure improvement, in conjunction with the EAS.

6.1.11

Regional Priorities 2021-2022

The EAS will endeavour to be a professional partner working with schools and settings. All schools and settings will be entitled to a range of professional learning and bespoke support which will be tailored to their school improvement priorities. Full consideration will be given to the current climate in which schools and settings are operating. Within this context the priorities of the EAS will be to:

1. Ensure that the wellbeing of practitioners and learners in schools and settings remain paramount. Regional professional learning will be provided to support the social and emotional needs of the workforce and learners.
2. Provide bespoke support to schools and settings in line with agreed school improvement priorities that reflect the current situation and positions of schools and settings.
3. Provide support to continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning, including continued use of blended learning approaches, particularly in identified secondary schools.
4. Continue to provide support to school leaders on the identification and support for specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners including those who have been disproportionately affected by school closures.
5. Provide professional learning and bespoke support and guidance to schools and settings to help them realise Curriculum for Wales, as appropriate.
6. Provide access to a range of regional and national professional learning, including access to coaching and mentoring, for all educational practitioners in schools and settings that is appropriate to their role and responsibility in line with professional standards.
7. Consolidate, promote and further develop the regional school and practitioner networks, enabling effective routes of communication and support.

8. Continue to support the development of leaders at all levels in schools and settings.
9. Further build the capacity of governing bodies through the regional professional learning offer and bespoke support, as appropriate.
10. Further develop a culture around accountability that identifies and values a broad spectrum of characteristics of effective schools and settings.
11. Embed the EAS internal evaluation model, continue to welcome external challenge and support, ensure the effective and efficient support to schools and settings and adhere to legislative requirements that fully supports the wellbeing of staff.

Ambitions for 2021/22

6.1.12 Working in partnership with local authorities, schools and setting the ambitions for 2021/22 and beyond are challenging to capture without having clarity around the changing nature of the pandemic and the effect it will have on schools and settings. In this regard, the ambitions below need to be read within the context they have been derived:

- The EAS has placed wellbeing at the forefront of its work and has provided a range of professional learning to schools and settings that has provided support to the social and emotional needs of the workforce and learners.
- There is a clear strategy to improve the quality of distance and blended learning experiences for learners. There has been good engagement in the regional strategy and many opportunities have been provided for schools to share to develop more effective teaching across and within schools and settings.
- Where schools and settings have engaged in the regional wellbeing support offer it has helped to support improvement in their provision for wellbeing.
- Schools and settings receive the right type of support, as appropriate to help them make progress against their school improvement priorities.
- Most schools can identify and provide the most appropriate support to specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners, including those who have been disproportionately affected by school closures, to help them to progress.
- A regional strategy developed in collaboration with practitioners provides a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals.
- The quality and impact of the provision for professional learning for educational practitioners and governors is good and those schools that have engaged are able to evidence the impact of this.
- Refined and extended networks ensure effective collaboration and communication to support school improvement.

- A range of professional learning and bespoke support provided to schools and settings helps them realise Curriculum for Wales.
- Working with schools and local authorities, a regional model of support will be developed and implemented, focusing on accurate self-evaluation using a broad range of characteristics, aligned to school improvement priorities.

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

High Quality education is a fundamental pre-requisite of ensuring future local and national prosperity through the provision of an informed and well-educated workforce and society. The Local Authority's statutory role to monitor and evaluate school performance and the quality of provision, coupled with its statutory powers of intervention in schools causing concern is fundamental to ensuring that all schools provide high quality education provision.

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

Involvement of partners is fundamental to securing and sustaining school improvement. The statutory framework advocates this and the work of the Local authority, its commissioned school improvement service (EAS) and schools evidences the positive impact of working in this way.

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

The EAS Business Plan that is being consulted upon for 2021/2022 aligns to the strategic priorities within Blaenau Gwent.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

A key element of the Council's work is to monitor settings and ensure appropriate support to secure continuing high standards. Estyn Inspection reports reflect the extent to which settings and Local Authorities has been effective in achieving this.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Educational improvement in Blaenau Gwent is delivered on a regional basis through the South East Wales Consortium in collaboration with Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, Torfaen and Blaenau-Gwent Councils.

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

The Estyn Inspection Framework is aimed at promoting high standards and high-quality education provision. This aim is fundamental to the Council's well-being objectives and is fundamental to the joint work between Education and Social Services Directorates.

6.8 ***EqlA***

Not required for this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1

The EAS is required to submit to the Business Plan to Welsh Government, this plan covers the period 2021-2022. As noted above, the EAS will be sensitive and responsive to changing priorities as a result of the pandemic and may need to change direction and repurpose priorities as required. The support will be made available to all schools and settings, there is an understanding that schools and settings are likely to be facing continuing challenges. It will be the decision of

leaders to determine the most appropriate type and timing of at any of the support on offer in line with their priorities.

- 7.2 The progress on the implementation and impact of the Business Plan will be reported formally at a mid-year basis to the Joint Executive Group and Company Board. These reports, as in previous years, will be suitable for scrutiny activity at local authority and national level. In addition, the progress made towards the implementation of key actions will be reported at each meeting of the Joint Executive Group and Company Board.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 - Education Achievement Service: Regional Business Plan (Post Covid Recovery: April 2021-March 2022) (Final)

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EAS

Education Achievement Service
for South East Wales
Gwasanaeth Cyflawni Addysg
i Dde Ddwyrain Cymru



Education Achievement Service

Regional Business Plan

April 2021 - March 2022

(Final Version)



The Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan has undergone a thorough consultation process. The consultees are listed below:

- EAS staff
- Directors of Education (within South East Wales) and Diocesan Directors
- Regional Joint Executive Group
- EAS Company Board
- EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
- Individual local authority education scrutiny committees
- All Headteachers from within the region
- All Chairs of Governors from within the region
- School Councils from within the region
- All school based Professional Learning Leads
- EAS Supporting School Trade Union Group (SSTU Group)

The final version of the Business Plan 2021-2022 will be presented for agreement to the Regional Joint Executive Group and then to each LA Cabinet / Executive in March 2021. The plan will then be submitted to Welsh Government.

Cllr K Preston Chair of Education Achievement Service Company Board	
Cllr J Collins Chair of Joint Executive Group	
Ms D Hartevelde Managing Director, Education Achievement Service	
Mr Will McClean Lead Director on behalf of South East Wales Directors Group	

Contents

Section	Focus	Page
1	Section 1: Position statement	3
2	Section 2: Regional Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key facts and figures 	5 5-6
3	Section 3: Regional Priorities 2021-2022 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction Local Authority Education Strategic Priorities 2021/2022 Business Plan (2021/2022): Priority Areas A-K 	7 7 8-9 10-19
4	Section 4: Ambitions for 2021-2022	19
5	Section 5: Delivery Arrangements 2021-22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance and funding How will the EAS held to account for the delivery and impact of the Business Plan? Consortium funding Local authority contributions Regional school improvement grants Governor Support Service Level Agreement 	20 20 20 20 20 21 22
6	Section 6: Additional supporting documents	22

Section 1: Position statement

“Especially in times of uncertainty, it is important for the organisation to be agile and to be able to respond quickly to changing needs. In these times of challenge, continue to focus on staying close to schools, listening to the voice of school leaders and working closely with local authorities. Relationships and trust are crucial in times of uncertainty so in spite of the other pressures this needs to continue to be prioritised very strongly and time proactively put aside in diaries to do it.” (Steve Munby: Review of the EAS - October 2020)

Our Pledge: Continue to over communicate with clarity, to strengthen collaboration, support schools and settings to embrace change and promote innovation.

This document contains the main priorities that the EAS believe will be relevant to focus upon in the next iteration of the regional Business Plan for 2021-2022. It is challenging to try to predict the way in which society will be operating from summer 2021 with regards to managing the spread of coronavirus. The priorities contained within this document assume that the EAS will build upon the learning and momentum from the past few months.

However, this plan will also need to consider how schools and settings will operate in a COVID-19 recovery phase and the support that will be required. Consideration will also be given to the priorities that were set and agreed prior to the pandemic in the previous Business Plan 2020-2021 depending on their relevance in the current climate.

The EAS will work collaboratively with local authority partners, wider partners and schools and settings to implement the Business Plan. It is critically important that the EAS remains sensitive and responsive to the needs of the school workforce and will continue to be a highly supportive, reflective and responsive organisation.

The EAS will build upon what has worked well during this period, particularly the aspects of our role that have been successful within the virtual environment. The support that the EAS will offer will fully align to the expectations set by local authorities, Welsh Government (WG) and links to emerging research. The pandemic has reminded us that positive change is and has been possible. Schools, settings and the EAS have seized opportunities to explore innovative ways of working and delivering meaningful learning experiences through a creative blended learning approach. These experiences should be built upon to avoid a ‘snap back,’ keeping the positive learning that has been developed during this time.

During this period, the region has facilitated sharing opportunities to capture emerging practice and to discuss their developments and refinements via the Blended Learning task and finish groups and subsequent Masterclass events.

Whilst the challenges schools and learners have faced have been recognised, many leaders have acknowledged that not all learners have been adversely affected by the pandemic and many learners have had positive experiences. Practitioners have responded positively to this period of change, responding with resilience and agility, including evolving their use of technology innovatively to:

- improve communication with learners and the wider school community
- provide the opportunity for innovative pedagogy, enabling more flexible and tailored learning experiences
- enable and enhance collaboration, both internally and with a wider range of partners, broadening opportunities for Professional Learning across the school workforce.

At the start of the pandemic, no one could have foreseen or anticipated the disruption to the lives of learners, staff and school communities that would happen during the course of the year. Wellbeing will continue to be at the forefront of the regional approach.

Schools and their communities will have had their own unique set of circumstances and will require a bespoke and flexible approach to learning together through this next phase. Every learner will have differing requirements to engage successfully in their continued learning and to fully integrate into the whole school experience when the time is right.

We will continue to research, refine, respond and reflect to school needs. Our established networks will continue to be the mechanism of communicating with schools and settings. The Supporting our Schools website will continue to be the 'go to place' for all resources and guidance materials.

The EAS understands the need to over communicate with clarity to provide reassurance regarding advice, guidance, support and expectations. As a result, the EAS will work with local authorities to minimise any unnecessary bureaucracy for schools and settings to ensure they are able to focus on their important priorities and their support for learners.

The timing, delivery and focus of the support will be carefully considered in respect of the challenges that are likely to continue into the summer and autumn terms 2021.

Section 2: Regional Context

The centralised model of service delivery that has been adopted across the South East Wales region has enabled efficiencies to be realised, economies of scale to be secured, particularly in relation to avoiding duplication of functions and the ability to secure a range of educational expertise within the region.

The talent and expertise that resides in schools and settings within and beyond the region is incentivised and used effectively to support professional learning and school improvement activity. There has been inevitable fragility in the ability of schools and settings to offer support beyond their own settings because of the pandemic, this situation will be managed with sensitivity and will be constantly reviewed.

Key regional facts and figures



- The number of pupils of compulsory school age within the region in 2020 was 73,090. This represents 19% of all pupils in Wales.



There are 233 maintained schools in the region, 16% of all maintained schools in Wales (EAS figure correct from September 2020, Wales figure from PLASC, 2020).



There are 20 Welsh medium primary schools, 3 Welsh medium secondary, 17 Roman Catholic and 11 Church in Wales schools within the region.



- The percentage of pupils of compulsory school age who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) is 20.9%. This level of eligibility is the second highest of the four regional consortia with Central South Consortium highest with 21.3% (PLASC, 2020).



- In the region, 10% of people aged three and over say that they can speak Welsh compared to the Wales average of 19% (2011 Census, ONS).



- The percentage of pupils aged 5 or over from an ethnic minority background is 11.3%.



Based on local authority reported numbers (Summer 2019), 1024 children in the region are looked after (LAC) by a local authority and attend a school in the region. (No new information available and not included on PLASC for 2020)

Overview of school and settings

2021

Caerphilly (21.6% FSM)

- 14 Non-maintained Nursery settings
- 63 Primary (11 Welsh medium, 1 Roman Catholic)
- 6 Infant
- 4 Junior
- 11 Secondary (1 Welsh medium)
- 1 Special
- 1 Pupil Referral Unit
- 1 3-18



Newport (19.5% FSM)

- 23 Non-maintained Nursery settings
- 2 Nursery
- 43 Primary (3 Welsh medium, 2 Church in Wales, 6 Roman Catholic)
- 9 Secondary (1 Welsh medium, 1 Roman Catholic)
- 2 Special
- 1 Pupil Referral Unit



Blaenau Gwent (25.5% FSM)

- 3 Non-maintained Nursery settings
- 19 Primary (1 Welsh medium, 3 Roman Catholic, 1 Church in Wales)
- 2 Secondary
- 2 Special
- 2 3-16



Monmouthshire (13.1% FSM)

- 25 Non-maintained Nursery settings
- 30 Primary (2 Welsh medium, 6 Church in Wales, 2 Roman Catholic)
- 4 Secondary
- 1 Pupil Referral Service



Torfaen (25.0% FSM)

- 15 Non-maintained Nursery settings
- 25 Primary (3 Welsh medium, 3 Church in Wales, 3 Roman Catholic)
- 6 Secondary (1 Welsh medium, 1 Roman Catholic)
- 1 Special
- 1 Pupil Referral Service



Overview of regional school / PRU staffing

Local Authority	Number of Teaching Staff	Number of Support Staff
Blaenau Gwent	506	554
Caerphilly	1,523	1,389
Monmouthshire	644	648
Newport	1,475	1,316
Torfaen	779	773
EAS	4,927	4,680

Overview of regional school governors

Local Authority	Number of school governors*
Blaenau Gwent	327
Caerphilly	1063
Monmouthshire	429
Newport	768
Torfaen	396
EAS	2983

Section 3: Regional Priorities 2021-2022




The EAS will endeavour to be a professional partner working with schools and settings. All schools and settings will be entitled to a range of professional learning and bespoke support which aligns to their school improvement priorities. Full consideration will be given to the current climate in which schools and settings are operating. Within this context the priorities of the EAS will be to:



- A. Ensure that the wellbeing of practitioners and learners in schools and settings remains paramount. Regional professional learning will be provided to support the social and emotional needs of the workforce and learners.
- B. Provide bespoke support to schools and settings to address the impact of the pandemic on individual learners, as appropriate, in line with their improvement priorities.
- C. Continue to provide support to improve the quality of teaching and learning, including the continued use of, and evaluation of blended and distance learning approaches, particularly in identified secondary schools.
- D. Continue to provide support to leaders on the identification and support for specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners including those who have been disproportionality affected by the pandemic.
- E. Provide professional learning and bespoke support and guidance to schools and settings to help them realise Curriculum for Wales.
- F. Provide access to a range of regional and national professional learning, including access to coaching and mentoring, for all educational practitioners in schools and settings that is appropriate to their role and responsibility.
- G. Consolidate, promote and further develop regional practitioner networks, enabling effective routes of communication and support.
- H. Continue to support the development of leaders at all levels in schools and settings.
- I. Further build the capacity and capability of the knowledge and skills of governing bodies (as appropriate), through the regional professional learning offer and bespoke support.
- J. Further develop a culture around accountability that identifies and values a broad spectrum of characteristics of effective schools and settings.
- K. Embed the EAS internal evaluation model, continue to welcome external challenge and support, ensure the effective and efficient support to schools and settings and adheres to legislative requirements that fully supports the wellbeing of staff.

Local authority education strategic priorities 2021/22 (provided by each local authority)

The regional priorities and actions contained within this plan will support the implementation of each of the strategic priorities (that fall within the remit of the EAS) that have been identified by individual local authorities. The EAS will continue to work in partnership with local authorities to support additional local priorities, as appropriate, and those that arise from the changing local and national situation.

The improvements that are required at regional and local authority level require a strong commitment of partnership-working to be successful. Where local authorities and the EAS work in close partnership, there is evidence, that rapid and sustainable school improvement can be achieved. This joined up approach will be even more critical as we work in partnership to support schools and settings during this challenging time.

Local Authority	Strategic priorities for 2021/2022
<p>Blaenau Gwent</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the impact of COVID-19 on learner development and progress, including improving the digital competency of all learners and staff in the wider Blaenau Gwent school community. • Ensure high quality leadership and teaching that secures good progress for all learners, particularly the vulnerable and those who are eFSM. • Improve wellbeing for learners at all stages of development. • Secure strong progress in skills, particularly in English and mathematics at key stages 3 and 4. • Support schools who are identified as causing concern through regional protocols to secure improvement, in conjunction with the EAS.
<p>Caerphilly</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further improve the quality of leadership across all phases of education. • Address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on pupil wellbeing and engagement. • Endeavour to ensure the implementation of remote and blended learning strategies provide high quality support to pupils across all phases of education. • Further improve pupils' acquisition of digital competency skills.
<p>Monmouthshire</p> 	<p>Monmouthshire strategic priorities for 2020/21 aligned well with the following four recommendations from our Estyn inspection in February 2020. They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> R1 Improve outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals. R2 Further strengthen the focus on increasing the number of pupils achieving excellent standards. R3 Articulate a clear strategy for SEN provision. R4 Strengthen the use of information gathered through self-evaluation to better inform improvement planning. <p>The year that followed has been unprecedented and in managing our response to the global pandemic, our priorities have taken a step back. Instead, we have adopted key strategic aims that can be responsive to emerging needs in a rapidly changing environment. Whilst the current uncertainty remains, we continue to work towards addressing our Estyn recommendations, and prioritising emerging need.</p>

<p>Newport</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address barriers to learning at home, particularly where this is due to a lack of access to suitable computers or adequate connectivity. • Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs. • Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals. • Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils. • Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design.
<p>Torfaen</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the progress (ensure catch up) of all learners, with a particular focus on FSM and vulnerable learners at key stage 4 by ensuring LA services compliment and support regional provision. • Ensure all of Torfaen schools have a clear strategy for improving the quality of teaching and learning particularly in secondary schools to reduce within school variation so all pupils, including boys and vulnerable learners, make appropriate progress over time. • Ensure continued development and support for blended learning across all sectors in Torfaen. • Reduce the level of variability in the quality and impact of leadership at all levels in secondary schools in the authority to secure strong, sustained pupil outcomes.

EAS Business Plan 2021/2022

The actions below have been developed in collaboration with our key partners, many of the actions have been refined from the originally agreed Business Plan 2020/2021 and the Revised Business Plan 2020/2021. This plan will be accompanied by a detailed delivery plan.

As noted above, the EAS will be sensitive and responsive to the changing priorities as a result of the pandemic and may need to change direction and repurpose priorities as required. The support will be made available to all schools and settings, there is an understanding that schools and settings are likely to be facing continuing challenges. It will be the decision of leaders to determine the most appropriate type and timing of at any of the support on offer in line with their priorities.

The content of this plan will continue to support the implementation of the priorities within the National Mission document and will seek to support the recommendations from Estyn's remit report: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020.

Priority A	Ensure that the wellbeing of practitioners and learners in schools and settings remains paramount. Regional professional learning will be provided to support the social and emotional needs of the workforce and learners.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			
Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> R4 Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils 			
What will the EAS do?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine the regional Equity and Wellbeing Strategy (which encompasses strategies for all disadvantaged and vulnerable learners) to further develop multi-agency working, to build on the universal provision for all schools and settings. Enhance the regional wellbeing offer to practitioners and learners. Create an online interactive curriculum tool that captures the resources available to support schools in shaping their provision for Health and Wellbeing at a local and regional level. Provide a programme of professional learning to build the capacity within schools and settings to support learners with their emotional health and wellbeing based upon the principles of adverse childhood experiences. Support schools and settings to adopt the National Whole School Approach to Wellbeing and Mental Health. 			

Priority B	Provide bespoke support to schools and settings to address the impact of the pandemic on individual learners, as appropriate, in line with their improvement priorities.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			

Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:

- R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs
- R3 Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals

What will the EAS do?

- Undertake professional dialogue with schools and settings to agree on school's improvement priorities and support.
- Work with schools and settings to develop a supportive regional approach to the development of a broad range of skills that is bespoke and flexible, ensuring learners receive the most approach provision to engage successfully in their continued learning.

Supporting a self-improvement system

- Refine the Challenge Adviser Role to reflect national model for school support identification and ensure key focus on support for school improvement.
- Identify lead schools and settings considering strengths in leadership capacity, curriculum design, learning culture and behaviour to support system wide improvement, including support for distance and blended learning.
- Broker school-to-school collaboration and cluster working.
- Refine the Learning Network Schools approach to reflect new and emerging service priorities.
- Develop a bespoke peer working model that builds mutual and reciprocal peer support to achieve increased levels of excellence across schools.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for schools, governing bodies and local authorities to understand the changing assessment and accountability arrangements within the reform agenda.

Supporting School Self Evaluation and Quality Assurance

- Further develop a broader range of evaluation criteria that do not focus solely on end of key stage outcomes but look at a wider range of school improvement information, including quality and effectiveness of distance and blended learning.
- Provide professional learning to all schools and settings to promote effective self-evaluation, improvement planning processes and effective strategies for formative and summative assessment.
- Further develop the regional approach of 'School on a page' so that a broader range of information is used for accountability purposes focused on pupils' wellbeing and attitudes to learning, the standards achieved, and progress made by all pupils including those in vulnerable groups, the quality of teaching and learning in schools and settings as well as the quality of leadership.
- Support Schools to effectively quality assure their processes for distance and blended learning.
- Establish mechanisms whereby schools may engage peers in the self-evaluation process to gain external perspective on improvement priorities including distance and blended learning.
- Support the continuing pilot of the national evaluation and improvement resource (NEIR) in identified regional schools as context dictates and ensure key learning is shared with all schools and settings.
- Further develop the use of pupil progress data at school level in line with national guidance taking into account the situation with the pandemic.
- Provide a comprehensive professional learning programme for elected members that supports the regional and national priorities around evaluation and quality assurance including distance and blended learning in order that they are able to hold schools to account more effectively.

Priority C	Continue to provide support to improve the quality of teaching and learning, including the continued use of, and evaluation of blended and distance learning approaches, particularly in identified secondary schools.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			
Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs 			
What will the EAS do?			
Teaching and Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a range of delivery models and access to a wider range of blended professional learning across all areas of learning to support schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning within and beyond the region. Use the established network of school practitioners to further enhance the regional website as a mechanism to share effective whole school strategies for teaching and learning, including distance and blended learning. Support schools to use a range of first-hand evidence to improve the quality of teaching and learning, including distance and blended learning through a modelled, shared and guided approach. Continue to work in partnership with key partners, to include Welsh Government and Higher Education Institutions to offer a programme of professional learning to develop staff proficiency in the Welsh language. Review the regional Welsh Language Strategy to ensure this addresses the regional and national priorities. Continue to support and work collaboratively with school leaders, as appropriate, to develop and refine whole school teaching and learning strategies, using a team around the school model. Continue to provide a range of strategies to support leadership of teaching and learning e.g., school to school, research informed approaches, virtual professional learning and networking opportunities. 			
Targeted support for the secondary phase (in addition to above) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure schools are made aware of key messages from WG and from QW and WJEC on the assessment process for awarding centre determined grades for 2021. To promote the sharing of practice between schools regionally and nationally. To support schools through the process of CDG awarding, as identified by the Design and Delivery Advisory Group and the QW/WJEC agreed process and to facilitate Professional Learning in key features of assessment for qualification, in partnership with other organisations as appropriate. Supporting schools to ensure that curriculum pathways provide an appropriate choice for all learners. Engage with Careers Wales to design a programme that offers learners career advice from year seven onwards to map their flightpaths to their desired destinations. Design and facilitate national online resources to complement the middle leadership programme for more able and SEREN school leads. To support schools with Sixth Forms to have access to Russell Group Universities to support them with their SEREN learners. 			

- Collaborate with schools and other sectors to share and analyse outcome and destination data at key stage 5 for all groups of learners.

Priority D	Continue to provide support to leaders on the identification and support for specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners including those who have been disproportionality affected by the pandemic.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			
Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> R3 Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionally affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals R4 Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils 			
What will the EAS offer schools and settings?			
Specific focus on improving the outcomes of Vulnerable Learners			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the regional plan for Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards (RRRS) to provide appropriate support and guidance for identified learners to make progress. Design and facilitate professional learning for specialist teaching assistants in partnership with local authorities and settings. Evaluate the current range of enhanced curriculum opportunities funded via the pupil development and RRRS grants to share best practice across the secondary phase. Capture best practice of a range of curriculum offers that are provided in PRU and Special school settings. 			
Partnership Working: LA Inclusion Leads			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a revised regional approach, as appropriate, to improve the monitoring and impact of the pupil development grant. Work in partnership with local authorities to analyse attendance and exclusions data for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners and support school leaders to share effective practice and to improve outcomes, as appropriate. Work in partnership with local authorities to analyse FSM and LAC data and provide additional advice and support for schools and settings who have an increase in these groups as a result of COVID. 			
Partnership Working: External Partners			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work in partnership with Challenge Education to support the 'RADY' network of schools engaged with the 'Raising the achievement of disadvantaged youngsters' programme. Commission and external evaluation of the impact of the RADY programme. 			
Partnership Working: ALN reform			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local authority partners to explore and agree roles and responsibilities with regards to the EAS role in securing the effective regional provision for ALN. Support, as appropriate, the Regional ALN Transformation Officer to update stakeholders on ALN Reform and support the delivery of professional learning in line with the remit of the work of the EAS. 			

Targeted Support for Schools and Settings:

- Continue to provide support to school leaders on the identification and support for specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners including those who have been disproportionality affected as a result of COVID pandemic.
- Support schools to develop coherent approaches to improve progress in literacy, numeracy digital, and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils and those learners disproportionality affected by the pandemic.
- Refine the current Teaching and Learning Strategy to include an annex supporting the teaching and learning of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of learners.
- Work in collaboration with schools to provide resources to support learners from non-Welsh speaking homes in welsh medium provision who have been disproportionality affected by the pandemic.
- Extend the Vulnerable Learner Lead Programme through primary and secondary settings.
- Refine the grant planning system and the processes in place to support the planning, reviewing and evaluating of impact of expenditure in line with the research from the Education Endowment Foundation.
- Provide a programme of professional learning through a 'Train the Trainer' approach that provides the foundations of universal provision across all schools and settings. This will include strategy development and professional learning for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of learners.
- Improve pupil voice and pupil participation across the region in partnership with the School and Super Ambassador Programme to influence school and regional priorities.
- Deliver a regional programme across all settings supporting More Able and Seren Learners.

Priority E	Provide professional learning, bespoke support, and guidance to schools to help them realise Curriculum for Wales.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			
Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs• R5 Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design			
What will the EAS do?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide all schools and settings with access to the national professional learning programmes to support the implementation of the curriculum for Wales. Ensure that this professional learning reflects the priorities set out in the national implementation plan.• Provide schools and settings with examples of effective school development actions for curriculum reform and provide bespoke support to schools and settings to implement these.• Support settings to engage in the pilot of the non-maintained nursery curriculum, as appropriate.• Encourage all schools and settings to be research informed by creating a network of lead enquirers to develop the capacity for professional enquiry in all schools.• Review the regional Welsh language strategy in collaboration with school leaders and other partners, considering the findings for future delivery models.			

- Encourage schools and settings to actively seek resources and experiences that support learners to understand the stories of different groups, including diverse and minority groups, and enable all learners to see themselves and their experiences and knowledge developed through the curriculum.

Priority F	Provide access to a range of regional and national professional learning, including access to coaching and mentoring, for all educational practitioners in schools and settings that is appropriate to their role and responsibility.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC

What will the EAS do?

- In partnership with other regions and higher education institutions, provide a national mentoring and coaching programme to develop and support school leaders and governors.

Schools as Learning Organisations

- Ensure all professional learning is underpinned by the principles of effective learning organisations and encourages schools to develop as effective learning organisations.
- Provide coordinated support to ensure all schools develop as effective learning organisations e.g., how to use the survey to inform school development priorities.
- Share case studies where schools and clusters are effectively developing as learning organisations.

Professional learning teaching assistants

- Provide a virtual professional learning offer that supports teaching assistants whether new to the role, a practicing teaching assistant or as an experienced higher-level teaching assistant.
- Design and facilitate professional learning for specialist teaching assistants in partnership with local authorities, Special Schools and PRU's.

Professional Learning for statutory induction

- Refine and develop a Nationally designed virtual induction professional learning offer to support all those who support the induction process including: Newly Qualified teachers, the school-based induction mentor, and the external verifier.
- Continue supporting early career teachers beyond the statutory induction period.
- Further strengthen partnership working with HEI institutions to offer joint induction support for early career entry.

Initial Teacher Education

- Continue to work with higher education partners, cross regional partners and schools in developing and delivery of all routes into initial teacher education, as appropriate within the current arrangements.

Priority G	Consolidate, promote and further develop regional practitioner networks, enabling effective routes of communication and support.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC

Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:

Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:

- R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs
- R5 Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design

What will the EAS do?

- Review all existing networks to ensure all practitioners have access to relevant networking opportunities with colleagues within and beyond the region.
- In partnership with schools and settings continually review their capacity to support the wider system.

Priority H	Continue to support the development of leaders at all levels in schools and settings.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 4: Evaluation, improvement and accountability	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC

Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:

Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:

- R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs
- R3 Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals

What will the EAS do?

- Further develop the strategic approach to identifying and supporting the next group of leaders within the region.

National professional learning offer for leaders

- Provide a blended professional learning offer in partnership with higher education institutions and other regions to support leaders at all levels in all schools and settings through a nationally endorsed range of programmes: Middle leadership, senior leadership, aspiring headteacher / preparation for NPQH, NPQH, New and Acting headteachers, experienced headteachers.
- Work in partnership with local authorities to support school leaders to address the actions, as appropriate, contained within the Welsh in Education strategy and Cymraeg 2050: Welsh language strategy.

Identifying, recruiting and retaining effective leaders

- Identify aspirational leaders and provide them with bespoke professional learning and a range of leadership experiences that supports them to develop an individual professional learning journey, particularly within the Welsh medium and secondary sectors.
- Work with local authorities and governing bodies to explore a range of leadership models e.g. Executive headship
- Regional specialist HR will work with local authorities to review and revise senior leadership recruitment processes to include using evaluations from a range of stakeholders and professional learning for appointment panel members.

- In partnership with other regions and higher education institutions, provide a national mentoring and coaching programme to develop and support school leaders and governors.

Specialist HR

- Work with local authorities to complement existing education HR services and provide a range of specialist HR professional learning for school leaders and governors.

Priority I	Further build the capacity and capability of the knowledge and skills of governing bodies (as appropriate), through the regional professional learning offer and bespoke support.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 4: Evaluation, improvement and accountability	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
What will the EAS offer schools and settings?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to refine the delivery of the Governor Support Service Level Agreement (2020-22), ensuring governing bodies are supported through timely, constructive guidance that enables effective governance. • Further develop professional learning for governors, including online materials, interactive and recorded workshops, regular briefings for all chairs of governing bodies, support for existing self-evaluation tools and the development of a cluster-based approach. • Provide focused professional learning for chairs and vice chairs of governing bodies in secondary schools, that supports them in addressing phase specific challenges. • Develop a pilot programme to develop coaching approaches for Chairs of Governors. • Provide opportunities for collaborative professional learning for school leaders and governors, encouraging and enabling peer support arrangements for governing bodies to refine and develop their capacity to support their schools. • Identify governors who can undertake additional roles within and beyond their own governing bodies, providing bespoke professional learning to strengthen and build capacity within the region. 			

Priority J	To further develop a culture around accountability that identifies and values a broad spectrum of characteristics of effective schools and settings.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 4: Evaluation, improvement and accountability	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
What will the EAS offer schools and settings?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work collaboratively with a range of partners to develop a regional approach that identifies and values the characteristics of an effective school. • Identify a broader range of evaluation strategies that do not focus solely on end of key stage outcomes but looks at a wider range of school improvement information. • Provide a comprehensive professional learning programme for elected members that supports the regional and national priorities around evaluation and quality assurance including distance and blended learning in order that they are able to hold schools to account more effectively. • Determine the support arrangements for all schools in line with national guidance considering how regional consortia and local authorities can agree with the school the additional support it needs to improve and to build its own capacity to improve and considering specifically distance and blended learning. 			

Priority K	<p>i. Embed the EAS internal evaluation model, continue to welcome external challenge and support and ensure the effective and efficient support to schools and settings.</p> <p>ii. Ensure the EAS adheres to legislative requirements and fully supports the wellbeing of staff.</p>
Link to National Mission	<p>Enabling objective 1: Professional learning</p> <p>Enabling objective 2: Leadership</p> <p>Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing</p> <p>Enabling objective 4: Evaluation, improvement and accountability</p>
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:	
<p>Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> R5 Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design 	
What will the EAS do?	
Business delivery model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to refine the business model for the EAS to ensure that it aligns to regional and national priorities and addresses the needs of schools and settings. Maintain the credibility of the service using EAS core staff and the move to the school led system whilst ensuring effective provision and value for money. Embed the EAS internal evaluation model, continue to welcome external challenge and support and ensure the effective and efficient support to schools and settings. Ensure the EAS adheres to legislative requirements and fully supports the wellbeing of staff. Use the Investors in People development programme to support service improvements. Refine and enhance the communication and marketing strategy to ensure appropriate stakeholder engagement, to include the development of a regional pupil forum. Continue to engage with other consortia and middle-tier organisations, such as Estyn, to realise efficiencies in programme development and delivery. Support and advise local authorities, as appropriate, in the delivery of their statutory functions for SACRE and the development of individual Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. 	
Staff Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain high levels of staff morale and wellbeing in the backdrop of reduced funding and the implementation of change management processes. Continue to develop collaborative ways in which the EAS team contribute to and feel part of the decision-making processes and are recognised more systematically for their successes. Provide access to coaching and mentoring support for all staff. Maintain a high-quality, well informed, flexible and motivated workforce that represent the service values and vision. Embed performance management processes and extend the professional learning opportunities for staff that meet individual and service needs. Ensure all EAS staff are well informed regarding all aspects of the reform agenda. 	
Funding, Resourcing and Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with key partners to deliver a more sustainable funding model that aligns with the workforce plan and secures an updated Collaboration and Members Agreement. Continue to develop the regional grant mapping tool to enable more efficient and effective interrogation of data, impact capture and value for money at school, LA and regional level. Continue to publish the regional grant allocations and maximise delegation rates to schools. Refine the value for money model, further exploring access to comparative data. 	

- Managing a complex governance interface to ensure communication, satisfaction and engagement levels remain high.

Section 4: Ambitions for 2021/2022

Working in partnership with local authorities, schools and setting the ambitions for 2021/22 and beyond are challenging to capture without having clarity around the changing nature of the pandemic and the effect it will have on schools and settings. In this regard, the ambitions below need to be read within the context they have been derived:

- The EAS has placed wellbeing at the forefront of its work and has provided a range of professional learning to schools and settings that has provided support to the social and emotional needs of the workforce and learners.
- There is a clear strategy to improve the quality of distance and blended learning experiences for learners. There has been good engagement in the regional strategy and many opportunities have been provided for schools to share to develop more effective teaching across and within schools and settings.
- Schools and settings receive the right type of support, as appropriate to help them make appropriate progress against their school improvement priorities.
- Most schools can identify and provide the most appropriate support to specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners, including those who have been disproportionately affected by school closures, to help them to progress.
- A regional strategy developed in collaboration with practitioners provides a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy, digital and personal and social skills of learners who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals.
- The quality and impact of the provision for professional learning for educational practitioners and governors is good and those schools that have engaged are able to evidence the impact of this.
- Refined and extended networks ensure effective collaboration and communication to support school improvement.
- A range of professional learning and bespoke support provided to schools and settings helps them realise Curriculum for Wales.
- Working with schools and local authorities, a regional model of support will be developed and implemented, focusing on accurate self-evaluation using a broad range of characteristics, aligned to school improvement priorities.
- Evaluations of the impact of regional policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic will be used to inform future ways of working and curriculum design.

Section 5: Delivery arrangements for 2021/2022

Governance and funding

The EAS is subject to a robust governance model that is underpinned by a Collaboration and Members agreement (CAMA) and Articles of Association. Ensuring that the EAS provides value for money is of utmost importance. As recipients of public funding, it is important that budgets are allocated wisely. We will endeavour to deliver even better value for money through achieving financial balance and delivering services within the constraints of our budget, making further efficiency savings wherever possible and ensuring delegation rates to schools are maximised.

How will the EAS held to account for the delivery and impact of this Business Plan?

The progress on the implementation and impact of the Business Plan will be reported formally at a mid-year basis to the Joint Executive Group and Company Board; this will include an evaluation of the regional plan and of each individual local authority annex document. These reports, as in previous years, will be suitable for scrutiny activity at local authority and national level. In addition, the progress made towards the implementation of key actions will be reported at each meeting of the Joint Executive Group and Company Board.

This year the EAS will report additional information on a termly basis, to both the Joint Executive Group and local authorities around the progress and impact of its work in support of each local authority strategic objective and their related success criteria and the progress schools are making towards their individual targets. This approach will be aligned to the national changes in the accountability system.

Throughout the year there will be many interim impact reports associated with the implementation streams within the Business Plan which will be reported through each of the governance groups, though individual LA committees (as requested) and through evaluation and improvement events with Welsh Government officials. These include: reports on pupil outcomes and progress, progress on schools causing concern, regular updates on outcomes/impact from regional / local authority self-evaluation activity and regional strategies, feedback from external reviews, annual regional value for money report, Managing Director's Annual Report, outcomes from regional school and governor surveys.

The financial accounts are reported to both the company board on a quarterly basis and through the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on a termly basis. The final year end accounts are externally audited and reported in line with the 2016 UK Corporate Governance Code. In compliance with the Companies Act these accounts are reported and approved at the Annual General Meeting by the Joint Executive Members who are shareholders of the EAS.

Consortium funding

The EAS is funded on an annual basis from three sources: Local authority core contributions, regional school improvement grants and a service level agreement for governor support services. A spending plan accompanies the Business Plan which is intrinsically linked to all actions contained within it. A detailed overview of the regional distribution of all grants is available for all schools to view and compare allocations and rates of delegation through the regional grant monitoring tool.

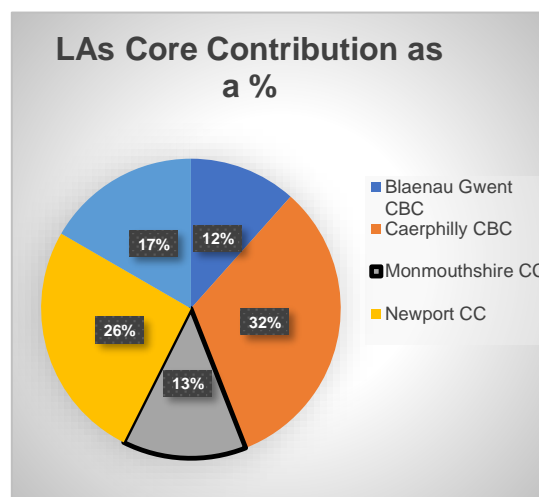
Delegation rates to schools has increased to 94.4% whilst the EAS staff profile has reduced by 53.1% since 2012.

Local authority contributions 2021/2022

Local authority funding for consortium working is underpinned by the National Model for Regional Working, published by the Welsh Government in 2014. The model recommended a core funding allocation of £3.6m for the EAS. The current LA core contribution is based on these figures less year

on year efficiencies of £1.23m since 2012 agreed in collaboration with the 5 local authorities. The local authorities' indicative figures for 2021/22 are as follows:

Local Authority	£
Blaenau Gwent CBC	£351,806
Caerphilly CBC	£985,591
Monmouthshire CC	£405,844
Newport CC	£787,227
Torfaen CBC	£506,028
Total	£3,036,496



In terms of the above £0.796m of this figure is used to secure capacity within the EAS team from current serving headteachers and schools and £0.2m of this figure is used to secure service level agreements and venue costs sourced through local authorities.

Regional school improvement grants

The Collaboration and Members Agreement (CAMA) details the procedure that needs to be followed for all school improvement grants received into the region. All grants are approved by local authority Chief Education Officers / Directors of Education with a follow up ratification from JEG members.

Grant Name	Grant Total	Amount delegated to schools	Delegation* Rate	Regionally Retained
(To be updated when information on grants is received from Welsh Government)	Indicative Calculation 2021/22			
	£	£		£
Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant (RCSIG)				
- Education Improvement Grant	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
- Professional Learning for Teachers	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
- Other grant initiatives	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Pupil Development Grant (PDG)	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
PDG (Lead Regional PDG Adviser)	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Seren Pre 16	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Seren Post 16	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Total	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

*Delegation: This refers to funding which gives freedom of choice to a school in how it is used. It must however be spent in accordance with, and in the spirit of, the core purpose of the grant and the individual school development plan.

Governor Support Service Level Agreement

The EAS has responsibility for providing a Governor Support service to all schools in the region. The service provides support to school governing bodies, headteachers, and individual governors. This includes advice, guidance, training, and an optional clerking service to support governing bodies to deliver their responsibilities.

The optional clerking service is provided through an annual service level agreement with an option to buy into a clerking service and then additionally a statutory committee clerking service. Only two school opted not to buy into the clerking service in 2020/21. The indicative funding for 2021/22 is £0.387m.

Section 6: Additional supporting documents

This Business Plan is supported by the following documents:

- Local Authority Annex documents 2021 – 2022
- Detailed Business Plan 2021–2022
- Regional Grant Mapping Overview 2021–2022 (to follow once detailed received from WG)
- Regional Self-Evaluation Report (Executive Summary)
- EAS Risk Register (Executive Summary)
- Regional Professional Learning Offer 2021–2022
- Local Authority Strategic Education Plans

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Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 26.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 29.03.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th April 2021**

Report Subject: **Blaenau Gwent Education Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2022/23**

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

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

Reporting Pathway (Dates to be Entered)								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	23.03.21			09.03.21	14.04.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to outline the outcome of the annual review and consultation process associated with the Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education. The Executive Committee is asked to review the proposed policy and consultation outcome, prior to its determination and publication on the 15th April 2021.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Welsh Government's School Admissions Code (2013) dictates that Councils must review their admissions policies annually for consultation and publication by April 15th in the academic year preceding the admissions round. Blaenau Gwent School Admissions Policy outlines the arrangements, criteria and relevant legislation that underpin school admission processes and methodology. The Admissions Authority must ensure that the following information is provided during the consultation process:
- 2.2
- i) Admission numbers for each school;
 - ii) Application procedures and the timetable for the admission process;
 - iii) The criteria to be applied to applications in the event that there are more applications than places for a school;
 - iv) Arrangements for waiting lists and how they operate;
 - v) Arrangements for the processing of late applications; and,
 - vi) Details of how parents will be notified of a decision on their application, as well as appeal procedures should their application be unsuccessful.
- 2.3 The primary changes to the policy document for the 2022/23 academic session are as follows:
- A review of the nursery, primary and secondary admission numbers in line with the annual capacity review. This is an annual process which reviews changes to school plans and physical space within

the school, which affect the provision of teaching and learning. This is carried out in line with the Welsh Government Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales Guidance (2011). The final agreed capacity calculations are then used to inform admission numbers.

- A review of the dates for the admission round(s), associated processing and offer deadlines.
- A review of the allocation of primary campus places at Abertillery Learning Community this includes a change to their allocation criteria.
- A review of the online application process due to Capita One Online now replacing Abavus.
- A shared residency section and person making the application form has been added to the policy to highlight the importance of whom should be making the application for the child in the case of separated parents (split families).
- A review of the admissions appeals for primary and secondary school places. This is due to the Welsh Government introducing legislation which temporarily disapples or relaxes certain requirements relating to admission appeals to allow appeals to take place despite the restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus pandemic.
- An updated Blaenau Gwent Schools Catchment Area Overview Map has been added in Appendix 2.

2.4 The draft Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education (2022/23, please refer to **Appendix 1** for the policy document), was distributed to relevant consultees as outlined within the Welsh Government's School Admissions Code (2013, pages 6-7) and detailed on page 2 of the appended policy consultation document. The consultation period commenced on Monday 25th January 2021 and concluded on Friday 5th February 2021. During the consultation period, 1 response was received as follows:

- Glanhowy Primary School made a request for the Nursery intake timings to reduce to support and improve early language skills. The Admissions Authority explained to the consultee that the policy is developed in line with the framework detailed within the Welsh Government School Admissions Code (2013) paragraph 2.57 that states that Local authorities in Wales are under a duty to secure sufficient provision of nursery places for their area for children in the term following their third birthday. Therefore, there is limited flexibility in terms of what can be changed in respect of the Nursery intake.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 The Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considered and accepted the report at its meeting on 9th March 2021.

3.2 **Option 1:** The Executive Committee accept the policy document and agree to its publication by April 15th 2020.

- 3.3 **Option 2:** The Executive Committee provide feedback/contributions relating to improvements that can be made to the policy, in consideration of the publication date (15th April 2021).
4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 In accordance with the Welsh Government's School Admissions and Admission Appeals Code (2013), there is a statutory requirement upon the Council to determine and publish their admissions arrangements annually by the 15th April, the year preceding the admissions round to which they apply.
- 4.2 Education is a strategic priority within the Corporate Plan, of which school admissions and the planning of pupil places are essential components.
5. **Implications Against Each Option**
- 5.1 ***Impact on Budget***
There are no direct budget implications associated with this report.
- 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***
There is a risk that Council will not be compliant with the Welsh Government School Admissions Code (2013), if the policy is not approved and published by the 15th April 2021. The timeline for approval take account of the publication requirements and dates.
- 5.3 ***Legal***
The Council are legally required to prepare, implement and update accessibility strategies for all schools for which they are the responsible body.
- 5.4 ***Human Resources***
The Schools Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2022/23 has been developed by the Education Transformation team, who oversee implementation and reviews of the policy within Blaenau Gwent.

The Corporate Director, supported by Wider Corporate Leadership Team, will have a key role in ensuring the key staff-related actions are effectively delivered.
6. **Supporting Evidence:**
- 6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***
Please refer to **Appendix 2**, for a summary of the 2020/21 Admissions Round. The Council are presently implementing the 2021/22 policy.
- 6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***
The public can expect a fair and equitable admissions process for all pupils in accessing education, and where possible place allocation in line with parent/pupil preference.

6.3 ***Involvement***

Stakeholders and end user needs and engagement are of paramount importance and a key focus of both the policy development, and ongoing admissions process. The Policy is subject to consultation on an annual basis, in line with the Welsh Government School Admissions Code (2013). In addition, the admission arrangements and forms are developed in consultation with key stakeholders including: schools, partners, governing bodies, parents etc.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term***

The Strategy is aligned to the Corporate Plan and covers the period 2020 to 2022.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The admissions process prevents oversubscription of schools and inequality in line with access to education.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Admissions Authority works with other internal admission authorities i.e. the faith and foundation schools, along with external admission authorities within the region and partners such as Social Services, to ensure that there are sufficient arrangements and pupil places for Blaenau Gwent Schools. Also, supporting effective appeal, capacity assessment, childcare offer and other associated processes. The Blaenau Gwent Admission Forum which is comprised of school, council, governor and other service representatives; oversee application of the policy, procedures and compliance with the Welsh Government School Admissions and Admission Appeals Codes (2013).

6.7 ***Integration***

The Blaenau Gwent School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education is aligned to early year's education, pupil place planning, school organisation, the work of social services, planning in line with housing developments etc. Service integration is essential to ensure effective policy implementation, whilst also securing appropriate access to education for current and prospective pupils. The Admissions process is monitored and assured by the Admissions Forum, works in accordance with ALN and Managed Move Panels and associated process. Work with Social Services, Health & Safety, Early Years, Health, Occupational etc. is ongoing to ensure effective transition processes are in place.

6.8 ***EqIA***

An Equality Impact Screening Assessment (EQIA) has been completed in line with the policy, which determined that there is no negative impact upon the protected characteristics. The policy promotes equality of opportunity for all, with regards to accessing education.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

The Admissions Authority monitors the development and delivery admission round(s) and processes on a weekly basis; reporting the Blaenau Gwent Admissions Forum quarterly, providing monthly data analysis and undertaking annual appraisals in line with the delivery of the admission arrangements, which are reported via Councils political processes.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Blaenau Gwent Education Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2022/23
- Appendix 2 – School Admissions – 2020/21 Admissions Round Analysis

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2022/23

Blaenau Gwent Admission Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education



Consultation Process

In accordance with the Welsh Government School Admissions Code (2013) Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council consults upon its admission arrangements on an annual basis, attempting where possible to mirror the admission round timescales of neighbouring admission authorities. The coordinated admission arrangements will determine the date at which application forms are sent to parents as well as the publication of an agreed closing date (For more information please refer to page 13).

Consultation will commence on Monday 25th January 2021 and conclude at 5 pm on Friday 5th February 2021. The admission arrangements will then be published on 15th April 2021, the year preceding the 2022/2023 admissions round. The Local Authority will ensure that the following information is provided during the consultation process:

- i) Admission numbers for each school
- ii) Application procedures and the timetable for the admission process
- iii) The criteria to be applied to applications in the event that there are more applications than places for a School
- iv) Arrangements for waiting lists and how they operate
- v) Arrangements for the processing of late applications
- vi) Details of how parents will be notified of a decision on their application, as well as appeal procedures should their application be unsuccessful.

The Local Authority will consult with the following parties on its admission arrangements:

Headteachers of relevant Schools:	All headteachers of community Schools in Blaenau Gwent
Governing body of relevant Schools:	All governing bodies of community Schools in Blaenau Gwent
All neighbouring Local Authorities within the area:	Caerphilly County Borough Council Torfaen County Borough Council Monmouthshire County Borough Council Newport City Council
Admission Authorities for all other schools in the area:	All headteachers of voluntary aided schools in Blaenau Gwent All governing bodies of voluntary aided schools in Blaenau Gwent Brynmawr Foundation School All Saints RC Primary School St Marys Church in Wales Primary School St Marys RC Primary School St Joseph's RC Primary School

Blaenau Gwent Proposed Admission Policy for Statutory Education 2022/23

1. Introduction/ Purpose

There is a requirement upon Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council as a directive from Welsh Government, to develop, review and consult upon the Blaenau Gwent School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education, on an annual basis. The purpose of the policy in question is to guide and inform the statutory admissions function within Blaenau Gwent, ensuring equality of opportunity for all current and prospective pupils. ***Please note that the following non-maintained schools and non-maintained early year's education providers are responsible for the development of and governed by their own individual Admissions Policies:**

- Acorns Nursery
- All Saints Roman Catholic Primary School
- Brynmawr Foundation School
- Mrs Tiggywinkles Day Nursery
- St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School
- St Mary's Church in Wales Primary School
- St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

The Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery (non-statutory) and Statutory Education has been updated in line with confirmed admission numbers and the dates from the 2021/22 admission round. All other content remains the same. The policy is fully compliant with the Welsh Government School Admissions Code (2013) and School Admissions Appeal Code (2013). This document outlines requirements associated with and guidance relating to pupil admissions and in-year transfers/admissions for nursery, primary, and secondary school place allocation within Blaenau Gwent.

The Welsh Minister for Education and Skills in 2013 outlined the following key considerations in relation to how pupil place allocation in respect of admissions should ensure equality of opportunity:

“The process of starting or transferring between schools can be a time of uncertainty or anxiety; therefore, it is essential that the principles of fairness and openness are applied to all aspects of school admissions. A properly functioning admissions system, that reflects this, can play a vital part in helping to minimise concerns. It is crucial in delivering equality of opportunity.”

Minister for Education and Skills (2013)

2. Admission Types

2.1 Nursery Education

The Council provides free part-time nursery education to every child and every child is entitled to a 'rising 3' place from the start of the term following their third birthday, at either school nursery provision or a quality assured early years education provider.

- Nursery places are in the main offered on a part time basis (am and/or pm sessions which vary in each school throughout the year). Children start attending nursery classes at the age of 3 or 4 years.
- There are three intakes for rising 3 pupils per year as follows:
 - **January**
 - **April**
 - **September**

*Please note that the specific dates for intake change on an annual basis linked to school term dates. These dates are communicated within the Starting Schools Booklet and on nursery application forms, in line with the admission rounds for nursery, reception and secondary school places.

- Some governing bodies offer full-time provision, which is funded directly from the schools budget. The nursery entitlement within Blaenau Gwent is part-time which equates to 12.5 hours per/week (2.5 hours per/day), other than the following nursery provisions, which offer:
 - Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg – full time rising 3 and nursery places
 - St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School – part-time rising 3 places and full-time nursery places
 - St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School - part-time rising 3 places and full-time nursery places
- The regulations pertaining to nursery education are specific and confirm that: **attending a nursery class does NOT give a child priority for a place in the reception year group. A separate application is required for this purpose.**

2.2 Admission to Primary Education

Children are eligible for admission to school at the start of the school year in which their fifth birthday falls (i.e. 1st September to 31st August inclusive).

It is against the law to prevent your child from accessing education at the start of the school year in which their fifth birthday falls.

The Council must provide education places for the admission of all children in the September following their fifth birthday; however, parents/ guardians or carers have the right to:

- a. request that the date their child is admitted to school is deferred until the term after the child's fifth birthday; or,
- b. request that their child takes up the place part-time until the term after their fifth birthday.

2.2.1 Allocation of Primary School Places at Abertillery Learning Community

In the case of Abertillery Learning Community Primary Phase, the admission authority (Blaenau Gwent Council) is responsible for placing pupils at the Learning Community. These pupils are then allocated a site within the Learning Community by Abertillery Learning Community Leadership team and Governing Body in line with the following criteria:

1. Siblings in the campus already
2. Catchment area
3. Ensuring each session stays within the agreed teacher to learner ratio

Once the site has been confirmed the notification process is then administered by the admissions authority. This process has been established in accordance with the Welsh Government School Admissions Code (2013) point 2.51 which states:

"Where split site schools are in operation, the admission authority **should** in most cases, apply the admission arrangements as if the school were a single unit. They **should** make it clear to parents that admission applications are made to the school as a whole and not to a particular site. The site that children attend is a matter for the internal organisation of the school. Appeals **cannot** be made against the site allocated".

The Council's School Organisation Policy (2015), advocates having the right schools, of the right size, in the right places. All school organisation proposals are assessed in line with the Council's admissions and pupil place planning arrangements, to ensure that there is sufficient capacity within Blaenau Gwent Schools to accommodate local pupils.

2.3 Admission to Secondary School

Children/ young people transfer from primary school to secondary school at the beginning of the school year, following their eleventh birthday.

2.3.1 Allocation of Secondary School Places 3-16 at Middle Schools

In the case of both Ebbw Fawr Learning Community and Abertillery Learning Community, **pupils who are on roll in Year 6** at the primary phase will automatically transfer to/ be allocated a place at the secondary phase. In this

instance a separate admission application is **not** required. ***Please note all other secondary settings require an application to be made in order for a place to be allocated.**

2.4 In-Year Transfers (admission that is requested outside of the normal admission round)

In-year transfer/ admission refers to applications made in-year (during and not prior to the academic year commencing), and outside of the normal admission round, i.e. pupils moving into the borough, wishing to change schools etc. All In-year transfers are dealt with in date order of receipt. Where there are a greater number of applications received than the number of places available, the Council will apply their oversubscription criteria (see page 12) in order to determine place allocation and/or refusal.

Applications are processed within 7-15 working days of receipt, confirmation of a place is proved by the Council, and confirmation of a start date is provided by the school. Where possible the start date provided by the school is within 10 days of place allocation being confirmed.

In the following circumstances pupil allocation will be managed differently to that of a standard transfer request:

- **Complex Admissions** – an admission is considered to be complex, if the needs of the pupil fall outside of the standard admission and hard to place procedures (detailed below). In this case a working group co-ordinated by the Admissions Officer, will be convened in order to address the complex nature of the placement, ensuring that all of the pupils needs can be addressed within an appropriate education setting.
- **Hard to place pupils**– applicants who are considered hard to place, fall into one or more of the categories presented below. The 14 categories cover circumstances and/or needs which would deem or contribute to a learner being considered as hard to place:
 - Children who were permanently excluded from their last maintained school placement and are able / ready to integrate to an alternative school;
 - Children returning from the criminal justice system (secure estate);
 - Child victims of serious crimes (child cruelty, kidnapping, sexual or violent crime, FGM);
 - Children who are CLA;
 - Children who have been out of education for longer than two months;
 - Children with below 50% attendance;
 - Children with disabilities or medical conditions which have already impacted on their attendance or participation at school;
 - Children of carers, Gypsies, Roma, Travellers, children whose parents offend, asylum seekers and refugees who have been in

- the UK less than two years and need a supported entry to school;
- Homeless children who have been placed in temporary housing;
 - Children who are in a refuge due to domestic violence;
 - Children of UK service personnel where a change of location ordered by the service leads to a need for a change of school and will have experienced multiple moves;
 - Children who have received 10 days exclusions in the last twelve months; and/or,
 - Children on the child protection register.

It may not be possible to process complex and hard to place admissions within the target timeframe outlined above. In such cases, the applicant would be informed of any increases to the processing timescales with regards to their application, and the process through which the application will be managed. The Additional Learning Needs Panel, Managed Move Panel, and/or the Complex Admissions Working Group; would be responsible for managing applications as outlined above (please refer to section 2.6 below for further information on the panel's).

As part of the transfer allocation process, the Council will contact the child or young person's current school to obtain information in order to support and ensure a smooth transition. This information will then be shared with the recipient school in order to make sure that they are equipped to meet the pupils' educational, learning and any other identified needs upon transfer.

It is the responsibility of the parent/ guardian or carer to notify the Admissions Officer if they no longer wish to transfer their child to the newly allocated school, as confirmed within the offer letter.

***Please note:**

The admissions authority does not encourage transfers from one local school to another, due to the potential disruption that it causes to all parties. However, it does recognise that this process may be required in putting the needs of the child and/ or young person first.

Previous research has determined that the transfer process can impinge upon a pupil's educational achievement and success, unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as the transfer being in the best interest of the child/ young person. Transfers are also dependent (as with general admissions), upon place availability at the preferred school. Parents will be encouraged to discuss at length their reasons for wanting to change schools with the school and admissions authority.

Parents should also consider prior to making a transfer request, differences in curriculum offer available at the child's current school and requested recipient school, i.e. the schools may not offer the same subjects at GCSE level.

2.5 Requests for Admission Outside of Chronological Year Group

It is the Council's policy that children are admitted into their chronological year group. It is only in exceptional circumstances that the Council will support admission into a year group that is not within the chronological year. For example, where there is an appropriate evidence base that suggests the chronological year group is not able to meet the needs of the child e.g. on medical grounds, due to ill health, additional learning needs and/ or if a pupil is new to the UK. Evidence of the placement being 'essential' will be required should a placement of this nature be requested.

Applicants submitting requests for admission into a year group that is not the chronological year for the child/ young person, will be given the opportunity to share their reasons for the application with the Council. The headteacher of the preferred school will be consulted during the processing of the application, and their views considered as part of the decision making process.

Parents, guardians or carers who have been refused a place at the preferred school will have a statutory right of appeal against the decision that has been made; however, there is no right of appeal against a decision to refuse a place into a non-chronological year group.

2.6 Managed Moves, Resource Bases, Special School and Complex Placements

The Council has a protocol in place which ensures that children and young people who may benefit from what is called a 'managed move' are able to move schools in an organised and coordinated way, ensuring that their needs are appropriately met. This protocol is called the Managed Move protocol and implemented via the Managed Move Panel. Where appropriate the Admissions Officer will consider the individual circumstances in line with the Welsh Government Admissions Code (2013), and if the school is over subscribed, utilise and implement 'excepted pupil' status (for more information please see the aforementioned Welsh Government School Admissions Code, 2013, page 27), in order to admit the pupil.

The Council has a number of Resource Base provisions throughout Blaenau Gwent to meet the needs of pupils with complex needs, social emotional and behavioural needs (SEBD) or autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) needs that cannot be met within a mainstream environment.

The Council also has two special schools:

- Pen-Y-Cwm Special School, which caters for children and young people with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties throughout the 3-19 age range.

- River Centre 3-16 Learning Community which caters for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties throughout the 3-16 age range.

All placements into resource base and special school provision are agreed and managed by the Additional Learning Needs Panel, which is comprised of representatives from:

- School Admissions;
- the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) team;
- the Education Welfare Service
- Educational Psychology Service; and,
- Headteachers/ Senior Leaders and school ALNCOs as well as other professionals/officers as and when required.

Decisions are made based upon strict criteria to ensure placements are appropriate. Processes are managed by the ALN team to ensure that pupils with additional learning needs are admitted in a timely manner, whilst ensuring that all of their identified needs can be met by the recipient school. All processes are carried out in consultation with the Admissions Officer in order to inform the allocation and planning of school places.

A complex admission is characterised by the child or young person's needs and or circumstances, being unable to be met within the normal admissions round and general admissions arrangements. Cases characterised as complex often require careful consideration and involvement from a wider network of partners, in order to ensure that the child's educational needs can be met within an appropriate school setting/ placement. Where there is a complex admissions case outside of the remit of the Managed Move protocol and ALN Panel processes, the Admissions Officer will coordinate the development of a working group aligned to the needs of the pupil, in considering the prospective pupil's circumstances and ensuring appropriate school placement. Complex admissions will be managed and processed in accordance with the School Admissions Code (2013). Where appropriate Welsh Government advice may be sought in line with the decision making process.

3. School Admission Criteria

The determination of school admissions differs between Local Authority maintained and non-maintained schools. The faith schools, foundation school, and non-maintained early year's education providers within Blaenau Gwent, maintain their own policies and criteria. These differ to the standardised criteria of the Council. The faith and foundation schools are also responsible for administering their own transfer and appeal procedures. **Applications for pupil places at these schools need to be made directly to the preferred school.** Applications for pupils where a faith or the foundation school is a first preference, should only be submitted to the Council's Education Transformation team in respect of second and third preference schools that are maintained by Blaenau Gwent. ***Please note that the Council are**

unable to allocate pupil places within the following non-maintained faith and foundation schools and non-maintained early year's education providers:

- Acorns Nursery
- All Saints Roman Catholic Primary School
- Brynmawr Foundation School
- Mrs Tiggywinkles Day Nursery
- St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School
- St Mary's Church in Wales Primary School
- St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Additionally, the Council cannot allocate pupil places within schools outside of Blaenau Gwent. Out of county school admissions and placements are managed by the admission authority of the Borough within which they reside, and/ or the schools themselves, when they are not maintained by the Council.

The Council works jointly with the faith, foundation schools and non-maintained early year's education providers; to ensure that all pupils applying either via the schools/settings directly or the Councils processes are allocated a place. Joint monitoring also takes place around transfers and appeals.

Each school has a limit to the number of children that it can accommodate per year group. This limit is called the published admission number (please refer to **Appendix 1** of this document for more information). The admission number takes into account the physical space within the school building relevant to each age group, as determined by the Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales Guidance (2011). There are two figures derived from this formula for primary school admissions, the admission number for nursery and the admission number for reception. The nursery area includes the available space for all pupils who are eligible to attend nursery, which includes rising threes (as detailed within the nursery section above). For those schools that run both morning and afternoon sessions, the admission number is applied to each session, and so can be doubled. For secondary the figure derived indicates the admission number for all year groups. Schools are asked on an annual basis each autumn-term, to confirm their sessional plans etc. for the admission round and capacity calculations, which are then presented within the admissions policy, two years preceding the academic year to which it applies. Schools will then be bound by the admission numbers for primary and secondary school places. In the case of non-statutory nursery admissions, the capacity calculation is advisory based on the guidance detailed above.

In the event of school reorganisation taking place, the admission arrangements will be determined and confirmed as part of the statutory consultation and transition process.

4. **How to apply for a School Place in Blaenau Gwent (excluding the Faith and Foundation Schools and non-maintained early year's education providers)**

Parents/carers are required to make an application for a school place. Completed forms with supporting evidence are to be returned by the closing date as detailed in Section 6 (below). In order to process an application linked to allocation of a school place, only **one** of the following types of evidence within each category below will be required for submission with the application form:

- **Proof of Residency (copies of one of the following)**
 - Valid driving licence including paper licence
 - Council tax bill (for the 2020/21 year)
 - Recent child benefit / child tax credit notification, naming the child for whom the application has been made
 - Utility bills (within the last three months)
 - NHS Medical card
- **Proof of Date of birth (copies of one of the following)**
 - Child's birth certificate
 - NHS medical card
 - Valid passport which displays your child date of birth

All completed application forms are then to be returned to:
The Education Transformation team,
School Admissions,
Floor 8,
Anvil Court,
Church Street,
Abertillery.
NP13 1DB.

Applications to the Council can also be made online via the following link: <https://citizenportal.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk> . In making an online application applicants will receive immediate confirmation that their application has been submitted, then confirmation of pupil placement will be sent on the offer date. Alternatively, parents can request an application pack from the Admissions team on (01495) 355340 or via the following email address: schooladmissions@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

As previously outlined the faith and foundation schools within Blaenau Gwent have additional criteria linked to their independent status, which needs to be fulfilled in line with the child securing a place. Applications to non-maintained early year's education providers are dealt with directly by the providers concerned.

Where a parent/ guardian or carer does not provide the relevant evidence, the application will be treated as **incomplete** until such time all supporting evidence is received. Consequently, should the supporting information be received after the closing date of the relevant admissions round, then this will

render the application **as a 'late' submission**. If the information is not provided upon initial request, the Council will then attempt to chase the parent/ guardian or carer for the information a further **three times only**.

In the case of a double allocation as a result of an administrative error, the Council would need to ensure that adequate places are available and follow the School Admissions Code and oversubscription criteria, in order to meet the 1st preference requested.

In instances where fraud is suspected, or accusations of fraudulent claims have been made, an investigation will take place. Places may be withdrawn if it is discovered that parents/ guardians or carers have knowingly provided false information in order to obtain the advantage of a particular school place.

Information provided within the application in respect of additional learning needs, will require further consultation with the SEN team. This will ensure effective, suitable provision and placement in line with additional educational needs and/ or a successful transition for the pupil.

5. Oversubscription Nursery, Primary and Secondary Criteria for the Normal Round of Admissions

The admissions authority will consider each individual application received by the published closing date. If the number of applications for an individual school is greater than the admission number, the allocation of places will be carried out using the following criteria, which are listed in order of priority below:

i) Children Looked After

Priority to be given to children looked after/previously looked after (children under Local Authority care); following consultation on the appropriateness of the named school.

Children in care means children who are in care of a Local Authority in accordance with Section 22 Children Act 1989.

ii) Catchment School

Children who live in the catchment area of the school on or before the published closing date.

iii) Social/Medical

Children who the Authority accepts have an exceptional medical or social need for a place at one specific school. Applications will only be considered under this category if they are supported by a medical consultant's report. The information must specify the medical advantage of the child attending the preferred school. Please note that reports from family doctors are NOT accepted for this purpose.

iv) Brother or Sister

Children who will have a brother or sister at the school to which the parent is applying, after the date of admission, will be given a higher priority than those who do not. Please note however, that having a sibling at the school does not guarantee admission for any other children in the family. Where there is more than one such case, priority will be given to those children closest in age to the sibling already attending the preferred school as of the admission date. Brothers and sisters whether half, full, step or foster will be considered relevant where living in the same household.

v) Distance

Children living closest to the preferred school measured by the shortest recognised permitted walking route between the pupils' front door of the home and school gate using a digital mapping system.

It should be noted that a child with a statement of special educational need or equivalent (i.e. individual development plan) which names a specific school, will be admitted in accordance with Section 343 of the Education Act 1996.

Deciding Factors associated with prioritising Admissions

In the event of oversubscription and/or the requirement to prioritise admission based on distance, places will be allocated on the basis of distance between the shortest recognised walking route between the pupils' front door of the home and the main school gate. Distance is calculated using a digital mapping system. Children living closest to the school are given the highest priority.

Shared residency

In the event that the residency of a child is shared between two parents, the address where the child concerned resides for the majority of the school week will be used for allocation purposes. This is the address that should be declared on the application.

However, if the residency with both parents during the school week is equal, the address for where the child benefit is paid will be used for allocation purposes.

Person making the application form

Only persons holding parental responsibility for the named child are able to make an application and they will be required to make a declaration to this effect as part of the application process. Ordinarily it is expected that this

person resides at the same address as the child and is referred to as the parent for admission purposes.

Where parental responsibility is equally shared, the Council will ask the child's parents to determine which parent should submit the application.

It is expected that parents will also agree on school preferences for a child before an application is made. The Council is not in a position to intervene in disputes between parents over school applications and will request that these are resolved privately.

If parents cannot agree and neither has obtained a court order stating who should be making the application/what the preference should be, the Council will accept an application from the parent in receipt of Child Benefit for the child.

Multiple births

In the case of multiple births relating to a single family, if only one place is available at the school and the second child who qualifies for a place is a sibling, the school will exceed their published admission number to accommodate both pupils.

6. Timeframe for Processing Admissions as Part of the 2022/23 Admission Round

Nursery

For places to be allocated in spring summer and autumn term of 2022;

Admission round commences on	1 st September 2021
Closing date for applications	5pm on 8 th October 2021
Offer date	22 nd November 2021

Reception

Admission round commences on	3 rd January 2022
Closing date for applications	5pm on 25 th February 2022
Offer date	18 th April 2022

Secondary

Admission round commences on	27 th September 2021
Closing date for applications	5pm on 15 th November 2021
Offer date	1 st March 2022

7. Arrangements with Neighbouring Admissions Authorities and Neighbouring Local Authorities

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has made arrangements with the following neighbouring Councils' and schools, in order for parents to express a preference to attend a school outside of the borough. The Council's schools and admissions team would then liaise with the relevant admissions authority to secure a pupil place along with transition arrangements:

- **Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council**

Parents can express a preference to attend;

- Bishop Hedley High School (children living in Ebbw Vale, Beaufort and Tredegar)

- **Torfaen Borough Council**

Parents can express a preference to attend;

- Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw children from the whole of the borough.
- St. Albans R.C. High School (children living in Abertillery and Brynmawr)

8. Late Applications

Applications received '**after the closing date**' will be classed as late. These will be considered as a secondary priority to applications received on time. Incomplete applications and those without relevant supporting evidence will also be considered as late, if the information requested is not received by the closing date for admission round to which the application relates.

Late applicants are unlikely to be offered a place at their preferred school, due to places being allocated to on-time applicants, particularly where there are high levels of demand.

9. Change of Preferences

Should a parent/guardian or carer wish to change their preference, they will need to do so in writing. Letters expressing a change of preference are to be directed to the admission authority. Any request of a change in preference received after the closing date will be treated as a late application.

10. Waiting Lists

Following the allocation of places during the normal admission round, children will remain on the waiting list for their preferred school until 30th September the following academic year. Thereafter, parents/ guardians or carers will be

required to make a new application for admission. If additional places become available, they will be allocated to children on the waiting list on the basis of the published oversubscription criteria. **Waiting lists do not give priority to children based on the date the application was added to the list.**

11. Notifying Parents, Guardians or Carers of the Outcome of the Application

The Council will inform parents/ guardians or carers of the outcome of their application on the published offer date (please refer to pages 13 and 14 for more information). If the application is rejected, parents will receive written confirmation informing them of the outcome and will also be provided with the 'Appeals Guidance for Parents' document, which provides details of the appeals procedure. As part of the refusal letter the Council will allocate a place at the 2nd or 3rd preference school, if a 2nd and/or 3rd preference has been indicated within the application. A place will be allocated at the next nearest available school, should all preferences be unavailable or if an alternative preference has not been specified.

12. Admission Appeals for Primary and Secondary School Places

The Council endeavours to fulfil parental preference wherever possible; however, where there are more applications than places available at a school it is not always possible to fulfil parent preference.

The 1996 Education Act provides parents with an opportunity to appeal against the decision of a Local Authority in the matter of **statutory** school admissions - ***please note appeals cannot be made for non-statutory nursery admissions**. The appeal will be heard before and considered by an independent appeal panel.

Post receipt of the offer letter detailing the outcome of an application, should a parent/ guardian or carer wish to appeal against the decision of the admissions authority, they will need to complete the form issued with the letter and return it to the:

Head of Law and Standards,
General Offices,
Steelworks Road,
Ebbw Vale,
Blaenau Gwent.
NP23 6DN

Parents will have 10 working days to submit an appeal and their appeal will be heard within 30 school days from the specific closing date indicated within the refusal letter.

On the 4th May 2020 Welsh Government introduced legislation which temporarily disapplies or relaxes certain requirements relating to admission

appeals to allow appeals to take place despite the restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Education (Admission Appeals Arrangements)(Wales)(Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020:

- Expressly provide the flexibility for panels to meet virtually or by telephone.
- Disapply the normal requirements relating to the venue for admission appeals where they are happening remotely or on paper instead of in person.
- Relax the rules with regard to what happens if one of the members of a panel of three withdraws to make it permissible for the panel to continue with and conclude the appeal as a panel of two.
- Amend the deadlines relating to appeals for the time that the regulations are in force.

The Amendment Regulations are due to expire on 31 January 2021. However, the pandemic and restrictions to reduce its spread are likely to continue to impact on the ability to undertake appeals beyond 31 January. With this in mind Welsh Government propose to introduce new Amendment Regulations which extend the current disapplications and relaxations until the 30th September 2021. It is expected that the new Regulations will come into force during the early part of 2021. The regulations aim to support continuity within the appeals process, allowing appeal panels to complete applications received during the admission round.

13. Home to School and Post 16 Transports

Blaenau Gwent Council will provide free transport for children attending their nearest suitable school, where the distance from home to school is over the specified walking distance detailed below:

- more than 1.5 miles from home for children aged under 8 years but of statutory school age; and,
- more than 2 miles from home for children aged 8 years and over.

Distances are measured by using the Council's Digital Information Mapping System, to determine the shortest available safe walking route between the home address and the main gate of the school to be attended.

Parents are able to choose an English-medium, Welsh-medium or a denominational school for their child. The child will qualify for home to school transport to the appropriate catchment area of the school. When the catchment area school is full and unable to admit a pupil, free transport will be provided to the next nearest available school that has room to take the child, as long as the home is 1.5 miles or more away from the school for pupils under the age of 8 years, or 2 miles for pupils aged 8 and over.

The provision of free school transport will be arranged to coincide with the start and end of the normal school day and shall be provided during the school term time. Home to School transport is not provided for breakfast clubs, after school clubs or summer schools. Transport will be provided from pick-up points at approved bus stops on the nearest public transport route to the learner's home, where possible.

Post 16 Travel

All students living in Blaenau Gwent will be provided with a discounted bus ticket or travel grant to the Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone, Ebbw Vale Campus as their designated Post 16 provider; or, the nearest institution where their course is available depending on the following criteria:

- students must be between the ages of 16 to 19 (under 19 prior to the 1st September of the commencement of their course) to qualify;
- students shall reside in the County Borough of Blaenau Gwent;
- students must reside 2 miles or over (nearest walking distance) from their nearest college campus; and, the students should attend a full time course which requires attendance of 16 or more hours per week or a minimum 4 days attendance per week at the institution.

Students and pupils aged 19 or over at the commencement of the course are not eligible for travel assistance from the Council and in these circumstances they are advised to contact their respective college for details of any available transport provision.

All transport for Post 16 pupils including those with additional learning needs is agreed on a case by case basis by the SEN team in consultation with the Transport Officer. The Council may provide transport up to a maximum of three years.

Travel Grant

The Council's present policy is to provide travel assistance to those who meet the criteria up to a maximum of £150 per academic session. This will be paid termly as follows: £50 autumn, £50 spring and £50 summer.

Welsh Medium / Faith Education

Pupils who wish to undertake their Post 16 studies via the medium of Welsh or attend a Faith school are required to travel further distances for their education, with no direct public service bus routes. These students have the opportunity to utilise the existing contract bus provision in lieu of the Travel Grant, if appropriate.

All awarded transport will be reviewed periodically. For more detailed information on home to school and post 16 transport, along with details on how to apply, please refer to the Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy (2021/22) via the following link: <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/schools-learning/school-transport/>

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Appendix 1 – Published Admission Numbers

***Please note in order to apply for a place in one of the following schools/early years education providers, an application will need to be made directly to the school of your choice:**

- **Acorns Nursery**
- **All Saints Roman Catholic Primary School**
- **Brynmawr Foundation School**
- **Mrs Tiggywinkles Day Nursery**
- **St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School**
- **St Mary's Church in Wales Primary School**
- **St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School**

Published Admission Numbers for 2022/23

School *The school highlighted in red are responsible for their own admission arrangements and as such, applications need to be submitted directly to the school.	Nursery Admission Number	Session	Statutory Admission Number (Reception or Year 7)
All Saints R.C. Primary School	30	am	26
Beaufort Hill Primary School	30	am	30
Blaen y Cwm Primary School	26	am	38
	26	pm	
Brynbach Primary School	30	am	30
Brynmawr R.C. Primary School	53	Full time places	30
Coed y Garn Primary School	30	am	30
	30	pm	
Cwm Primary School	52	am	30
	52	pm	
Deighton Primary School	30	am	30
	30	pm from April-term	
Georgetown Primary School	30	am	60
	30	pm	
Glanhowy Primary School	65	am	

	65	pm	42
Glyncoed Primary School	52	am	45
	52	pm	
Rhos y Fedwen Primary School	26	am	25
St. Illtyd's Primary School	30	am	30
St. Joseph's R.C. Primary School	41	full time	15
St. Mary's Church-in-Wales Primary School	30	am	30
Soffryd Primary School	19	am	23
	19	pm	
Willowtown Primary School	30	am	60
	30	pm	
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg	60	full time	30
Ystruth Primary School	37	am	42
	37	pm	

	Nursery Admission Number	Session	Statutory Admission Number (Reception or Year 7)
<u>Secondary School</u>			
Brynmawr Foundation School			151
Tredegar Comprehensive School			154
<u>Middle School</u>			
Abertillery Learning Community – Primary Phase	141		140
Abertillery Learning Community – Secondary Phase			150
Ebbw Fawr Learning Community - Primary Phase	58	am	40
Ebbw Fawr Learning Community - Secondary Phase			238

Appendix 2 - Blaenau Gwent Schools Catchment Area Overview Map



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Analysis:

School Admissions – 2020/21 Admissions Round Analysis

The Admissions team have successfully implemented the School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2020/21, which is evidenced by the following assessment:

- 100% of applications were processed within 48 hours and 100% of standard in-year transfer requests were processed within 15 days of receipt in accordance with the WG School Admissions Code (2013) and Blaenau Gwent's School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2019/20.
- Transfer rates have fluctuated over the last 4 academic sessions, from 140 in 2016/17, up to 343 in 2017/18 and then a slight increase of 355 in 2018/19. The rate of **229 in 2019/2020 – 151 primary transfers, 78 secondary transfers. Figures are much lower due to covid.** The primary reason for in-year transfer has been inward migration of families into the Blaenau Gwent area.
- Complex transfers were received on a weekly basis and referred to the SEN team for consideration at ALN Panel.
- The admissions officer has attended all ALN Panel meetings and/ or liaised directly with the SEN team on pupil placement.
- There were 3 appeals held for the reception year group during the summer period 2020, which is less than the number of appeals held in 2019. All 3 appeals were upheld in favour of the Council due to them being class size appeals.
- The numbers of in-time applications received for pupils who applied for a school place during the 2020/21 admission round, increased slightly for nursery and reception but decreased for secondary when compared to 2019/20, this was due to the birth rate for that year being lower. Please refer to Figure 1 overleaf for the in-time percentage comparisons:

Figure 1: In-time Application (%)

Percentage of In-time Applications 2018/19	Percentage of In-time Applications 2019/20	Percentage of In-time Applications 2020/21
Nursery – 58%	Nursery – 51%	Nursery – 60%
Reception – 79%	Reception – 74%	Reception – 75%
Secondary – 71%	Secondary – 89%	Secondary – 79%

- The Council were able to sustain 100% of parental first preferences for a 4 years period in respect of both nursery and secondary place allocation, and 99% of first preferences were met for the reception year group (please refer to **Figure 2** below). This is attributable to the effective monitoring and management of school capacities and pupil places along with the continued achievement of surplus place reduction, whereby school admission numbers for primary schools with a high surplus have been reduced over the last year and in turn the admission number has also been reduced.
- First preferences met for late applications are also extremely high due to effective pupil place management processes

Figure 2: First Preferences Met %

% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2017/18	% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2018/19	% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2019/20	% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2020/21
Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%
Reception – 99%	Reception – 99%	Reception – 99%	Reception – 99%
Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%
% of First Preferences Met for Late Applications 2017/18	% of First Preferences Met for Late Applications 2018/19	% of First Preferences Met for Late Applications 2019/20	% of First Preferences Met for Late Applications 2020/21
Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 99%	Nursery – 100%
Reception – 97%	Reception – 96%	Reception – 99%	Reception – 100%
Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%

The Welsh Government School Admissions Code (2013) dictates that Councils must review their admissions policies annually for consultation and publication by April 15th in the academic year preceding the admissions round. Blaenau Gwent School Admissions Policy outlines the arrangements, criteria and relevant legislation that underpin school admission processes and methodology. The primary changes to the policy document for the 2020/21 academic session were as follows:

- A review of the nursery, primary and secondary admission numbers in line with the annual capacity review. This is an annual process which reviews changes to school plans and physical space within the school, which affect the provision of teaching and learning. This is carried out in line with the Welsh Government Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales Guidance (2011). The final agreed capacity calculations are then used to inform admission numbers.
- A review of the dates for the admission round(s), associated processing and offer deadlines.

The Admissions Policy for 2021/22 was consulted upon and published in line with the Welsh Government's deadline (April 2020). The pilot phase of on-line admission arrangements was launched on September 1st 2016. Online applications have increased overall within the last academic session as outline below:

2017/18

- 158 out of a possible 976 applications received online for nursery;
- 6 out of a possible 796 applications received online for reception; and,
- 16 out of a possible 685 application received online for secondary.

2018/19

- 94 out of a possible 705 applications received online for nursery;
- 93 out of a possible 586 applications received online for reception; and,
- 58 out of a possible 770 application received online for secondary.

2019/20

- 205 out of a possible 659 applications received online for nursery;
- 186 out of a possible 676 applications received online for reception; and,
- 161 out of a possible 654 application received online for secondary.

2020/21

- 248 out of a possible 519 applications received online for nursery;
- 216 out of a possible 559 applications received online for reception; and,
- 185 out of a possible 426 applications received online for secondary.

The aim of the team is to become completely paperless in preparation for the 2022/23 admission round, with the team now being in the process of organising training for Capita One Online System.

The Admissions Forum met twice times over the last year (September 2019 – August 2020), with the minimum number of meetings required being 3. The Forum has sustained a good level of attendance at each meeting. The Forum has worked closely with the Education Transformation team in order to:

- improve school and Council awareness and partnership approaches in respect of the implementation and monitoring of the admissions round;

- improve tracking processes from live birth to secondary education (whilst ensuring alignment with Inclusion);
- address issues i.e. ensure that when in-year transfers are allocated a place a start date is offered within 10 days; and,
- explore a wider ranging data set i.e. Flying Start, placement outside of the chronological year group, home tuition and attendance data etc. Ensuring that there is a holistic approach to the management of pupil places.

Agenda Item 9

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 26.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 26.03.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th April 2021**

Report Subject: **Destination Management Plan 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)
02.03.21	04.03.21	23.03.21			24.03.21	14.04.21		

1. **Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request Members endorsement of the draft Blaenau Gwent Destination Management Plan (Plan) for 2020-25.
- 1.2 The report provides a summary of the Plan's content and the Themes around which it is based. The report also summarises the context in which the Plan sits, and the role of the Destination Management Partnership and other stakeholders in its production.

2. **Background and Current Position**

- 2.1 The Destination Management Plan is a strategic document that sets out priorities for tourism development in Blaenau Gwent over the period 2020-2025 and complements the new Visit Wales Tourism Action Plan over the same period.
- 2.2 The Plan has been co-produced by a number of stakeholders and has been overseen by the Destination Management Partnership which includes the following Members: Cllr Phil Edwards, Cllr Mandy Moore, Cllr Lee Parsons, as well as representatives from the public, private and third sectors.
- 2.3 The BGDMP differs from many strategic documents in that the ownership and delivery sits with both BGCBC, the Destination Management Partnership and stakeholders across the tourism sector – it is not solely a Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council document.
- 2.4 The BGDMP is recognised by Visit Wales as the strategic document for tourism within a geographical area and will help support funding applications.
- 2.5 The BGDMP aims to ensure that people, businesses and organisations work together in a coordinated way to deliver agreed targets and priorities for investment. The Plan contains eight chapters including, an Introduction to Destination Management, Strategic Context, a SWOT analysis, a review of the 2016-19 BGDMP, Covid-19 implications, Strategic Priorities and the Action Plan.

- 2.6 The Plan identifies six Cross Cutting Themes and five main Themes. The cross cutting Themes are:
- Business Development
 - Challenging and Changing Perceptions,
 - Partnership Working,
 - Research and Analysis,
 - Skills
 - Transport
- 2.7 The main Themes are:
- Business Tourism;
 - Culture, Heritage including the NHS & Genealogy;
 - Events
 - Green/Eco Tourism including Outdoor Activity & Trails
 - Town Centres.
- 2.8 The BGDMP and associated Action Plan have taken account of national, strategic and local trends and priorities, and has been co-produced and informed by stakeholders and partner organisations. Should the Plan be endorsed, it's proposed that it will be formatted into an appropriate marketing/promotional document with photographs and other imagery.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 The Regeneration Scrutiny Committee will consider this report at its meeting on 24th March 2021 and any feedback will be provided verbally to the Executive Committee.
- 3.2 Option one – The BGDMP 2020-25 is endorsed.
- 3.3 Option two – The BGDMP 2020-25 is endorsed with amendments requested.
4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board: Established in April 2016, and is currently working towards preparing a Well-being Plan for the area. Tourism will offer an opportunity in Blaenau Gwent to help the area contribute towards the long-term future of the area.
- 4.2 The Blaenau Gwent Local Plan 2018-2022
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 priorities developed for the Corporate Plan incorporate the previous Council Well-being Objectives and also represent our Improvement Objectives, as required by the Local Government (Wales) Measure.

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

- 5.1.1 The proposed BGDMP 2020-25 has been co-produced with a range of stakeholders and the Destination Management Partnership.
- 5.1.2 The Action Plan will be delivered collaboratively with the identified partners, who will also have responsibility for sourcing the necessary funding, with support from the DMP Officer as appropriate. Where the Authority is the identified lead, the project will be funded via internal budgets e.g. Destination Management and where necessary external funding opportunities will be explored.
- 5.1.3 The Plan will support the Authority in making funding applications to external funding bodies including Welsh Government, Visit Wales and others, to deliver projects.
- 5.1.4 Any priorities identified within the action plan requiring additional funding will be reported as appropriate, identifying any potential impact on BGCBC resources.
- 5.1.5 Retention of the Destination Management budget is essential to supporting the five-year delivery of the Blaenau Gwent DMP.

5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions

- 5.2.1 The DMP is Blaenau Gwent's strategic document to support destination related activity. Without such a plan there is a risk to the authority and other stakeholders in terms of securing funding to deliver projects.
- 5.2.2 Reduction in available staff resources will impact upon the Council's ability to implement activity contained within the action plan.
- 5.2.3 There is a risk of partner organisations not prioritising agreed actions which will negatively impact upon the implementation of the overall plan.
- 5.2.4 Failure of local tourism stakeholders to engage in the Destination Management Partnership will result in a weak monitoring of the Plan. The Destination Management Officer will dedicate time to strengthening the partnership membership.

5.3 Legal

- 5.3.1 There are no legal implications to the development of the BGDMP. Any activities arising as a result of the plan will be delivered within existing legal governance arrangements.

5.4 Human Resources

- 5.4.1 Destination Management related activity will be undertaken and co-ordinated through the Council's Destination Management Officer.

- 5.4.2 The Destination Management Officer is a critical role to ensuring the effective co-ordination and implementation of the plan.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 Performance Information and Data

- 6.1.1 Nationally - The plan referenced Welsh Government's / Visit Wales new tourism framework and The Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- 6.1.2 Regionally – South Wales Tourism Forum, South East Wales Destination Management Group and South East Wales Destination Implementation Group

- 6.1.3 Locally - Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board, the Blaenau Gwent Local Plan 2018-2022 and the Blaenau Gwent Corporate Plan.

6.2 Expected outcome for the public

The BGDMP could benefit local businesses, residents and visitors alike through developing a more prosperous economy, pleasant environment and inspiring pride in our heritage.

6.3 Involvement

The Destination Management Partnership meet quarterly at various venues across the County Borough. The group has increased membership and is a strong and cohesive voice for local tourism.

- 6.3.1 The Destination Management Officer regularly engages with stakeholders and the community to ensure that their voices are heard and acted upon.

- 6.3.2 This Plan was developed by the Partnership and consultation has been undertaken with the BGCBC and wider tourism stakeholders. There has not been the opportunity to undertake a public consultation due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

- 6.3.3 All views have been considered by the Partnership and based on this, the plan has been amended accordingly.

6.4 Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)

The BGDMP lifetime has been extended from 3 years to 5 years to allow the partnership to take a long term vision for tourism.

6.5 Preventative focus

Without a Destination Management Plan for Blaenau Gwent there will be no focus and monitoring of tourism delivery in the area. Regular business and community engagement addresses issues at an early stage or prevents them occurring in the first place.

6.6 Collaboration / partnership working

- 6.6.1 The Local Authority works collaboratively with Welsh Government, other local authorities, local businesses, trusts, public bodies and the voluntary sector in delivering the Destination Management Plan. In Blaenau Gwent we are working together to deliver the Blaenau Gwent Destination Management Plan through the community, stakeholders and the Destination Management Partnership.

Officers of the Council are represented on the South Wales Tourism Forum, South East Wales Destination Management Group and South East Wales Destination Implementation Group who link to the City Region board.

6.7 Integration

- 6.7.1 Prosperous - The Destination Management Plan aims to improve the profitability of business performance through building the capacity of the industry.
- 6.7.2 Healthier - walking and activities in the outdoors through the development of walking and cycling routes will benefit the physical and mental wellbeing of the community and visitors.
- 6.7.3 Equal - By making recreational activities accessible to all.
- 6.7.4 Culture & Language - Through the use of the Welsh language in all our promotional materials and on line and celebrating our heritage and culture.
- 6.7.5 Globally Responsible - By protecting and promoting our unique natural and built environment, encouraging use of sustainable transport and supporting businesses in securing the Green Dragon environmental standard awarded to organisations that are taking action to control their impacts on the environment.

6.8 EqIA

The BGDMP embraces all residents and visitors. It has no adverse impact on people or groups from the nine protected characteristics.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.1 The BGDMP is monitored quarterly through the Blaenau Gwent Destination Management Partnership which receives updates on the progress made and forward planning.
- 7.2 Annual updates are provided to Scrutiny Committee and Executive and on request.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 - The Draft Blaenau Gwent Destination Management Plan
2020-25

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BLAENAU GWENT DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020 -2025

INDEX	1
FOREWORD	2
DMP, VISION AND THEMES	4
STRATEGIC CONTEXT	6
SWOT	11
REVIEW OF BGDMP 2016-9	13
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	18
COVID-19	21
ACTION PLAN	22

FOREWORD

As a keen naturalist and photographer I spend a great deal of my spare time in the beautiful countryside of Blaenau Gwent, over the past 40 years I have seen a dramatic change as the wildlife has reclaimed the mountains and rivers following the demise of our once flourishing heavy industry.

Red Kites now circle high above the Borough's oldest standing building St Illtyd's Church, whilst the formerly extinct native of Britain the Goshawk has re-established itself within our coniferous forests and its chilling call can be heard once again.

Dippers can be seen bobbing on the rocks of both the Ebbw Fach and Ebbw Fawr rivers and a keen eye will pick up the elusive Otter as it glides effortlessly through the watercourses, the transition has been considerable and there are now endless opportunities to capture wonderful images on my door step.

The whole of Blaenau Gwent is just a short walk from mountain tops with acres of wilderness to explore. It isn't just the wildlife, there are great walking trails, cycling routes, fabulous places to stay and amazing heritage sites to visit.

In the Eighteenth Century, we became the focus of the industrial revolution, people flocked here to make their living in the ironworks and pits and this migration made Wales the world's first industrial nation. Hundreds of years later, whilst our ironworks and colliers have long gone, the roots they put down then are now sending us visitors researching their family history. Gwent Archives receives visitors from all over the world researching their ancestors with Australia, New Zealand and North America topping the list.

Our last Destination Management Plan delivered a rise in visitors, more bed spaces in our guest accommodation and a huge increase in cottages, flats and rooms to rent. We saw many new tourism businesses setting up locally, capitalising on the location and all it has to offer. We also have a wealth of businesses tourism opportunities with unique conference and meeting venues that are growing in their potential and profitability. We are challenging and changing their perceptions of the area and in doing so, attracting more visitors.

More films were shot here recently than ever before and we achieved this by linking up our services and knowledge to make it easier for film makers to shoot in Blaenau Gwent. The continued investment in local infrastructure with the developments to the Heads of the Valleys road, the Ebbw Valley rail link and cycle routes make it easier to get here and to enjoy what we have to offer. The future plans for The Metro will bring exciting new opportunities and we look to maximise these connections with our tourism product.

In closing I would like to thank the Destination Management Partnership for steering us through the last 3 years. With their guidance and the input from stakeholders we have put together a new Plan that plots the course for the next 5 years. We know from feedback that when visitors spend time in Blaenau

Gwent that they have a wonderful time, we have delivered so much through our previous Destination Management Plan and it is now time to ensure that even more visitors enjoy what we have to offer.

It is crucial that we all work together to deliver the plan to make Blaenau Gwent a better place to live and visit.

Councillor Lee Parsons

Chair of the Blaenau Gwent Destination Management Partnership

INTRODUCTION TO BLAENAU GWENT DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

The Destination Management Partnership

The success of Destination Management will be dependent on key stakeholder engagement and strong collaborative working in meeting the priorities set out within the Plan.

Destination Management Partnership is responsible for co-producing the Destination Management Plan with other stakeholders. The Plan will be monitored and reviewed quarterly by the Blaenau Gwent Destination Management Partnership consisting of tourism stakeholders, Blaenau Gwent members and the relevant officers, all of whom have a good working knowledge of the sector and bring their skills, expertise and enthusiasm to the partnership. The Destination Management Partnership membership is reviewed annually and welcomes new members to bring fresh ideas and dynamics to the group.

An effective Partnership is key to the success of the Destination Management Plan and as such its ongoing monitoring, challenging and delivery will be a key to success. The partnership has reviewed our last plan and based on progress made and changes to the visitor economy and has developed new directions for a sustainable and successful way forward.

The Destination Management Partnership consists of representatives from the public, private and third sectors and currently includes the following:

Cllr Phil Edwards, Cllr Mandy Moore, Cllr Lee Parsons, Aneurin Leisure, Coalfields Regeneration Trust, Ebbw Vale Works Museum, Gwent Archives, Brynmawr History Society, Private Sector Partners and Council Officers.

The Destination Management Plan

Destination Management is co-ordinating and delivering all the many facets that enhance the visitor experience. It looks at things from the visitor's viewpoint and ensures that residents, businesses, and our environment are well positioned to deliver the best possible experience in our destination. Ensuring a destination works effectively from a visitor perspective is the essential ingredient of successful Destination Management.

The Destination Management Plan is the strategic document that sets out our vision for a visitor-focussed way forward for tourism development in the area. Its main output is a Destination Action Plan which sets out practical steps that if taken forward jointly by all stakeholders, can make a positive difference; improving the quality of the visitor experience and growing the visitor economy in Blaenau Gwent. Some steps will be small and immediate, whilst others may be far reaching and ambitious.

The Plan has been co-produced with a number of stakeholders including:

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Departments

Blaenau Gwent Destination Partnership

Aneurin Leisure

Blaenau Gwent Business Forums

Social Business Wales

Visit Wales

Private Sector Businesses across Blaenau Gwent

THE BLAENAU GWENT DESTINATION PLAN VISION

‘The Vision’

“Visitors will be attracted to a destination where vibrant businesses work together to provide a warm welcome to everyone exploring the rich heritage, dramatic landscape, captivating towns and wide range of events and activities that Blaenau Gwent has to offer”.

THE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN THEMES

- BUSINESS TOURISM
- CULTURE & HERITAGE INCLUDING NHS AND GENEALOGY
- EVENTS
- GREEN/ECO TOURISM INCLUDING OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AND TRAILS
- TOWN CENTRES

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

National Context

Visit Wales / Welsh Government are currently reviewing their policy and have developed a 'Plan on a Page' that summarises their new framework. There is no set growth target as in previous policies.

OUR AMBITION			
To grow tourism for the good of Wales.			
OUR GOALS			
Economic Growth			
Environmental Wellbeing	Cultural Wellbeing	Health Wellbeing	
OUR APPROACH			
High-quality experiences – that are good for visitors and host communities.			
Inherently Welsh – with a global outlook			
Welsh and local – BRO		Global - BYD	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Experiences with a Welsh sense of place— Friendly, welcoming communities— A showcase for Welsh food and drink— Thriving music and cultural experiences— Driving local economies/supply-chains— Accessible and inclusive – value for money— Open year-round, across all parts of Wales— Growing home-grown businesses— Celebrating the Welsh language		<ul style="list-style-type: none">— A respected destination brand— Attracting new international business— Driving value over volume— World-class experiences & events— Meeting international quality standards— Relevant, innovative and contemporary— Harnessing data and insight for decisions— Multi-lingual and culturally aware— Minimising its environmental impact	
OUR OFFER			
Outstanding Natural Landscapes	Creative Culture	Epic Adventure	
Croeso: unique accommodation and local food and drink			
The Wales Way			
OUR TARGET VISITORS			
Values over Volume			
New staycation markets UK cities, Ireland, Wales		International visitors that are new to Wales Near European, USA: targeted elsewhere	
Lifetime relations			
Leisure	Operators	Business Travel	Niche

OUR KEY PRIORITIES				
<i>Great products and places</i>	<i>Quality visitor experiences</i>	<i>An innovative Cymru Wales brand</i>	<i>An engaged and vibrant sector</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Visit Wales-led projects- Industry-led capital investment- Integrated place-making- International and home grown events inc. Business Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Brilliant basics- Great hospitality through grading- Food and Drink- Skilled people- Product-led Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A stronger nation brand- Adaptive flag-carrier marketing with off-peak focus- One campaign, two themed years- Digital-first industry- Marketing Centre of Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Effective industry engagement one industry voice- Improved data and insights based on industry need- Strengthened strategy and policy function inc. Transport focus- An agile and responsive Visit Wales	
COMMERCIAL PRIORITIES				
Improved routes to market		A focus on special interest products		Commercial partnerships
BRAND OBJECTIVES				
Elevate our Status	Surprise and inspire	Change perceptions	Do good things	Be unmistakably Wales
IMPLEMENTATION				
Restructured internal team		Refreshed governance structures		Streamlined business support
Review of delivery at local level			New approach to partnership delivery	
MEASURING SUCCESS				
Economic Growth				
Environmental Sustainability: TBC		Cultural Wellbeing: TBC		Health Benefits: TBC
Local engagement with tourism		Visitor satisfaction		Business confidence

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

The law is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It places statutory duties on public service bodies to work together towards seven national well-being goals (appendix). Tourism is key in Wales, contributing to the seven national well-being goals. Tourism can bring sustainable economic growth, showcase and celebrate Wales' social and

cultural assets, and protect and promote our unique natural and built environment.

1. A Prosperous Wales 2. A Resilient Wales 3. A Healthier Wales 4. A More Equal Wales 5. A Wales of Cohesive Communities 6. A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language 7. A Globally Responsible Wales

Regional Context

Since the last Destination Management Plan was written there have been changes in the delivery of tourism regionally. The in house Regional Engagement Team for S E Wales has been reduced to one manager responsible for engaging on a one to one basis with local authorities. The Regional Team also act as secretariat for the South Wales Tourism Forum.

South Wales Tourism Forum: The forum is made up of private sector and local authority representatives from each area along with other key stakeholders. The remit of the South Wales Tourism Forum includes the exchange of relevant views and ideas on tourism issues, and a mechanism for effective collaboration between Welsh Government and key stakeholders in the region.

South East Wales Destination Management Group: The group is made up of local authority senior managers and heads of service whose primary aim is to provide strategic and professional support and advice to the South East Wales Regional Partnership Board and Cardiff Capital Region Board, the South East Wales Tourism Forum and Visit Wales on Destination Management issues affecting the Region.

South East Wales Destination Implementation Group: The group is comprised of Tourism Officers who ensure that the tasks identified by South East Wales Destination Management Group are researched and delivered and are directly linked to local Destination Management Partnerships.

Valleys Regional Park is a partnership established by Welsh Government to inspire positive changes in the way we care for our Valleys landscape, connect people with a wide range of outdoor activities for health and wellbeing and to support communities to explore new ideas and enterprises. Parc Bryn Bach is one of 12 Discovery Gateways that act as nodes to encourage visitors to explore the local area and region.

Local Context

Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board: Established in April 2016, and is currently working towards preparing a Well-being Plan for the area. Tourism will offer an opportunity in Blaenau Gwent to help the area contribute towards the long-term future of the area.

The Blaenau Gwent Local Plan 2018-2022

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 priorities developed for the Corporate Plan incorporate the previous Council Well-being Objectives and also represent our Improvement Objectives, as required by the Local Government (Wales) Measure.

Our core vision - Proud Heritage, Strong Communities, Brighter Future.

Our core values – Proud & Ambitious, Trust & Integrity, Working Together, Raising Aspiration and Fair & Equitable.

Our Council priorities are an Efficient Council delivered through Strong & Environmentally Smart Communities, Economic Development & Regeneration, Social Services and Education.

Blaenau Gwent Transport Strategy

The Destination Management Plan will complement the Blaenau Gwent Transport Strategy which is currently being developed. There is potential to improve the integration of the cycle network and Active Travel routes with visitor attractions across Blaenau Gwent, improving access, increasing dwell time at venues and the attractiveness for day visits and activities for visitors and residents.

There is also scope to investigate whether the Integrated Responsive Transport pilot project can assist in providing transport to venues and attractions outside of scheduled timetables. Visits by walkers using trains and buses as stop off points are becoming increasingly popular, and with a range of attractions and with Blaenau Gwent located at a southern gateway to the Brecon Beacons, there is a clear role for transport to play in supporting the visitor economy and maximising the opportunities for local businesses.

Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Plan

The Plan has five priority areas

1. Business and Enterprise
2. Learning and Skills
3. Social Mobility, Inclusion and Employability;

4. Education and Schools

5. Procurement and Community Benefits

The priorities identified are inclusive of all business types and employers. Similarly support to individuals will encapsulate all, including enterprise and business start-up; however, a focus on specific groups will be critical to deliver change and support economic growth.

The plan though applicable to all areas of the economy, aims to position Blaenau Gwent in meeting the needs of key sectors within the region including; Advanced Material and Manufacturing, Compound Semi-Conductors, Construction, Creative, Digital and Enabling Technologies and Human Foundational Economy including, Education, Health, Social Care and Childcare, Hospitality, Retail and Tourism.

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BLAENAU GWENT DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN – SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Unique valley landscape - everything from woodlands to open moorlands amazing views	Reluctance of some businesses to market and invest in their product.
Proud history and heritage with Heritage sites and features, Museums and a chronicle of steel working, mining, Chartism and the Home of the NHS	Negative perceptions –landscape scarred by industrial past and media portrayals especially post Brexit vote.
Transport including rail link into Ebbw Vale town and Llanhilleth and A465 Head of the Valleys road improvements increasing accessibility and connectivity to Midlands, M4 and West Wales.	Limited distribution and range of restaurants/hospitality across the area. No chain and few quality restaurants.
Growing accommodation and restaurant sector with some new high quality additions.	Limited stock of group accommodation.
Ultimate destination for the outdoors - Walking, cycling and running. A wide variety of walking routes, mountain biking and off road cycling, and strong local Park runs. Events including Junior Tour of Wales and Triathlons.	No Tourism Association or Network.
Family history tourism fully exploiting the links to Gwent Archives.	Challenging economic climate for town centres.
The warmth of the welcome and sense of community	Limited range of accommodation (self-catering sector is mainly Airbnb).
	Litter and Fly tipping
	Limited take-up of Digital Technology – by businesses and access to town centre Wi-Fi

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Tourism is one of the nine key sectors for growth recognised by Welsh Government. External investment e.g. Tredegar Townscape Heritage Initiative, Town Centre Regeneration Initiative, Valleys Task Force and Tech Valleys funding	Perceptions of the destination.
Development of South Wales Metro including new station in Abertillery and increased services. A465 Heads of the Valleys Road improvement along with the introduction of an Integrated Responsive Transport pilot project to test a new approach to access bus services linked to train and other modes of travel	Lack of private sector confidence in the economy/lack of investment and increased uncertainty following Brexit and Covid 19.
New trends including Glamping Wellness retreats Music venues Festivals Wellbeing Climate change leading to staying local, local food etc.	Available public funding opportunities. Changes in Welsh Government's Tourism Investment Support Scheme from grant to loan. Future funding sources (no EU funds available) – replacement Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) availability is unclear
Increased opportunities following Brexit if the pound weakens (overseas visitors & staycations)	Digital and eco networks - Lack of Wi-Fi availability in town centres and Eco cars – availability of charging points
NHS – dedicated National Museum of Health. Circuit of Blaenau Gwent marathon linked to NHS	Labour and skills - Post Brexit labour threat and chef shortages along with perceptions that tourism is a low pay low skill employment opportunity
Cultural Tourism, Artworks, film & TV locations, artists and galleries.	Off peak public transport (evenings and weekends).

REVIEW OF BLAENAU GWENT DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN 2016-29

The previous Blaenau Gwent Destination Management Strategy ran from 2016-19. It had 10 priority areas of Business Development, Business Tourism, Challenging and Changing Perceptions, Transport and Trail Development, Culture & Heritage, Research and Analysis, Events, Partnership Working, and Town Centres

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- Worked with 39 accommodation developers. Key developments include the opening of The Tredegar Arms – 4 Star, The Castle Lodge apartments, Nantyglo Roundhouses Holiday lets. There are now 18 self-catering businesses offering 138 bed spaces; 1 campsite offering 60 camping pitches, 16 serviced accommodation businesses providing 138 rooms 426 beds
- New hospitality businesses have opened including The Henrison, The Railway, The Looking Glass and Seren cafe.
- Award winners – Seren Business Growth 2020 winner Welsh in Business, Highly Commended Food, Drink and Hospitality. Bedwellty House Welsh Café Awards 2019 winner of Best Café Food and runner up in Best Café Visitor Experience
- Secured location for mobile food businesses in layby at the Highest Point A465.
- Development of BG Business hub 105 businesses linked with 386 contacts.
- Businesses entering the BG Business Awards with Tourism and hospitality class launched in 2019/20

BUSINESS TOURISM

- Working with venues on developing their offer on MEET Cardiff Capital Region. Acting and Conference Bureau to link customers to venues.
- New brochure for The General Offices. New room naming to add sense of place to venue
- Secured funding for new Business Tourism project across SE Wales
- Tabor, Brynmawr opened and promoted as a business tourism venue.

CHALLENGING AND CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

- Major events – Hosting the Man Engine visit at Parc Bryn Bach received huge influx of visitors and wide UK and international media coverage. Steelhouse video features on Visit Wales new marketing.
- Worked on securing locations for TV and film these include Who Do You Think You Are? – BBC, The Widow ITV/Amazon, Requiem BBC and the feature films and His Dark Materials. Jewellery for BBC series Dracula made by Gemtime.

- Filmed Weatherman Walking which was broadcast autumn 2018
- UK Blogger/Vlogger visits mainly focusing on outdoor, activities, families, food and events. Sites featured included Tudor brewery, Soar Chapel Guest House, Bedwellty House, Guardian, Owl Sanctuary, Parc Bryn Bach and local walking trails.
- Three Blaenau Gwent locations feature in the 29 epic Welsh backdrops to Hollywood films – Wrath of the Titans, Arabesque and Transformers: the Last Knight <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/whats-on/film-news/welsh-hollywood-films-movie-tourists-12837385>
- There are 7 Green Flag Parks in Blaenau Gwent – Beaufort Hill Woodlands, Bedwellty Park, Garden Festival Parklands, Parc Bryn Bach, Parc Nant y Waun, Terence Garden at Brynmawr Welfare Park, Trevor Rowson Park.

TRANSPORT

- A465 improvements Brynmawr to Gilwern continuing including the new Jack Williams Gateway bridge
- Ebbw Valley line. As part of the new rail partnership, Welsh Government and Transport for Wales Rail Services are developing the delivery plan for improved services and a spur to Abertillery.

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

- Worked with Cwm a Mynydd RDP Local Action Group to develop trails that link to the train and Halls Tramroad with Bryn Oer Tramroad. Delivered consultant report, path upgrades, way marking, website and leaflet.
- New cycling link between Llanhilleth and Cwm open.
- Mapping of Ebbw Fach Trail complete. Ebbw Fawr Trail developed with complimentary logo and sculptures along the trail.
- Clydach Gorge Project with BBNP and MCC at an advanced stage.

CULTURE AND HERITAGE

- Continued to work with *The Valleys That Changed the World*, developing and promoting Industrial Heritage Product.
- Worked with Blaenau Gwent Heritage forum helped to establish new Facebook site and marketing.
- Delivered the Man Engine event. Highly successful on all fronts especially in telling our story. The theatre group told the story of life before the NHS. The narrator included Six Bells disaster, naming all the victims to tell of the true price of coal and the role of Tredegar Workingmen's Medical Aid Society and Aneurin Bevan in delivering the NHS. Ebbw Valley Brass, Beaufort Male Voice Choir, Ad Hoc Theatre Company and Head 4 Arts Gamelan

group all involved in delivering the musical soundtrack of commissioned music for Man Engine. Tredegar Orpheus Male Voice Choir were involved in the Blaenafon event.

- Aberystroth history and Archaeological Society project that has explored and uncovered the history of the Cwm Celyn valley.
- Consultation report to maximise the tourism potential of BG as the Home of the NHS and Aneurin Bevan.

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

- Expanded locations and installed people counters.
- Collation of footfall data
- Took part in the VW biannual visitor surveys in 2017 and 2019.
- New bed stock report compiled.
- STEAM report produced that analyses volume and value of tourism in Blaenau Gwent.

EVENTS

- Local Events - Production and distribution, on and off line of event posters - 16 posters with 519 events covering all of Blaenau Gwent for Spring, Easter, Summer, Autumn, Remembrance and Christmas. Promotion of Blaenau Gwent events on The Valleys website.
- Delivered the Man Engine event. Highly successful on all fronts especially in telling our story. The theatre group told the story of life before the NHS. The narrator included Six Bells disaster, naming all the victims to tell of the true price of coal and the role of Tredegar Workingmen's Medical Aid Society and Aneurin Bevan in delivering the NHS. Ebbw Valley Brass, Beaufort Male Voice Choir, Ad Hoc Theatre Company and Head 4 Arts Gamelan group all involved in delivering the musical soundtrack of commissioned music for Man Engine. Tredegar Orpheus Male Voice Choir were involved in the Blaenafon event.
- Steelhouse video features on Visit Wales new marketing.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- Continued membership of The Valleys. Successfully secured WG funding for 2017-19.
- Produced series of brochures including event-led seasonal brochures, great outdoors and Valleys Gateway sites. Website updates and full Welsh translation completed, PR campaign, regional competitions. Hosted series of blogger visits.

- Continued membership of Southern Wales – attendance at trade shows, Familiarisation visits, BG Travel Trade Brochure. Secured WG funding to encompass Consumer, Business and Travel Trade Tourism.
- Continued membership of TVTCTW – networking events across south Wales.
- Continued to organise and deliver Wales Valleys Walking Festival.
- Working with Coalfields Regeneration Trust to develop work around 10 The Circle, Bevan Trail and other significant product.
- Development of NHS/Nye Bevan project.

TOWN CENTRES

- Local Events - Production and distribution, on and off line of event posters - 16 posters with 519 events covering all of Blaenau Gwent for Spring, Easter, Summer, Autumn, Remembrance and Christmas.
- Delivery of Small Business Saturday. In 2018 our media campaign comprised of a series of animated posts developed by our in-house communications team. Twitter – 52 posts, 33125 tweet impressions, 1102 media views and 346 engagements. Facebook – 51 posts, 38191 reach, 1127 clicks, 3779 video views, 149 shares and comments.
- Promoted membership of discount cards that can increase business e.g. Defence Card, Blue Light Card.
- Working with new Ebbw Vale Business Group to establish regular events throughout the town centre
- There has been an agreement to re-establish a Task & Finish group to consider the report and make recommendations. They will review the draft strategy with specific consideration to:
 - a. Generating a new strategy, focus and direction
 - b. Common principles that should underpin the strategy, action plan and associated delivery across all towns.
 - c. Complementarity of offer across the Authority and associated town centres.
 - d. Key strategic projects for town centre delivery, Blaenau Gwent wide.
 - e. Partnership and delivery mechanisms to support implementation of priorities contained within the strategy.
- A Town Centre Business Development Officer has recently been appointed and will work with the Destination Management Partnership

VOLUNTEERS

- Blaenau Gwent employs 24 Litter pickers who on average remove over 600 tonnes of litter a year. They also have 53 individual volunteers registered as Litter Champions.

- In Blaenau Gwent Keep Wales Tidy annually supports 1445 volunteers who spent around 6877 hours a year working on environmental projects including removing 67.5 tonnes of waste and recycling or reusing 3631 bags of waste. The types of projects included 225 clean ups, 28 protected species, 115 biodiversity, 30 access, 14 allotment/food growing, 39 community Gardens and 217 measures to prevent fly tipping.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

THE BLAENAU GWENT DESTINATION VISION

“Visitors will be attracted to a destination where vibrant businesses work together to provide a warm welcome to everyone exploring the rich heritage, dramatic landscape, captivating towns and wide range of events and activities that Blaenau Gwent has to offer”.

THE THEMES

On reviewing the priority areas in the previous Destination Management Plan, it was decided to divide them into 6 Cross Cutting Themes that underpin the plan and 5 Main Themes for specific tourism areas.

MAIN THEMES

BUSINESS TOURISM

Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events. For several years there has been an embryonic business tourism sector in Blaenau Gwent the potential of which has not been realised. Recent development has brought together a number of facilities who have a better understanding of the market and a desire to capitalise on the income it can generate. Improvements to the transport network give the ideal platform to fully embrace the opportunities that exist.

CULTURE & HERITAGE INCLUDING THE NHS AND GENEALOGY

The heritage and culture of the area is probably the stand out reason for visitors coming to the area. We have a special and proud history, a landscape that tells of the earliest settlers in the area and a wealth of historical sites, museums and archives that draw in visitors on a daily basis. It is essential that we protect, maintain and capitalise on this valuable asset. Two areas that are particularly suitable for development are genealogy with the proximity of Gwent Archives, registry office and several local museums and Blaenau Gwent as the home of the National Health Service.

EVENTS

The value of events to the tourism sector is increasingly evident. Large annual events give a huge boost to the local economy while many smaller local events are growing as is the support needed to run them safely and successfully. To maximise the benefits, a clear way forward for marketing, training, development and financial sustainability is required.

GREEN/ECO TOURISM INCLUDING OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AND TRAILS

The mining and ironmaking industries left an indelible mark on the landscape however years of land reclamation and reforestation has restored the beauty and the biodiversity of the area. Tourists are much more aware of sustainability and the need to respect our environment and it is therefore incumbent on our industry to address environmental issues and promote a sustainable way forward.

The desire to be outdoors and active continues to grow with the markets for walking, cycling and adventure activities increasing. We must ensure we are at the forefront of developing and reacting to existing and emerging trends. The existing trails on offer continue to be well received however it is essential that we look at new opportunities to enhance the offer to niche markets and to increase accessibility, through developing new and longer trails.

The development of the Valleys Regional Park across what is geographically known as the South Wales Coalfield will improve, enhance and promote the unique landscape of the area.

TOWN CENTRES

Addressing the difficulties faced by our town centres, is a far broader task than can be delivered by this Destination Management Plan however we must strive to maintain a thriving and vibrant welcome for residents and visitors alike. This will not be done by relying on traditional town centre business mixes and approaches, we will have to accept change and embrace digital opportunities.

CROSS CUTTING THEMES

Business Development

To ensure a thriving and vibrant tourist economy, it is essential that we work with individual businesses to maximise their potential. Blaenau Gwent, along with other agencies, has a key role to play in business development to support those who want to grow and increase their profitability. In addition to the specific development needs of each business, there are many ways that we can work together to improve our individual performance and that of the destination. Sharing knowledge, gaining new skills and teaming up to form a cohesive way forward is important and enhances the destination offer.

Challenging and Changing Perceptions

The perception of our area is often dominated by historical industrial portrayals and the subsequent decline through the post-industrial passage of time, yet when visitors arrive they are captivated by our heritage, impressed by the beauty of and the welcome received in the valleys.

Changing these perceptions will not be immediate but we must continue to build on the positives and unite to inform new audiences of why they should visit the Valleys, capitalising on our proximity to the Brecon Beacons.

Partnership Working

Blaenau Gwent is one of the smallest Local Authorities in Wales and the UK. Whilst this has some disadvantages, it also has many advantages. It is broadly recognised that we achieve more by working together than working in isolation. A better knowledge of the sector, developing local supply chains and forming cohesive and clear partnerships can maximise our return from visitors.

Research and Analysis

In order to improve our performance, it is essential that we continually measure and monitor our achievements. To do this, ongoing data collection is essential for accurate quantitative information. It is also important to find out what our customers feel, as this is the best way to improve our service and in turn results. A new Tourism Strategy is essential for the strategic development of the destination.

Skills

In order for our visitors to have the best experience possible, it is essential that our workforce maximises the opportunities available to them through formal and informal training options. This can be achieved by raising awareness and encouraging take up of training and development opportunities and ensuring accessibility for potential learners

Transport

There is a need to continue with improvements to our connectivity, with works to increase rail services on the Ebbw Valley rail link and completion of the A465 improvements. Regional and local bus services are also an essential part of the network especially in the north and west of the area. With moves towards increased sustainability the importance of linking these to walking and cycling trails is important.

COVID-19

Since this document has been compiled the Covid 19 pandemic has decimated the economy and in particular the tourism sector worldwide. Government at all levels have concentrated efforts on the health and wellbeing of our communities. The ebb and flow of the virus spread has led to the introduction of measures and restrictions that can change daily and our businesses have had to react instantly to keep their visitors and staff safe.

Throughout the pandemic, Blaenau Gwent officers have worked closely with Welsh Government to keep our businesses informed, operational, supported and safe. The financial support from Welsh Government, given to local businesses and organisations, has helped most of them survive. We have fed back to Welsh Government the thoughts and feelings of the sector, they have listened and in reacted.

A survey of tourism stakeholder showed that 85% fully closed following national lockdown on 23 March 2020 and 88% lost 100% of their income. All had kept in touch with their customers and 88% were going to reopen as soon as they were allowed to or it was safe to reopen. Most had received government funding and there was an increase in the sign up of industry newsletters to keep on top of announcements – 76%.

This close co-operation within the sector will continue and ongoing engagement will safeguard the future of tourism locally.

ACTION PLAN

Theme	Description	Activity	Delivery (Who)
Business Development	Business engagement and support	1.1 Undertake proactive business engagement with the tourism sector, including inward investment, to encourage growth and development of businesses through raising awareness of the opportunities available.	BGCBC (DM), Aneurin Leisure, Visit Wales, Business Wales, Federation of Small Businesses, Social Business Wales, Big Ideas Wales, Superfast Business Wales
Challenging & Changing Perceptions	Awareness	2.1 Realise a comprehensive awareness of the destination, on and off line, through media, marketing, vivid imagery, websites and hosting familiarisation visits, vloggers and bloggers.	BGCBC (DM & Comms) Stakeholders
	Regeneration	2.2 Develop and deliver regeneration initiatives to strengthen the business, physical and social environment of the destination e.g. Tredegar THI, VVP, RDP, TRI.	BGCBC (Regeneration), Stakeholders
Partnership Working	Group membership	3.1 Secure membership and affiliation to regional and national groups/ bodies, as appropriate to ensure the Authority and local business are represented appropriately.	BGCBC (DM),
	Cross promotion	3.2 Encourage collaborative working and cross promotion opportunities amongst business clusters e.g. town centres, business tourism, tourist attractions.	BGCBC (DM & Comms), Stakeholders
Research & Analysis	Performance data	4.1 Ensure appropriate measures and arrangements are in place to capture, record and monitor footfall data for STEAM, Visit Wales Occupancy reports and	BGCBC (DM), Stakeholders
Skills	Training	5.1 Audit and encourage businesses to take up accredited and non-accredited training opportunities to developed a better skilled and payed economy.	
	Guides	5.2 Ensure Ambassadors and Blue/Green Badge guides are up to date and involved in the area, recruiting additional volunteers as necessary. Consideration to be given to specialist module for 'Home of the NHS	BGCBC, WOTGA,
Transport	Connectivity	6.1 Improve connectivity across the local authority through the completion of the A465 HoV dualling through Blaenau Gwent and	

		the Delivery of the Metro infrastructure including new station in Abertillery and increased services to Cardiff (and Newport).	
	Public Transport	6.2 Improving public transport connectivity to and across the Local Authority, improving ease and range of access to destination attractions.	Welsh Government, BGCBC (Transport), TfW, Local services.
Business Tourism	Collaborative approach	7.1 Encourage all stakeholders to work collaboratively to establish and strengthen the Business Tourism offer within the Local Authority and to promote offer locally, regionally and nationally.	BGCBC (DM) Stakeholders
	Performance	7.2 Undertake reciprocal visits with key MICE locations and develop surveys to monitor and improve performance.	BGCBC (DM) Stakeholders
Culture & Heritage Including NHS Genealogy	Heritage	8.1 Celebrate and promote our local history and heritage through accessible trails, museums, archives, genealogy and research opportunities	BGCBC (DM), Heritage and walking groups
	Home of the NHS	8.2 Implement the proposals of the Nye Bevan /NHS report that celebrates Blaenau Gwent as the Home of the NHS.	BGCBC (DM), WG, Aneurin Leisure and other stakeholders.
Events	Development	9.1 Develop and enhance the event provision across the borough, including annual events and festivals and promote to a local and national audience.	Stakeholders
	Event Stewards	9.3 Develop a volunteer steward resource to support event delivery in Blaenau Gwent.	GAVO, Event organisers, Aneurin Leisure, BGCBC (Env Health)
Green/Eco Tourism Including Outdoor Activities Trails	Clean environment	10.1 Maintain clean and litter free environment across the destination.	BGCBC(DLO), Volunteers
	Valleys Regional Park	10.2 Work with the VRP partnership and Discovery Gateways to deliver their goals and ambitions across the valleys	Valleys Regional Park Partnership BGCBC Aneurin Leisure

	Trails	10.3 Develop and market walking, running, cycling and longer cross border trails	BGCBC (DM) Other LAs, volunteers, Community groups
	Adventure activities	10.4 Develop easily accessible adventure activities for individuals and groups.	Aneurin Leisure BGCBC (DM)
Town Centres	Appearance	11.1 Maintain a clean, litter free and visually appealing environment in Town Centres with key facilities, infrastructure and events to attract visitors.	BGCBC (Environment)
	Wi Fi	11.2 Introduce Town Centre Wi Fi into our towns	BGCBC (Regeneration) Business Forums, Town Partnerships, Town Councils, Community organisations

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Agenda Item 10

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 26.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 29.03.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th April 2021**

Report Subject: **Civic Crowdfunding**

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

Report Submitted by: **Bethan McPherson, Team Manager Connected Communities**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
23.02.21	25.02.21	23.03.21			24.03.21	14.04.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval in order to:
- 1.2 Submit a CCRCD Challenge Fund application for a regional civic crowdfunding programme, operating as the lead authority.
- 1.3 Subject to funding award, implement a regional crowdfunding programme, inclusive of Blaenau Gwent, to support solutions to locally identified projects and challenges.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Civic crowdfunding funding provides a unique platform that enables local people, groups and businesses with ideas for improving their local area, to bring projects to life.
- 2.2 It has the capability to deliver a programme of projects led by the public that delivers rich social and economic impact and add to the fabric of the area; building social cohesion.
- 2.3 A civic crowdfunding approach places citizens at the heart of improving places, which results in a difference to the types of projects being delivered and also the process by which they are delivered.
- 2.4 Other benefits to the approach include:
 - Maximising the impact of public sector investment to those projects with demonstrated community support, leveraging X3 value on average.
 - Extends beyond the traditional project applicants, bringing new solutions and creators to civic project development.

- Skills development for the project creators, leading to increased capacity for local people to deliver civic projects.
- 2.5 The civic crowdfunding is built from a “coalition of willing funders” to back projects, including, local businesses, national partners, local community and voluntary organisations, philanthropic grant-makers and local citizens.
- 2.6 Utilisation of a dedicated platform is proposed to facilitate this crowdfunding activity. The product suite automates many of the processes required to deliver change and offers an end-to-end digital solution that will automatically match projects to grants, distribute funds, collect impact data and report, in real-time, on all the projects in your portfolio. Certain platforms offer additionally in terms of project due diligence checks.
- 2.7 Alongside the dedicated technology, civic crowdfunding platforms deliver a comprehensive support package consisting of targeted marketing, community engagement, project, support and capacity building events to communicate the initiative to potential project creators. As part of the agreement, the LA would seek:
- Strategy, setup and account management
 - Management of funding rounds (x2 per annum)
 - Development of a funders ecosystem
- 2.8 A recommended investment fund is identified in order to generate the optimum fund level for maximum engagement and programme outcomes. A level of flexibility exists but the fund level is based on, multiple factors, not least:
- The need to demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting communities and their individual projects.
 - Provide a strong offer to perspective projects, including those not traditionally engaged.
 - Committing a level of investment to help individual projects realise their fundraising targets.
- 2.9 The civic crowdfunding platform model has been successfully adopted by a number of authorities across the UK, including Swansea who have launched their platform within the last 18 months. A case study outlining their achievements to date is included as Appendix 1.
- Regional Civic Crowdfunding model**
- 2.10 Reflective of the economies of scale required to deliver an effective programme and associated investment levels, a regional approach across the CCRCD is proposed, aligned to their recently launched Challenge Fund, enabling community led activity and solutions.
- 2.11 The CCRCD team has encouraged a submission from BGCBC as the proposed lead authority by the 12th March 2021, with a subsequent decision anticipated after board determination on the 20th April 2021.

- 2.12 BGCBC would be the lead authority, managing the relationship and entering into contract with an appropriate provider to deliver the crowd funding platform for an initial period 2021/22 through to 2023/24.
- 2.13 This opportunity will extend beyond the HoV proposal previously considered. Reflective of this and the approach supported by CCRCD, a briefing note will be circulated to all 10 LA Chief Executives, seeking endorsement, a desire to be part of the proposal, consideration to potential contribution to the investment fund and nominated lead officers.
- 2.14 An appropriate governance structure would be implemented in line with the funding requirements, ensuring appropriate representation from each participating LA in the decision making associated with the investment fund.
- 2.15 The fund criteria will align with those of the CCRCD Challenge Fund, including: improving the health and wellbeing of the region's citizens, and supporting, enhancing and transforming communities.
- 2.16 There may be opportunity to develop more specific priorities where there is additional investment to the overall fund from individual Local Authorities that would underpin local investment decisions.

3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 This report will be considered by the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 24th March 2021, and any feedback will be provided verbally to the Executive Committee.
- 3.2 Option 1 Do Nothing
- 3.3 Option 2 (Preferred Option)
To approve the submission of a CCRCD Challenge Fund application for a civic crowdfunding platform, acting as the lead authority.

Approve the implementation of a regional crowdfunding platform, inclusive of Blaenau Gwent, to support solutions to locally identified projects and challenges; subject to funding award.

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

Regional Priorities

Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan

- Blaenau Gwent wants safe and friendly communities
- Blaenau Gwent wants to look after and protect its natural environments
- Blaenau Gwent wants to forge new pathways to prosperity
- Blaenau Gwent wants to encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the places that they live, learn, work and play

Corporate Plan

- Strong & Environmentally Smart Communities
- Economic Development & Regeneration
- Efficient council

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

The financial proposal is outlined within Appendix 2 of the report.

A full funding proposal will be submitted to CCRCD, seeking the full project costs associated with a regional crowdfunding project.

A project proposal to the value of £1,241,222.28 over 3 financial years (21/22, 22/23, 23/24) is proposed. The investment fund sought from CCR is £833,333.34. The funding application will also seek funding for the hosting platform (also exploring WG funding as potential match) and a dedicated staff resource to co-ordinate the regional programme delivery

The value of the investment fund total will be amended accordingly where LA match funding is identified. This is not a requirement for the application but will add value and demonstrate partnership working and commitment.

Optimum fund level £750k to £1m over 3 years' full delivery.

CCRCD will consider a submission seeking 100% funding; however, match funding (financial or in-kind) from participating partner Local Authorities is encouraged and will be further identified as part of the engagement work that will be undertaken as the first part of the regional project.

A note has been prepared and will be shared, via the CCRCD Team, with all Chief Executives of the respective LAs within the CCR in order to outline the challenge proposal, seek a commitment to engage and give consideration to financial contribution to the proposal.

Funding of up to £50k over 3 years (21/22, 22/23, 23/24) has been identified by Regeneration (associated with income generated specifically to support community based initiatives), as the BGCBC contribution to the project. No further funding is anticipated from BGCBC sources.

Wider investment from partner funding streams (e.g health, RSLs) available to support Blaenau Gwent based groups and activity will form part of the larger funding ecosystem developed as part of the crowdfunding platform model.

Evidence highlights that there is scope to lever an additional £3 for every £1 invested. This could potentially lever a minimum of £2.5million additional investment into the region.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The primary risks associated with the project are outlined below and actions to mitigate would be undertaken as part of the project development and in advance of a contractual commitment being made.

- Securing partner endorsement to the regional proposal. CCRCD funding would enable delivery across the regional, whilst reducing the investment required from partner authorities, making the proposal more attractive. Engagement from all authorities will be sought but is not a requirement to enable the proposal to be implemented.
- Appetite for the fund from community based groups and organisations will impact on the fund and its under or over subscriptions. Several measures will be in place to mitigate this risk including; appropriate fund levels, fund promotion, engagement of key support organisations, including CVCs. The COVID pandemic may further influence the uptake of the funding; delivering the proposal over 3 years will allow the programme to respond and adapt accordingly.
- Project governance, deliverability and sustainability considerations to minimise any long term liability is a further risk. The available crowdfunding platforms including a due diligence exercise (via a third party body) to ensure all appropriate permissions are in place and consideration to sustainability is made. Contracts are built into the platform that ensure legal responsibility for the delivery of the project, providing further mitigation in relation to this risk.

5.3 ***Legal***

A funding awarded and associated T&C would be in place.

An approach which is procurement compliant will be adopted in commissioning the crowdfunding platform, with consideration to specific requirements, inclusive of independent verification checks.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

An officer to co-ordinate the regional delivery of the civic crowdfunding and manage relations if proposed as part of the challenge fund application. The post would be a fixed term post for 3 years, hosted within Regeneration.

6. ***Supporting Evidence***

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Update reports, aligned to funding rounds, would be produced, outlining key performance data including:

Projects supported,
Funding levered,

Value added achieved,
Impact metrics and qualitative responses,
Project success rate.

Some example stats from a crowdfunding platform identify;

73% of projects have come from deprived wards
50% of project creators have not been involved in civic projects before.
13% av.ratio programme costs to value of projects funded
88% av. Success rate of projects backed by our partners.

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

Community activation
Capacity building
Community ownership
Community designed/led solutions
Sustainable delivery

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

The success of the project will in part be dependent on effective involvement;

LA commitment across the CCR

Partner agencies, not least third sector including CVCs, providing support to potential applicants and ensuring sufficient capacity and engagement in the project.

Community groups are aware engaged and empowered to take forward projects via the civic crowdfunding platform.

Potential partners are aware and engaged as a potential part of the funding ecosystem e.g. members of the Public Service Board, members, RSLs, local businesses etc.

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

Consideration to funding the model beyond the initial funding commitment will be required. The requirement may reduce as the funding ecosystem grows and establishes. With an intensive level of investment to local community led regeneration projects could reduce the long term requirement for the platform and/or BGCBC level of investment.

A mechanism through which resident/community led solutions are facilitated could enable wider long term benefits to be realised, including reduced dependency on public sector service delivery, additional resource and added value to existing services and sustainable delivery.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The project concept seeks to support local development activity through an alternative approach that levers maximum investment to a range of community based projects within defined parameters. This encourages;

Needs based delivery aligned to community needs and wants not perceived need, only those projects that fulfil this requirement are likely to achieve their total funding target.

Projects identified and driven from within local communities may increase long term sustainability of the project.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The proposal was originally explored as a HoV delivery model with the investment requirement centred on each participating LA. The proposal is now focused on the CCR region and there will be engagement with all LAs across the area.

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

The investment criteria and therefore the projects supported could fulfil the objectives of many service areas as a proactive and preventative approach.

6.8 ***EqlA***

The project will seek to be inclusive and is focused on supporting community based initiatives, which could include those aimed at specific groups.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Annual/Six monthly update/outcome report.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Case Study
- Appendix 2 – Financial Profile

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Appendix 1 – Civic Crowd Funding Case Study

Swansea Civic Crowdfunding - Space hive

The impact

- 604 backers
- 20 projects
- £127,388 pledged
- £30k pledged by Swansea CC

Most projects have exceeded their funding requirements and those projects supported include:

- Bike shelters and ebike mounts
- Copley Common Regeneration - Eco friendly
- Room to Grow – Community Food Corridor
- Beach Clean Stations
- Sheelair – women creating together using discarded material and inventiveness
- COVID 19 Emergency response fund
- Coedback park – a park for the people
- A brighter future for Swansea children – annual competition for primary children to design and make products to sell

Considering exploration of a Swansea Bay City Region Platform roll out.

<https://www.spacehive.com/movement/crowdfundswansea/projects>

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Appendix 2: Civic Crowdfunding CCRCF Challenge Fund: Financial Profile

PROJECT COSTS	21/22	22/23
Investment Fund	£ 183,333.34	£ 350,000.00
Hosting Platform (potential WG funding)	£ 65,000.00	£ 65,000.00
<i>Optional event for project creators</i>	£ 2,000.00	£ 2,000.00
Management Overheads:		
<i>BGCBC Lead Officer Staff Costs</i>	£ 35,774.56	£ 40,055.48
<i>Oncosts (34.20%)</i>	£ 12,234.90	£ 13,698.98
<i>Equipment</i>	£ 2,000.00	£ 500.00
	£ 300,342.80	£ 471,254.46

CCRCF Funding Requirement		
<i>Investment Fund</i>	£ 166,666.67	£ 333,333.33
<i>Platform</i>	£ 67,000.00	£ 67,000.00
<i>Management Overheads</i>	£ 48,009.46	£ 53,754.46

LA Match Funding Pledge(£):	21/22	22/23
<i>Blaenau Gwent</i>	£ 16,666.67	£ 16,666.67
<i>Bridgend</i>	TBC	TBC
<i>Caerphilly</i>	TBC	TBC
<i>Cardiff</i>	TBC	TBC
<i>Newport</i>	TBC	TBC
<i>Merthyr</i>	TBC	TBC
<i>Monmouthshire</i>	TBC	TBC
<i>Rhondda Cynon Taff</i>	TBC	TBC
<i>Torfaen</i>	TBC	TBC
<i>Vale of Glamorgan</i>	TBC	TBC
	£ 16,666.67	£ 16,666.67

LA Match Funding (inkind)	TBC	TBC
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23/24	TOTAL
£ 350,000.00	£ 883,333.34
£ 65,000.00	£ 195,000.00
£ 2,000.00	£ 6,000.00
£ 41,076.77	£ 116,906.81
£ 14,048.25	£ 39,982.13
£ 500.00	£ 3,000.00
£ 472,625.02	£ 1,244,222.28

£ 333,333.33	£ 833,333.34
£ 67,000.00	£ 201,000.00
£ 55,125.02	£ 156,888.94
	£ 1,191,222.28

23/24	TOTAL
£ 16,666.67	£ 50,000.00
TBC	TBC
TBC	TBC
TBC	TBC
TBC	TBC
TBC	TBC
TBC	TBC
TBC	TBC
TBC	TBC
£ 16,666.67	£ 50,000.00

TBC TBC

Agenda Item 11

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 26.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 29.03.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th April 2021**

Report Subject: **Advanced Engineering Centre & MTC Report**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr D Davies, Executive Member 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)
02.03.21	03.03.21	23.03.21			24.03.21	14.4.21		

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek endorsement of the Blaenau Gwent Future Skills report and the subsequent funding proposal submitted to Tech Valleys for the refurbishment of the Monwell Building into an Advanced Engineering Centre.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 In 2018 the Council acquired the former Monwell Factory and set about developing the site to realise an ambition to create a venue which would support the future skills needs of the manufacturing industry across Blaenau Gwent and the Heads of the Valley.

2.2 MTC – Future Skills Recommendations Report

In December 2020, MTC Training Services published their findings based on research across Blaenau Gwent industry for Future Skills Recommendations and delivery within the proposed training centre. (Appendix 1)

- 2.3 The report highlighted several factors not least the impact of Brexit and more recently the Covid pandemic that needed to be considered. The area is largely made up of SME companies who albeit expressed the need to maintain with traditional engineering techniques, there was a requirement for more support and knowledge on the implementation of robotics and automation, in addition, additive manufacturing and digital manufacturing awareness. All of which have been considered for delivery within the facility by the Coleg Gwent Team.
- 2.4 The employer survey identified that “SME businesses are not currently in a financial position that would encourage any significant investment in either staff training or new equipment. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many SMEs are experiencing a great deal of uncertainty – primarily due to the impact of the pandemic, but also due to the lack of clarity regarding trading conditions post-

- Brexit. Even prior to the impact of the pandemic, the reluctance (or inability) of many SMEs to invest in training was a concern
- 2.5 As a result, the report recommended that the Advanced Engineering Centre offers a range of technology awareness programmes that will allow SMEs to explore, at minimal cost, the benefits of deploying a range of technologies with the potential to improve the efficiency of their business, while also developing additional revenue streams via diversification into additional products and services. It is with these recommendations that the teams at Coleg Gwent and the Local Authority have considered carefully the equipment purchases for the facility that will be required to support industry.
- 2.6 One of the headline recommendations within the MTC report:
“is that all necessary efforts should be made to support, enhance and, where possible, expand the activities of the Aspire Shared Apprenticeship programme. The Programme is an award-winning programme which has been of benefit to companies in the Blaenau Gwent region since 2015. The recommendation is for this to continue, along with several recommendations to provide support for school engagement and career guidance:
- 2.7 **Key Supporting Documents**
In addition to the MTC report the Cardiff Capital Region Skills Partnership Plan 2019-2022, a 3-year vision for employment and skills across the region developed by the Regional Skills Partnership in consultation with business, education and training partners details Advanced Material & Manufacturing as a Key Sector – there is a reported skills gap of 21% in Wales which is the highest reported figure for Wales by sector. It suggests that a relatively large proportion of the workforce do not possess the skills to meet current needs.
- 2.8 The Advanced Engineering Centre will aim to reflect what Welsh Government has outlined in ‘A Manufacturing Future for Wales’ document. The ten themes to future proof the manufacturing community across the Heads of the Valley feature as cross cutting themes; one of the key points is the collaboration between Government, Industry and Academia which is the basis of the partnership for the delivery of this proposal.
- 2.9 **Tech Valleys**
Since 2018 a number of meetings have been held with the Tech Valleys board to fund the refurb. The delivery concept of the facility has changed and developed in that time and on the advice of the board to source an anchor tenant at the end of 2019 a partnership with Coleg Gwent was established.
- 2.10 On January 29th 2021 the TV Board endorsed the proposal and have written a letter of recommendation to go alongside the Business Case which has been submitted to Welsh Government.
- 2.11 The Tech Valleys programme has a vision:

"In 2027 the South Wales Valleys and Blaenau Gwent in particular, will be a globally recognised centre for the development of new technologies, to support cutting edge industry"

- 2.12 In support of this vision BGCBC and Coleg Gwent have proposed to develop an Advanced Engineering Centre which will create an environment that will attract hi-tech inward investors within the Advanced Manufacturing sector.

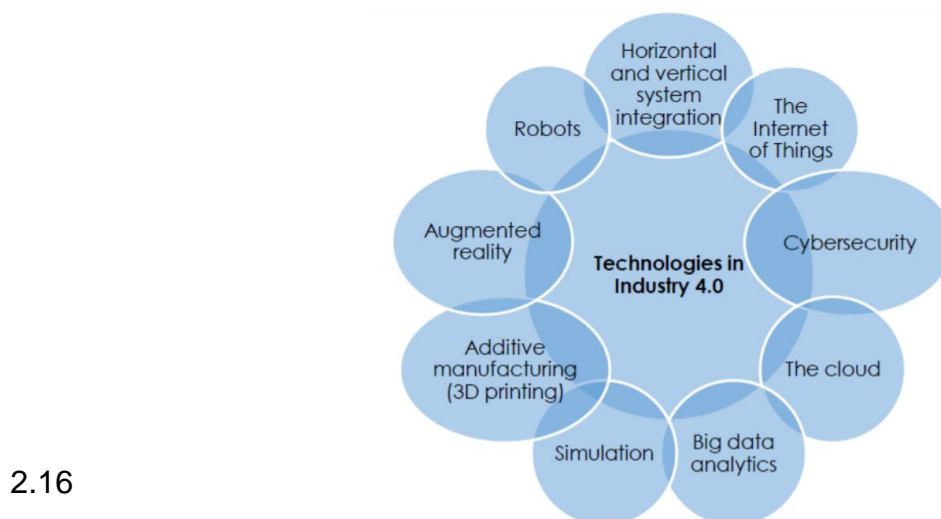
Advanced Engineering Centre

- 2.13 The facility will be sector-leading, a pioneering Centre of Excellence embodying the ideals of Industry 4.0, the Digital 2030 Framework and with education at its core. The goal is to provide an adaptable platform capable of delivering a new curriculum fit for the engineering industry of the future.

- 2.14 There is no venue or facility currently across the Heads of the Valley that seeks to capitalise on the collaboration between academia, industry and challenges the boundaries of manufacturing to create more efficient methods of working.

- 2.15 The curriculum offer will range from L1 to L6 in the areas identified as in-demand by the Welsh Government, local industry and the Manufacturing and Technology Catapult Centre (MTC) as written in the recent recommendation report for Blaenau Gwent (2020).

These areas include Autonomous Manufacturing, autonomous vehicles with battery technology and Collaborative Robotics incorporating the ever-increasing Cyber influence, such as machine learning, predictive analytics, artificial intelligence and security. Aspects of this will be embedded in and delivered in conjunction with the Cyber College initiative Coleg Gwent has already established with University of South Wales



There will be focus on the use of Augmented and Virtual Reality to design, analyse data in real-time and manufacture. Students and Industry will have access to the latest in Materials Technology such as metal additive manufacturing and composites. As the face and future of Engineering is rapidly changing to heavily rely on these new technologies and respond to industry 4.0,

2.17 it has never been more important that these new technologies are embraced and brought to the forefront of our community.

2.18 Across Blaenau Gwent and the Heads of the Valley primary and secondary schools will have access to the facility and will be able to have guest lectures, demonstrations and develop STEM knowledge through project work through accessing the equipment and experiences outside of a school's limited capability.

2.19 The Advanced Engineering Centre will be constantly adapting to produce highly trained students who have a real passion for engineering and upskill the current engineering workforce, ready for the next industrial revolution. The partnership with the Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme will ensure local industry and Tech Valleys are provided with skilled young people for the jobs of the future.

2.20 Ebbw Vale (along with the rest of the South Wales Valleys) has significant socio-economic challenges, and these are detailed in strategic documents such as Our Valleys Our Future Evidence Paper 2018.

2.21 The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 specifies two highly relevant challenges for places like Ebbw Vale, namely, equipping everyone with the right skills for a changing world and the need to build capacity for lifelong learning.

2.22 It is proposed that 600 full time, part time, HE, apprenticeships and commercial learners by 2026/27. The additional state of the art equipment and resources will allow for a far greater range of commercial training and additional income all identified as required in Ebbw Vale by the Manufacturing and Technology Catapult Centre Report (MTC) conducted on request by Tech Valleys and BGCBC.

2.23 The aim of the Advanced Engineering Centre is not to duplicate current provision but to ensure that there is holistic provision across the region to enhance skills development in the Advanced Manufacturing Sector and Digital Industries. It will complement the immersive digital arena centre at Thales (NDEC) as their new building will have an area dedicated to public engagement and there are already partnership developments in reviewing learning pathways for apprentices across this sector.

There have also been curriculum developments at the Coleg Gwent campus which will enable cyber security learning opportunities and also universities and stakeholders will in turn bring benefits to the regional economy

The Building

2.24 The team are keen to explore the implications of a low carbon approach to running the building and have made an allowance in the cost model for appointing a specialist consultant in that field to advise together with a provision in the construction budget for the findings from such a study.
Photographs of the site (appendix 2)

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 This report will be considered by the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 24th March 2021, and any feedback will be provided verbally to the Executive Committee.

3.2 Option 1 Do Nothing

- Do not endorse the MTC report and associated recommendations
- Do not note and endorse the TV submission for the refurbishment of Monwel into the AEC.

Option 2 Preferred option

- To endorse the MTC report and associated recommendations
- To note and endorse the TV submission for the refurbishment of Monwel into the AEC.

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

In the short term the implications for BGCBC is the cost of officer time and resource to develop proposal and to initiate developments until the funding is confirmed. This is the funding contribution to the overall programme.

In terms of asset contribution that equates to the cost of the purchase of the site itself £57k with a property value of £150k

The proposal under consideration will require capital investment from Tech Valleys.

The overall capital investment sought is £8million:

- Construction costs £5m
- Consultants / Surveys /Professional Design fees – £800k
- Equipment costs £2.2k

The annual revenue investment – Coleg Gwent

- £196k

Long Term

Coleg Gwent will be the tenant and therefore all operational cost will be covered within their budget which been agreed by their finance and resource committee in Jan 21. The estimated running costs will be £196k per year.

Should funding not be awarded for the refurbishment, the property would not be fit for use and therefore it would be reasonable to advise to sell and utilise the land for other uses.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The risks associated are:

- Not acknowledging the future skills needs of the local authority and therefore not putting in place measures to support training and future employability opportunities.
- If the proposal is not endorsed, then the building will not be refurbished or even fit for any learning purposes. There would have to be alternate plan for the use maybe disposal.

5.3 ***Legal***

There will be lease arrangement with BGCBC & Coleg Gwent on a peppercorn rent basis for a term yet to be determined.

BGCBC along with the College has taken VAT advice on the proposed arrangement throughout the proposal development to ensure that the zero VAT position currently assumed is feasible. Advice has supported the position subject to a number of key controls including:

- The total scheme must be commissioned and procured by BGCBC
- There must be no capital contribution from the College.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

Not required for this update

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

There is a target programme of events for this development which will require early funding decisions. There is an expectation that the facility will be open for learning in September 2022.

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

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 proposal has been developed in consultation/discussions with:

- Schools across Blaenau Gwent
- University of South Wales
- Cardiff School of Engineering, Cardiff University, UK
- Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC), Coventry
- Renishaw
- Thales (NDEC)
- Industry Wales
- Welsh Valleys Engineering Project (WVEP)
- Technology Connected
- Local Industry
- Employability & Skills partners
- Coleg Y Cymoedd

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. with learning providers.
- The Aspire 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 proposal is 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,
- 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 ***EqlA***

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 and Executive Committees and the PSB.

7.2 This will also be monitored through the Post 16 Partnership in line with the governance structure of the Employment and Skills plan.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – BG Aspire Academy – Future Skills
- Appendix 2 – Photographs of the Site

BLAENAU GWENT ASPIRE ACADEMY – FUTURE SKILLS RECOMMENDATIONS (V 2.0)

AUTHOR:
William Fowler

DEPARTMENT:
MTC Training Services

DATE OF ISSUE:
15th December 2020

Table of Contents

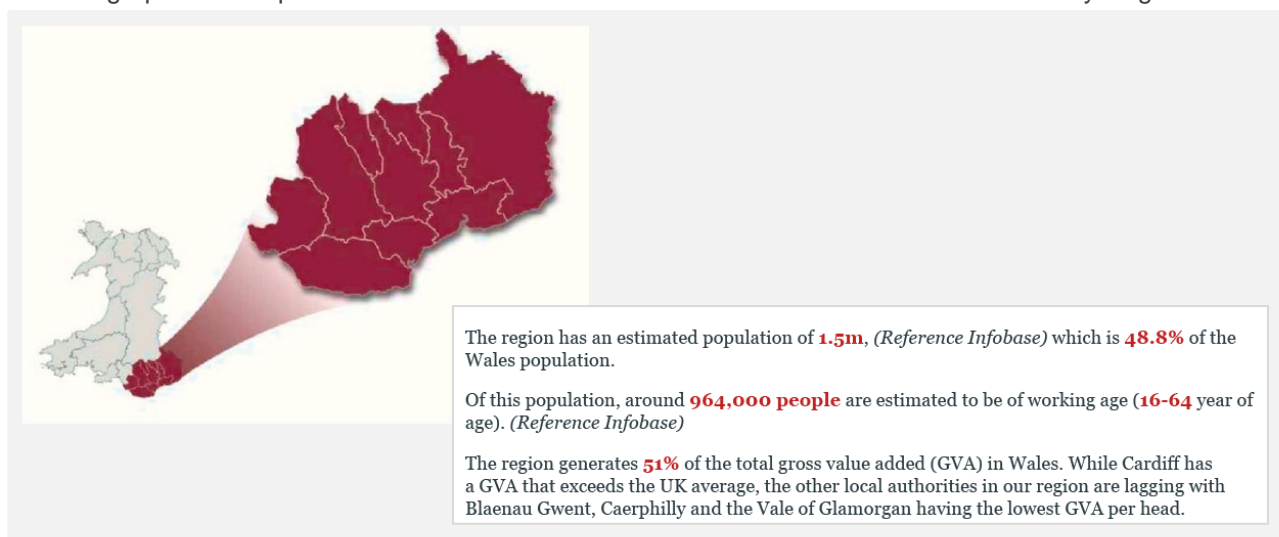
Foreword	2
The post-Covid economy	5
Blaenau Gwent (Aspire) Future Skills Academy	6
Alignment with Tech Valleys Strategic Plan (April 2018)	7
Executive summary	10
Scope of project	14
Blaenau Gwent – economic and social context	15
Business landscape	15
Socio-economic landscape	16
Education, training and skills	18
Existing education, skills and training provision	19
Research methods utilised	21
Desktop study	21
Employer survey	22
Research findings	25
Current skills landscape - gaps	29
Recommendations for commercial training	30
Strategies used to identify commercial training recommendations	31
Recommended Products and Services	33
Recommendations for the creation of training material	37
Proposed delivery model	37
Recommendations for apprenticeship training	38
Strategies used to identify apprenticeship training recommendations	40
Recommended apprenticeship programmes and enhancements	43
Recommendations for the creation of training material	46
Proposed delivery model	46
Considerations for the Aspire training facility	47
Considerations for rollout	48
Appendix	54
01. Online Employer Survey Questions	54
02. VPC – Commercial	55
03. VPC - Apprenticeship	56

Foreword

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council lies within the Cardiff Capital Region of Wales and has a rich industrial and manufacturing heritage, being an early centre of industrial innovation, including coal, iron and steel production, during the Industrial Revolution (1760-1840) and beyond. Iron and steelmaking were of particular importance in the area, some notable dates being:

- 1789 Iron making began in Ebbw Vale
- 1790 First blast furnace established at Ebbw Vale
- 1857 Ebbw Vale Ironworks produced the world's first steel rails for trains
- 1914-18 Women made artillery shells at the Ebbw Vale steelworks for the war effort
- 1927 52 miners killed in an explosion at Marine Colliery
- 1930s Ebbw Vale Steelworks was the largest steel mill in Europe
- 1978 Closure of Ebbw Vale steel plant
- 2002 Closure of Ebbw Vale tinsplate and galvanising works

The infographic below provides some headline socio-economic indicators for the Cardiff City Region:



Source: ¹

- Gross Value Added (GVA) is a widely-quoted economic indicator that is used to compare the relative economic performance of regions of different sizes.
- In this case, GVA represents the monetary value of products and services produced within a local authority within a defined period of time.
- GVA is calculated as the total of all goods and services that are produced during the reference period (output), less goods and services used up or transformed in the production process, such as raw materials and other inputs.

¹

https://businesswales.gov.wales/skillsgateway/sites/skillsgateway/files/documents/2020_02_005%20Cardiff%20Capital%20Region%20Skills%20Partnership%20Employment%20and%20Skills%20Plan%202019%20-%202022..pdf

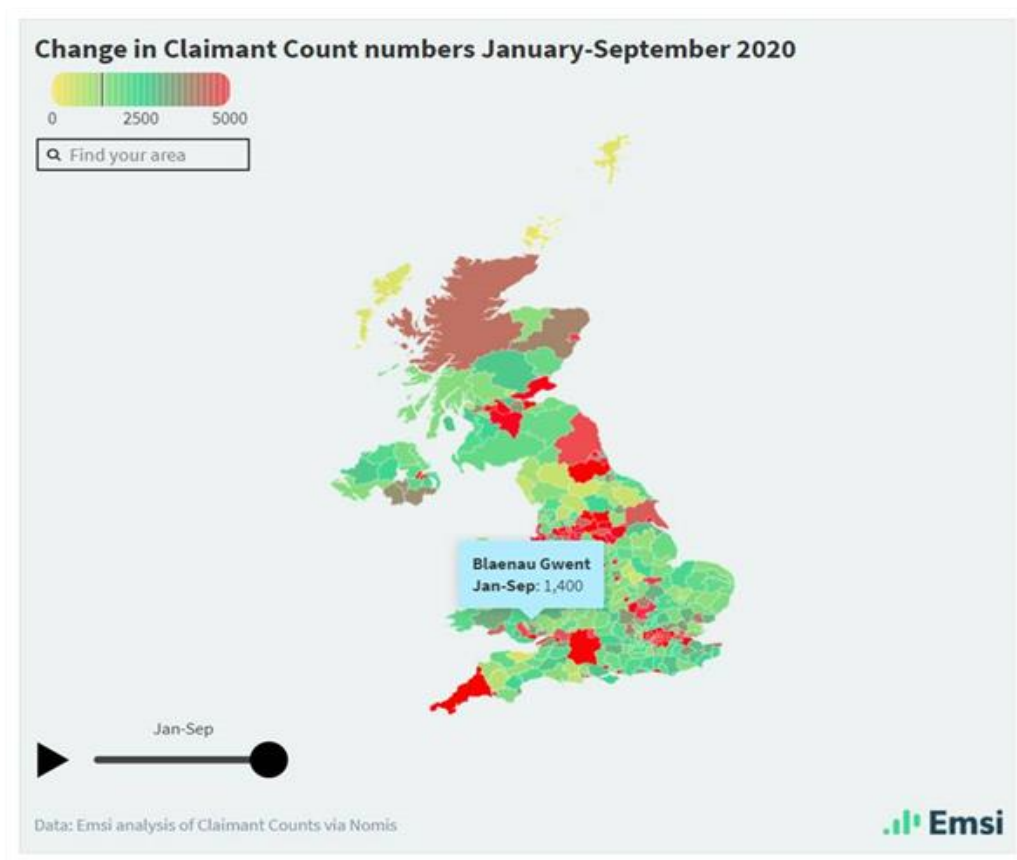
By the early 1920s the Ebbw Vale Steel, Iron & Coal Company employed 34,000 men – its expansion driven by a booming market for Welsh steam coal that was used all over the world in steam locomotives and ships. However, the demise of the use of coal and steam to power industrial machinery led to the decline of many heavy industries, and the subsequent closure of coal mines, steel works and associated activities. This left a legacy of high rates of unemployment, and other associated socio-economic challenges, to be faced by those communities affected by these issues.

Consequently, in common with many post-industrial regions in the United Kingdom, Blaenau Gwent has faced a range of social and economic challenges which have arisen from the shift from an economy and workforce based primarily on secure and relatively well-paid jobs in heavy industries, to a modern economy based upon a diverse range of smaller manufacturing companies.

While the emergence of manufacturing in newer sectors (e.g. automotive, aerospace and pharmaceuticals) in the Blaenau Gwent region is welcome and encouraging, it has yet to replace the volume of jobs and opportunities afforded to earlier generations by large-scale employment in heavy industry.

Unfortunately, the automotive and aerospace sectors are among those that have been most seriously affected by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, with job losses affecting not only manufacturing companies but also leading to jobs being shed throughout their associated supply chains.

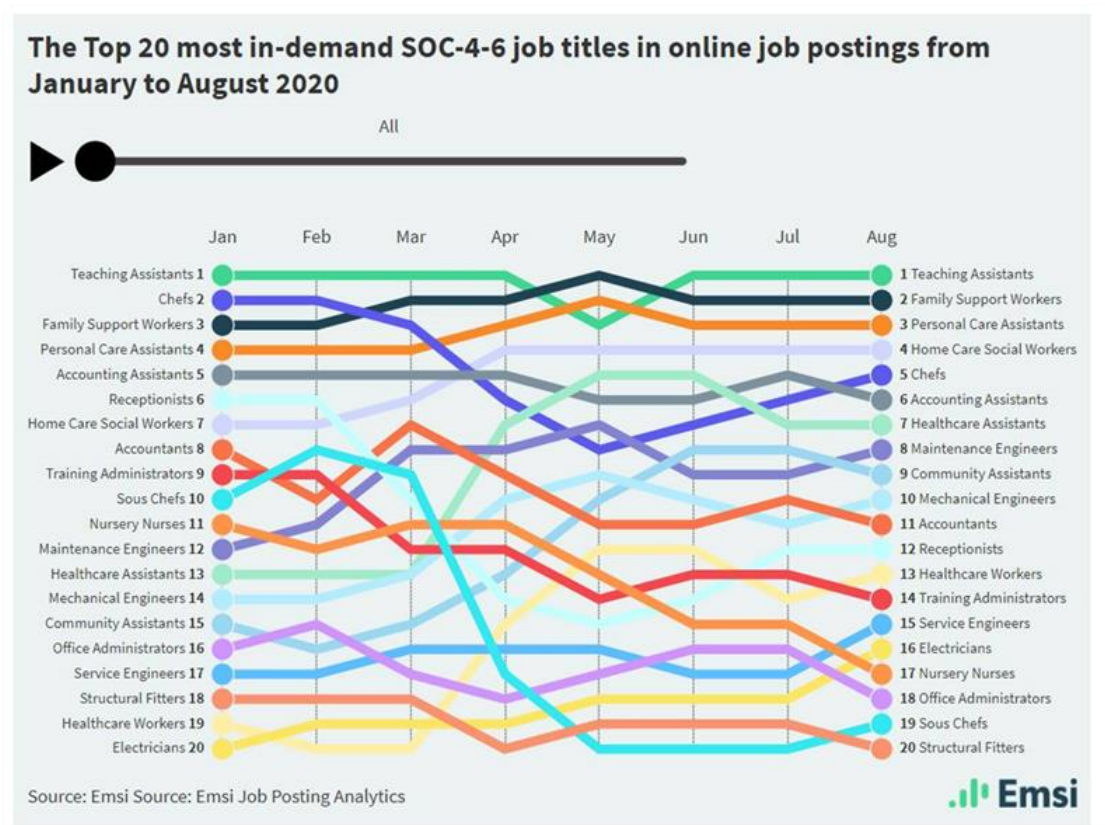
The following chart provides some insight as to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic since March 2020 – with 1400 jobs having been lost in Blaenau Gwent by September 2020:



Source: ²

² https://www.economicmodelling.co.uk/2020/10/16/an-analysis-of-september-claimant-counts/?utm_campaign=UK%20Blog%20Posts&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=98335885&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8A1cGs-

The chart below illustrates how the pandemic has initiated a shift in demand for those in-demand job roles which typically require a Level 3 to Level 5 education:



Source: ³

Unsurprisingly, the Covid-19 pandemic has driven a significant increase in demand for workers in the Health and Social Care sector (e.g. healthcare assistants, home care workers, personal care assistants, etc.).

However, it is interesting to note the increase in demand for workers in the following engineering/trades disciplines:

- Electricians (2,997 current vacancies across the UK)
- Service Engineers (3,090 current vacancies across the UK)
- Mechanical Engineers (4,169 current vacancies across the UK)
- Maintenance Engineers (4,773 current vacancies across the UK)

While this data reflects the current situation across the UK, **it is also consistent with the findings of an employer survey commissioned by Blaenau Gwent Borough Council which identified demand for Level 4 multi-skilled maintenance engineers (i.e. HNC level⁴), across all manufacturing sectors within the Blaenau Gwent region.** These findings are supported by those job vacancies currently being advertised within a 10-mile radius of Merthyr Tydfil which evidence strong demand for workers with both mechanical and electrical engineering skills at Level 4.

³ https://www.economicmodelling.co.uk/2020/10/13/which-medium-skilled-jobs-are-in-demand/?utm_campaign=UK%20Blog%20Posts&utm_medium=email&_hsmt=98335885&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-80wBFp5-veWpIO8d6W1rfyTTPoG9hkOsrTZQqnTDOvOgagTjNcgIDZx7mvRIHAKYqSeWd0GL_xoWlvPJMy3RUgalqUDQ&utm_content=98335885&utm_source=hs_email

⁴ HNC – Higher National Certificate: a Level 4 qualification equivalent to the first year of a university undergraduate programme.

The existence of a strong demand for multi-skilled maintenance engineers validates the important work of the Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme⁵ that seeks to enhance skills development within local manufacturing and engineering companies to develop business growth - while tackling unemployment and providing aspirational opportunities for young people across the local authority.

The post-Covid economy

Clearly, in the current environment, there are difficult challenges to be faced but, with targeted economic support and political will, experience tells us that there will also be opportunities for some businesses to diversify by creating new products and services, hence creating new employment opportunities for residents of Blaenau Gwent.

In time, this will begin to address some long-standing socio-economic challenges, helping to **establish Blaenau Gwent as an attractive place to live, thrive and conduct business.**

This report will provide a realistic appraisal of the current and post-Covid-19 business landscape in the Blaenau Gwent region by:

- Analysing primary data gathered from an online survey of local businesses, along with secondary data collated via a desktop study.
- Considering the results of this survey in the wider context of economic key indicators and other relevant metrics.
- Researching, identifying and considering a range of national and local government strategies and initiatives that are aligned to the strategic aims of the Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme and the planned Blaenau Gwent (Aspire) Future Skills Academy.
- Proposing a curriculum for the Aspire Future Skills Academy that supports and reinforces the existing Shared Apprenticeship Programme, while also articulating a future skills programme that will deliver, in collaboration with local education and training providers, those skills needed to transform the workforce and realise the ambitions of local and national government.

⁵ <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/business/jobs-skills/aspire-support-for-employees/>

Blaenau Gwent (Aspire) Future Skills Academy

Blaenau Gwent Future Skills Academy:

‘Helping the local workforce to reach their full potential’

The proposed Blaenau Gwent (Aspire) Future Skills Academy is an essential component of the Welsh Government ‘Tech Valleys’ programme⁶, a brief synopsis of which is shown below:

‘The lag of the economy of the Blaenau Gwent behind the rest of Wales, demands renewed intervention by the public sector along with private sector intervention. Without such assistance, educational under-achievement and limited employment prospects will continue to hinder the prospects of the current and future generations, limiting their ability to realise their potential. Against this background, the announcement by the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport of a programme of investment of £100million, aimed at creating 1,500 new jobs has generated a real focus on achieving change in Blaenau Gwent. As important as the job creation figures will be the transformation of the economy to one of innovation, research and development and skilled employment. The creation of a culture of learning will equip individuals, communities and enterprises investing in Tech Valleys to achieve sustainable, resilient growth.’

The quote above is taken from the Tech Valleys Strategic plan which was published in April 2018. It is reasonable to assert that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will make achieving those aims outlined in the plan even more challenging - yet achieving those aims has never been more important.

A further complication is posed by the uncertainty created by the UK’s decision to leave the European Union (Brexit), and the imminent expiry of the Brexit transition period on 31st December 2020. At the time of writing, a trade deal with the European Union has yet to be agreed: without a trade deal UK goods will, from 1st January 2021, be subject to tariffs and border checks under the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Even the most optimistic scenario - where a trade deal with the European Union is agreed prior to the expiry of the Brexit transition period – may well lead to economic uncertainty, and possible disruption to supply-chains, especially in the short-term.

To summarise, it is clear that those ambitions outlined in the Tech Valleys programme will only be realised by adopting a collaborative approach between all stakeholders. This report will identify opportunities to meet these challenges, justify their inclusion in the current political and economic landscape, and, crucially, propose realistic and innovative solutions that will address the core outcomes of the Blaenau Gwent Future Skills Academy, which are:

- Reduce unemployment
- Reduce the numbers of 18-24 year olds who are claiming benefits
- Increase median earnings (by place of residence)
- Reduce the number of economically inactive people
- Continue to reduce/maintain the number of young people who are NEET
- Increase skills level 0-4 (NVQ).

⁶ <http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/Data/Executive%20Committee/201807251000/Agenda/att8703.pdf>

Alignment with Tech Valleys Strategic Plan (April 2018)

The Tech Valleys Strategic Plan, published by Welsh Government in April 2018, maps the transition from the Ebbw Vale Enterprise Zone (established by Welsh Government in 2012), to a programme of activities that will address the economic and societal needs which are *'founded in the demise of traditional industries in many of the South Wales Valleys, and, in particular, those of Blaenau Gwent.'*

The objectives of the Tech Valleys Strategic Plan are to be realised via the curation and promotion of a portfolio of related and complementary projects, underpinned by a commitment from Welsh Government to invest £100million over a 10-year period. To achieve this, collaboration between all **stakeholders (i.e. business, academia and the public sector)** is essential, along with developing an environment that is conducive to **inward (public and private) investment**.

In addition to these economic proposals, the core tenets of the Tech Valleys programme will be **growth, fair work and decarbonisation** – to the mutual benefit of all residents.

It is recognised that a successful outcome to the Tech Valleys programme will require strong and effective strategic governance, along with access to the following key elements:

- **Property (commercial and residential)** – to accommodate businesses and their workforces
- **Education and Skills** – to enable businesses to implement new technologies, secure existing revenue streams, and diversify their products and services into new markets
- **Infrastructure** – improved transport links, and, crucially, digital connectivity throughout the region
- **Inward investment** – companies, especially the smaller SMEs will require access to funding to enable them to **invest in Industry 4.0 technologies** such as automation, data analytics and additive manufacturing

Prior to the publication of the Tech Valleys Strategic Plan, proposals to establish an automotive technology park in Ebbw Vale were already well advanced. In April 2018, the South Wales Valleys area was home to several significant and well-established automotive manufacturing facilities, including the Ford engine plant at Bridgend which employed over 1600 workers.

In addition, Aston Martin Lagonda had announced plans to build its DBX model at a new manufacturing facility at St. Athan, leading to the creation of 750 jobs by the second quarter of 2020. There were also plans for TVR to build their new Griffith supercar in Ebbw Vale, leading to the refurbishment and refitting of the currently-disused Techboard factory on the Rassau industrial estate – with 200 jobs being created when production is fully up and running.

Clearly, a strong automotive sector would provide a firm foundation for manufacturing within Blaenau Gwent, while supporting a diverse supply chain, creating high-quality employment opportunities for local residents, and attracting inward investment and talent to the region.

However, events occurring since the Tech Valleys Strategic Plan was published have dealt a severe blow to the automotive sector in the South Wales Valleys, most notably **the decision by Ford in June 2019 to close its engine plant at Bridgend by September 2020**.

A further blow has been the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the automotive industry worldwide. As a consequence, **Aston Martin Lagonda have announced plans to cut their workforce by 500 staff as part of a restructuring exercise**, following a collapse in the company's share price from over 400p per share at the beginning of 2019 to 70p at time of writing. The impact of this announcement on the St. Athan manufacturing facility is unclear, but the outlook remains uncertain, with pre-tax losses of more than £120million for the current financial year and net debt nearing £1billion.

At time of writing, **TVR have yet to commence production of the Griffith model at the Rassau site** – the Techboard building is still awaiting refurbishment and the TVR website has not been updated since March 2020; the last update on the TVR Twitter feed being 11th June 2019.

More disappointingly, proposals by Sir Jim Ratcliff, the CEO of Ineos Automotive, to build a new 4x4 vehicle – the **'Ineos Grenadier'** - in Bridgend, creating up to 500 jobs, have been scrapped, with the vehicle **now to be manufactured in France**.

The decision by Ineos to build its factory in Europe was followed by an announcement in the same week that **plans by the lithium-ion battery start-up company, BritishVolt, to establish an automotive battery 'Gigafactory' in the Vale of Glamorgan, have also been abandoned in favour of a new location in North-East England**.

Finally, it is reasonable to assert that the UK government's recent announcement that the sale of petrol and diesel cars and vans will be outlawed in the UK by 2030, in tandem with the yet-to-be realised impact of Brexit on the UK automotive sector, will lead to a period of considerable uncertainty within the sector, with investment decisions likely to be postponed until clarity returns.

Nonetheless, the opportunity for innovative projects to have a positive impact within the automotive sector remains, as evidenced in the prospectus for the *'Test Facility for Future Mobility'* - published by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council - which articulates the requirement to refocus the South Wales Valleys automotive sector away from a reliance on traditional manufacturing, towards those value-added services that will be required to support the future automotive sector

This prospectus identifies four trends that will change the way in which the automotive industry will develop future vehicles:

- Autonomous driving
- Diverse (shared) mobility
- Connectivity to high-bandwidth mobile networks (5G)
- Vehicle electrification (and hydrogen – fuel cell – power)

All of these trends will demand a workforce with the appropriate skills. This will support existing and future supply chain development, offering local SMEs a potential path for economic growth via the development of new products and services.

Clearly, in light of these developments, it would be prudent to explore opportunities afforded by activity in other manufacturing sectors - while continuing to track the progress of the TVR project at Ebbw Vale, and other similar projects that may bear fruit as the impact of the pandemic eases.

By analysing this rigorous and unambiguous body of evidence, this report is, nonetheless, able to offer a dual strategy for delivering the vision of the Tech Valleys programme:

1. Offering viable and realistic solutions to support existing members of the manufacturing community within Blaenau Gwent - via the signposting and provision of a range of products, services and training solutions, **which have been proven by the MTC's members and clients to facilitate the adoption of those Industry 4.0 technologies** illustrated in Figure 1.

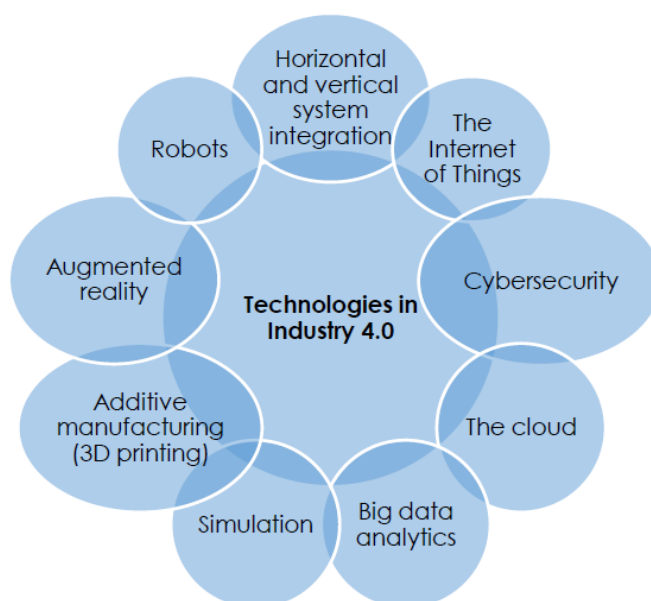


Figure 1 Technologies Related to Industry 4.0

2. The impact of the pandemic on the automotive sector has been unforgiving. While opportunities for innovation within this sector doubtless remain, it is difficult to envisage how, in isolation, such activities will be able to deliver socio-economic benefits at the scale demanded by the Tech Valleys strategy. Consequently, **this report offers an opportunity for the Tech Valleys advisory board, and other local stakeholders, to work alongside the MTC, and other High Value Manufacturing Catapult (HVMC) partners, to help develop an advanced manufacturing sector to meet the needs of the Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) industry** - which has been identified as an essential component of Welsh Government strategy to deliver affordable, high-quality social housing at scale to residents of Blaenau Gwent and further afield. The following benefits could be realised by such a programme:
 - SMEs who are currently active in the construction sector supply chain can diversify into the MMC sector, with the potential to attract investment and develop new revenue streams.
 - SMEs who are **not** currently active in the construction sector may also identify opportunities to diversify into the MMC supply chain.
 - The upskilling and reskilling required by the adoption of MMC methods will require a comprehensive programme of skills and training to be delivered via local colleges in partnership with other providers.
 - Local residents will benefit from better access to high-quality social housing, along with the opportunity to gain employment in a sector that delivers sustainable social and economic benefits to their communities.
 - Blaenau Gwent will be at the heart of a developing sector with the potential to deliver transformative change at local and national levels.

Many of those techniques and methods required by MMC are transferrable skills that will be of value to other sectors within advanced manufacturing (e.g. CAD, software simulation, etc.).

Executive summary

The original scope of this project was agreed in November 2019 between Martin Dury (Head of Future Skills at the Manufacturing Technology Centre) and Tara Lane and Bethan McPherson of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

The initial aim of the project was to identify the future skills which would be required by the local workforce to support advanced manufacturing in the Blaenau Gwent region, with the intention of developing a Future Skills Academy focusing on the advanced manufacturing sector. The Academy's aim is 'to enhance the existing local education and training offer to support local and national industrial strategies and skills agendas,' as per the core outcomes indicated previously.

However, during the early phase of the project it quickly became apparent that the impact of Covid-19 on several hitherto thriving sectors (particularly the aviation and automotive manufacturing sectors), would necessitate a rapid reappraisal of the project aims – to ensure that our recommendations for the future skills curriculum to be supported by the Aspire Future Skills Academy are still relevant in the post-Covid economy.

In the current environment, it is essential that all recommendations are underpinned by empirical evidence that will test their relevance and impact – especially their potential to meet the skills and training requirements that are necessary to support key government policy initiatives at local and national level.

To achieve this, a comprehensive **desk top study** of local, regional, and national policy and strategy documents was undertaken, along with analysis of key economic indicators from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and other audited sources.

In addition, an **on-line survey** was carried out to ascertain the attitudes of local businesses in the Blaenau Gwent region, and to begin to identify those skills which are currently in demand by the Blaenau Gwent business community. As the survey was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, it captures current attitudes, uncertainties and challenges, thus providing, at a micro-level, some insight as to how the pandemic may potentially reshape the local and wider economy.

While the employer survey identifies an ongoing requirement for 'traditional' engineering skills across a variety of sectors (particularly multi-skilled maintenance engineers with higher-level qualifications), it also gives some indication of opportunities for companies within Blaenau Gwent to **diversify their current business activities** by becoming involved in strategic projects within the construction sector – especially within **the rapidly-developing Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) sector**.

This is an exciting prospect, as it affords an opportunity to not only 'enhance the existing local education and training offer to support local and national industrial strategies and skills agendas' - in accordance with the aim of the Future Skills academy – but to equip local communities within Blaenau Gwent region with the skills and knowledge to enable them to tackle pressing social issues, such as building new social housing and retaining young talent within the region.

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Photos of Site & Proposed Vision



Photos of Site & Proposed Vision



Agenda Item 12

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 26.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 29.03.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th April 2021**

Report Subject: **Revised Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy 2020 - 2025**

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

Report Submitted by: **Damien McCann, Corporate Director of Social 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)
4.2.21	x	23.03.21			11.3.21	14.04.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the refreshed Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy 2020-2025.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 In response to the rising numbers of children coming into care in 2017 Children's Social Services recognised the need to develop a 3 year "Safe Reduction in Children Looked After Strategy". This 3-year strategy has now come to an end, however, the good work to continue reducing the numbers of children coming into care needs to continue, hence the need to review and refresh the strategy.

- 2.1.2 The refreshed strategy has the same three clear objectives which are: -

1. To support families to stay together;
2. To manage risk confidently and provide support at the edge of care;
3. To provide affordable high quality placements.

- 2.1.3 As with the last strategy each of the objectives has a number of actions aligned to them and these actions are embedded in our business planning process which is reported on a quarterly basis.

- 2.1.4 The 2017-2020 strategy was independently evaluated by Worcester University. The report highlights a number of key findings. These findings acknowledge the considerable work already undertaken in relation to this strategy. It concludes that the strategy and its underpinning objectives are broadly appropriate at the current time. The report highlights areas of progress towards meeting the objectives and the considerable challenges related to taking the strategy forward, not least in relation to developing and sustaining a stable, highly trained workforce and creating and sustaining a range of high quality, flexible local placements.

- 2.1.5 The report offers twenty main recommendations grouped around six themes:

1. Strategy development;
2. Workforce issues;

3. Partnership working;
4. Placement capacity;
5. Interventions;
6. Strategy implementation.

2.1.6 The recommendations have been considered and have been translated into actions under the 3 objectives which underpin the refreshed 2020-2025 Strategy.

2.1.7 In summary the evaluation stated the Authority has identified an effective approach to the safe reduction of children looked after within the Borough. However, continued concerted action will be needed in order to build on and improve the work already undertaken and to meet the considerable challenges identified.

2.1.8 The refreshed strategy is appended to this report and covers the following:

- Significant service developments during 2017 – 2020;
- Performance Information 2017 - 2020;
- Overview of progress made on objectives 2017 – 2020;
- 2020 - 2025 CLA reduction strategy action plan.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

The report has been presented to Social Service's Scrutiny Committee.

Option 1

3.1 Members are asked to review the report on the Children's Services reviewed Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy and contribute to the continuous assessment of the effectiveness of the directorate by making appropriate recommendations.

Option 2

3.2 Accept the report as provided.

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

4.1 The implementation of the safe Children looked After reduction strategy supports the following priorities for social services under the corporate plan

- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater;
- To work with our partners including Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and neighbouring authorities to deliver integrated responsive care and support;
- To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities.

5. ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

5.1 The Strategy has had an impact not only in reducing the number of children needing to be bought into care, but also on the budget pressure on the Social

Services Directorate and the Council. The table below shows the positive impact on budget by showing the Children's Services Budget / Outturn and Over/under spend from 2016/17 onwards

	Budget	Outturn	Overspend
2016/17	9,386,570	11,932,760	2,546,190
2017/18	11,757,760	12,523,229	775,469
2018/19	12,606,045	13,566,700	960,655
2019/20	12,960,360	12,884,866	Underspend 75,494

It is hoped the continuation of the strategy will enable Children's Services to manage their budget in future years.

5.2 ***Legal***

5.2.1 Not applicable to this report

5.3 ***Human Resources***

5.3.1 Not applicable for this report, except to note that this strategy would not have seen the success so far without the hard work and dedication of the Children's Services workforce.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

See data contained in the refreshed strategy document as attached as Appendix 1.

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

6.2.1 The successful implementation of the Safe Reduction of CLA Strategy will lead to more positive outcomes for children on a number of levels. It will prevent children coming into care in the first place due to the work under the strategy. For those children who do come into care they will have more local placement choices enabling them to maintain attendance at their local school and contact with family and friends.

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

6.3.1 There is extensive involvement with the children and families we work with. Their views are gathered through a number of avenues including:

- The National Youth Advocacy Service;

- Formally seeking their views following interventions from the supporting change team;
- Formally seeking their views at each review of their plan.

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

- 6.4.1 This refreshed strategy is now a 5-year strategy which lays out the longer term plans to continue to reduce the numbers of children looked after.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

- 6.5.1 A large part of the Safe Reduction of CLA Strategy has a preventative focus.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

- 6.6.1 A number of the actions under the Safe Reduction of CLA Strategy rely on partnership working. Senior managers and staff have good working relationships with our partners which will support us in achieving the actions.

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

As above

6.8 ***EqlA***

The safe reduction of children becoming looked after involves supporting and engaging with children and families covered by protected characteristics from the Equality Act 2010.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 The Safe Reduction of CLA Strategy is in the process of being independently evaluated. The outcome of this is expected in Quarter 4 of 2020/21. The actions aligned to the 3 objectives under the strategy are incorporated under the Children's Services business plans. Progress on actions is reported quarterly and contributes to the Directors Annual report.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy



Safe Reduction of
children Looked Aft

Children's Services

Strategy to Safely Reduce the Numbers of Looked After Children

2020 – 2025

**SOCIAL
SERVICES
DIRECTORATE**

VERSION CONTROL

Version number:	2	Date Written:	August 2020
		Date Approved:	
Status:	Final	Date of Issue:	
		Review Date:	
Approved by:			
Author:	Tanya Evans		
Supporting documents:			
Equality Impact Assessment	Approved by:		
	Date:		
	Dates reviewed:	Outcome of review:	
Change history	August 2020		

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK	5
3. PURPOSE	5
4. SIGNIFICANT SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS DURING 2017 - 2020.....	5
Families First.....	6
Information Advice and Assistance	6
Supporting Change Team	7
My Support Team (MyST)	7
Integrated Care Fund (ICF)	7
Outcomes/strengths based approach to practice	8
Independent Evaluation of the 2017 – 2020 CLA reduction strategy.....	8
5. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION 2017 - 2020.....	9
Children Looked after Performance information.....	9
Supporting Change Team Performance Information	12
Integrated Care Fund Grant Performance Information	14
My Support Team (MyST) Performance Information.....	16
Placement Team Performance Information.....	17
6. OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS MADE ON OBJECTIVES 2017 - 2020	18
7. 2020 - 2025 CLA REDUCTION STRATEGY ACTION PLAN	18
8. CONCLUSION.....	18

1. INTRODUCTION

A strategy to **safely** reduce the numbers of children becoming looked after in Blaenau Gwent has been in place from 2017-2020. This document is an updated version of that original strategy. It will present a review of the strategy to date, and outline actions required of the refreshed strategy which will run from 2020 – 2025.

In 2013 the All Wales Heads of Children's Services commissioned Cordis Bright to undertake research into the differences in the looked after children population across Wales. The research identified 5 areas that can help reduce numbers of looked after children. These were:

- - Strategy and Leadership
- - Prevention and Early Intervention
- - Approach to practice
- - Partnership working
- - Information and intelligence about performance

Children's Services in Blaenau Gwent have undertaken significant work in relation to these 5 areas which has supported the positive progress made.

Interestingly the Cordis Bright research concluded there was no 'magic number' for the rate of children looked after that would help a local authority calculate whether numbers are 'too high' or 'too low'. This is because the number of children looked after in a local area is a result of a complex interaction of demographic and socio economic trends as well as factors connected to the way the Local Authority leads, organises and deploys its services for vulnerable children and families.

As a Social Services Department we strive to:

- Promote independence
- Minimise dependency
- Only intervene when necessary

This strategy strives to embed those principles in practice which in turn drives change in the way we deliver services to ensure the best possible outcomes for the children and families we work with.

In 2017 Welsh Government established a Ministerial Advisory Group to improve outcomes for children. The programme is split into three key areas for action. These are

1. Safely reduce the number of children in need of care.
2. Making sure there are sufficient placement options of a high quality for children who are looked after or are leaving care.

3. Supporting children who are looked after to have the best possible journeys through care and into adulthood.

The First Minister of Wales, Mark Drakeford has highlighted the increasing numbers of children looked after in Wales as a priority area. In April 2019 Welsh Government established a Children Looked After Technical Group, to work co-productively with Local Authorities to develop an approach to manage this priority area. The technical group met with representatives from Blaenau Gwent and reported back their satisfaction in the approach being taken to safely reduce the numbers of children looked after.

2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014, The Children Act 1989, Adoption and Children Act 2002, Children Act 2004 provides the legislative and regulatory framework which underpins this strategy.

3. PURPOSE

The Purpose of this strategy is to achieve three key objectives. These are: -

1. **To support families to stay together** and reduce the need for children to be looked after by ensuring a focus on early intervention and prevention across all service provision for children, young people and their families.
2. **To manage risk confidently** and provide support at the 'edge of care' by making sure that need is accurately assessed, resulting in the right children being accommodated at the right time. This includes supporting families to avoid children becoming accommodated unnecessarily and by making private arrangements within their wider family networks.
3. **To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements** that meets the diverse range of children's needs.

4. SIGNIFICANT SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS DURING 2017 - 2020

It is important to capture the service developments which have occurred over the past 3 years as they have all played a part in achieving the 3 objectives set out in this strategy.

Families First

Families First underwent a restructure which was implemented in April 2017. The drivers for this change included the need for qualified professionals to provide more intensive support to the family support workers delivering interventions to prevent needs from escalating. This resulted in a social work qualified Team Manager being appointed, along with other social workers and a psychology post.

The University of Worcester were commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the restructure 12 months after it was in place. The evaluation sought to determine:

- the extent to which changes in design have improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the model; and
- to provide recommendations related to further development of the programme.

There are a number of significant findings from the evaluation study undertaken in May 2018 which highlight aspects that are going well within the programme, as well as areas for future development. The recommendations have been taken forward. The Evaluation report can be found under **Appendix 1**.

Information Advice and Assistance

In response to the requirements under the Social Services & Wellbeing Act 2014, Blaenau Gwent Children's Services developed an Information, Advice and Assistance Service (IAA). This service provides one front door in relation to all referrals relevant to children's social services.

Early in 2019 a review of this service highlighted the high volume of referrals coming into the IAA service and that the additional responsibilities placed on IAA far outweighed the staffing ratio within the service. This resulted in poor screening within the team leading to a disproportionate number of referrals entering statutory services to meet needs instead of being redirected to preventative services.

The review identified a need to increase staffing capacity in the IAA Team in order to sustain a front door provision that not only met the requirements of legislation but ensured safe decision making, provided an efficient and effective service to the citizens of Blaenau Gwent and promoted staff wellbeing.

Approval was given in November 2019 to appoint a temporary (until March 2021) full time Team Manager, full time Support Worker and full time Contact Customer Service Representative in the IAA service. This has enabled the service to carry out its statutory functions more effectively and has ensured that the decisions made on referrals into children's services have been responded to in a timely manner and prioritised the needs of children requiring statutory intervention. It has also provided capacity to enable an early response to those referrals not meeting the criteria for statutory intervention, and prevented need from escalating by involving prevention and early intervention services.

Supporting Change Team

A significant element to the success of the safe CLA reduction strategy was to establish the Supporting Change Team. The remit of this team is to intensively work with families to prevent children coming into care by adopting an outcomes/strengths based approach to practice. The team was initially established on a temporary basis in January 2018. In September 2019 the council agreed to establish it permanently based on an evaluation report by Worcester University (**Appendix 2**) which evidenced the positive impact this team had made in supporting children to remain with their families and in turn evidence cost avoidance for the Local Authority.

My Support Team (MyST)

In the summer of 2018 a bid was made via the Children and Families Partnership Board for Integrated Care Fund (ICF) grant money to develop a Gwent wide approach in developing a joint multi-disciplinary intensive **therapeutic fostering service** for children looked after. As Torfaen and Caerphilly already had a MyST in place the partnership board agreed Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire should be the next authorities to develop this service. It was already well evidenced by Torfaen and Caerphilly how MyST had improved outcomes for children looked after with complex needs and how it had made savings and created cost avoidance for the Local Authorities

In September 2018 the development of a joint My Support Team (MyST) was agreed by Blaenau Gwent council.

The MyST became operational in the Spring of 2019. It provides a multi-disciplinary intensive **therapeutic fostering service** for children looked after. The team work intensively with children currently in residential care with the aim of bringing them back to live closer to Blaenau Gwent and be placed with foster carers or family members. The team also works with those children in care who present with complex needs and are at risk of going into residential care, to prevent this from happening.

The Blaenau Gwent/ Monmouthshire MyST has had a significant impact on preventing children in Blaenau Gwent going into residential care and as a result of their interventions reduced the numbers of children in residential care from 18 to 13 as at August 2020.

Integrated Care Fund (ICF)

In February 2019 the Gwent Regional Partnership Board sent a letter to all partners informing them they had received formal communication from Welsh Government regarding the Priority areas for the integrated care fund.

A new priority area for 19/20 and 20/21 was “**Children at risk of becoming looked after, in care or who are adopted**”

Due to the expectations that regional approaches should be developed, the Gwent Heads of Children’s Services worked together to develop and submit a joint bid for this money. The

bid included the development of **4** regional approaches, delivered locally, with the clear aim of safely reducing the numbers of children becoming looked after. These 4 approaches were:

1. To implement a **Family Group Conference / Meeting service** within each of the five Local Authority areas using a regional service model to be delivered on a local level.
2. Deliver a consistent **Gwent wide ‘offer’ of support to Special Guardians.**
3. To **enhance each Local Authorities Edge of Care Team** (known as Supporting Change Team in Blaenau Gwent) to include **psychological support, education support and a Community Connector.**
4. To deliver a **Young Person’s Mediation Service** aimed at ages 14 years and above.

These new services have all been in place since October 2019. These newly established services have already had a significant impact in meeting the objectives of this safe CLA reduction strategy. If the grant funding is stopped by WG this will have an impact on the positive progress made to date.

Outcomes/strengths based approach to practice

Over the last 3 years Children’s Services have undertaken a significant programme of training in the outcomes based approach to practice. Supporting the culture shift to outcomes focused practice is one of the priority areas identified for service improvement by Social Care Wales. This approach puts people at the centre of their care and support planning. All Staff have received mandatory training which is in the process of becoming embedded in the culture within the service. From February 2019 this culture shift is being supported by dedicated mentors in every team who meet each month to share good practice and promote reflective thinking sessions within their teams.

Independent Evaluation of the 2017 – 2020 CLA reduction strategy

Worcester University was commissioned to undertake an independent evaluation of the CLA reduction strategy in order to inform future strategy development and implementation. **(Appendix 3).**

The report highlights a number of key findings. These findings acknowledge the considerable work already undertaken in relation to this strategy. It concludes that the strategy and its underpinning objectives are broadly appropriate at the current time. The report highlights areas of progress towards meeting the objectives and the considerable challenges related to taking the strategy forward, not least in relation to developing and

sustaining a stable, highly trained workforce and creating and sustaining a range of high quality, flexible local placements.

The report offers twenty main recommendations grouped around six themes:

1. Strategy development
2. Workforce issues
3. Partnership working
4. Placement capacity
5. Interventions
6. Strategy implementation

The recommendations have been considered and have been translated into actions under the 3 objectives which underpin the refreshed 2020 -2025 Strategy.

In summary the evaluation stated the Authority has identified an effective approach to the safe reduction of looked after children within the Borough. However, continued concerted action will be needed in order to build on and improve the work already undertaken and to meet the considerable challenges identified.

5. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION 2017 - 2020

Safely reducing the numbers of children looked after depends on a whole systems approach within every team within children's services. Therefore, it is important to scrutinise performance information across all the functions of the department and not just focus on the numbers of children in care.

Children Looked after Performance information

Figure 1: Children Looked After population broken down into placement types.

	Jan 2015	Mar 2019	Jul 2020
Total CLA	134	230	214
Total Placed with Parents	9	44	53
Total with Kinship Carers	11	37	42
Total placed with BG Carers	68	79	72
Total Placed with IFA Carers	26	25	19
Total Placed with Prospective Adopters	11	23	10
Total in Residential Placements	5	17	13
Total in Independent Living Placements (16 and 17 Year olds)	4	5	5

It is important to understand the different circumstances within which our children are looked after. **Figure 1** demonstrates this picture and how it has changed since 2015. The areas highlighted in yellow demonstrate the circumstances in which there has been an increase in the number of children looked after in Blaenau Gwent.

Children placed with parents has seen a large increase. There are a number of reasons for this. The Public Law Outline process which determines how a case is managed prior to and during the court process changed. This led to an expectation that all court cases would be completed within a 26-week timescale. This reduced the time to test safeguarding arrangements out during the court timescales leading to a higher number of care orders being issued for children placed at home with parents when a lesser order could be more appropriate if more time was given. Also the department is managing more risk so in a number of cases it is right for the local authority to share parental responsibility with the parents to ensure children's needs are met and they continue to be safeguarded.

The numbers of children placed with kinship carers has also significantly increased. This increase has been driven by case law which states if the local authority has, for safeguarding reasons been instrumental in placing children with extended family members, then these children must become looked after. Significant work has been done locally to produce practice guidance for social workers to empower parents to make an informed decision thereby making it possible to support a private family arrangement without the need for the children to become looked after.

The final yellow area in Figure 1 highlights the increase in the numbers of children in residential care. Again there are a number of reasons for the increase in numbers since 2015, not least the complexity of children's needs. However, some children have been placed in residential care due to foster placements not being available. This situation is not unique to Blaenau Gwent. It is recognised by Welsh Government and the 22 local authorities there is a national shortage of foster carers. It should be noted that the reduction in children in residential care has coincided with the MyST team becoming operational.

Figure 2: Total number of children looked after, admissions / discharges

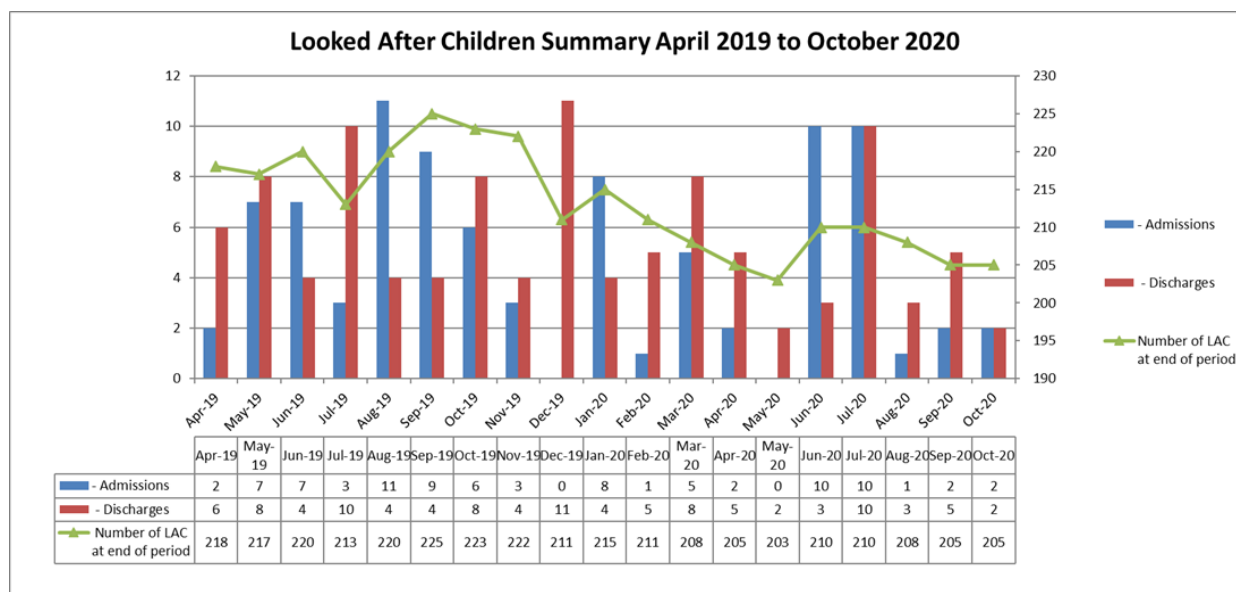


Figure 2 demonstrates the journey children's services has been on over the past 3 years in relation to the total number of children looked after. At its highest we had 237 children looked after in July 2018. The lowest number was 203 in May 2020.

It is clear to see the numbers of admissions and discharges in and out of care over this time period. The discharges from care can be for a variety of reasons. A child may return home, have their care order revoked whilst living with their parent, they may become adopted or they may become subject of a special guardianship order.

The admissions and discharges in and out of care are carefully scrutinised by the Head of Service and service managers each month. This provides reassurance that everything has been done to prevent a child coming into care and for those who are in care they exit as soon as possible if appropriate.

Supporting Change Team Performance Information

The following information is provided in respect of the work undertaken by the Supporting Change Team since its launch in December 2017.

Figure 3 Number of children supported to remain living with their family network during the period 01/01/2018 to 31/07/2020

	Total Number of Children who received a service from SCT	Total Number of children supported to remain living within their family network
	(Excluding children who were re-referred into the service)	
Year One	140	99
Year Two	137	104
Year Three	74*	67*
Total number of children	351	270

* Data from 1st January 2020 to 31st July 2020

The figure of 270 above does not include the 37 children supported to return home to their family network from care (see data below). If this was included in the data it would show, 307 out of a total of 351 children have been supported to live within their own family network, preventing the need for a Local Authority care provision.

As was predicted, year two saw an increase in the number of re-referrals into the service. The Team acknowledges that relapse is part of the cycle of change and that for a number of families they will go through the change cycle a number of times before sustained change is made. In recognition of this, the Team have now adopted an open door policy where families can receive non-intensive, telephone support beyond the 12-week intervention stage, with a view to hopefully reduce the number of re-referrals into the Team.

Figure 4: Number of children supported to return home within their family network from care in the period 01/01/2018 to 31/07/2020

	Total Number of Children who received a service from SCT	Total Number of children supported to return home within their family network from care.
Year One	140	18
Year Two	137	17
Year Three	74*	2*
Total number of children:	351	37

*Data from 1st January 2020 to 31st July 2020

What is evident from the data is that there has been a reduction in the number of children referred into the service where support is needed to rehabilitate a child from foster care back into the care of their birth family. Evidence from the Placement Team indicates that requests for Connected Person Assessments has increased, as social workers are demonstrating a greater commitment to keep children within the wider family network. Once placed with the wider family member, a referral is often made to the Supporting Change Team to support a rehabilitation back to the birth parents and a Family Group Conference is often utilised to support care planning for these children.

Figure 5: Number of children entering the care system in the period 01/01/2018 to 31/07/2020

	Total Number of Children who received a service from SCT	Total Number of children entering the care system.
Year One	140	20 + 3 children who remained in care
Year Two	137	10 + 4 children who remained in care
Year Three	74*	6 + 1 child who remained in care*
Total number of children	351	36 + 8 children who remained in care

* Data from 1st January 2020 to 31st July 2020

It is recognised that not all children can be prevented from entering the care system and that some families are not able to make positive changes despite the risk of their children entering care. Motivation to change remains a key indicator in regards to whether an intervention is likely to be successful or not and the Team utilise the Bruce Thornton Motivation to Change Tools to assess a person's level of motivation. While it is possible to promote motivation to change, it remains extremely difficult to influence change where motivating factors are external or where a person is unable to recognise the need to change. For these children, the Supporting Change Team has supported the Local Authority in making decisions around longer-term care planning outside of the family network.

Of the 8 children who remained in care following an intervention by the Supporting Change Team, 3 children received a service to try to prevent a breakdown in the placement where the outcome was positive for all three children; 1 child received a service to prevent the risk of escalating to residential care where the outcome was achieved and 4 children received a service with the view to rehabilitating home which unfortunately resulted in the children remaining in foster care.

The information above clearly demonstrates the part this team has played in supporting the CLA reduction strategy

Integrated Care Fund Grant Performance Information

As stated under the significant events section of this strategy this grant money became available to the local authority in February 2019. The grant was used to develop new and existing services with the aim of safely reducing the number of children looked after.

The following provides evidence of how this has been achieved.

1. **Family Group Conference** (*service active from July 2019*) – held a total of 37 Family Group Conferences for 37 families with 68 children. Out of the 68 children subject of a Family Group Conference: 52 were prevented in becoming looked after, 8 were already looked after and were rehabilitated into their birth families and 8 children became looked after.
2. **Enhanced Edge of Care** – The new Community Connector, Education Support Worker and part time psychologist funded through ICF were aligned in the Supporting Change Team. During FY 2019/2020 this team delivered services to 175 children to prevent them coming into the care of the Local Authority and 23 children being rehabilitated from care to their birth family.

Education Support Worker - Feedback from Teacher: *“(Child) is doing amazing! She's going to all her lessons, working well in class, going to her red card detentions if she's late to school, I hardly see her now if I'm honest. Before when there was an issue she would have roamed around the school looking for me and probably truanted. The pastoral team were saying this morning how incredible she is working and behaving at the moment and hardly hear her name any more. “*

Psychologist – feedback from social worker: *“The consultation gave me some reflective space and helped me to see the bigger picture of what is really going on in the family. It gave me insight into things I wouldn't necessarily have thought about without the psychology consultation. It gave me a focus of the work needed with the family and children and a plan for me to follow”*

3. **Special Guardianship Support Team** (*service active from September 2019*) – staff within the team have completed 5 SGO assessments for 8 children resulting in them no longer being looked after and 2 SGO assessments for families preventing 2 children becoming looked after. 51 families (Special Guardians and children in their care) have received support from this team since September 2019. As at the 31st March 2020 there were 118 children subject to an SGO in Blaenau Gwent. Most of these families receive support and/or financial assistance from the Local Authority in order to maintain these placements on a permanent basis.

Figure 6: Special Guardianship Orders Granted

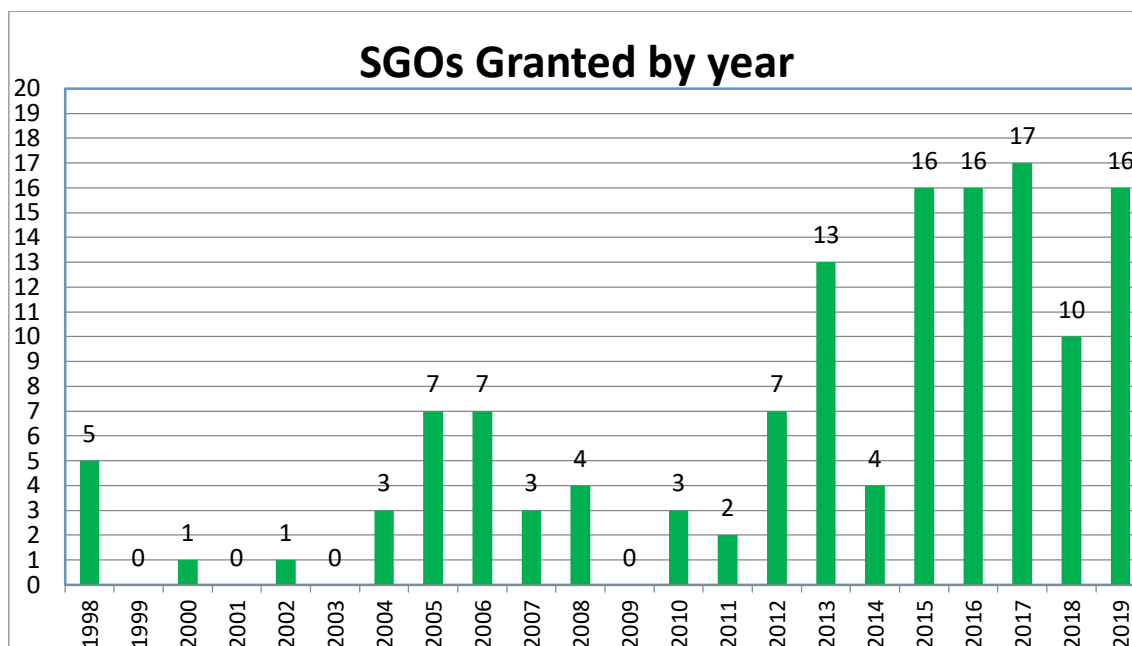


Figure 6 above shows a consistent increase in use of Special Guardianship arrangements as an alternative to children coming into the care of the Local Authority. While the numbers of children subject of SGO is growing in Blaenau Gwent, the SGO support team is now vital in supporting these placements on a long term basis by preventing family breakdown and children returning into the care system.

SGO Support Team - Feedback

"I'm feeling much more positive now that I have been referred for some support, thank you so much you have been very helpful"

'I think the service is fantastic, it is so reassuring to know someone is there when you need them. This should I have been set up years ago.'

'It is lovely to know that there is a service, it can feel isolating after you are granted the Special Guardianship Order.'

"It's nice to know people are willing to listen and nice to have the support around us"

"It's a comfort to know someone is there if I'm honest during these times [COVID 19- Pandemic]"

"Thank you, it's very reassuring to know the support is there, thank you for continuing to work and help us"

"Thank you for everything you're doing, feel like finally the girls are getting the support they need"

4. Mediation worker

To deliver a **Young Person's Mediation Service** aimed at ages 14 years and above across the five Local Authorities adopting a regional service model that is delivered locally in each Local Authority area. The proposed service model will

work with young people and their families where conflict has led to the young person either leaving or being asked to leave their home. The service will provide young people with the opportunity to talk about their worries and concerns and assist them to explore available options and retain control over their lives

My Support Team (MyST) Performance Information

The My Support Team became operational in May 2019. The team has been funded by ICF grant money which will cease in April 2021. However, the council agreed to create this team on a permanent basis based on the evidence provided from other local authorities that the approach taken by this team improved outcomes for children looked after and in the longer term would make savings by children not needing residential care due to the support MyST offered.

When MyST became operational Blaenau Gwent had 18 children in residential care. As at August 2020 we had 13 children in residential care. This is a direct result of the intensive support that MyST offer children and foster carers. This has led to both improved outcomes for those children and a reduction in the overspend in the residential care budget.

MyST have worked with **8** children. **6** of these children have moved out of residential care, (however 1 has returned)

The **5** children that moved out of residential care, moved to live with foster carers.

The other **2** children have been supported to remain with their foster carers and prevented from going into residential care

MyST also provide practice consultations to Social Workers and Foster Carers when they are struggling to understand and support a child whose needs are starting to become complex. These consultations provide advice and guidance in managing emerging complex needs by trying new approaches when managing various risks/behaviours.

As at 30th September 2020 MyST have provided **29** practice consultations to staff, foster carers and birth parents

MyST – Feedback -

- **BG Young Person** – “I like having someone there, just for me, and I like being a part of MyST. It has been helpful (and very difficult) to talk about my feelings. I’d prefer to see my worker out of school so that we have more time together”
- **BG foster carer** “working alongside MyST and being in weekly contact with the team has allowed me to share my knowledge and ideas and I feel like a valued person within the child’s support network. I feel listened to and that my skill set as a foster carer is appreciated

- **BG Young Person** – “I like having someone there, just for me, and I like being a part of MyST. It has been helpful (and very difficult) to talk about my feelings. I’d prefer to see my worker out of school so that we have more time together”
- **BG foster carer** “working alongside MyST and being in weekly contact with the team has allowed me to share my knowledge and ideas and I feel like a valued person within the child’s support network. I feel listened to and that my skill set as a foster carer is appreciated

Placement Team Performance Information

A significant part of this strategy is to ensure we can provide a range of good quality placements when children do need to become looked after.

Figure 7: Enquiries to foster by year and month 2015 – 2020

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Jan	4	1	2	3	8
Feb	7	3	7	0	6
March	3	2	2	3	0
April	5	0	1	1	0
May	1	2	3	2	3
June	2	2	0	4	1
July	6	0	2	5	7
Aug	4	1	0	1	3
Sept	3	3	2	3	3
Oct	2	5	1	6	
Nov	4	1	0	0	
Dec	5	0	0	3	
Total	46	32	20	31	

Figure 7 shows a varied picture in the numbers of enquires the authority has had in relation to fostering over the past 5 years. Decreasing numbers of local authority foster carers is a national issue. A significant amount of work has been done via the Ministerial Advisory Group to improve outcomes for looked after children to understand the reasons why this is the case and strengthen the local authorities position in attracting foster carers. The work already completed includes the development of a national performance framework in relation to fostering and the creation and adoption of a national learning and development pathway for foster carers. Also the development of **Foster Wales** which is a local authority owned national approach to recruiting foster carers. Foster Wales requires significant investment if it is to be successful, WG are currently being lobbied to identify and support with this investment.

Clearly this is an area of work that will need attention in the revised strategy.

6. OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS MADE ON OBJECTIVES 2017 - 2020

This information is contained in **Appendix 4**. An update on progress has been given in relation to each action under the 3 objectives.

7. 2020 - 2025 CLA REDUCTION STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

The new action plan can be found under **Appendix 5**. The actions under each of the 3 objectives have been refreshed.

8. CONCLUSION

This Strategy sets out how we will deliver our commitment to families to stay together, to manage risk confidently and ensure when children do need to be looked after we have a wide range of placement options to meet these needs.

This Strategy simply outlines what is required of Children's Services over the next 5 years. The challenge is delivery of the actions that sit under the 3 objectives included in the document that will make the difference. The work will require a continued, coordinated Council wide effort.

The Children's Services Departmental Leadership Team (DLT) will be tasked with overseeing the delivery of the strategy, monitoring the impact on children and their families and driving forward the focus on reducing the numbers of children coming into care.

The Actions required to deliver this strategy will be contained within the Children's Services Annual Business Plan. Progress against each action will be reported quarterly through the DLT.

We will continue to review and refine the strategy as our evidence base builds over coming months/years; as our thinking evolves, so will this strategy. As a result, this strategy and the associated action plan will continue to be live documents, regularly updated and reviewed.



**Appendix 1 Final
Evaluation report R**



**Appendix 2
Supporting Change**



**Appendix 3
Blaenau Gwent**



**Appendix 4
LAC Overview of Progres**



**Appendix 5 2020-
2025 CLA reduction**

Agenda Item 13

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 26.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 29.03.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**
Date of meeting: **14th April 2021**
Report Subject: **Position Report Fly Grazing Horses**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Joanna Wilkins / Executive Member Environment**
Report Submitted by: **Corporate Director – Regeneration & 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)
2/2/21	4/2/21	23.03.21			1/3/21	14/4/21		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To provide Executive Committee with an overview on the issue of fly grazing horses within the County Borough. The report will outline the scale of the issue, including identifying geographical locations where the problem is often reported and set out the legislative and policy framework from which officers operate to resolve incidents.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The illegal fly grazing of horses has been a recurring issue within the County Borough for many years. It appears that some horse owners lack short or long term grazing land for their animals and therefore often utilise primarily Local Authority land on which to keep them.
 - 2.2 Historically the Local Authority could utilise its animal impounding team to remove horses, which were often the source of complaints either because of their persistent or recurring nature or because of the welfare concerns around the animals themselves. However, since the termination of this service, Officers ultimately have to rely on informal action and legislative powers to ensure horses are removed.
 - 2.3 There are a number of legal avenues available to the Authority to deal with the issue of fly grazing by horses which will be covered in the body of the report, however in 2014 Welsh Government introduced the Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014 (the 2014 Act), which was specifically created to deal with fly grazing horses in what was seen as a National problem. The Authority has adopted a common policy, which is appended to this report, with Powys County Council on how it implements and enforces the powers within the 2014 Act.
 - 2.4 Exercising the powers contained in the 2014 Act is discretionary and while the powers can be used to remove horses from both public and private land, the Authority is not under a duty to discharge these powers if a request from a private land owner is made. When Local Authorities exercise these powers, costs incurred by land owners in the removal and storage of seized horses

must be paid by the horse's legal owners before any retained horses are released.

2.5 The responsibility for the removal of horses from Local Authority land rests with the relevant portfolio land holder, with Environmental Health providing support where it is needed to ensure the legal provisions of the Act are discharged appropriately where that is necessary. In many instances of fly grazing in the County Borough, it is the Estates Section, supporting the portfolio holder that leads in securing the removal of fly grazing horses. This is often achieved through informal means such as speaking directly to horse owners if known or by placing notices on the land stipulating that removal of the horses by the Authority will take place within a specified timescale if they remain. To date, the Authority has not had to utilise the provisions of the 2014 Act to remove horses from its own land.

2.6 Historically Environmental Health have carried out 2 major operations to remove fly grazing horses in the County Borough, both of these occurred on common land at Manmoel and Cefn Golau. These areas of land have for many years supported feral herds of horses and in the Winter of 2012/13, which was particularly harsh, the Authority received numerous complaints about dead and dying horses on the Commons. As a result, in its first operation the Authority, along with colleagues in Powys C.C., Caerphilly C.B.C and various horse welfare charities, implemented its powers under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to remove 37 horses from both Commons throughout the spring and summer of 2013. The vast majority of these animals were successfully rehomed with only a small number needing euthanasia on welfare grounds. This culminated in a second operation in the Summer of 2014 to remove 30 horses from the larger herd at Manmoel common under the then new powers contained the Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014. Again the vast majority of the horses removed were rehomed by horse charities, with a small number needing to be euthanized on welfare grounds. Specific funding was secured from Welsh Government for this operation to cover Local Authority costs. Since these operations very few complaints about the condition of horses on either common have been received.

2.7 Environmental Health do not have a specific budget for action taken under the 2014 Act. The Policy adopted by the Authority places the financial cost of any removal, storage and disposal of horses on the relevant land owner while Environmental Health ensure the legal process is followed correctly and all relevant documentation completed, served and saved appropriately. This is also the case should the Authority seek to utilise the powers to remove horses from its own land, with the relevant land portfolio holder within the Authority bearing the costs of removal, storage and disposal of any horses seized.

2.8 As the Authority does not retain the man power, plant and storage facilities to remove horses it would have to use a private contractor to conduct this work. A quotation has been received from a bailiff company for the type of costs involved with this work and while it is difficult to put a specific cost on an operation because of the number of variables involved, it is estimated that the removal of 2-3 horses could potentially cost £3-4000.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 Option 1- That Executive Committee supports the existing process for the removal of horses set out in the report with the use of contractors and the costs associated with this.

3.2 Option 2 (Scrutiny Preferred Option) - That Executive Committee supports the existing process for the removal of horses set out in the report with the use of contractors and the costs associated with this and that the Council look to work with partners, and be granted permission to pursue enforcement with regard to the Control of Horses Act in prolific areas in line with the Wellbeing Plan Objective 2.

4 **Recommendation(s)/Endorsements by other Groups**

4.1 Corporate Leadership Team and Regeneration & Community Services Leadership Team have considered this report. Community Services Scrutiny Committee also considered this report on 1st March 2021 and supported the existing process for the removal of horses set out in the report with the use of contractors and the costs associated with this (Option 1); and the Committee also recommended that the Council look to work with partners, and be granted permission to pursue enforcement with regard to the Control of Horses Act in prolific areas in line with the Wellbeing Plan Objective 2.

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

5.1 Well-being Plan, Objective 2 – Blaenau Gwent wants safe and friendly communities. The removal of illegal fly grazing horses from Local Authority and private land prevents damage being caused by this act of trespass and ensures members of the public feel safe by the removal of large, often untethered animals from land which can be open to public access.

5.2 Corporate Plan – Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities Priority objective – While there is significant cost associated with individual operations in the removal of horses, it is felt that by dealing proactively with problematic locations where recurrent offending behaviour often occurs that the message will be sent out to irresponsible horse owners that the Authority will not tolerate the act of fly grazing with the result that fewer incidents will occur.

6. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

6.2 Environmental Health do not hold a specific budget for implementing its powers under the 2014 Act. Requests to utilise these powers formally are rare, but if it was necessary then, as previously, a request would be made for the work to be undertaken by colleagues from Powys C.C (who deal with other Animal Health, Welfare & Licensing issues for the Authority) at extra cost to the current Service Level Agreement. If the extra costs could not be managed within existing budgets, then this would be reported to CLT accordingly.

6.3 Where the removal of horses is carried out on Local Authority land then the relevant land portfolio holder would have to fund the contractor costs

associated with the removal, storage and disposal of any seized animals. Obviously regular use of the seizure powers could put considerable strain on existing budgets, but discussion with the relevant portfolio holders has shown that limited use of these powers would need to be managed within existing budgets. It is anticipated that once the Authority starts exercising the powers contained in the 2014 Act to remove horses from its own land that along with relevant media releases, the number of incidents will start to decline and the use of these powers will become less necessary.

7. Risk including Mitigating Actions

7.1 Reputational risk- Illegal fly grazing does generate a number of complaints from Members and the public (figures are set out in Section 10). Fly grazing itself often results in damage to Local Authority land, concerns about the welfare of the animals themselves and public safety concerns about large untethered animals roaming freely. Failing to tackle the problem proactively could lead to significant reputational damage to the Authority.

8. Legal

8.1 There are a number of legal provisions available to deal with the issue of fly grazing horses or straying livestock which are outlined below. Discussion with the Legal Section has identified the 2014 Act to be the most appropriate legal sanction to deal with fly grazing horses, including the use of civil trespass action, as it provides a reasonably quick and defined process by which to remove the animals. The policy appended to this report sets out how this is done. The Authority's Constitution determines that policy on this matter is set by the Executive, while operational matters are delegated to the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services.

8.2 Other legal provisions include:

- **Animals Act 1971-** Under the Animal Act 1971, where livestock strays onto land in the ownership of another person (including the Local Authority), the landowner can detain the livestock whilst ownership of the straying animals is being established and reclaim any reasonable costs in doing so. The land owner can claim the costs of any damage, and sell the animal at a market or public auction after 14 days, unless steps are being taken by the owner of the livestock to pay any money owed.
- **Town Police Clauses Act 1847-** If any cattle (including horses, asses, mules, sheep, goats, and swine) are straying in any street within the limits of the Act then a constable or officer of police, or any person residing within the limits of the Act, may seize and impound the cattle until the reasonable expenses incurred in impounding the cattle are paid.
- **Highways Act 1980-** Section 155 of the Highways Act 1980 states if any horses, cattle, sheep, goats or swine are at any time found straying or lying on or at the side of a highway their keeper is guilty of an

offence; but this subsection does not apply in relation to a part of a highway passing over any common, waste or unenclosed ground.

9. **Human Resources**

9.1 While there are no implications in relation to the need for additional resources for Blaenau Gwent staff associated with this report, dealing with fly grazing horses takes up a significant amount of Officer time. Each complaint requires numerous site visits to try to identify ownership of animals, attempt to contact owners, erect signage and monitor the progress of removal.

10. **Supporting Evidence**

10.1 **Performance Information and Data**

10.2 **Complaints History.** The Estates Section have been consulted during the drafting of this report and they have provided data on the locations, dates (where recorded) and frequency of incidents of fly grazing on Local Authority land over the last 7 years within the County Borough. Table 1, below, sets this data out.

Table 1.

Area / Location	Dates (not all recorded)	Number of Occurrences / Complaints
Former Nantyglo Comprehensive Site	24th March , 12 th September and 8 th November 2017	6 or more per year
Pantyfforest		recurring - 4/5 times per year
Station Road, Tredegar	Regular throughout 2020, 16th November 2018- gate has subsequently been locked December 2020	recurring 4/5 times per year
Crown Cottages, Tredegar		once and no return
Nantyglo OAP Hall	10th November 2020	min 4/5 - from Cwmcrachen per year
Land at Coalbrookevale, Nantyglo	13th April 2015	3/4 times per year, last one Jan 2021
Farm Road, Nantyglo	21st August 2014	2/3 times per year
Former Garn fach School Site	3rd November 2016	recurring
Stones Houses Blaina		recurring - 4/5 times per year
Fan Tips Blaina		recurring 4/5 times per year
Crown Avenue, Tredegar		2/3 times over a adhoc period
Sirhowy Estate - coming off Chartist Way Plots		5/6 times minimum per year
Above Tredegar Rec		once

Pennant Street, Ebbw Vale	December 2020	approx 7-8 horses report
Darrenfelin Road, Brynmaur		twice

10.3 All of these incidents have been dealt with by informal means with no matters dealt with by the use of the powers contained in the 2014 Act. The horses are usually removed by their owners and as a result they can often end up returning to a location. In addition, it is felt by Officers that by dealing with this matter informally, irresponsible horse owners in our community feel that they can utilise Authority land without the risk of losing their animals by seizure with the financial cost that comes with this should they wish to recover the animals.

10.3.1 **Environmental Health Actions.** Other than the operations outlined in Section 2.5 above, Environmental Health have not utilised their powers in the 2014 Act for other incidents of fly grazing in the County Borough. Enquiries are sometimes received from private land owners about alleged incidents of fly grazing on private land, but other than requests received from the commoners of Cefn Golau and Manmoel Common's, no formal requests have been to Environmental Health to instigate its powers under the 2014 Act have been received since its introduction.

11 **Expected outcome for the public**

11.1 Improved proactive response to service requests in relation to fly grazing incidents.

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

12.1 Relevant internal colleagues in Cleansing Legal and Estates have been consulted on the content of this report.

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

13.1 The process outlined in this report is necessary to ensure long-term improvements in response to misuse of the Authority's land for fly grazing and to create safer public open spaces.

14 **Preventative focus**

14.1 The process will help to change cultural attitudes to fly grazing by ensuring offending behaviour is actioned by the removal of horses with horses retained and disposed of unless costs are paid.

15 **Collaboration / partnership working**

15.1 The process will utilise private contractors to provide removal, storage and disposal of relevant animals.

16 **Integration (across service areas)**

16.1 The scheme contributes to relevant well-being and environment Agendas.

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

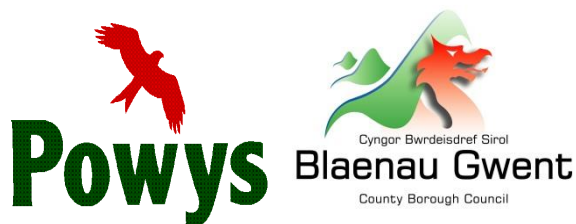
17.1 The proposals will no adverse effects against the protected characteristics.

18 **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 18.1 The scheme will be monitored by Public Protection Managers and by way of relevant reports to the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services, CLT and Scrutiny Committee, as necessary.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Policy Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014



ENFORCEMENT POLICY – CONTROL OF HORSES (WALES) Act 2014

Introduction

On 27th January 2014 the National Assembly for Wales introduced the Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014.

The aim of the Act was to provide a further tool for Local Authorities to use to combat fly grazing, straying and abandonment of horses and ponies. The Act provides Local Authorities in Wales with consistent legal powers to seize, impound, sell, re-home, return, dispose of and destroy horses by humane means after certain notifications and time limits, when the horses are found causing nuisance by fly grazing, straying or have been abandoned in a local authority area.

The powers within the Act will enable the Local Authority to act when notified of horses on land in its area without lawful authority. The Authority will be able to dispose of the horses, if after 7 days, beginning on the relevant day, the owner of the horse(s) or a person acting on behalf of the owner has not contacted the local authority. The Authority may also dispose of those horses where the owner has contacted the Authority but has not paid or disputed the reasonable costs incurred in connection with seizure and impounding.

The relevant day will either be when the Notice was given to the owner or when the notice was displayed (whichever is applicable).

Requests for LA to use Powers under the Act

This Policy has been agreed by Powys County Council and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

Where an individual or organisation requests that the Authority use its powers under the Act: we will consider using our powers under the Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014 if a formal written request is received from the Land owner/occupier or commoners associated and on the basis that it would be cost neutral to the Local Authorities other than officer time and travel. The applicant will need to supply the Local Authority with an Operational Plan detailing how s/he will address each of the following points along with the costs for the same: -

- i. The gather of all equines from the common/private land to a suitable handling facility, which must include a race handling system.

- ii. Details of the provision of veterinary support to be provided to deal with any horses that have welfare issues.
- iii. Details of the facility where the equines will be held for a minimum of 7 days, although the preferred period would be at least 10 days.
- iv. Details of who will be responsible for the welfare of the horses during the period that they are held, to include details of feeding/watering and bedding to be provided etc.
- v. Details of how and when the applicant is going to allow public viewing of horses for potential owners to claim them.
- vi. How the applicant proposes to dispose of the horses:
 - a. Details of the veterinary surgeon who will be in attendance to determine fitness to travel or monitor humane destruction.
 - b. Sale.
 - c. Re-homing (details of National Equine Welfare Council affiliated members being used and numbers of horses being re-homed by each).
 - d. Destruction (details of numbers and who will humanely destroy, when destruction will take place, where destruction will take place and where carcasses will be disposed of). Note; where the proposal is for the destruction of horses this would require agreement by the Authority's Executive Committee prior to any involvement by Animal Health Officers.

Applicants will need to be able to satisfy the Authority that all the necessary arrangements can be put in place prior to any assistance being agreed.

Once a written plan has been submitted and been approved, local authority Animal Health Officers would be present when the animals are gathered. Animal Health Officers would seize and scan each horse for a micro-chip and where chipped make the necessary enquiries to determine the registered owner etc. Animal Health Officers would photograph and catalogue the horses and arrange for the required Notices to be displayed (and monitored on a daily basis) in the locality where the horses were seized and for the required notification to be made to the police. Animal Health Officers would then be present on the public viewing to determine if the claimed owner had a legal right to the return of any claimed horse(s), and present again at the dispersal of any unclaimed horses. Finally, Animal Health Officers would ensure that the required public register is maintained.

In addition to the above Animal Health Officers may also submit a funding bid to Welsh Government to offset the costs to the applicants and Local Authority. However no guarantees can be given that such a bid would be successful.

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Agenda Item 14

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 26.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 29.03.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th April 2021**

Report Subject: **Revenue Budget Monitoring -2020/2021, Forecast Outturn to 31 March 2021 (As at 31st December 2020)**

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

Report Submitted by: **Rhian 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)
x	04/02/2021	23.03.21			15.03.21	14 /04/21		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the forecast financial outturn position across all portfolios for the financial year 2020/2021 (as forecast at 31st December 2020).
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 This report provides details on the following:
 - Forecast financial position to the end of March 2021 across all portfolios
 - Forecast outturn for Fees & Charges
 - Progress on the achievement of the Bridging the Gap Projects for 2020/2021.
 - 2.12 This report will inform the quarterly financial reporting framework to Members.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 **Option 1 (Recommended Option)**

Members to consider and provide appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report.
 - 3.2 **Option 2**

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**
 - 4.1 This report supports the Council Corporate Plan proposed outcome statement 2020/2022 “An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities”

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 Impact on Budget

5.1.1 The overall forecast outturn as at December 2020, is an adverse variance of £4.719m. This is before the application of Welsh Government Hardship funding, moving the forecast adverse variance to a favourable variance £0.552m. This is a much improved position compared to the forecast as at September 2020, which indicated an adverse variance of £0.248m (after the application of Hardship and furlough funding).

5.1.2 The forecast overall financial position across all portfolios at 31 December 2020 (and before the inclusion of Covid-19 related expenditure) is shown in the table below:

Portfolio/ Committee	2020/2021 Revised Revenue Budget £m	2020/2021 Forecast Outturn @ 31 Dec 2020 £m	Favourable/ (Adverse) To 31 March 2021 £m	Append ref:
Underspending Portfolios				
Corporate Services & Financial Management & Strategy	16.726	15.808	0.918	2a
Education & Leisure	62.132	61.905	0.227	2c
Social Services	45.352	45.242	0.110	2b
Sub Total (1)	124.210	122.955	1.255	
Overspending Portfolios				
Economy	1.215	1.378	(0.163)	2d
Environment	25.532	25.853	(0.321)	2e
Planning	1.118	1.132	(0.014)	2f
Licensing	0.070	0.097	(0.027)	2f
Sub Total (2)	27.935	28.460	(0.525)	

Crosscutting costs as a result of the pay date move (October 2020)		<u>0.111</u>		
Total	<u>152.145</u>	<u>151.526</u>	<u>0.619</u>	
Covid-19 Costs				
Social Services		2.275	(2.275)	
Education		0.285	(0.285)	
Environment		2.778	(2.778)	
Sub Total – Covid-19		<u>5.338</u>	<u>(5.338)</u>	
WG Hardship funding			<u>3.417</u>	
WG SS Hardship funding			<u>1.854</u>	
Revised Total			<u>0.552</u>	

- 5.1.3 The forecast includes actual and estimated funding from the Hardship fund for April to December 2020 of £5.271m.
- 5.1.4 The forecast shows a positive movement of approximately £0.8m from the quarter 2 forecast. Movements greater than £100,000 relates to:
- Corporate Services/ Financial Management - £832,000.
- 5.1.5 Welsh Government has considered and paid claims from local authorities for loss of income for quarter 1 and 2 totalling £1.3m of which:
- £1m relates directly to portfolio budgets
 - £115,000 for schools who arrange their own catering arrangements and
 - £272,000 for the Leisure Trust.
- 5.1.6 A Claim has been submitted for quarter 3 loss of income of £0.467, in line with a set of principles issues by Welsh Government and the assumption in the portfolio forecasts is that loss of income will be funded to 31st March 2021.
- 5.1.7 Taking Hardship funding, Furlough income and the initial claims for lost income into account, the net impact on the Council's revenue budget is a forecast favourable variance of £0.552m.
- 5.1.8 The increased caseload in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme is currently resulting in an adverse variance of £0.23m after applying hardship funding of £0.35m. It has been assumed that Welsh Government are committed to funding the cost pressure to the end of the financial year.

5.1.9 **PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS**

5.1.10 A summary of the main adverse variances is shown as Appendix 1 and details on the main variances within the Portfolios are included below.

5.1.11 Action plans to address cost pressures are attached at Appendix 4.

5.1.12 **Corporate Services – £918,595 favourable variance (quarter 2 £87,365 favourable variance)**

5.1.13 The movement in the favourable variance from quarter 2 to quarter 3 of £831,000 mainly relates to:

- Departmental Budget - £199,000 and this is due to the delayed implementation of the Commercial Services Restructure and savings from staff secondments
- Council Tax Collection - £76,000 due to an increase in the forecasted Surplus on Collection income
- CTRS - £311,000 due to the inclusion of loss of income from WG £348,000
- Cross Cutting Budgets - £246,000 – Committed spend on the Transformation Fund budget has been reduced to 50% of the total budget.

5.1.14 There are three main adverse variances within the Portfolio:

5.1.15 ***Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) - £229,959***

5.1.16 As previously reported, this is due to an increase in the number of claimants resulting from the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Recent information indicates that the level of new claims has now decreased when compared to the same period in 2019. This is shown by the decreasing cost pressure compared to the start of the year. However, the full effect of the recent national lockdown that was enforced in December, is not known at this stage.

5.1.17 WG has now considered the CTRS cost pressure across Wales, with income of £174,000 being received in respect of quarters 1 and 2. A commitment for financial support for the period October to March 2021 has been assumed.

5.1.14 ***ICT Service - £160,000***

5.1.15 This adverse variance is mainly as a consequence of income being built into the budget which was intended to be funded by reserves, with the view that future savings, due to merging of software systems, would produce savings and therefore reduce the need of reserve funding. These savings have not yet been achieved, as the Software Contracts are still Blaenau Gwent's responsibility.

Attempts to try to mitigate this adverse variance has not been possible, with a cost pressure being identified for the financial year 2021/2022.

5.1.16 ***Registrars - £33,431***

5.1.17 The forecast adverse variance is due to a reduction in income from fees & charges due to Covid-19 pandemic. £4,000 has been received from WG in respect of loss of income for quarter 1, however this only equates to 50% of our initial claim, as it is assumed that income will improve throughout the year. Quarter 3 has shown improvement as suggested, so it has been assumed that this will continue until the end of the financial year along with a commitment that WG will fund any lost income for the year.

5.1.18 ***Apprenticeship Levy - £21,379***

5.1.19 The forecast adverse variance is due to an increase in the NI-able pay of staff paid to date. This is mainly due to the additional staff and backdated pay for TTP staff, increase in overtime claims and additional hours (due to the Covid-19 pandemic) and the four weekly staff who transferred over to the new monthly payroll (receiving additional pay for days owing from September 2020).

This is an in year pressure only and should not be an issue in future years.

5.1.20 These adverse variances have been offset by two main favourable variances:-

5.1.21 ***Cross Cutting Budgets - £742,410***

5.1.22 Commercial & Contract Management (£496,410) – This budget has been set up to fund contract price increases during 2020/2021, that cannot be managed within portfolio budgets. However, no requests for funding have been considered to date.

5.1.23 The Transformation Fund of £492,000 has been assumed to be 50% committed at this stage, to progress and support the Bridging the Gap programme. However, the only transformation project that has been considered to date was the business case for the development of the Festival Park estate.

5.1.24 ***Departmental Budgets - £401,734***

5.1.25 The forecast favourable variance mainly relates to employee related savings due to vacant posts (as a result of long term/new secondments), maternity leave, staff on temporary reduced hours and the utilisation of one-off grant funding. In addition, the delayed implementation of the Commercial Services restructure has further increased this favourable variance.

5.1.26 ***Council Tax Collection - £166,870***

5.1.27 The forecasted favourable variance mainly relates to an increase in the Surplus on Collection income budget.

5.1.28 **Social Services – £109,000 favourable variance (quarter 2 £116,000 favourable variance)**

5.1.29 The forecast is made up of the following main variances:

- Children's Services
There is an overall adverse variance of £468,000 (£58,000 adverse variance in quarter 2) which is mainly due to the continuing cost pressure in legal fees resulting from court proceedings in relation to Children Looked After.

5.1.30 The adverse variance have been offset by the following areas:-

- Adult Services
The favourable variance of £518,000 is mainly due to the application of ICF and Home First Grant funding for a number of established posts and the significant loss of income within Provider Services has been offset by the loss of income grant from Welsh Government and a reduction in staffing cover costs. There has been an assumption that Day Services will not resume service until the end of the calendar year.
- Support Services and Management Costs
The favourable variance of £60,000 is due to accumulated underspends in staffing costs, travelling expenses and Supplies and Services within the departmental budget and the Workforce Development Plan budget.

5.1.31 **Education and Leisure – £227,000 favourable variance (quarter 2 £293,000 favourable variance)**

5.1.32 As the Leisure Services budget now falls under the remit of the Corporate Director of Education, the relevant budgets are grouped together in this section. There are five main areas of favourable variances:

- School Budget Supporting SEN £13,000 favourable variance (£106,000 favourable variance in quarter 2)– relating mainly to a higher than estimated number of out of county placements in independent SEN schools.
- Assuring Access £33,000 favourable variance (£27,000 favourable in quarter 2)– relating mainly to the 25% agreed reduction on Home to School Transport contracts. In addition, an estimated increase in Home to School Transport for pupils attending Pen y Cwm School has been forecast.
- LEA Budget Supporting SEN £70,000 favourable variance (£77,000 favourable variance in quarter 2) – relating to the secondment income for the Principal School Psychologist.
- Home to College Transport £32,000 favourable variance (no change from the quarter 2 variance)- relating a saving from the non-payment of travel passes for the summer term 2020.

- Strategic Management £35,000 favourable variance (no change from the quarter 2 variance) – relating to pension contributions to the local government pension scheme for school based staff.
- Departmental budget - £37,000 favourable variance (£11,000 adverse variance in quarter 2) – mainly relating to the forecast delay in the appointment of the Head of School Improvement & Inclusion post.

5.1.33 **Economy – £163,000 adverse variance (quarter 2 £221,000 adverse variance)**

5.1.34 The forecast is made up of the following main variances:-

- Industrial Units £123,000 adverse variance – down from £182,000 in quarter 2, as a result of a loss of income claim. At present the adverse variance relates to a contingency for loss of rental income for 6 months from tenants who are deemed high risk in terms of rent payment (amounting to approx. £100,000). Work is ongoing to secure rent repayment agreements.
- Estates Non Rechargeable £11,000 adverse variance – The impact on COVID-19 on the collection of ground rents, albeit an improvement on the quarter 1 forecast of a £55,000 adverse variance. At this stage it is unclear if this income will be lost to the Council or the collection is delayed.

5.1.35 **Environment Portfolio – £432,000 adverse variance (quarter 2 £402,000 adverse variance)**

5.1.36 The forecast is made up of the following main variances:

- Increased salary costs of £111,000 as a result of the revised single pay date. These will be one-off in year only costs for 2020/2021.
- Waste collection, transfer and disposal which is forecasting an adverse variance of £0.315m, mainly due to:
 - Additional cost of 2 Waste Wardens which cannot be met within existing resources.
 - An increase in residual waste tonnages during the lockdown period, which has only been partly offset by the WG Hardship Fund.
 - There is a decrease in recycle income of £90,000 compared to financial year 2019/2020. This is due to fluctuations in the market prices and a general downturn in activity. Only the decrease in income from the plastics, cardboard and textiles market has been directly affected by Covid-19 and hardship funding has been built in to partly offset this decrease.
 - The delay to the opening of the HWRC as a result of Covid-19, has impacted on the forecast increase in the volume and sale of recycle material.
 - An increase in green waste recycling costs - £40,000 mainly as a result of the contractor closing for business which resulted in a contingency arrangement put in place at short notice, which has been costly. There is

now a new contract in place for a longer term solution. The increased tonnage collected during the first lock down period has been partly been offset by the WG Hardship Fund.

5.1.37 **Cross cutting issues**

5.1.38 There are some areas of expenditure which will see reductions across a number of portfolios:

- Car allowances – an increase in home working and the transfer of meetings online has led to a significant reduction in claims. For example, there has been a reduction in expenditure of approximately £238,000 comparing April to December 2020 to the previous financial year.
- Energy costs – the closure of some Council buildings and schools has led to a reduction in expenditure. For information, there has been a reduction in expenditure of approximately £106,000 comparing April to December 2020 to the previous financial year.
- There are also a number of vacant posts as at 31st December 2020 (together with the monthly salary plus oncost value) in each portfolio, *where the vacant post has not been used to offset cost pressures elsewhere* and excluding grant funded posts (see Appendix 6). The Appendix indicates that there are currently 21 vacant posts at a total monthly salary value of £80,000 in this category. This equates to a potential saving of £240,000 to the end of the financial year (should the posts not be filled). The Appendix also includes information relating to vacant posts that are being held vacant to offset cost pressures for varying periods of time, at a total monthly salary value of £12,000.

Additional costs of £111,000 will be incurred in the 2020/2021 financial year as a result of transferring staff paid on a 4 weekly basis to a monthly basis. period. In previous years the 4 weekly pay period ended in the middle of March and pay for the latter March period was accounted for in the following financial year. However, this will be a one-off cost for the 2020/2021 financial year.

5.1.39 **Fees & Charges**

5.1.40 The 2020/2021 portfolio estimates include income budgets in relation to fees & charges (excluding Council Tax) of £14.8m across all portfolios. Attached at Appendix 3 is an analysis of income received against budget for the financial year for individual portfolios, and current forecast indicates an adverse variance against this target of £1.44m, primarily relating to lost income in the sale of recycle, charges for Community Care and rental income for Industrial Units.

5.1.41 Whilst the analysis of fees and charges is useful, it should not be considered in isolation, as elements of any shortfall within Portfolios can be inextricably linked to underspends in expenditure within the same budget heading. Where this is the case, budget holders should action budget virements to ensure that the income targets reflect more accurately expected income. Likewise, any over

achievement in income which offset overspends in expenditure within the same budget, should be treated in the same way.

5.1.42 Bridging the Gap Programme

5.1.43 The target for the financial achievement of the Strategic Business Reviews in 2020/2021 is £1.465m. Many of the proposals relate to income generation / maximisation and therefore these areas have been factored into the fees and charges information contained within Appendix 3. An overall summary of financial progress within each proposal is attached as Appendix 5.

5.1.44 Appendix 5 forecasts that £1.218m (83%) of savings will be achieved in this financial year. This forecast will be updated for the final quarter out turn position and is therefore subject to change.

5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions

5.2.1 Grants form a significant element of the Council's income and support the delivery of priority services to the people of Blaenau Gwent. There is a risk that a reduction or cessation of grant funding will result in service levels reducing or services no longer being delivered.

5.2.2 A grants register has been developed and is being maintained and will be considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5.2.3 There is a risk that Action Plans will not address the cost pressures identified.

5.2.4 Action Plans have been developed, identifying actions to mitigate the forecast cost pressure. The Action Plans will be monitored as part of the Budget Monitoring and Reporting Framework and the impact reported to the Joint Budget Scrutiny Committee, Executive Committee and the Cost Pressure Sub Group.

5.2.5 Savings to date will have been factored into the current forecast. However, some will continue beyond the lockdown period and could contribute towards forecast cost pressures.

5.2.6 There is a risk that Covid-19 will continue into the medium/long term, impacting on Council services and budgets. This risk can be mitigated by the continuation of processes that the Council has introduced since March 2020 eg prioritising services, redeployment of staff, home working.

5.2.7 There is a risk that Welsh Government will not provide Hardship funding/loss of income funding for all cost pressures identified. This risk can be mitigated by a continuing dialogue and lobbying with Welsh Government, through the WLGA and the continuing development of action plans by budget holders.

5.2.8 There is a risk of increase costs for food, fuel and other essential goods and services following the ongoing situation regarding the U.K. Exiting the E.U..

- 5.2.9 The UK Exiting the EU has been added as an organisational risk to the corporate risk register, whilst a separate, more detailed high level action plan has been developed and is being monitored by the Core Planning Group.
- 5.3 Legal
N/A
- 5.4 Human Resources
N/A
6. **Supporting Evidence**
- 6.1 **Performance Information and Data**
- 6.1.1 A summary page for each portfolio is contained in Appendices 2a to 2g.
- 6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**
- 6.2.1 The report details the financial implications for the Council in providing services to the communities of Blaenau Gwent.
- 6.3 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**
- 6.3.1 CLT have considered the forecast financial position for 2020/2021 (as 31st December 2020).
- 6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**
- 6.4.1 For new and emerging cost pressures identified during the financial year, budget holders have produced Action Plans which should address the cost pressure during the year. These Action Plans will form part of the quarterly budget reports and will be submitted to the Cost Pressure Sub Group for scrutiny, challenge and monitoring.
- 6.4.2 Cost Pressures are also considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 6.5 **Preventative focus**
- 6.5.1 Budget holders will continue to develop and monitor Action Plans which should mitigate the forecast adverse variance during the financial year. It may be necessary to implement further actions including maintaining vacant posts and limiting non- essential spend during the remainder of the financial year, where it is possible to do so, to prevent any unplanned draw from reserves at the year end.
- 6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**
- 6.6.1 Accountancy works closely with budget holders during the financial year in producing the financial forecast, identifying cost pressures and in developing Action Plans.

6.7 *Integration*
 N/A

6.8 **EqlA**

6.8.1 All Bridging the Gap Projects that were approved as part of the budget setting process had gone through the EqlA process.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Financial reporting to Joint Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Committee is carried out on a quarterly basis. Where services are reporting significant cost pressures, there will be a requirement for Budget Holders to develop and implement Action Plans these will be reported to the Cost Pressure Sub Group, on a quarterly basis.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Appendix 3

Appendix 4

Appendix 5

Appendix 6

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SUMMARY OF MAIN FORECAST ADVERSE VARIANCES 2020/2021

		<u>Forecast Adverse Variance at September 2020</u> <u>£</u>	<u>Forecast Adverse Variance at December 2020</u> <u>£</u>	<u>Action Plan Ref:</u>
	<u>Adverse variances in Excess of £15,000</u>			
1.	<u>Corporate Services</u>			
	ICT Service	(160,000)	(160,000)	4a
	Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths	(40,798)	(33,431)	4a
	Council Tax Reduction Scheme	(541,007)	(229,959)	4a
	Apprenticeship Levy	5,379	(21,379)	4a
2.	<u>Social Services</u>			
	<i>Childrens Services:</i>			
	Legal Costs	(499,699)	(773,227)	4b
3.	<u>Economy</u>			
	Nursery Units	(181,869)	(123,451)	4c
4.	<u>Environment</u>			
	Waste Services	(331,583)	(315,231)	4d
	Grounds Maintenance	(17,000)	42,302	4d
	Corporate Landlord	(57,536)	(65,067)	4d
	Bridge Maintenance	(13,383)	(24,522)	4d
	Environmental Health	(89,044)	(64,901)	4d
	Cwmcrachen Caravan Site	(23,473)	(33,697)	4d
5.	<u>Planning & Licensing</u>			
	Planning Committee – Dealing with Applications	(31,293)	(31,293)	4e
	Licensing Committee	(26,419)	(26,733)	4e

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CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2020/2021	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2021	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at Sept 20
	£	£	£	£
SUMMARY				
DEPARTMENTAL AND OTHER RECHARGEABLE SERVICES				
Corporate Services Department	(72,070)	(406,252)	334,182	203,049
Resources Department	(28,190)	(95,742)	67,552	(541)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>(100,260)</i>	<i>(501,994)</i>	<i>401,734</i>	<i>202,508</i>
COMMERCIAL SERVICES				
Archives	151,640	142,789	8,851	8,851
Festival Park	92,820	98,188	(5,368)	(5,368)
Housing Benefit	(117,130)	(120,894)	3,764	3,762
ICT Service	479,400	639,400	(160,000)	(160,000)
Cross Cutting	(50,000)	(50,000)	0	0
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>556,730</i>	<i>709,483</i>	<i>(152,753)</i>	<i>(152,755)</i>
LEGAL & CORPORATE COMPLIANCE SERVICES				
Registration of Electors	16,670	16,853	(183)	3,082
Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths	33,630	67,061	(33,431)	(40,798)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>50,300</i>	<i>83,914</i>	<i>(33,614)</i>	<i>(37,716)</i>
GOVERNANCE & PARTNERSHIP SERVICES				
Corporate Management	107,370	112,009	(4,639)	(4,639)
Democratic Representation and Management	1,239,940	1,232,498	7,442	(2,229)
CCTV Cameras	84,000	71,215	12,785	16,563
Civil Contingencies	100,820	100,648	172	718
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>1,532,130</i>	<i>1,516,370</i>	<i>15,760</i>	<i>10,413</i>
RESOURCES SERVICES				
Corporate Management	338,810	318,609	20,201	7,475
Non Distributed Costs	827,990	825,408	2,582	2,582
Apprenticeship Levy	320,000	341,379	(21,379)	5,378
Council Tax Collection	(1,315,610)	(1,482,480)	166,870	90,846
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	9,257,740	9,487,699	(229,959)	(541,007)
N.N.D.R. Collection	(107,040)	(113,769)	6,729	3,217
Grants and Subscriptions	57,270	57,270	0	0
Cross Cutting Budget	988,410	246,000	742,410	496,410
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>10,367,570</i>	<i>9,680,114</i>	<i>687,456</i>	<i>64,902</i>
CORPORATE CHARGES				
Corporate Recharges	4,319,750	4,319,737	13	13
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>4,319,750</i>	<i>4,319,737</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>13</i>
Covid-19 Related Expenditure	0	0	0	0
CORPORATE SERVICES TOTAL EXPENDITURE	16,726,220	15,807,625	918,595	87,365

SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2020/2021	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2021	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at Sept 20
	£	£	£	£
SUMMARY				
<u>SOCIAL SERVICES</u>				
Children's Services - Commissioning and Social Work	3,562,584	3,494,958	67,626	69,691
Looked After Children	6,894,281	7,471,814	(577,533)	(236,735)
Family Support Services	188,603	186,795	1,808	5,383
Youth Justice	232,922	228,118	4,804	4,804
Other Children's and Family Services	2,369,411	2,334,401	35,010	98,763
Older People Aged 65 or Over	5,947,020	5,655,668	291,352	92,627
Adults Aged Under 65 with a Physical Disability or Sensory Impairment	41,800	43,571	(1,771)	(1,771)
Adults Aged Under 65 with Learning Disabilities	3,687,899	3,447,477	240,422	66,641
Adults Aged Under 65 with Mental Health Needs	596,710	607,875	(11,165)	(22,306)
Other Adult Services	357,910	345,682	12,228	2,032
Community Care	15,486,780	15,500,228	(13,448)	(12,518)
Support Service and Management Costs	1,023,280	963,132	60,148	49,875
Corporate Recharges	4,962,770	4,962,772	(2)	(2)
Social Services COVID-19 Costs	0		0	0
Sub Total	45,351,970	45,242,491	109,479	116,484
 Covid-19 Related Expenditure	 0	 2,275,384	 (2,275,384)	 (1,473,225)
Total Expenditure	45,351,970	47,517,875	(2,165,905)	(1,356,741)

EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2020/2021	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2021	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at Sept 20
	£	£	£	£
SUMMARY				
EDUCATION				
SCHOOLS BUDGET				
Individual Schools Budget	45,069,380	45,069,380	0	0
Education Improvement Grant	257,800	267,601	(9,801)	(11,730)
Other Costs	662,320	662,834	(514)	(523)
Supporting Special Education Needs	1,707,570	1,694,346	13,224	105,810
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>47,697,070</i>	<i>47,694,161</i>	<i>2,909</i>	<i>93,557</i>
LEA BUDGET				
Strategic Management	2,282,620	2,247,456	35,164	35,164
Assuring Access to Schools	2,133,370	2,100,217	33,153	27,248
Facilitating School Improvement	419,760	400,330	19,430	20,113
Supporting Special Education Needs	337,940	268,018	69,922	77,261
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>5,173,690</i>	<i>5,016,021</i>	<i>157,669</i>	<i>159,786</i>
OTHER EDUCATION SERVICES				
Further Education and Training	133,290	101,450	31,840	31,840
Youth Service	380,873	376,380	4,493	4,774
Other Expenditure	141,037	155,983	(14,946)	5,487
Education Departmental Budget	0	(36,761)	36,761	(10,877)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>655,200</i>	<i>597,052</i>	<i>58,148</i>	<i>31,224</i>
CORPORATE CHARGES				
Corporate Support Recharges	4,225,700	4,225,700	0	0
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>4,225,700</i>	<i>4,225,700</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
Covid-19 Related Expenditure	0	284,651	(284,651)	(59,140)
EDUCATION TOTAL EXPENDITURE	57,751,660	57,817,585	(65,925)	225,427
LEISURE TRUSTS				
LEISURE TRUSTS				
Leisure Trusts	3,215,660	3,232,688	(17,028)	(17,028)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>3,215,660</i>	<i>3,232,688</i>	<i>(17,028)</i>	<i>(17,028)</i>
RETAINED SERVICES				
Corporate Recharges	1,164,900	1,139,811	25,089	24,579
General Reserve Funding Re: Staff Support	0	0	0	0
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>1,164,900</i>	<i>1,139,811</i>	<i>25,089</i>	<i>24,579</i>
LEISURE TRUSTS TOTAL EXPENDITURE	4,380,560	4,372,499	8,061	7,551

ECONOMY PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2020/2021	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2021	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at Sept 20
	£	£	£	£
SUMMARY				
DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES				
Economic Strategy and Development - Departmental Budget	(1,240)	13,724	(14,964)	(14,964)
Estates Management - Rechargeable	0	8,751	(8,751)	(8,751)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>(1,240)</u>	<u>22,475</u>	<u>(23,715)</u>	<u>(23,715)</u>
ECONOMY SERVICES				
Affordable Housing	0		0	0
Aspire	0		0	0
Community Benefits Investment	0		0	0
CSCS	(10,000)	2,913	(12,913)	(12,913)
Destination Management	16,150	16,150	0	0
DRivE	0		0	0
Financial Support to Business	4,140	4,140	0	0
General Offices	(75,762)	(75,508)	(254)	(254)
Industrial Land	6,946	(2,450)	9,396	9,396
Inspire	0		0	0
Nursery Units/Misc. Industrial Premises	(827,315)	(703,864)	(123,451)	(181,869)
Pentagon	0		0	0
Regeneration Projects	4,900	6,075	(1,175)	(1,175)
Resilient Project	0		0	0
Estates Management Non Rechargeable	(92,998)	(82,229)	(10,769)	(10,769)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>(973,939)</u>	<u>(834,773)</u>	<u>(139,166)</u>	<u>(197,584)</u>
Corporate Recharges	2,189,880	2,189,880	0	0
Total Expenditure	<u><u>1,214,701</u></u>	<u><u>1,377,582</u></u>	<u><u>(162,881)</u></u>	<u><u>(221,299)</u></u>

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2020/2021	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2021	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at Sept 20
	£	£	£	£
SUMMARY				
<u>COMMUNITY SERVICES</u>				
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>				
Environment Department - Corpora	0	(34,138)	34,138	9,463
Environmental Services Division	0	28,195	(28,195)	(30,984)
Technical Services - Engineering & Property Management	(6,386)	(6,386)	0	0
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>(6,386)</i>	<i>(12,329)</i>	<i>5,943</i>	<i>(21,521)</i>
<u>WASTE SERVICES</u>				
Waste Services Team	0	0	0	0
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<u>WASTE COLLECTION</u>				
Household and Trade Waste Collec	612,320	655,044	(42,724)	(29,970)
Recycling Collection	2,012,370	2,079,747	(67,377)	(69,346)
Bulky Waste Collection	(4,224)	(2,480)	(1,744)	5,296
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>2,620,466</i>	<i>2,732,311</i>	<i>(111,845)</i>	<i>(94,020)</i>
<u>WASTE TRANSFER</u>				
Civic Amenity Sites	247,970	326,364	(78,394)	(88,022)
HWRC Roseheyworth	260,480	78,143	182,337	182,337
Transfer Station	569,370	584,609	(15,239)	(34,508)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>1,077,820</i>	<i>989,116</i>	<i>88,704</i>	<i>59,807</i>
<u>WASTE DISPOSAL</u>				
Disposal Of Waste	999,730	1,063,254	(63,524)	(63,635)
Recycling Disposal	18,294	213,217	(194,923)	(200,092)
Trade Waste Collection, Transfer &	(30,974)	2,669	(33,643)	(33,643)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>987,050</i>	<i>1,279,140</i>	<i>(292,090)</i>	<i>(297,370)</i>
<u>PUBLIC SERVICES</u>				
County Borough Cleansing	1,086,700	1,086,694	6	28,878
Cemeteries / Crematorium	(280,381)	(317,608)	37,227	27,404
Community Meals	0	0	0	0
Grounds Maintenance	942,857	900,555	42,302	(17,000)
Countryside Recreation Sites	34,690	32,608	2,082	2,082
General Entertainment	2,530	2,530	0	0
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>1,786,396</i>	<i>1,704,779</i>	<i>81,617</i>	<i>41,364</i>
<u>FACILITIES MANAGEMENT</u>				
Corporate Landlord	1,235,205	1,300,272	(65,067)	(57,536)

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2020/2021	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2021	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at Sept 20
	£	£	£	£
Corporate Property	11,300	11,297	3	2
Building Cleaning	70,240	70,240	0	0
Catering Account	137,462	137,462	0	0
Appetite For Life	42,854	42,854	0	0
School Breakfast Club	384,010	370,574	13,436	12,185
Sub Total	1,881,071	1,932,699	(51,628)	(45,349)

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2020/2021	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2021	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at Sept 20
	£	£	£	£
<u>HIGHWAYS & ROADS SERVICES</u>				
Highways - Street Care Team	0	2,233	(2,233)	(1,754)
Non Operational Land	1,460	0	1,460	1,460
Licensing (Highway Permits)	(34,018)	(34,137)	119	0
Shopping Arcade, Abertillery	2,780	2,263	517	675
Road and Street Works Acts	(33,496)	(33,496)	0	5,789
Multi-Storey Car Parks	272,740	272,740	0	0
On Street Parking	1,100	1,100	0	0
Surface Car Parks	31,790	32,138	(348)	0
Public Transport Co-Ordination	910	910	0	0
Bridges	77,590	102,112	(24,522)	(13,383)
Structural Maintenance (Principal and Other Roads)	199,404	199,404	0	(1,890)
Environmental Maintenance (Principal and Other Roads)	19,440	19,440	0	0
Safety Maintenance (Principal and Other Roads)	71,596	71,596	0	143
Routine Repairs (Principal and Other Roads)	809,918	798,650	11,268	12,312
Street Lighting	1,193,090	1,193,090	0	0
Winter Maintenance	390,340	390,340	0	0
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>3,004,644</i>	<i>3,018,383</i>	<i>(13,739)</i>	<i>3,352</i>
<u>TRANSPORT SERVICES</u>				
Traffic Orders	(16,024)	(16,024)	0	0
Highways Adoptions	(9,560)	(9,560)	0	0
Traffic / Accident Research	15,690	15,690	0	0
Traffic Management	6,760	7,927	(1,167)	0
Civil Parking Enforcement	0	0	0	0
Road Safety Education	18,340	18,340	0	0
Crossing Patrols	149,220	146,785	2,435	2,603
Concessionary fares and Support to Operators	281,060	280,204	856	0
Local Transport Plans	2,620	2,620	0	0
Home to School Transport	0	0	0	0
Transport and Heavy Plant	58,850	58,850	0	0
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>506,956</i>	<i>504,832</i>	<i>2,124</i>	<i>2,603</i>
<u>CULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES</u>				
General Administration and Market:	(23,870)	(23,870)	0	0
Countryside Programme and Mana	1,990	1,990	0	0
Landscaping and Afforestation	20,470	20,470	0	0
Reservoirs, Tips, Quarries and Mine	10,130	10,130	0	0
Flood Defence And Land Drainage	55,380	55,380	0	0
ENRaW	0	0	0	0
City Deal	62,700	62,700	0	0
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>126,800</i>	<i>126,800</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2020/2021	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2021	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at Sept 20
	£	£	£	£
COMMUNITY SERVICES TOTAL EXPENDITURE	11,984,817	12,275,731	(290,914)	(351,134)

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2020/2021	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2021	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at Sept 20
	£	£	£	£
<u>PUBLIC PROTECTION</u>				
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>				
Environmental Health	18,636	83,538	(64,902)	(89,044)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>18,636</i>	<i>83,538</i>	<i>(64,902)</i>	<i>(89,044)</i>
<u>CARAVAN SITES</u>				
Cwmcrachen Caravan Site	(54,735)	(21,038)	(33,697)	(23,473)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>(54,735)</i>	<i>(21,038)</i>	<i>(33,697)</i>	<i>(23,473)</i>
<u>ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH</u>				
Food Safety	6,311	8,359	(2,048)	(2,048)
Control of Pollution	9,717	13,180	(3,463)	(3,463)
Dog Wardens	1,512	2,630	(1,118)	(1,118)
Animal Health and Welfare	23,358	20,000	3,358	3,358
Pest Control	62,000	62,509	(509)	(509)
Littering and Dog Control Orders	0	2,416	(2,416)	(2,744)
Health and Safety at Work (Comm)	1,514	1,105	409	259
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>104,412</i>	<i>110,200</i>	<i>(5,788)</i>	<i>(6,266)</i>
<u>HOUSING SERVICES</u>				
Homelessness	244,683	151,443	93,240	79,851
20 Church Street	16,874	19,199	(2,325)	(1,818)
General Properties	(8,164)	(7,416)	(748)	(748)
Housing Access	48,968	44,436	4,532	17,877
Works in Default	17	4,187	(4,170)	(4,170)
Disabled Facilities Grants	1,040	863	177	177
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>303,418</i>	<i>212,713</i>	<i>90,705</i>	<i>91,169</i>
<u>TRADING STANDARDS</u>				
Trading Standards	(18,000)	(26,129)	8,129	8,310
Inspection and Enforcement	4,388	3,230	1,158	1,158
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>(13,612)</i>	<i>(22,899)</i>	<i>9,286</i>	<i>9,468</i>
PUBLIC PROTECTION TOTAL EXPENDITURE	358,119	362,514	(4,395)	(18,146)

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2020/2021	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2021	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at Sept 20
	£	£	£	£
<u>CORPORATE CHARGES</u>				
Fire Service	3,405,680	3,405,680	0	0
Coroner's Court	120,830	112,766	8,064	0
Corporate Recharges	9,662,500	9,662,500	0	(131)
Procurement Saving	0	0	0	0
Prudential Borrowing	0	0	0	0
Flood Costs	0	32,845	(32,845)	(32,845)
Single Payroll System				
CORPORATE CHARGES TOTAL EXPENDITURE	13,189,010	13,213,791	(24,781)	(32,976)
 Covid-19 Related Expenditure	 0	 2,778,489	 (2,778,489)	 (1,701,174)
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	25,531,946	28,630,525	(3,098,579)	(2,103,430)
 Net Expenditure before covid / cross cutting costs		25,852,036	(320,090)	(402,256)
 Cross cutting - single payroll	0	111,480	(111,480)	0
 Net Expenditure		25,963,516	(431,570)	(402,256)

PLANNING COMMITTEE AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Item	Revised Estimate 2020/2021	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2021	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at Sept 20
	£	£	£	£
PLANNING COMMITTEE SUMMARY				
<u>BUILDING CONTROL</u>				
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>				
Building Control	0		0	0
<u>BUILDING CONTROL SERVICES</u>				
Building Regulations	3,140	3,140	0	0
Dangerous Structures	22,200	18,018	4,182	4,182
<i>Building Control Total Expenditure</i>	<u>25,340</u>	<u>21,158</u>	<u>4,182</u>	<u>4,182</u>
<u>DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT</u>				
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>				
Development Management	0	(12,641)	12,641	12,641
<u>DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICES</u>				
Dealing with Applications	(202,740)	(171,447)	(31,293)	(31,293)
Planning Appeals	3,190	3,193	(3)	(3)
Enforcement	(30)	3	(33)	(33)
<i>Development Management Total Expenditure</i>	<u>(199,580)</u>	<u>(180,892)</u>	<u>(18,688)</u>	<u>(18,688)</u>
<u>DEVELOPMENT PLANS</u>				
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>				
Development Plans	0	(59)	59	59
<u>DEVELOPMENT PLANS SERVICES</u>				
Development Plans	34,080	34,080	0	0
<i>Development Plans Total Expenditure</i>	<u>34,080</u>	<u>34,021</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>59</u>
Corporate Recharges	1,257,740	1,257,740	0	0
Funding from General Reserves	0		0	0
Covid-19 Related Expenditure	0		0	0
Planning Committee Total Expenditure	<u>1,117,580</u>	<u>1,132,027</u>	<u>(14,447)</u>	<u>(14,447)</u>
LICENSING COMMITTEE SUMMARY				
Licensing	33,360	60,093	(26,733)	(26,419)
Internal Recharges	37,010	37,010	0	0
Funding from General Reserves	0	0	0	0
Covid-19 Related Expenditure	0	0	0	0
Licensing Committee Total Expenditure	<u>70,370</u>	<u>97,103</u>	<u>(26,733)</u>	<u>(26,419)</u>

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Fees and Charges Forecast 2020/2021 (As at December 2020)

Portfolio	Service	Description of Income	Income Source	Revised Estimate 2020/2021	Forecast	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at Sept 2020	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at June 2020
				£	£	£	£	£
Fees & Charges								
Corporate Services	Communications	Advertising	Fees & Charges	9,910	400	(9,510)	(18,510)	(19,010)
Corporate Services	Business Support	External Printing and photocopying charges.	Fees & Charges	8,000	5,392	(2,608)	(5,964)	(4,238)
Corporate Services	Legal Fees	Legal Charges	Fees & Charges	14,330	3,044	(11,286)	(11,263)	(12,440)
Corporate Services	Corporate Support	Land Charges	Fixed - Set Locally	32,150	30,070	(2,080)	(8,694)	(5,631)
Economy	General Offices	Rental Income	Fees & Charges	64,969	55,867	(9,102)	(8,992)	(14,499)
Economy	Departmental	Reimbursement of staff costs and receipts for external works	SLA	66,494	34,117	(32,377)	(33,026)	19,073
Environment	Household and Trade Waste Collection		Fees & Charges	0		0	0	0
Environment	Recycling Collection	Recycling Collection & Disposal Income - Commercial Customers	Fees & Charges	0		0	0	0
Environment	Trade Waste	Trade Waste Collection & Disposal Income - Commercial Customers	Fees & Charges	140,593	102,817	(37,776)	(8,201)	(130,624)
Environment	Bulky Waste Collection	Bulky Waste Collection	Fees & Charges	71,687	71,173	(514)	3,835	(23,281)
Environment	Recycling Disposal	Sale of Recyclate Materials	Fees & Charges	629,721	469,915	(159,806)	(211,344)	(272,605)
Environment	County Borough Cleansing	C&CR - External Cleansing Works	Fees & Charges	210	0	(210)	(210)	(210)
Environment	Cemeteries / Crematorium	Burial Fees	Fees & Charges	495,080	479,138	(15,942)	(37,308)	101,690
Environment	Cemeteries / Crematorium	General Properties	Fees & Charges	2,630	3,000	370	370	420
Social Services	Meals On Wheels	Sale of Meals	Fees & Charges	175,280	169,128	(6,152)	694	(29,244)
Environment	Grounds Maintenance	Income from Letting of Playing Fields, Ground Rent & Way Leaves	Fees & Charges	59,901	36,810	(23,091)	6,471	22,762
Environment	General Properties	Rental Income	Fees & Charges	8,015	7,416	(599)	(599)	(599)
Environment	Cwmcrachen Caravan Site	Rental	Fees & Charges	113,947	109,984	(3,963)	(3,963)	(10,808)
Environment	Dog Wardens	Byelaw Enforcement Fees	Fees & Charges	5,665	895	(4,770)	(4,770)	(5,171)
Environment	Corporate Landlord	Civic Centre - Rental of Land	Miscellaneous	797	693	(104)	(104)	(104)
Environment	School Catering Service	Sale of Meals		814,091	869,348	55,257	15,343	330
Financial Management and Strategy	Accountancy Division	Administration charges for administering Appointments	Fees & Charges	26,030	14,864	(11,166)	(11,447)	(11,405)
Infrastructure	Technical Services - Engineering & Property Management	Reimbursement of staff costs and receipts for external works	Fees & Charges	410,724	464,475	53,751	65,755	36,589
Infrastructure	FEP - Increase in Income	Fees	Fees & Charges	0	0	0	0	(52,750)
Infrastructure	Licensing (Highway Permits)	Skips & Scaffolding Permits	Fees & Charges	34,173	34,292	119	0	(8,167)
Infrastructure	General Administration and Markets	Rental income	Fees & Charges	23,870	23,870	0	0	(14,348)
Infrastructure	Traffic Orders	Income from contractors, Welsh Water etc. for road works	Fees & Charges	24,324	24,324	0	0	0
Infrastructure	Road and Street Works Acts	Inspection fees, section 74's, FPN, coring, Dropped kerbs etc.	Fees & Charges	106,380	106,380	0	26,821	0
Infrastructure	Highways Adoptions	Highway Searches	Fees & Charges	9,563	9,563	0	0	0
Infrastructure	Multi-storey Carparks	Charge to Coleg Gwent	Fees & Charges	30,000	30,000	0	0	0
Infrastructure	Civil Parking Enforcement	FPN's	Fees & Charges	105,000	83,010	(21,990)	(9,000)	(8,000)
Infrastructure	Public Transport Co-Ordination	Charge to bus companies for use of Brynmawr Bus Station	Fees & Charges	234	234	0	0	0
Licensing	Hackney Carriages	Licence Fees	Fees & Charges	78,030	47,769	(30,261)	(29,035)	(30,649)
Licensing	Private Hire Vehicles	Licence Fees	Fees & Charges	1,830	224	(1,606)	(1,647)	(1,591)
Licensing	Scrap Metal	Sale of Scrap Metal	Fees & Charges	600	424	(176)	(176)	(161)
Planning	Enforcement	Enforcement Fees	Fees & Charges	610	0	(610)	(610)	(610)
Planning	Development Plans	Heritage Officer Income	Fees & Charges	0	0	0	0	0
Social Services	Other Children's and Family Services	Training Fees (Early Years tied in with expenditure which is set	Fees & Charges	0		0	0	0
Social Services	Older People aged 65 or over	Fees & Charges in respect of Care (Cwrt Mytton, Home Care, Extra Care & Joint Day Care Unit)	Fees & Charges	582,720	530,057	(52,663)	(54,112)	(58,501)
Social Services	Adults aged under 65 with Learning Disabilities	Fees & Charges in respect of Care (Augusta, Supported Living Bungalows & Community Options)	Fees & Charges	337,580	105,018	(232,562)	(196,052)	(165,005)
Social Services	Adults aged under 65 with Mental Health Needs	Fees & Charges in respect of Care (Vision House & Ysbyty'r Tri Chwm)	Fees & Charges	24,920	7,611	(17,309)	(23,246)	(20,307)
Social Services	Support Service and Management Costs	Fees & Charges in respect of Piper Alarms (IAA)	Fees & Charges	0	0	0	0	0
		Sub - Total		4,510,058	3,931,322	(578,736)	(558,984)	(719,094)

Fees and Charges Forecast 2020/2021 (As at December 2020)

Portfolio	Service	Description of Income	Income Source	Revised Estimate 2020/2021	Forecast	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at Sept 2020	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at June 2020
				£	£	£	£	£
Fees & Charges - Set Nationally								
Corporate Services	Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths	Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths	Fixed - Set Nationally	94,770	54,997	(39,773)	(45,442)	(69,770)
Environment	Food Safety	Hygiene ratings & Health Certificates	Fixed - Set Nationally	2,040	1,740	(300)	3,280	3,280
Environment	Control of Pollution	Environmental Permits	Fixed - Set Nationally	16,563	9,855	(6,708)	(6,708)	1,080
Environment	Health and Safety at Work (Commercial Prem.)	Petroleum + Tattoo Licences	Fixed - Set Nationally	0	486	486	586	250
Environment	Trading Standards	Explosives Licences	Fixed - Set Nationally	776	735	(41)	(41)	(41)
Licensing	Licence Fees	Various (Gambling, Premises/ Clubs & Street Trading)	Fixed - Set Nationally	57,900	57,072	(828)	(1,063)	1,239
Planning	Dealing with Applications	Planning Application Fees	Fees & Charges	213,360	150,315	(63,045)	(36,772)	(102,495)
Planning	Building Regulations	Building Regulation Fees	Fixed - Set Nationally	95,620	75,079	(20,541)	0	0
Social Services	Older People aged 65 or over	CHC Income (Home Care)	Fixed - Set Nationally	0	70,403	70,403	70,403	70,403
Social Services	Adults aged under 65 with Learning Disabilities	CHC Income (Augusta House; Supported Living Bungalows; Community Options)	Fixed - Set Nationally	50,000	34,028	(15,972)	(20,018)	40,952
Social Services	Community Care	Fees & Charges in respect of Care	Fixed - Set Nationally	3,412,830	3,112,595	(300,235)	(208,625)	(270,905)
Social Services	Older People aged 65 or over	Sale of Property (Cwrt Mytton)	Fixed - Set Nationally	0	0	0	16,886	0
Social Services	Community Care	Sale of Property	Fixed - Set Nationally	292,340	292,339	(1)	0	0
Social Services	Community Care	CHC Income	Fixed - Set Nationally	391,000	25,108	(365,892)	(378,656)	0
Social Services	Support Service and Management Costs	CHC Income (Adult Service Managers)	Fixed - Set Nationally	0	0	0	0	0
		Sub - Total		4,627,199	3,884,752	(742,447)	(606,170)	(326,007)
Fees & Charges - In Line with Local Agreements								
Economy	Industrial Land	Ground rent and commercial bookings	Fixed - Set Locally	2,824	2,804	(20)	0	0
Economy	Nursery Units/Misc. Industrial Premises	Rental income for industrial units	Fixed - Set Locally	841,195	659,653	(181,542)	(181,542)	(225,763)
Economy	Estates - Non Rechargeable	Ground Rent	Fixed - Set Locally	143,358	117,735	(25,623)	(25,624)	(66,433)
Economy	Financial Support to Business	Ground rent and commercial bookings	Fixed - Set Locally	2,650	2,605	(45)	0	0
Economy	CSCS	Charges for Construction Skills Certificates	Fixed - Set Locally	10,000	3,040	(6,960)	(6,728)	(6,728)
Environment	Corporate Landlord	Little Stars Nursery - Rent (Recovery of costs)	Miscellaneous	8,496	13,287	4,791	3,968	4,443
Education	Inter Authority Recoupment	Charges to other Local Authorities for SEN placements within Blaenau Gwent Schools	Fixed - Set Locally	631,370	793,069	161,699	124,699	204,452
		Sub - Total		1,639,893	1,592,193	(47,700)	(85,227)	(90,029)
		Total - Fees & Charges		10,777,150	9,408,267	(1,368,883)	(1,250,381)	(1,135,129)
SLA								
Aneurin Leisure Trust	SLA Income	Provision of Support Services	SLA	243,600	243,600	0	0	0
Environment	Grounds Maintenance	SLA	SLA	168,220	168,847	627	(20,373)	(144,762)
Environment	Building Maintenance	SLA	SLA	0	0	0	0	0
Financial Management and Strategy	Accountancy Division	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	178,270	178,270	0	0	0
Corporate Services	Organisational Development, Payroll & Health & Safety	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	307,210	307,210	0	0	0
Corporate Services	Legal Fees & GDPR	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	40,350	40,350	0	0	0
Corporate Services	Communications	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	3,130	3,130	0	0	0
Corporate Services	Performance (SIMS Support)	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	74,260	74,260	0	0	0
Corporate Services	Business Support (Courier)	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	5,550	5,550	0	0	0
Financial Management and Strategy	Creditors Division	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	6,230	6,230	0	0	0
Corporate Services	ICT	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	0	0	0	0	0
Environment	School Catering	SLA with Schools (excludes Corporate Landlord)	SLA	1,089,772	1,089,772	0	0	(90,000)
Environment	Cleaning Services	SLA with Schools	SLA	1,069,989	1,069,989	0	0	(270,000)
Infrastructure	CPM - Schools Biodiversity SLA	SLA with Schools	SLA	14,000	7,000	(7,000)	0	0
Infrastructure	Winter Maintenance	SLA with LA's for salt Storage	SLA	13,000	13,000	0	0	0
		Sub - Total		3,213,581	3,207,208	(6,373)	(20,373)	(504,762)

Fees and Charges Forecast 2020/2021 (As at December 2020)

Portfolio	Service	Description of Income	Income Source	Revised Estimate 2020/2021	Forecast	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at Sept 2020	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at June 2020
				£	£	£	£	£
Court Fees/Fixed Penalty Notices/Fines								
Corporate Services	Corporate Services and Strategy	Legal income and land charges. Advertising.	Court Fees/FPN/Fines/Legal	10,000	9,612	(388)	2,873	(1,686)
Education	Welfare Service	Fixed Penalty Notices	Court Fees/FPN/Fines/Legal	2,110	2,110	0	0	0
Environment	Littering and Dog Control Orders	Income in relation to FPNs	Court Fees/FPN/Fines/Legal	128,765	5,875	(122,890)	(123,205)	(92,755)
Corporate Services	Payroll Division	Attachment Orders	Court Fees/FPN/Fines/Legal	1,020	610	(410)	(410)	(478)
Financial Management and Strategy	Council Tax Collection	Court Costs	Court Fees/FPN/Fines/Legal	162,680	151,286	(11,394)	(11,394)	(11,394)
Financial Management and Strategy	NNDR	Court Costs	Court Fees/FPN/Fines/Legal	1,800	1,800	0	0	158
Corporate Services	Housing Benefits Account	Admin Penalties	Court Fees/FPN/Fines/Legal	25,000	25,000	0	0	0
		Sub - Total		331,375	196,293	(135,082)	(132,136)	(106,155)
Consortium Arrangements								
Economy	General Offices	Annual Service & Rental Charge to Torfaen CBC in relation to Archives	Consortium Arrangements	76,438	85,022	8,584	8,583	8,584
Environment	Disposal Of Waste	Contribution from SVWS	Consortium Arrangements	110,000	110,000	0	0	0
Environment	Cemeteries / Crematorium	Crematorium Income - Reallocation of surplus at year end	Consortium Arrangements	131,925	167,114	35,189	35,189	1,766
Environment	20 Church Street	Housing Advice Centre Contribution	Consortium Arrangements	11,975	15,400	3,425	8,425	8,425
Environment	Housing Access	Income from Housing Associations in relation to Administration of the Common Housing Register	Consortium Arrangements	95,564	108,711	13,147	12,522	12,458
Environment	Environmental Health	Public Protection Collaboration with Torfaen CC	Consortium Arrangements	0	0	0	0	0
		Sub - Total		425,902	486,247	60,345	64,719	31,233
Miscellaneous								
Education	Supporting Special Educational Needs	Internal Income - Recovery of pupil lead funding from schools.	Internal Income	50,000	50,000	0	0	0
Corporate Services	Corporate Procurement Division	Rebates - Energy & Randstad	Miscellaneous	95,700	92,410	(3,290)	(3,290)	6,300
Corporate Services	Corporate Procurement Division	Purchase Card Income	Miscellaneous	5,140	13,299	8,159	8,159	(140)
Infrastructure	L&A - Invasive Weeds	Contribution from Caerphilly for Treatment of Knotweed	Miscellaneous	10,000	10,000	0	0	0
		Sub - Total		160,840	165,709	4,869	4,869	6,160
		TOTAL		14,908,848	13,463,724	(1,445,124)	(1,333,302)	(1,708,653)

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Action Plan

Corporate Services

2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4a

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
IT Service	(£160,000)	(£160,000)	(£160,000)	<p><u>Reason for Adverse variance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the original IT Collaboration Business Plan, £100,000 income was built into the budget to be funded from reserves, with the view that future savings, due to merging of software systems, would produce savings and therefore reduce the need of reserve funding. These efficiencies have not been realised as the opportunity for joint contracting with the other partners has not progressed. It is unlikely that this element of the business case will now be realised. In 2020/2021 the budget for the SRS Management Fee did not match the actual charged leaving a shortfall of £4,000. An income line of £29,000 has been injected into the budget for the income from which has PSBA lines. This has never been achieved and therefore creates an ongoing gap. The Information Security service provided by Gwent Police has also increased over the years by £10,000. 	Unknown	Anne-Louise Clark

Action Plan

Corporate Services 2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4a

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Also, Gwent Archives element of the management fee as due to move to Torfaen in 2020/2021. This did not happen and so we need to invoice Gwent Archives. Increase systems costs where the service pledged to pay into the central budget has not been actioned in previous years. <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All IT contracts are now reviewed and re-negotiated through the Procurement team, to ensure that the best terms and conditions are achieved. Following the deployment of Office 365, opportunities to scale back the number of systems operating across the council, are being explored, to reduce costs. The funding for increased systems costs will now be vired from service budgets. <p><u>Updates</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holding £84k refund from SRS, however, this will potentially be transferred to the ICT Reserve to assist with the shortfall in the laptop refresh programme. 		

Action Plan

Corporate Services 2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4a

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot mitigate the management fee increase over and above set estimates. £4k Cannot mitigate Information Security officer. £10K Cannot mitigate PSBA income line. £30k Cannot mitigate the non-achievement of efficiencies savings of £100k Seeking refund for Gwent Archives, due to SLA not being redirected to Torfaen. <p>Cost Pressure identified for 2021/22.</p>		
Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths	(£64,742)	(£40,798)	(£33,431)	<p>Reason for Adverse variance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced income, due to Covid-19 pandemic (e.g. restrictions on wedding ceremonies) <p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of income formed part of the quarter 1 claim to WG for financial support. In addition, The Registrar Service is working to clear the backlog of registration services which could have a positive impact on the forecast level of income by the year end. 	Unknown	Andrea Jones

Action Plan

Corporate Services 2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4a

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
				<p>Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarter 2 has seen a slight improvement in income following the easing of the lockdown. It has been assumed that this level of income will continue for the rest of the financial year however, it could be dependent upon further lockdowns being enforced. Funding of £3,958 from WG regarding loss of income due to Covid-19 has been received. This equates to 50% of our initial claim as it is assumed that income will improve throughout the year. This will be reviewed towards the end of the financial year. Quarter 3 has shown further improvement which will hopefully continue to the end of the financial year therefore reducing the adverse effect of the pandemic. 		
Apprenticeship Levy	£5,559	£5,379	(£21,379)	<p>Reason for Adverse variance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is due to an increase in the NI able pay of staff paid. There was a large increase in this charge in month 7 mainly due to the 	Unknown	Rhian Hayden

Action Plan

Corporate Services

2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4a

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
				<p>take on and backdated pay for TTP staff, large amounts of overtime claims and additional hours (due to Covid-19) and the four weekly staff who transferred over to the new monthly payroll received additional pay for days owing from September.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is an in year pressure only and should not be an issue in future years. <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will be funded by Departmental underspends, a virement will be actioned in quarter 4. 		
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	(£627,383)	(£541,007)	(£229,959)	<p><u>Reason for Adverse variance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is due to an increase in the number of claimants following the Covid-19 pandemic. It has been assumed that the increased level of claimants will continue for the remainder of the financial year. New claims processed in Quarter 1 of 2020, compared to the same period in 2019, have increased by 911 (an increase of 158%). This position had improved by Quarter 2 as the level of 	Unknown	Rhian Hayden

Action Plan

Corporate Services 2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4a

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
				<p>new claims, when compared to the same period in 2019, were consistent indicating that the cost pressure had not worsened.</p> <p>Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New claims processed in Quarter 3 of 2020, compared to the same period in 2019, have decreased by 106 indicating that the cost pressure has decreased to that at the start of the year. This however could change following the recent lockdown that was enforced. • £174k income has now been received from WG in respect of Quarters 1 and 2. • £174k income has been committed in respect of Quarters 3 and 4, on the assumption that WG will continue to support this cost pressure. <p>A cost pressure of £280k has been identified for 2021/22 to reflect the increased CTRS applicants not directly linked to Covid-19.</p>		

Action Plan

Social Services

2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4b

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
Looked After Children	(399,699)	(499,699)	(773,227)	<p>Legal Services</p> <p><u>Reason for Adverse variance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an ongoing pressure in this area due to the number of looked after children, and the problems with retention and recruitment of staff has resulted in more services being outsourced to an external provider. It is anticipated that the Legal budget will be significantly overspent again this year. <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A long term solution will need to be identified in conjunction with Legal Services to mitigate this cost pressure for future years and a collaborative arrangement for legal services is being considered with a neighbouring council. This cost pressure is currently being offset by favourable variances within other social services budgets. <p><u>Updates</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts have been made to progress the longer term solution with a neighbouring authority on 		Tanya Evans

Action Plan

Social Services

2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4b

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
				our part, however little progress has been made due to the current pressures of COVID		

Action Plan

Economy

2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4c

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
Nursery Units	(226,063)	(181,869)	(123,451)	<p>Reason for Adverse variance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a delay to the refurbishment/investment to improve attractiveness to incoming and existing tenants as a result of Covid-19 1 month rental holiday in April given to all businesses within the Units Covid 19, detrimental effect to the worldwide/local economy. Business start-ups, expansions (including business relocations) on hold. Business community in hibernation mode. Business Tenant Support Scheme introduced to support SME's within the portfolio i.e. April rent free period and rental holidays. a contingency for loss of rental income for 6 months from tenants who are deemed high risk in terms of rent payment (amounting to approx. £100,000). <p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Rates and Business Innovation Team at BGCBC, worked extremely hard to support business tenants with Covid 19 grants schemes. 		

Action Plan

Economy

2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4c

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refurbishment scheme underway at Roseheyworth Business Park to focus on constrained business, which will result in further revenue potential. An exercise to re-value the rentals and potential yield investments. Secure marketing budget, to Increase marketing awareness to attract new customers i.e. rightmove.co.uk Re-gear existing leases and offer financial incentives for new tenants. Exploring options to secure external funding for further refurbishment schemes (WG) i.e. Phase 2 – Roseheyworth Business Park. Investment plan to review and secure funding for wider refurbishment scheme across the portfolio. Loss of income of £58,000 has been received from Welsh Government, reducing the forecast adverse variance The department is working to secure rent repayment plans 		

Action Plan

Environment

2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4d

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
Waste Services	(548,076)	(331,583)	(315,231)	<p>Reason for Adverse variance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional cost of 2 Wardens with no budget • An increase in residual waste tonnages during the lockdown period, offset partly by the WG Hardship Fund. • There is a decrease in recycle income of £90k compared to 19/20. This is due to fluctuations in the market prices and a general downturn. Only the decrease in income from the plastics, cardboard and textiles market has been directly affected by Covid, and hardship funding has been built in to offset this. • Also, an additional savings target was built in of £90k based on Consultants analysis, assuming this would be achieved as a result of the opening of the New HWRC. However, this has not been achieved partly due to the delay in opening. • An increase in green waste recycling costs - £40,000 mainly as a result of the contractor closing for business which resulted in BG having to implement a contingency arrangement at short notice which has been costly. There is now a new contract in place. The increased tonnage collected during first 		C Rogers / M Stent

Action Plan

Environment

2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4d

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
				<p>lock down has been partly been offset by the hardship fund.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Commercial Waste Service was suspended due to covid-19. The loss of income for the period April 2020 to June 2020 has been offset by the WG Hardship Fund. The budget is being reviewed. <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased costs to be potentially met by way of Covid 19 grant funding from WG in 20/21. Commencing side waste enforcement from July 2020, which will reduce residual waste charges. Currently due to easement of side waste, the cost to the authority is approx. £18,000 per month. This figure will reduce as restrictions on black bags commence borough-wide. Capital bids have been accepted by Welsh Government for receptacles. This has contributed £80,000 towards the revenue budget. 		

Action Plan

Environment

2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4d

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
Grounds Maintenance	(83,003)	(17,000)	42,302	<p><u>Reason for Adverse variance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarter 1 identified an indicative anticipated figure for the impact on income that the Covid pandemic situation might have on the grounds budget. The situation improved at quarter 2 with some income being received from the Covid Hardship Fund and the externalisation of the summer grass cutting operations to a private provider also helped the situation. The positive position has continued to improve at quarter 3 where this service area is currently predicting a surplus position at the end of quarter 4. 		C Rogers/ D Watkins
Corporate Landlord	(68,850)	(57,536)	(65,067)	<p><u>Reason for Adverse variance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forecast overspend due to Social Services Buildings £41,000 and Non Operational and CATs buildings £16,000. There is £40,600 of rates expenditure due to Non Operational buildings, which includes £20,000 for the Business Resource Centre, which has now been disposed of. Need to 		C Rogers / M Price

Action Plan

Environment

2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4d

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
				release Non-Operational buildings, as these still have on-going residual costs to the authority. <u>Actions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise and monitor expenditure on all non-essential maintenance buildings. 		
Bridge Maintenance	(0,000)	(13,383)	(24,522)	<u>Reason for Adverse variance</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency works required to re-build an unsafe / partially collapsed highway retaining wall. <u>Actions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise and monitor expenditure on all non-essential bridge maintenance 		C Rogers
Environmental Health	(66,642)	(89,044)	(64,901)	<u>Reason for Adverse variance</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget pressures resulting from the end of the Public Protection Collaboration have been built into the budget. Some savings delayed due to staff sickness/extended notice period into the new financial year Other staff savings postponed due to Covid 19 pandemic and reassessment of service needs. 		D Thompson

Action Plan

Environment

2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4d

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
				<u>Actions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMR 2 report and reassessment of service needs due to Covid 19 pandemic. The Service is likely to need to submit an application for a cost pressure for 21/22 <u>Updates</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variance has reduced. The ongoing pandemic is still impacting 		
Cwmcrachen Caravan Site	(25,079)	(23,473)	(33,697)	<u>Reason for Adverse variance</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electricity costs are the main reasons for the variance. The plan of action from 19/20 has continued (electricity meter changes and resident recharge increases) and this is led to a decrease in forecast net costs. Work is continuing. <u>Actions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further work is planned to attempt to reduce losses. <u>Updates</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing. The increase is due to necessary plot refurbishment/repair works 		D Thompson

Action Plan

Planning Committee and Licensing Committee 2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4e

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
Dealing with Applications	(31,293)	(31,293)	(31,293)	<p><u>Reason for Adverse variance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downturn in Planning Fees received due to the effects of covid 19. <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department is hopeful that fees will improve during the final three months of the year as we come out of Covid19 restrictions. Consideration will be given to submitting a claim to Welsh Government for loss of income in qtr 4 		

Action Plan

Planning Committee and Licensing Committee 2020/21 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 31 December 2020)

Appendix 4e

Service Area	2020/2021 Variance at June 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Sept 2020 Forecast £	2020/2021 Variance at Dec 2020 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
Licensing	(25,904)	(26,419)	(26,733)	<p>Reason for Adverse variance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed income, due to Covid 19 pandemic – (e.g. Pub and Club renewals) • Reduced income, due to Taxi fee proposed increases not actioned in 19/20 and for 20/21 due to pandemic, but inflationary increases have been applied to the budget in both years. • Potential further loss of income if local businesses are affected by the economic impacts of the pandemic <p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers will monitor the budget and consider options to reduce costs. The Service is likely to need to submit an application for a cost pressure for 21/22. <p>Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the ongoing pandemic, a “no increase” fee setting policy approach is being considered (that will support local business but result in a continued shortfall) 		D Thompson

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Saving Proposal	Approved Estimated Achievement £	Forecast to be Achieved £	Favourable / (Adverse) Variance £
Overall Savings target	1,465,000		
1 Third Party Expenditure	550,000		
a Contract Management - Removing of Inflation applied to the Draft Estimates	500,000	500,000	0
b Early Settlement Terms / Increased use of the Procurement Card	50,000	50,000	0
2 Fees & Charges	200,000		
a Stretched Income Targets	105,000	47,000	(58,000)
b Increase in Fees & Charges of 5.5% from April 2020	95,000	74,000	(21,000)
3 Property & Asset Review	130,000		
Corporate Landlord - Reduction in the Rates & Maintenance Budgets following the CAT transfer / Selling/demolition:			
a Worcester St - £13,630	73,000	73,000	0
Brynmawr District Office - £24,730			
Greenacre - £1,600			

Saving Proposal	Approved Estimated Achievement	Forecast to be Achieved	Favourable / (Adverse) Variance
Corporate Landlord - Reduction in the Rates & Maintenance b Budgets re: Buildings to be sold: Bryngwyn Primary & Queen St Primary - £18,000	18,000	4,500	(13,500)
d Increase income re: Land and other charges	3,760	0	(3,760)
e Net reduction in Alt management fee	28,000	0	(28,000)
e Energy Costs - Reduction in budget due to efficiency savings identified following implementation of RE:FIT	7,240	7,240	0
4 Growth Strategy a Council Tax - Increase in collection following the removal of the Empty Property Discount b Council Tax Income	220,000 170,000 50,000	220,000	0

Saving Proposal	Approved Estimated Achievement	Forecast to be Achieved	Favourable / (Adverse) Variance
5 Industrial Portfolio Review - Review of service charges and insurance to pass onto Tenants - Increase income through Investment of capital funding to upgrade units	100,000	0	(100,000)
6 Commercial Waste Service review - implementation 1/4/2020	23,000	0	(23,000)
7 Low Carbon Removal of the Carbon Reduction Commitment Budget	138,000	138,000	0
8 Work Place Transformation Cost reduction Measures - ICT Budget - Rationalising systems - Managing Suppliers - Review of printing, scanners, postage etc - Review of telephony	50,000	50,000	0
9 Income Recovery Review of Income Recovery activities	54,000	54,000	0

Saving Proposal TOTAL APPROVED SAVINGS	Approved Estimated Achievement 1,465,000	Forecast to be Achieved 1,217,740	Favourable / (Adverse) Variance - 247,260
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non-grant funded vacant post salary plus oncost, for one month, where
vacancy is not used to offset cost pressures in other budgets

APPENDIX 6

non-grant funded vacant post salary plus oncost,
for one month, where vacancy is used to offset
cost pressures in other budgets

	number of posts	salary plus oncost per month £	number of posts	salary plus oncost per month £
corp serv	11	45,299	2	9,666
soc serv	9	32,756	0	0
educ	0	0	0	0
env				
highways	0	0	0	0
econ	1	2,258	1	2,258
planning				
licensing	0	0	0	0
	<u>21</u>	<u>80,312</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>11,923</u>

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Agenda Item 15

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 26.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 29.03.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th April 2020**

Report Subject: **Capital Budget Monitoring, Forecast for 2020/2021
Financial Year (As at 31 December 2020)**

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

Report Submitted by: **Rhian 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)
x	18/02/2021	23.03.21			15/03/2021	14/04/2021		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To provide members with an overview of each Portfolio's actual and forecast capital expenditure against funding approvals for the 2020/2021 financial year, as at 31st December 2020.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 This report provides details on the following:
 - Forecast financial position to 31st March 2021 across all portfolios
 - Details of any significant adverse and/or favourable variances
 - 2.2 This report forms part of the quarterly financial reporting framework to Members.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 **Option 1 (Recommended Option)**

Members of the Executive Committee accept the report and

 - Provide appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report.
 - Continue to support appropriate financial control procedures agreed by Council.
 - To note the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital Team, to safeguard Authority funding.
 - 3.2 **Option 2**

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**
 - 4.1 This report supports the Forward Looking Corporate Plan 2020/22 as it ensures effective forward financial planning arrangements are in place to support the Council's financial resilience. This is a key element to achieving "An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities"

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

- 5.1.1 The overall financial position as forecast at 31st December 2020 indicates an adverse variance of £438,805 against a total in year capital budget of £21.24m.

The overall position across all Portfolios is shown below: -

Total Approvals Q3 (Dec 2020)	Future funding	In year funding	Actual Expenditure to 31/12/2020 (Month 9)	Forecast Expenditure 2020/2021	Forecast Variance underspent / (overspent)
£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
65,205	44,969	21,236	11,715	21,675	(439)

- 5.1.2 Despite the Covid-19 Pandemic actual expenditure to December 2020 of £11.7m is £3.7m higher, compared to Quarter three in financial year 2019/2020. It is expected that Capital Expenditure will largely be unaffected by the Lockdown restrictions however this report has identified significant overspends on the following projects:

- **Household Waste recycling Centre - £204,095**
The overspend relates to increased costs due to the Covid-19 pandemic & future proofing of the site. Discussions are ongoing with WRAP Cymru & Welsh Government regarding funding the additional expenditure
- **Lime Avenue Business Park - £234,710**
The latest anticipated final account advises of a loss & expenses claim for items in relation to unforeseen issues caused by Covid-19 pandemic. Officers are in dialogue with Welsh Government & WEFO project officials to pursue additional funding to mitigate the overspend.

- 5.1.3 Discussions are ongoing with funding bodies and requests for further funding are being pursued. Discussions are currently positive, therefore, it is not proposed that funding for these schemes be built in from the Capital contingency fund at this stage. Capital Expenditure is estimated to reach £21.675 by 31st March 2021. This has been revised down since the Quarter two report, with a number of projects such as Regain 2 (£3.8m) and both TRI – Urban Centre projects (£240k), forecasting a reduced level of spend in this financial year. The unused funding for these projects will be carried forward into 2021/22.

5.1.4 Welsh Government have confirmed financial support for costs incurred as a result of flood damage during March 2020. As a result, the quarter two forecast over-spend of £24,000 in relation to Flood Recovery Works is now expected to be mitigated.

5.1.5 Additionally, the Council's own resources will not be required for the repair works on Aberbeeg Road, therefore it is proposed that the £405k allocation be reinstated to the Big Arch project as agreed by Council on 23rd July 2020.

5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions

5.2.1 Expenditure against external funding approvals needs to be maximised in order to avoid loss of funding. If significant delays in capital expenditure are anticipated or contract costs rise due to the impact of Covid-19, liaison with funding bodies will be required at the earliest opportunity in order to secure approval for funding re-profile.

5.2.2 If funding re-profile cannot be agreed and capital schemes are not kept within budget, then capital reserves may be committed beyond affordable levels, with the consequence that projects that have not yet commenced may be deferred or not undertaken, so impacting upon future Capital Programmes.

5.2.3 If capital schemes do not achieve the required level of expenditure within the correct financial year and further peaks of the Covid-19 pandemic results in projects facing significant delay, funding may be lost to the Authority and be detrimental to the Authority's chances of securing future funding.

5.2.4 The aforementioned risks are mitigated as far as possible through close working relationship with Budget Holders, Technical Services and external funding bodies such as Welsh Government. This ensures that where possible, funding is maximised or funding amendments are secured should the need arise

5.2.5 Where overall funding approvals are likely to be exceeded and additional compensatory funding sources cannot be identified, budget holders will initially report the consequences to the Corporate Leadership Team, including proposals to defer/delete other approved schemes.

5.2.6 There is a potential risk of increase in Constructions costs & services following the ongoing situation regarding the UK's Exit from the European Union.

5.2.7 The UK's Exit from the EU has been added as an organisational risk to the corporate risk register, whilst a separate, more detailed high level action plan has been developed and is being monitored by the Core Planning Group.

5.3 **Legal**
N/A

5.4 **Human Resources**
N/A

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.2 The Capital programme is attached at Appendix 1.

6.1.3 Appendix 2 provides information of funding changes since the second quarter report.

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

6.2.1 The report details the financial implications for the Council in providing capital investment for the communities of Blaenau Gwent.

All forecast overspends and underspends are managed in order that secured funding approvals are not lost and to mitigate any potential adverse impact upon future Capital investment in Blaenau Gwent.

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

The Capital Programme is developed to support the Council's strategic priorities and is considered and agreed by full Council. Corporate Overview Scrutiny and Executive Committees consider the budget monitoring reports on a quarterly basis and provide challenge as appropriate.

Corporate Leadership Team has considered the Quarter Three position and accepted the report

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

It is essential that all forecast overspends and underspends are managed in order that secured funding approvals are not lost and to mitigate any potential adverse impact upon the future capital programme.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The Capital Services Team will continue their close working relationship with budget holders and external funding bodies to ensure that funding is maximised or funding amendments are secured in future financial years.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Capital Services Team works closely with budget holders in producing the financial forecast and with external funding bodies to ensure that where possible funding is maximised or funding amendments are secured should the need arise.

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

N/A

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

N/A

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 Financial reporting to the Joint Budget Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Committee is carried out on a quarterly basis. Where projects are reporting significant cost pressures, there is a requirement for Budget Holders to ensure that where possible funding is maximised or funding amendments are secured should the need arise.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

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Management Reports

Reporting Year: and Period: 2021/9

Capital Programme Funding Estimates Summary

Portfolio	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure To: December 2020	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
Corporate Services Portfolio	481,592	119,469	362,123	116,388	3,081	119,469	0
Social Services Portfolio	5,538,115	1,279,605	4,258,510	452,344	827,261	1,279,605	0
Economy Portfolio	18,744,429	9,591,476	9,152,953	6,049,171	3,777,015	9,826,186	(234,710)
Education and Active Living	28,314,158	2,434,676	25,879,482	820,994	1,613,682	2,434,676	0
Environment Portfolio	7,474,927	4,393,709	3,081,218	2,370,805	2,226,999	4,597,804	(204,095)
Infrastructure Portfolio	3,679,896	2,884,692	795,204	1,626,551	1,258,141	2,884,692	0
All Portfolios	971,334	532,344	438,990	278,828	253,516	532,344	0
Total Capital Funding	65,204,451	21,235,971	43,968,480	11,715,081	9,959,695	21,674,776	(438,805)

Capital Programme - 2020/21 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2020/21

Management Reports				Capital Programme Funding Estimates				
<i>Reporting Year: and Period: 2021/9</i>								

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: December 2020</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
Corporate Services Portfolio								
Corporate Services								
101385	Workplace Transformation	133,938	66,068	67,870	66,068	0	66,068	0
327100	Ebbw Vale Test Track	50,000	50,000	0	50,000	0	50,000	0
327101	Emergency Electrical & IT Works Civic Ce	209,253	0	209,253	0	0	0	0
327102	Corporate Properties H&S and Capital Wo	85,000	0	85,000	0	0	0	0
328090	CCTV Upgrade	3,401	3,401	0	320	3,081	3,401	0
Corporate Services		481,592	119,469	362,123	116,388	3,081	119,469	0
Corporate Services Portfolio		481,592	119,469	362,123	116,388	3,081	119,469	0

Capital Programme - 2020/21 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2020/21

Management Reports

Reporting Year: and Period: 2021/9

Capital Programme Funding Estimates

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: December 2020</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
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Social Services Portfolio

Childrens Services

323152	Beaufort Road - Extension Training Flat	130,475	130,475	0	46,253	84,222	130,475	0
323153	Beaufort Road - Outdoor spaces and Exiti	38,675	38,675	0	34,692	3,983	38,675	0
324719	Flying Start - Cwm 2	10,000	10,000	0	0	10,000	10,000	0
324721	Flying Start - Ebbw Vale North	273,706	5,194	268,512	5,194	0	5,194	0
324724	Flying Start - Sirhowy Primary	10,000	10,000	0	0	10,000	10,000	0
324735	Flying Start Brynithel FS Centre	20,000	20,000	0	0	20,000	20,000	0
324736	Flying Start Additional Works	90,000	90,000	0	23,331	66,669	90,000	0
324737	Flying Start Capital (Covid-funding)	10,740	10,740	0	0	10,740	10,740	0
324770	Childcare Offer - Sixbells Scheme	1,492,862	632	1,492,230	632	0	632	0
324771	Childcare Offer - Badminton Scheme	1,500,000	50,000	1,450,000	0	50,000	50,000	0
324772	Childcare Offer - Blaina ICC Scheme	437,243	50,000	387,243	17,927	32,073	50,000	0
324773	Childcare Offer - Swfryd Scheme	500,000	50,470	449,530	8,943	41,527	50,470	0
324774	Childcare Offer - Small Grants Scheme	122,000	122,000	0	0	122,000	122,000	0
Childrens Services		4,635,701	588,186	4,047,515	136,973	451,213	588,186	0

Adult Services

323003	Health & Safety	63,192	6,460	56,732	6,460	0	6,460	0
323005	Tackling Food Poverty - WLGA	23,147	4,250	18,897	4,250	0	4,250	0
323120	Disabled equipment	279,750	279,750	0	279,750	0	279,750	0
323144	ICF Main Capital Programme	99,233	8,314	90,919	8,314	1	8,314	0
323147	Intermediate Care Fund	3,292	160	3,132	160	0	160	0

Capital Programme - 2020/21 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2020/21

<div> <div>Management Reports</div> <div>Reporting Year: and Period: 2021/9</div> </div> <div>Capital Programme Funding Estimates</div>								
Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: December 2020	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
323148	ICF - Digital & Mobile Assistive Technol	19,000	0	19,000	0	0	0	0
323149	Better Care Capital Project	26,648	4,333	22,315	4,333	0	4,333	0
323151	Augusta House - Enablement Pods	388,152	388,152	0	12,105	376,047	388,152	0
	Adult Services	902,414	691,419	210,995	315,371	376,048	691,419	0
	Social Services Portfolio	5,538,115	1,279,605	4,258,510	452,344	827,261	1,279,605	0

Capital Programme - 2020/21 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2020/21

Management Reports

Reporting Year: and Period: 2021/9

Capital Programme Funding Estimates

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: December 2020</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
Economy Portfolio								
Tredegar Regeneration								
326163	Tredegar HLF	893,051	300,000	593,051	187,737	112,263	300,000	0
	Tredegar Regeneration	893,051	300,000	593,051	187,737	112,263	300,000	0
Ebbw Vale Town Centre								
326191	TRI - Urban Centre Commercial Property I	407,496	287,256	120,240	107,256	180,000	287,256	0
326192	TRI- Urban Centre Residential Property E	123,957	3,957	120,000	933	3,024	3,957	0
	Ebbw Vale Town Centre	531,453	291,213	240,240	108,189	183,024	291,213	0
Valleys Regional Park								
326205	VRP - Discovery Gateway	89,461	89,461	0	54,496	34,965	89,461	0
326206	Local Places for Nature Capital Funding	61,401	61,401	0	0	61,401	61,401	0
326207	Parc Bryn Bach - Co Working Space	100,000	100,000	0	504	99,496	100,000	0
	Valleys Regional Park	250,862	250,862	0	55,000	195,862	250,862	0
The Works Site								
325097	Big Arch	1,032,638	22,681	1,009,957	22,681	0	22,681	0
325103	Learning Works	75,000	75,000	0	35,531	39,469	75,000	0
325220	Site Investigation Works	19,000	0	19,000	0	0	0	0
325225	Ebbw Valley Railway - Northern Extension	2,441	0	2,441	0	0	0	0
	The Works Site	1,129,079	97,681	1,031,398	58,212	39,469	97,681	0

Capital Programme - 2020/21 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2020/21

<div> <div>Management Reports</div> <div>Reporting Year: and Period: 2021/9</div> <div>Capital Programme Funding Estimates</div> </div>								
Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: December 2020	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
Other Regeneration								
326006	Tech Valley s Initiative	475,000	0	475,000	0	0	0	0
326180	Lime Avenue Business Park	6,199,476	6,199,476	0	4,688,886	1,745,300	6,434,186	(234,710)
326181	Lime Avenue Employment park	2,501,013	4,113	2,496,900	4,113	1	4,113	0
326182	Box Works	703,992	703,992	0	428,064	275,928	703,992	0
326183	Regain 2	3,918,513	28,249	3,890,264	25,729	2,520	28,249	0
326184	Brexit Schemes	369,465	0	369,465	0	0	0	0
326193	TRI - Town Centre COVID-19 recovery ad	600,000	600,000	0	46,421	553,579	600,000	0
326225	Heat Networks Project	17,385	0	17,385	0	0	0	0
326226	Electric Vehicle Chargepoints	276,897	276,897	0	261,554	15,343	276,897	0
326252	Constrained Units - Roseheyworth	164,847	164,847	0	157,830	7,017	164,847	0
326265	Victoria Business Park - Development	66,687	27,437	39,250	27,437	0	27,437	0
326267	Blaenau Gwent Digital	213,309	213,309	0	0	213,309	213,309	0
326268	Covid Recovery for Town Centres	433,400	433,400	0	0	433,400	433,400	0
Other Regeneration		15,939,984	8,651,720	7,288,264	5,640,034	3,246,396	8,886,430	(234,710)
Economy Portfolio		18,744,429	9,591,476	9,152,953	6,049,171	3,777,015	9,826,186	(234,710)

Capital Programme - 2020/21 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2020/21

Management Reports

Reporting Year: and Period: 2021/9

Capital Programme Funding Estimates

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: December 2020</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
Education and Active Living								
Education Services								
324125	Education Minor Works	51,000	9,924	41,076	9,924	0	9,924	0
324138	Education Capital Maintenance	119,310	10,864	108,446	10,864	0	10,864	0
324142	Georgetown Windows & Boiler Replacement	8,671	1,681	6,990	1,681	0	1,681	0
324143	Rhos-y-fedwyn - Refurbishment	5,378	1,434	3,944	1,434	0	1,434	0
324145	Tredeggar Comp - Food & Technology	280,000	280,000	0	243,958	36,042	280,000	0
324146	Deighton - Kitchen	639	639	0	639	0	639	0
324147	Tredeggar Comp Upgrade Services and Accommodation	79,524	79,524	0	76,551	2,973	79,524	0
324148	Coed y Garn Roof & Remedial Works	50,000	50,000	0	15,675	34,325	50,000	0
324149	Brynbach Primary Disabled Adaptations	70,000	70,000	0	24,355	45,645	70,000	0
324150	Ebbw Fawr - Developing 3/4 classrooms, timber floors	100,000	100,000	0	2,900	97,100	100,000	0
324153	Ebbw Fawr Emergency Lighting	45,000	45,000	0	21,775	23,225	45,000	0
324201	Class Size - Willottown	69,557	69,557	0	0	69,557	69,557	0
324203	Period Poverty	6,045	0	6,045	0	0	0	0
324205	St. Marys CIW MUGA	130,000	2,776	127,224	2,776	0	2,776	0
324206	Georgetown S106	3,667	3,667	0	3,667	0	3,667	0
324519	Digital 2030 Capital Grant - Post 16	4,620	0	4,620	0	0	0	0
324530	ALN	122,298	0	122,298	0	0	0	0
324532	Ebbw Fawr ASD	3,890	0	3,890	0	0	0	0
324560	Schools IT Infrastructure	140,282	140,282	0	42,736	97,546	140,282	0
324580	Brynmaur 3G Pitch	793,378	793,378	0	4,950	788,428	793,378	0
324590	Tredeggar Comp 3G Pitch	153,410	17,311	136,099	(8,841)	26,152	17,311	0

Capital Programme - 2020/21 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2020/21

Management Reports

Reporting Year: and Period: 2021/9

Capital Programme Funding Estimates

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: December 2020</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
324743	21st Century Schools Six Bells Project	416,940	196,639	220,301	145,696	50,943	196,639	0
324750	Band B - Welsh Medium New Build	5,993,612	0	5,993,612	0	0	0	0
324751	Band B - New Primary Ebbw Fawr Valley	9,295,589	288,371	9,007,218	147,106	141,265	288,371	0
324752	Band B - Secondary Remodelling Brynmawr	3,198,936	0	3,198,936	0	0	0	0
324753	Band B - Secondary Remodelling Abertille	3,199,893	0	3,199,893	0	0	0	0
324754	Band B - Secondary Remodelling Tredega	3,198,335	0	3,198,335	0	0	0	0
324755	Band B - Welsh Medium Remodelling Bro	588,116	100,000	488,116	1,190	98,810	100,000	0
Education Services		28,128,090	2,261,047	25,867,043	749,036	1,512,011	2,261,047	0
Active Living Services								
329089	Abertillery LC Demolition	6,119	6,119	0	6,119	0	6,119	0
329092	ALC - Changing Room Refurbishment	59,700	59,700	0	57,238	2,462	59,700	0
329095	AWPOG - Play Equipment 20-21	62,960	62,960	0	0	62,960	62,960	0
329097	Play Equipment	44,850	44,850	0	8,600	36,250	44,850	0
332368	Play Area Schemes - Boroughwide	12,439	0	12,439	0	0	0	0
Active Living Services		186,068	173,629	12,439	71,958	101,671	173,629	0
Education and Active Living		28,314,158	2,434,676	25,879,482	820,994	1,613,682	2,434,676	0

Capital Programme - 2020/21 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2020/21

Management Reports

Reporting Year: and Period: 2021/9

Capital Programme Funding Estimates

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: December 2020</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
Environment Portfolio								
Environmental Services								
327018	RCAF Long Term Organics Procurement	26,512	0	26,512	0	0	0	0
327039	Kerbside Collections	2,115	0	2,115	0	0	0	0
327042	Collaborative Change Programme 18-19	176,872	176,872	0	88,436	88,436	176,872	0
327043	Household Waste Recycling Centre	1,754,482	1,754,482	0	1,181,454	777,123	1,958,577	(204,095)
327044	AHP Waste Collections	176,000	176,000	0	123,620	52,380	176,000	0
327045	BRC Decommissioning Project	245,511	100,000	145,511	100,000	0	100,000	0
327046	Repair Cafe	4,541	4,541	0	3,475	1,066	4,541	0
327047	Council Buildings Recycling Infrastructu	17,891	17,891	0	17,891	0	17,891	0
327061	CATS	80,000	80,000	0	0	80,000	80,000	0
327065	Re:Fit	2,922,084	517,549	2,404,535	517,549	0	517,549	0
327067	Market Hall - Asbestos Removal	11,321	4,715	6,606	4,715	0	4,715	0
327068	Cemeteries Investment Programme	200,028	2,700	197,328	2,700	0	2,700	0
327070	WRAP Cymru Capital Funding	85,100	85,100	0	7,200	77,900	85,100	0
327071	Education Centre	200,000	200,000	0	0	200,000	200,000	0
327072	Behaviour Change Campaign	80,800	80,800	0	7,913	72,887	80,800	0
327073	Kerbside Recycling Lorry	170,000	170,000	0	0	170,000	170,000	0
Environmental Services		6,153,257	3,370,650	2,782,607	2,054,953	1,519,792	3,574,745	(204,095)
Housing Environmental Health								
328221	Remediation of Contaminated Land/Dereli	154,269	0	154,269	0	0	0	0
350510	Improvement grants - new scheme	544,241	420,000	124,241	254,244	165,756	420,000	0

Capital Programme - 2020/21 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2020/21

Management Reports								
Reporting Year: and Period: 2021/9								
Capital Programme Funding Estimates								
Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: December 2020	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
350550	Support for Independent Living	112,901	92,800	20,101	19,331	73,469	92,800	0
350560	Empty Property Grants	510,259	510,259	0	42,277	467,982	510,259	0
	Housing Environmental Health	1,321,670	1,023,059	298,611	315,851	707,208	1,023,059	0
	Environment Portfolio	7,474,927	4,393,709	3,081,218	2,370,805	2,226,999	4,597,804	(204,095)

Capital Programme - 2020/21 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2020/21

Management Reports

Reporting Year: and Period: 2021/9

Capital Programme Funding Estimates

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: December 2020</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
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Infrastructure Portfolio

Engineering Services

328040	Cwm By Pass	13,970	0	13,970	0	0	0	0
328148	SRIC - Ebenezer Street	30,000	30,000	0	15,939	14,061	30,000	0
328310	Local Transport Fund	244,610	244,610	0	244,610	0	244,610	0
328312	Local Transport Fund 2020/21	150,000	150,000	0	2,293	147,707	150,000	0
328314	Local Transport Network Fund	75,000	75,000	0	12	74,988	75,000	0
328315	Local Transport Fund - Project Retention	21,987	0	21,987	0	0	0	0
328318	Active Travel Fund	256,377	256,377	0	256,377	0	256,377	0
328319	Active Travel Fund 2020/21	234,000	234,000	0	13,700	220,300	234,000	0
328322	Local Sustainable Transport Covid Respor	144,000	144,000	0	1,720	142,280	144,000	0
328340	LTF Metro Plus	250,000	250,000	0	0	250,000	250,000	0
328350	Access Improvement Grant	34,691	34,691	0	0	34,691	34,691	0

Engineering Services

1,454,635 1,418,678 35,957 534,652 884,026 1,418,678 0

Highways Network Management

328063	Bridge Strengthening Works	1,857	0	1,857	0	0	0	0
328095	Ebbw Vale Railway study Phase 3	973	973	0	973	0	973	0
328269	Highways PB Imp. Works.	20,946	0	20,946	0	0	0	0
328270	Highways Improvement Works	1,186,835	515,388	671,447	515,388	0	515,388	0
328334	LGBI - Trinant Hall	65,400	403	64,997	403	0	403	0
328404	Flood Damage - Emergency Repairs	125,500	125,500	0	24,227	101,273	125,500	0
328405	Aberbeeg Road Repairs	556,000	556,000	0	408,107	147,893	556,000	0

Capital Programme - 2020/21 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2020/21

Management Reports								
Reporting Year: and Period: 2021/9								
Capital Programme Funding Estimates								
Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: December 2020	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
328406	Small Scale Works Grant	267,750	267,750	0	142,801	124,949	267,750	0
	Highways Network Management	2,225,261	1,466,014	759,247	1,091,899	374,115	1,466,014	0
	Infrastructure Portfolio	3,679,896	2,884,692	795,204	1,626,551	1,258,141	2,884,692	0

Capital Programme - 2020/21 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2020/21

Management Reports

Reporting Year: and Period: 2021/9

Capital Programme Funding Estimates

Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: December 2020	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
All Portfolios								
All Portfolios								
300300	City Deal	233,500	0	233,500	0	0	0	0
303990	OS Capital Admin/Design & Supervision	524,000	524,000	0	270,484	253,516	524,000	0
321112	Disabled Access - Special Programme	16,871	8,344	8,527	8,344	0	8,344	0
324672	The Company Shop - Tred	196,963	0	196,963	0	0	0	0
All Portfolios		971,334	532,344	438,990	278,828	253,516	532,344	0
All Portfolios		971,334	532,344	438,990	278,828	253,516	532,344	0

Capital Programme - 2020/21 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2020/21

Management Reports					Capital Programme Funding Estimates			
Reporting Year: and Period: 2021/9								
Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: December 2020	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
Total Capital Funding		65,204,451	21,235,971	43,968,480	11,715,081	9,959,695	21,674,776	(438,805)

End of Report

New Approvals and/or material Funding Changes in Quarter Three

Portfolio	Cost Centre	Scheme	Amount (£)	Funding Body	Type	Additional Information
Corporate Services						
	327102	Corporate Properties H&S and Capital Works	85,000	Blaenau Gwent	Capital Programme	Allocation of Funding to indivdiual project from the Corporate Landlord Capital funding allocation.
Social Services						
	324721	Flying Start - Ebbw Vale North	123,706	Welsh Government	Flying Start	Confirmation from Welsh Government that last years unutilised funding can be carried forward.
	324774	Childcare Offer - Small Grants Scheme	122,000	Welsh Government	Childcare Offer Capital Programme	Small Grant Scheme – Covid-19 pandemic allocation
	324737	Flying Start Capital (Covid-funding)	10,740	Welsh Government	Flying Start	Covid-19 pandemic related funding for Flying Start Settings
Economy						
	325097	Big Arch	405,000	Blaenau Gwent	Capital Programme	Repayment of Funding previously vired to fund the emergency works at Aberbeeg road.
	326267	Blaenau Gwent Digital	213,309	Welsh Government	Valleys taskforce	Town Centre Wifi Access
	326268	Covid Recovery for Town Centres	433,400	Welsh Government	Valleys taskforce	Funding is to support Businesses in adapting to Covid-19 pandemic
	326207	Parc Bryn Bach - Co Working Space	100,000	Welsh Government	Valleys taskforce	Investment for a co-working space at Parc Bryn Bach
Education, Active Living and Learning						
	324153	Ebbw Fawr Emergency Lighting	45,000	Welsh Government	Capital Programme	Allocation of Funding to indivdiual project from the Corporate Landlord Capital funding allocation.
	329095	AWPOG - Play Equipment 20-21	62,960	Welsh Government	All Wales Play Opportunities Grant	New Approval
Environment						
	327045	BRC Decommissioning Project	100,000	Blaenau Gwent	Revenue Budget	Annual Revenue Contribution for the Invest 2 Save loan repayment
	327071	Education Centre	200,000	Welsh Government	Circular Economy Fund	Capital projects to support the move to a circular economy in Wales - where waste is avoided and materials are kept in use for as long as possible, an important part of the action needed on climate change
	327072	Behaviour Change Campaign	80,800	Welsh Government	Circular Economy Fund	
	327073	Kerbside Recycling Lorry	170,000	Welsh Government	Circular Economy Fund	
Infrastructure						
	328404	Flood Damage - Emergency Repairs	125,500	Welsh Government	Financial Assistance for Recovery from Emergencies scheme	Assistance for Recovery from Emergencies scheme in respect of the flooding incident across the authority following the impacts of Storm Ciara, Storm Dennis and Storm Jorge in February 2020
	328405	Aberbeeg Road Repairs	556,000	Welsh Government	Financial Assistance for Recovery from Emergencies scheme	Assistance for Recovery from Emergencies scheme in respect of the flooding incident at Aberbeeg Road following the impacts of Storm Ciara, Storm Dennis and Storm Jorge in February 2020
	328405	Aberbeeg Road Repairs	-405,000	Blaenau Gwent	Capital Programme	Repayment of Funding previously vired to fund the emergency works at Aberbeeg road.

It should noted that the funding changes detailed above will not balance to total funding changes between Q2 to Q3

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Agenda Item 16

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 26.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 29.03.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th April 2021**

Report Subject: **Use of General and Earmarked Reserves
2020/2021**

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

Report Submitted by: **Rhian Hayden, Chief Officer Resources**

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	25/02/21	23.03.21			15/03/21	14/04/21		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To report to the members of the Executive Committee the forecast reserves position for 2020/2021 as at Quarter 3 (31 December 2020).
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 There are a number of statutory requirements concerning Local Authority Reserves, including:
 - The Local Government Act 1972;
 - The Local Government Finance Act 1988;
 - The Local Government Finance Act 1992;
 - The Local Government Act 2003; and
 - The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.
 - 2.2 The CIPFA Local Authority Accounting Panel (LAAP) issued Bulletin 99: Local Authority Reserves and Balances in July 2014. This provides non-statutory guidance on relevant issues including:
 - Proper accounting treatment; and
 - Principles to assess the adequacy of reserves.
 - 2.3 To ensure compliance with CIPFA Local Authority Accounting Panel Bulletin 99 and identified best practice, the Council revised its protocol for managing reserves, with effect from April 2015.
 - 2.4 One aspect of the revised protocol concerns the enhancement of Elected Member engagement and scrutiny, and to this end quarterly reports detailing the actual and forecast use of general and earmarked reserves, including changes in requirement/amounts and risk assessments, are prepared and presented to Executive and Joint Budget Scrutiny Committee during the financial year.
 - 2.5 In order to adopt a long-term approach to the need to provide services to the citizens of Blaenau Gwent, the protocol was amended and agreed by Council in March 2016 to include a target level for general reserves. This was set as 4% of the last reported actual net revenue expenditure (as included in the Revenue Outturn return).

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 That the Executive Committee considers the forecast use of general and earmarked reserves for 2020/2021 and:

- consider the impact of the £0.552m favourable variance for 2020/2021 would have on the budgeted contribution to the General Reserve; and
- note the forecast increase of the General Reserve in 2020/2021 to £7.151m, being 5.28% of net revenue expenditure (above the 4% target level).
- continue to challenge budget overspends and implement appropriate service Action Plans, where required.

Maintenance of general reserves at an adequate level is crucial to the Council being able to meet future liabilities arising from risks for which specific provision has not been made.

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

4.1 **National Well-being Goals**

The management of earmarked and general reserves (in recognition of the need to plan for known or predicted future obligations, unexpected events or emergencies), allows the Authority to deliver services in pursuance of its obligations under the national well-being goals.

4.2 **Corporate Priorities**

This report supports the Council Priority, “Ambitious and Innovative Council”, as it is part of the financial planning and reporting arrangements which support the Council’s financial resilience.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 **Financial Impact**

5.1.1 Section 6 provides an overall summary of the forecast financial position in relation to the balances in general and earmarked reserves at 31 March 2021.

5.1.2 Table 1 at 6.1.3 (below) shows the forecast position for the general reserve at year-end 2020/2021 to be an increase of £0.752m, to £7.151m. This balance would represent 5.28% of net revenue expenditure, £1.737m above the 4% target level of £5.414m, indicating further progress towards strengthening the financial resilience of the Council and providing a buffer to deal with unexpected future issues.

5.1.3

The forecast increase in general reserves is a result of:

- currently forecast net portfolio underspends of £0.552m and;
- an agreed budget contribution in 2020/21 of £0.200m to support medium term financial planning and strengthen the Council's financial resilience

5.1.4 Table 2 at 6.1.7 (below) shows the forecast level of earmarked reserves at 31 March 2021 to be £9.189m, an in year increase of £0.917m. Further details of earmarked reserve movements are included in Appendix 1.

5.2 Risk

5.2.1 The Council must ensure an appropriate level and use of reserves to support its financial sustainability and to meet future liabilities arising from risks for which a specific provision has not been made.

5.2.2 The 2020/2021 budget includes a planned increase in earmarked reserves of £1.4m. Additional increases to the general reserve of £0.2m per annum are planned for the life of the current Medium Term Financial Strategy. However, the cost pressures and reductions in income associated with the continuing response to Covid 19 may adversely impact on the Council's in-year budget and ability to maintain and increase the level of reserves.

5.2.3 Failure to comply with the requirements set out in CIPFA LAAP Bulletin 99: *Local Authority Reserves and Balances*, which include the implementation of a clear protocol for the establishment, use, control and review of reserves, could result in adverse comments by regulators.

5.2.4 A protocol for the management of reserves was adopted in April 2015 to mitigate the risk of non-compliance with CIPFA LAAP Bulletin 99 and identified best practice.

5.2.5 In the short-term, the level and adequacy of reserves are regularly reviewed and monitored through regular outturn/ forecast reporting. In the medium term, reserves are assessed as part of the budget-setting process and the Medium Term Financial Strategy, which includes provision for an increase in reserves of £0.2m per annum over the life of the Strategy.

5.2.6 In comparison to all other Welsh Authorities, at 31 March 2020 Blaenau Gwent still had one of the lowest levels of general and earmarked reserves expressed as a percentage of Net Revenue Expenditure. Comparative information indicates that this position has improved to the end of 2019/2020, as follows:

	2019/2020
Blaenau Gwent Usable Reserves	£14.056m
Blaenau Gwent Usable Reserves as a percentage of Net Revenue Expenditure	9.45%
Ranking in Comparison with all Wales Local Authorities	18
All-Wales Average	£26.390m
All-Wales Average	17.74%

5.2.7 In order to meet the Welsh average, general and earmarked reserves would need to increase significantly to approximately £26.4m.

5.2.8 There is a risk that failure to increase reserves further will attract adverse criticism from regulators. This risk can be mitigated by increasing the General Reserve.

5.3 Legal

5.3.1 The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires authorities in England and Wales to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement.

5.3.2 Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 places a duty on chief finance officers' to report on the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves when the authority is considering its budget requirement.

5.3.3 Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the chief finance officer to report to all the authority's councillors if there is or is likely to be unlawful expenditure or an unbalanced budget. This would include situations where reserves have become seriously depleted and it is forecast that the authority will not have the resources to meet its expenditure in a particular financial year.

5.4 Personnel

There are no direct personnel/staffing implications arising out of this report.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 Performance Information and Data

6.1.1 The level of the Council's general reserve disclosed in the statutory accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2020 was £6.399m equating to 4.73% of net revenue expenditure (as reported in the 2019/2020 Revenue Outturn forms). The current 4% target level of general reserves is £5.414m.

6.1.2 The revenue budget forecast year-end position for 2020/2021 (as at end of Quarter 3) indicates a surplus of £0.552m.

6.1.3 Therefore, the potential impact on the forecast outturn position for the general reserve at 31 March 2021 would be as follows:

Table 1: General Reserve	£000
Balance at 31 March 2020 (Revised)	6,399
Budgeted Contribution to General Reserve	200
Contribution to the Reserve: Net Portfolio Underspends	552
Forecast Balance at 31 March 2021	7,151

6.1.4 Appendix 1 gives details of the total earmarked reserves held at the start of the 2020/2021 financial year (£8.272m) with actual reserve movements to the end of quarter 3 (31 December 2020) and forecast movements to 31 March 2021.

6.1.5 The level of earmarked reserves has been determined in accordance with the agreed reserves protocol. The level of earmarked reserves available to the Authority is forecast to increase by £0.917m in 2020/2021.

6.1.6 The current summary forecast outturn position for earmarked reserves at 31 March 2021 is as follows:

Table 2: Earmarked Reserves	£000
Balance at 31 March 2020 (Revised)	8,272
Budgeted Contribution to Earmarked Reserves	1,444
Actual Expenditure to Q3	(89)
Forecast Expenditure to Q4	(438)
Provisional Balance at 31 March 2021	9,189

6.1.7 For those reserves that have been utilised to fund actual expenditure to 31 December 2020 (£0.89m), details of the expenditure funded have been provided in Appendix 2.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

- 6.2.1 The management of earmarked and general reserves (in recognition of the need to plan for known or predicted future obligations, unexpected events or emergencies), helps demonstrate stewardship of the Authority's resources and its ability to provide services to the local community.

6.3 **Involvement** (*consultation, engagement, participation*) Not applicable.

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

- 6.4.1 Stewardship of the Authority's resources allows for the provision of services to the local community in the short and long term.

6.5 **Preventative focus** Not applicable.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working** Not applicable.

6.7 **Integration (across service areas)** Not applicable.

6.8 **EqIA**

- 6.8.1 An EQIA is not required as this report provides an estimated outturn position in relation to the Authority's reserve balances for the financial year, on an objective basis in accordance with relevant accounting standards, codes, concepts, principles, guidance and legislation.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 In the short-term, the level and adequacy of reserves are regularly reviewed and monitored through regular outturn/forecast reports.
- 7.2 There are legal requirements in respect of the reporting of reserves when setting the annual budget and the statutory outturn position is considered by the Authority's external auditors in their audit of the annual Statement of Accounts.
- 7.3 In the medium term, reserves are assessed as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1
Appendix 2

Appendix 1: Earmarked Reserves Movements 2020-2021

<u>Name of Reserve</u>	<u>Balance Brought Fwd 1 April 2020</u>	<u>Reserve Adjustments</u>		<u>Total Reserve Adjustments</u>	<u>Actual Expenditure</u>	<u>Forecast Expenditure</u>	<u>Balance Carried Fwd 31 March 2021</u>
		<u>Increases</u>	<u>Decreases</u>				
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Deminimis Capital Works	77,093.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	77,093.46
Facilities	121,963.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	(121,963.00)	0.00
Energy Centre	58,948.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	58,948.00
Industrial Units	50,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	(50,000.00)	0.00
IT Infrastructure	229,861.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	229,861.79
WRAP Regional Vehicles	122,865.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	(24,000.00)	98,865.85
Budget Contingency Fund	64,351.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	64,351.89
Building Control Fees	86,377.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	86,377.04
Business Support Hybrid Model	53,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	(53,000.00)	0.00
Cardiff Capital Region City Deal	294,730.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	294,730.00
Corporate Landlord ALT	18,153.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	(18,153.89)	0.00
Deposits and Bonds	3,200.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,200.00
Downsizing, Redundancy & Transitional Costs	200,088.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	200,088.71
Section Costs	36,228.83	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	36,228.83
Financial Planning/ Resilience	0.00	1,444,000.00	0.00	1,444,000.00	0.00	0.00	1,444,000.00
General/ Voluntary Sector Grants	27,680.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	27,680.00
	333,977.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	(18,215.52)	(143,964.48)	171,797.18
Insurance Liabilities	1,939,098.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,939,098.57
Individual Schools Budget (ISB)	26,781.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	26,781.54
Land & Property Charges	127,547.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	127,547.42
Local Development Plan	149,288.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	149,288.54
LMS Balances	1,224,498.65	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,224,498.65
Members Local Grants	40,347.41	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	40,347.41
Payroll Project Management	23,529.97	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	23,529.97
Specialist Commercial Advice (Leisure Trust Review)	19,188.72	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	19,188.72
Stock Conditions Survey	12,137.34	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	12,137.34
Strategic Business Reviews	193,061.27	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	193,061.27
Superannuation	500,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	500,000.00
Taxation	133,913.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	133,913.08
Technology Park Feasibility Study	200,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	200,000.00
Transport Oncost	33,127.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	33,127.00
Waste Services	120,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	120,000.00
Winter Maintenance	200,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	200,000.00
Aneurin Bevan Health Board - Education	40,962.52	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	40,962.52

Appendix 1: Earmarked Reserves Movements 2020-2021

<u>Name of Reserve</u>	<u>Balance Brought Fwd 1 April 2020</u>	<u>Reserve Adjustments</u>		<u>Total Reserve Adjustments</u>	<u>Actual Expenditure</u>	<u>Forecast Expenditure</u>	<u>Balance Carried Fwd 31 March 2021</u>
		<u>Increases</u>	<u>Decreases</u>				
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Corporate Procurement	4,437.62	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,437.62
CRASB	11,058.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11,058.00
Early Years Grant	229,243.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	(19,220.59)	(19,462.19)	190,560.23
Education - Gypsy Travellers	40,804.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	40,804.42
IER	72,152.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	72,152.28
Leadership Hallmark	24,837.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	(4,930.00)	19,907.66
PDG Grant	40,965.95	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	40,965.95
Period Poverty	12,796.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	12,796.05
Planning WAG Grant Planning Committee	2,103.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,103.66
Prevent	10,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10,000.00
Regen General Contributions Unapplied (Town Centre Management)	47,588.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	47,588.25
Rights of Way Diversions	20,255.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	20,255.00
Section 106 Agreements	171,041.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	171,041.31
SEW Adoption Collaboration	506,621.11	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	506,621.11
SMIFFs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sports Council	29,700.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	(29,700.00)	0.00	0.00
SIA/PLOF Grant	2,806.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	(2,806.08)	0.00
Syrian Resettlement Programme	122,980.73	0.00	0.00	0.00	(21,443.91)	0.00	101,536.82
Workforce Development Collaboration	92,477.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	92,477.25
Youth Service	67,902.34	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	67,902.34
Total:	8,271,772.39	1,444,000.00	0.00	1,444,000.00	(88,580.02)	(438,279.64)	9,188,912.73

Appendix 2: Expenditure Funded by Earmarked Reserves, 2020-2021

<u>Name of Reserve</u>	<u>Actual Expenditure to Q3</u>	<u>Purpose of Expenditure</u>
	£	
ICT	18,215.52	Costs relate to the purchase of 27 laptops
Early Years Grant	19,220.59	Costs in relation to Blaina ICC early years and play
Sports Council	29,700.00	Refurbishment of changing rooms at Abertillery Sports Centre
Syrian Resettlement Programme	21,443.91	Costs relate to the resettlement of families
Total to Qtr 3:	88,580.02	

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Agenda Item 17

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 26.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 29.03.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th April 2021**

Report Subject: **Estyn Thematic Review - Blaenau Gwent's Response to COVID-19**

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

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

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
February 2021	February 2021	23.03.21			9.3.21	14.04.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Executive Committee with an opportunity to review the Estyn Thematic Review report that outlines narrative on the corporate response to the COVID-19 situation, particularly supporting the schools during the emergency period.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Corporate Director of Education provided a verbal update to Scrutiny Committee throughout the Autumn term regarding the Education Directorate's and corporate response to the COVID-19 emergency. This was complemented by presenting an update COVID-19 response report to Members during the November cycle, in line with the forward work programme. The report provided background, context and an overview of the corporate response, in particular how the Council has and will continue to support schools during the pandemic. Members were also briefed that Estyn were carrying out a Thematic Review across Wales. The review was titled 'Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19' and covered the period June to November 2020. The report was published in January 2021 and Blaenau Gwent received a dedicated letter as part of this regulatory work.
- 2.2 The Estyn report was written in response to a request for advice from the Minister for Education in July 2020. It provides an overview of how local authorities and regional consortia have worked with schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) to promote learning and support vulnerable pupils. It captures the ways local authorities and regional consortia have adapted their work to respond to the challenges resulting from COVID-19. The work was carried out before all schools returned to remote learning in January 2021, but will be helpful to inform current ways of working. The intended audience for this report is the Welsh Government, local authority and

regional consortia officers and staff in schools and PRUs. The report features 'cameos' from local authorities and regional consortia. These were not considered as case studies because Estyn were unable to evaluate the impact of the work because of restrictions on our activities due to COVID-19. The cameos are included to exemplify points raised in the report, giving a flavour of the work that has taken place across Wales and in local authorities. The report focused specifically on two aspects:

- Promoting learning – the quality of the learning offer and how has this been supported through further guidance and professional learning? Supporting vulnerable pupils – how did the local authority target services; and,
- Support to vulnerable pupils to support them to engage in learning? What barriers still exist?

2.3 In Blaenau Gwent there were two sessions convened with Estyn Local Authority Link Inspectors (LALI) during the Autumn term and they also interviewed a cohort of Blaenau Gwent's Headteachers. The BG Estyn Thematic Review letter is attached as appendix 1 to this report. The letter is positive overall and highlights four cameos of notable practice, covering:

- Strong collaboration across the Local Authority;
- Beneficial support for vulnerable pupils by the Educational Psychology service;
- The work of the local authority youth service; and,
- Effective sharing of ICT resources.

The narrative from the Estyn Thematic Review findings provides Members with assurance that the Council/Education Directorate has handled the emergency response well in supporting our schools, but clearly there are also areas to learn moving forward, such as the need to enhance water testing compliancy when school buildings are closed for longer periods of time. This has been the subject of a separate report to the Executive and Full Council for consideration and recommendations were adopted.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 This report has been discussed by Education DMT, CLT and Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee prior to submission to the Executive Committee. There are two options for Members' consideration:

3.2 Option 1: Executive Committee accept the report as presented.

3.3 Option 2: Members consider the information detailed within the report and offer comments that contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness, particularly in light of the response to COVID-19.

3.4 This report provides the Executive Committee with important emergency response and statutory information, as well as opportunity to identify where progress has been made and where further improvement is required.

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

- 4.1 One of the key objectives in the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan is for every child to have the best start in life. The Council seeks to ensure that provision is appropriate and able to meet the needs of children and young people, so that their progress is in line with ambitious expectations. This is particularly pertinent in an emergency crisis situation.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 **Impact on Budget**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report, however, it should be noted that the impact of the COVID-19 emergency response on both Council and school revenue budgets is being closely monitored. The Education Directorate Q3 revenue budget monitoring report's position demonstrated a favourable variance circa £210,000, mostly attributable to the reduced provision of transport and out of county support for vulnerable learners. There are, however, some significant cost pressures that are being managed through school support services, such as cleaning, but there is WG Hardship funding available to offset aspects of the additional cost burdens at this point in time.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

There are two strategic risks associated with this report:

1. The impact of COVID-19 on learner progression and pupil regression. This is being mitigated through the Council, EAS and Schools working in collaboration to support learners across the board; and,
2. The risks associated with the provision of safe learning environments to minimise the potential transmission of COVID. There are comprehensive risk assessments in place to mitigate the risks, but the situation is constantly under review and appropriate remedial action is taken e.g. self-isolation protocols are implemented.

5.3 **Legal**

This report provides information relating to the emergency response requirements as well as the specific Education obligations set out the School Standards and Organisation Act Wales (2013) to support strategic and operational activity to improve pupil outcomes and wellbeing.

5.4 **Human Resources**

Colleagues in Organisational Development provide a weekly analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the Education Directorate's workforce. There is a stabilisation of cases amongst the workforce, which has resulted in only a limited impact on service delivery within schools at the time of drafting this report.

6. Supporting Evidence:

6.1 Performance Information and Data

Across the board, the emergency response from the Council and its schools has been coherent, especially in the following aspects of work:

- Re-purposing of schools – supporting children of key workers & vulnerable learners;
- Re-opening schools – from the 29th June 2020; and,
- Preparing for academic year 2020/21, particularly whole school re-opening from September 2020, in line with WG expectations.
- Managing the move to remote learning during the Spring term, with the exception of on-site provision for key worker families and vulnerable learners.

6.2 Expected outcome for the public

There is a commitment from the Council and its schools to provide quality education for our children and young people to improve their life chances, despite the challenges faced during the COVID-19 emergency crisis.

6.3 Involvement

There has been extensive involvement of key stakeholders both corporately and across the school estate. The planning groups for secondary, primary and special schools that are established, including Headteacher representation has secured a collaborative and corporate response. This approach has been recognised as a cameo in the Estyn Thematic Review letter.

6.4 Thinking for the Long term

This report largely reflects on the emergency response to date, however, there are robust governance arrangements in place to support the next stages of the emergency for the foreseeable future.

6.5 Preventative focus

The Council's emergency response has facilitated a preventative approach to minimising the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

6.6 Collaboration / partnership working

The report outlines the significant amount of partnership working at a strategic and operational level. This has resulted in a strengthening of the working relationships between the Council and the schools.

6.7 Integration

The emergency response has been a 'One Council' approach.

6.8 EqIA

There is no requirement for EQIA assessment since there only a limited change of policy and guidance associated with this report.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.1 The report will be presented to the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee and then subsequently through to the Executive Committee for monitoring purposes.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix 1- BG Estyn Thematic Review Letter

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Dear Michelle Morris,

During the early autumn term, the Welsh Government asked us to undertake a review of local authorities work in supporting their learning communities in schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) during the period from March to October 2020.

This letter outlines the outcome of this work in Blaenau Gwent local authority. The content of the letter is based on virtual meetings with officers, the cabinet lead member for education and a sample of schools and PRUs. We have also considered the supporting documentation provided by the local authority and the feedback from surveys of school/PRU leaders, governors, teachers and support staff, parents and pupils. We have referred to the outcomes of the surveys where relevant, although the surveys were mainly be used to inform the national report which was published on our website on 15 January. Here is a [link](#) to that report.

We would like to thank your staff for giving of their time to discuss their work with us and for providing additional information on request.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Meilyr Rowlands".

Meilyr Rowlands

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

The local authority's work to support its schools from March to August 2020

Leadership and collaboration

In March, the local authority established two groups to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The gold level response team consisted of the corporate directors and the emergency response team (ERT) consisted of service area leads and associated officers. These groups supported the school repurposing planning groups which involved all officers working with schools. The authority revised this structure in June to support school re-opening, establishing two executive school planning groups, one for the secondary sector inclusive of special schools and one for the primary sector inclusive of Welsh-medium provision. In addition, a local authority transition group was established with representation from key services including health and safety, environmental health and social services to provide support to schools. Headteachers were involved in these groups, acting as cluster representatives and liaising with the schools in their own clusters.

In June, officers surveyed parents about their intentions to send children back to school for the last three weeks of the summer term. There were 4,221 responses to the survey on behalf of 8,000 pupils. The results of the survey indicated that 53% of pupils would return to school, however actual attendance was lower than this. In the first week, attendance levels were 43%, increasing to 46% in week two. The survey results also showed that most parents were concerned about children's health, particularly where families had members who were shielding or had children with medical needs. Parents had concerns about children from hubs mixing with children that had not been attending school. Officers worked with Public Health Wales to try to address these concerns and took advice from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHs) to identify the best ways to support pupils back into school.

Officers created a strategic framework for school re-opening in September with a set of key principles to ensure consistency in approaches where possible and to try to avoid the need for schools to develop their own solutions to the challenges around re-opening. The executive school planning groups established a common local authority wide approach for the first two weeks of September. Officers provided a risk assessment template and guidance for reopening schools and established a process for reviewing these upon completion.

Cameo: Strong collaboration across the local authority

The reopening of schools in Blaenau Gwent was managed well in conjunction with corporate colleagues and schools. There are robust reporting arrangements on education matters to the gold level response team via the Emergency Response Team (ERT) protocols. In addition, education officers established two executive school planning groups - one for the secondary sector inclusive of special schools, along with one for the primary sector inclusive of Welsh-medium provision. The aim of these groups was to oversee the development of a common framework and

principles within which the reopening of schools could be implemented. Blaenau Gwent's approach was to offer pupils the opportunity to have at least three opportunities to check in and catch up during the summer term, where practicably possible. They also aimed to ensure that schools established maximum engagement opportunities for key year groups.

There was an issue with the water supply in four schools and these were unable to re-open on time. The schools' water supplies were tested once the Minister had announced that schools would re-open on 29 June. The local authority was unable to access the testing process earlier as staff involved in testing were part of the furlough scheme. By the time that the results were available, and Legionnaires' disease was found to be present in the systems, it was too late for the schools to open on 29 June. The local authority conducted an independent review so that they could prevent this happening during any future school closures. All four schools opened for the last week of the summer term.

Local authority officers supported staff in both of their non-school settings for children under five throughout the pandemic, including providing financial support through grants and advice on the furlough scheme.

Local authority officers worked well with officers from the regional consortium (EAS) to ensure that schools had appropriate guidance and information to support their work. In the main, the local authority provided support for operational processes such as school transport and health and safety and the EAS provided guidance around learning and professional development.

Officers feel that there is a good working relationship between schools and local authority staff. The local authority established a group of officers from key local authority services to support the transition from schools providing childcare hubs to reopening for education. School membership of this group is organised on a cluster basis with cluster representatives liaising with the schools in their own clusters.

Officers worked with Public Health Wales to share key messages with staff, parents and pupils about the safe reopening of schools. They provided advice and guidance to headteachers, for example about classroom organisation and pupil movement through schools. Officers put processes in place to maintain communication with parents throughout the school summer holiday period.

Promoting learning

Officers consider that the EAS has provided good support to schools in blended learning approaches. The EAS implemented a 'playlist' for schools soon after providers closed. This was a resource with comprehensive coverage of key information that EAS officers shared with all headteachers on a weekly basis. The resource was designed to support school leaders by collating national and regional advice and guidance together and locating it in one place to enable easy access for

school leaders. The resource was refined and updated during the summer term as the situation evolved.

Senior officers in the local authority recognised that learner engagement was an issue during the period when schools were closed. The EAS surveyed school leaders about distance learning, with all schools in Blaenau Gwent responding. The main reasons given by schools for the lack of engagement of learners were lack of ICT equipment, lack of support from parents and parents struggling to juggle their employment responsibilities with supporting their children's learning. As a result of these findings, the local authority set up a communication group to focus on learner wellbeing. The group produced videos for families about home and distance learning. The group also considered how best to support learners from Welsh-medium schools in their home environment.

The local authority undertook a survey to find out how many learners had either no digital equipment or no internet access at home. To support these learners and to enable them to access the provision offered by schools, officers arranged for devices from schools to be rebuilt. Around 900 laptops and approximately 133 Wi-Fi devices were allocated to learners and distributed to their homes.

Officers provided guidance and resources to support schools in managing the change to digital learning. The EAS provided professional learning opportunities for teachers and support staff. Prior to the publication of Welsh Government guidance, the EAS discouraged teachers across the region from streaming lessons live. However, after receiving the guidance one secondary school and one all-age school started to stream lessons, primarily to pupils in key stage 4. Coleg Gwent has also engaged with pupils using this method. The all-age school shared its live lessons with pupils from a school in a neighbouring authority.

Supporting vulnerable learners

The response to the pandemic forged closer links between social services, family services, CAMHS and the education service and allowed the local authority to streamline some of its work. Officers from these services held early discussions about school closures and by 3 April, the educational psychology service had produced and distributed five support packs for children and families. Both the

Cameo: Beneficial support for vulnerable pupils by the educational psychology service

The educational psychology service produced and distributed support packs for children and families. These focused on managing worries, learning at home including wellbeing advice, emotional health and wellbeing, communication and relationships and transition back into school. This work was done early in the school closure period to provide timely support for families. Parents and schools provided positive feedback on this guidance and the local authority shared this resource with local authorities across Wales.

education psychology service and the education welfare service set up telephone helpline services to support families. At the start of the lockdown period, headteachers identified children whose wellbeing they had concerns about and provided the local authority with information about these. Education welfare officers contacted these families by telephone or by making a socially distanced home visit to discuss wellbeing and learning.

The local authority implemented a food distribution service for pupils eligible for free school meals when schools first closed. This service provided meals each day, which were available for families to collect from hubs or were delivered to families in more isolated communities. In early May, the local authority replaced the food delivery service with direct payments to families. There was a high level of uptake for these payments and local authority officers contacted eligible families who had not applied for funding to give them support with the application process. Since the start of the pandemic, the number for families with school-aged children who submitted applications for universal credit increased by 600.

Cameo: The work of the local authority youth service

The local authority reconfigured the youth service to support the young people identified as having the greatest need for support and intervention. Officers obtained details of pupils identified as needing support from schools. Around 600 pupils below the age of 16 and 150 young people over the age of 16 were identified and have been contacted weekly by youth support staff. The lead officer for youth work tried to ensure the young people were familiar with the youth workers assigned to them. The youth service identified a number of challenges facing young people in the first few weeks of the pandemic. These included the loss of employment, running out of money and eviction from accommodation. Youth workers supported young people to find accommodation and the local authority placed some young people who would not usually be eligible to access support in bed and breakfast accommodation to try to ensure that they had a safe place to live. Youth workers also helped young people to apply for financial support. As the lockdown period progressed, youth workers liaised with other agencies to produce resources to emphasise the importance of social distancing to young people. Youth officers began working in different ways with young people, for example providing music sessions and cookery lessons online. This allowed them to work with an increased number of young people.

Following the urgent work carried out to support young people in these early weeks, youth workers moved from crisis management to focus on young people's wellbeing. They held one-to-one and group sessions virtually and continued with counselling sessions where these were in place previously. They recognised the difficulties for some young people in not having a private place for sessions, so a number of engagements became check-ins and some young people asked for sessions to be put on hold. Youth workers provided guidance to young people on the restrictions in place as a result of the pandemic and tried to make sure that young people were not congregating in groups outdoors. The youth service worked in partnership with agencies such as the police and crime commissioners and contributed to videos

produced to explain to young people the importance of staying at home and not mixing with others.

Youth workers identified early on in the pandemic that many of the young people they were working with did not have access to ICT equipment. They responded quickly to these needs, for example by distributing mobile phones and laptops. They started working with young people in different ways, for example holding music sessions and group cookery lessons online. The local authority reports that these have been successful, and they anticipate that these will continue as they have reached young people that would not usually attend youth centres. Youth workers provided weekly updates to schools about school age learners and to parents and carers.

Once it became apparent in March that schools would close to most pupils and that the local authority would need to provide childcare for the children of key workers and those that are most vulnerable, officers developed a hub protocol. The protocol provided detailed guidance on safeguarding, health and safety, hygiene and social distancing as well as clear procedures for organising the hub provision, including meal provision, opening hours and registration procedures. They established a repurposing group to carry out this work and to monitor the childcare hubs.

Initially hubs were organised around the four secondary catchment areas with an additional hub in the local authority's special school for pupils with specific needs, for example those with healthcare plans. In response to feedback from primary head teachers who were concerned with the initial arrangements for hubs to be solely in secondary schools, the local authority quickly arranged for an additional hub to be based in a primary school. The hubs were open from 8am until 6pm including through school holiday periods. Approximately 380 children of key workers and *** vulnerable pupils attended hub provision between March and July. Officers from education and social services worked together to identify vulnerable children to attend the provision, including at the special school. Hub provision ceased on 19 June and the children that had been attending returned to their own schools during the week beginning 22 June.

The local authority has two non-school settings for children under five. One remained open throughout the pandemic to cater for the children of key workers. In addition, the Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme, funded by Welsh Government, for children between the ages of 0-4 years supported 145 children to access funded childcare.

The local authority's work to support its schools from September

Leadership and collaboration

Following eight months of undertaking the role on an interim basis, in early November the local authority appointed the new permanent corporate director of

education. To help strengthen the education department, in the summer term, the local authority advertised for a new lead officer for school improvement. However, they failed to appoint to this position and a decision was taken to delay the appointment until the new corporate director had been appointed. Neither the interim arrangements for the corporate director position or the lack of school improvement lead officer appear to have impacted negatively on the local authority's ability to support schools during the pandemic. The new director has already met with headteachers and has outlined his vision for the local authority and his desire to align the various education teams more closely. The executive member for education is very well informed about the local authority's support for schools during the pandemic and has a clear understanding of the challenges facing schools and their leaders.

Education officers within the local authority continue to work productively with other corporate service staff. The gold level response team has maintained their lead work since September through their twice-weekly meetings. Education officers think that collaborative working across the council has been strengthened throughout the pandemic and that the local authority's 'one council' ethos is being reinforced through joint working practices to support children their families and the local community as a whole. This improved partnership working, and collaborative approaches have supported a strong response to the local challenges.

Officers have held workshops to discuss lessons that they have learnt through their actions so far and how they are addressing new ways of working. Officers are learning on a daily basis and they now have stronger amended systems and processes in place to manage the challenges should there be another full lockdown.

Working in conjunction with the EAS, local authority officers continue to recognise the importance of supporting the wellbeing of school leaders. Officers consider that they have provided leaders with a high level of support and Estyn's survey results show that many headteachers feel that the local authority cares about their wellbeing. Headteachers have appreciated how swiftly officers have responded to their concerns and this has helped them deal with a range of issues quickly. The local authority is also providing education officers with appropriate wellbeing support. This includes timely communication, guidance and resources to support effective homeworking, recognising officers' commitments to support family members and the need for a flexible approach to homeworking to support individual needs.

Promoting learning

From September, the local authority maintained a strong focus on supporting schools to provide a safe return to school for pupils and staff. Officers issued schools with an updated version of their 'Guidance for whole school reopening document' to help leaders manage operational matters. In addition, they have provided schools with a flexible range of support in order to respond to emerging learner and school improvement needs. Officers have worked closely with the EAS,

school leaders, staff and governors to support the identified needs. They have ensured that they have provided timely communication for school leaders as well as access to virtual networks for staff governors and pupils.

Across Wales, very few pupils currently need to receive blended learning. Most pupils are able to attend school and benefit from face-to-face teaching. Where pupils are required to isolate or shield, schools are providing distance learning until they are able to return. A blended learning approach would involve a cohesive, intentional plan for pupils' learning to involve a combination of learning in school and at home which is not required in most schools at the moment.

The local authority has worked in partnership with the EAS to support schools to plan their distance learning offer and to enable them to plan for a blended approach should they require it in the future. Officers have recognised key areas for improvement regarding distance learning, including ensuring better engagement from parents and all learners. As a result, officers have worked closely with schools to provide additional guidance for parents who need support in using ICT to help support their children's learning at home and to access communication.

In September, officers collaborated with colleagues from the EAS to produce an executive update on their strategy for supporting schools with continuity of learning. The document outlines various phases for school support and includes how the local authority and the regional consortia worked with other partners to produce guidance for schools to support them in preparing their approaches for distance learning. Initially written in September, the document was then updated in November and presented to all elected members.

In September, in line with other local authorities within the EAS, officers sent a survey to all headteachers to gain information around their strategy for distance learning. The response from schools in Blaenau Gwent was higher than the region as a whole. Local authority officers used the information from the survey to share good practice and to identify any professional learning requirements within individual schools to help them customise support. The results of this survey suggest that all schools are offering pupils a suitable variety of blended learning approaches. There are no schools where the local authority has concerns over their ability to support pupils' learning effectively. The local authority has used the survey responses to help share good practice, for example in the use of shared platforms and the streaming of live lessons.

Officers have used the findings of the Children's Commissioner's survey 'COVID and me' to help improve their support for schools. An example of this is increased emphasis on teaching pupils resilience to help them remain focused when learning at home. The survey also highlighted that over half of pupils worried about falling behind when not in school and so this information was shared with school leaders.

Local authority officers have weekly updates from the EAS as to how challenge advisers are working with individual schools. The local authority has now resumed a more formal approach to working with their three schools who are causing concern.

This has included more regular meetings that now have a stronger focus on school improvement rather than just supporting leaders to address wellbeing issues.

The local authority's Welsh-medium education forum is helping to embed the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). Officers also feel they have good representation from the Welsh-medium sector on their various strategic groups. They have established a communications group who are promoting the benefits of being bilingual. In addition, officers have worked with partners from other local authorities to develop a regional booklet on the benefits of being bilingual. This is now included in their admissions booklet and on their website. To help promote Welsh oracy in particular, the local authority organises a Welsh-medium youth club. Since the start of the pandemic this has been run as a virtual club and officers report that members attending has increased when compared to face-to-face sessions. Officers are continuing with their plans to expand provision for Welsh-medium education within the authority.

Local authority officers are well aware of the impact of high levels of COVID-19 within the locality and there are many schools with positive cases. Officers have worked closely with school leaders to assist them in supporting pupils with distance learning when they are isolating. The local authority has continued to provide a high level of support for pupils who require ICT equipment and Wi-Fi access in their homes. Officers have liaised regularly with school leaders to ensure that they target that provision to pupils in greatest need. They have also been proactive in supporting schools to work with parents to increase their capacity to support their children's learning at home.

Cameo: Effective sharing of ICT resources

Over recent months there has been an international problem of delays in procuring additional ICT devices with increased demand due to additional home learning and working. To help overcome this issue, local authority officers have worked effectively with schools to help co-ordinate the sharing of surplus ICT devices. Where there has been a need to provide pupils with ICT hardware, this local approach has been effective in supporting pupils' learning at home. It has helped mitigate the impact of a delay in receiving new devices.

Officers have undertaken a survey with members of their youth service to measure the impact of their support and to ask young people for suggestions for improvement. From this work, they discovered that at times, young people felt contacted too often and therefore youth officers have reduced contact with young people when appropriate. They also amended their approach in contacting these young people by addressing individual preference for either face-to-face, virtual or telephone contact.

Local authority officers have maintained their regular headteacher stakeholder group meetings with a strong focus this term on supporting learning.

At the start of the autumn term, local authority officers were mindful of not placing excess pressure on schools and therefore took a graduated approach in considering how schools were using their 'Recruit, recover, raise standards: the accelerating learning programme' grant funding. Working with officers from the EAS, they

grouped schools into three tiers depending on their categorisation. Schools therefore received a level of initial support to complete their plans based on their individual needs. All leaders were expected to submit their school development plan by October half-term.

The local authority has directed all schools to use the EAS grant monitoring tool to plan and check on that spending. Officers are fully aware of the year groups who have been disproportionately affected by school closures. They are working with individual school leaders to ensure that additional funding is targeted appropriately to support these pupils to catch up with their learning. Officers have not yet put plans in place to monitor the impact of grant spending by each school but will be working closely with EAS challenge advisors once schools have evidence available to measure the impact of their plans on improving outcomes for pupils.

In particular, officers are working very closely with the leaders of schools causing concern and expect leaders to provide them with a regular update on the progress against each of their recommendations. The local authority is working in conjunction with the EAS to continue to broker and provide bespoke support to these schools, dependent on their individual need. Additional support has a strong focus on helping to improve teaching, learning and leadership.

From September, officers determined that they would need to revise their transport provision to ensure that it would enable them to provide safe travel for all eligible pupils. Currently pupils from 15 schools within the local authority are eligible for transport in line with the council's policy, along with pupils from 12 schools and specialist education facilities outside of the authority. The local authority has been able to meet the transport requirements identified by schools within and outside of the authority. This has assisted in providing these pupils with continuity of learning.

Since September, the local authority has continued to work closely with the EAS to provide schools with a weekly 'playlist' of support and training. There is a strong focus on blended learning and approaches to delivering a curriculum virtually and in school and to ensure that professional learning opportunities are available for all staff. The playlist is updated regularly in response to feedback from staff and to share good practice. Individual schools are able to apply to have their good practice included in the playlist. Local authority and regional consortia officers endorse this provision before it is included in the training materials.

Feedback from headteachers has been that there has been a lot of useful information on the playlist and it has supported training needs well. However, a few leaders have expressed concerns that the playlist can be too large, overwhelming and difficult to navigate.

In November, the EAS has launched a new website to help support schools to maintain consistent high quality blended and distance learning experiences for pupils. The website has been designed to share practice in learning approaches to help schools in their curriculum design. Local authority officers have undertaken work with the EAS to support schools with this work, for example through organising master classes to be shared on the website. The local authority has recognised that

it is of paramount importance to enable staff to access professional learning flexibly. As a result, professional learning sessions are recorded and therefore available for staff to access at their preferred time. Feedback from school leaders is that this approach has been much appreciated by schools. Local authority officers monitor the impact of professional learning through monthly reports and quality assurance meetings with the EAS. Through this work, officers help identify further areas for development and target professional learning opportunities accordingly.

Middle leaders across the local authority continue to access the EAS's useful middle leadership training. This is particularly helpful in strengthening the capacity of leadership in schools causing concern.

Supporting vulnerable learners

Local authority officers have continued to work closely with schools and other services, such as children's services, to identify and support vulnerable learners within the local authority. Education officers liaise with officers from children's services and their established group meets on a regular basis to consider how best to provide support for vulnerable pupils.

Across the local authority, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils had generally been the most anxious about re-engaging in education in September. The local authority's GRT worker has been working closely with GRT families and schools with large numbers of GRT pupils. There is a higher level of non-attendance amongst these pupils and officers are working hard to persuade parents not to register their children as being electively home educated. Officers have had concerns regarding some GRT pupils and their access to digital learning platforms. They have addressed this by supplying these families with printed paper packs of work as required.

At the time of writing, school attendance was between 80% and 85%. Officers are aware that some pupils have been anxious about returning to school and that they have individual needs. The local authority has adopted a risk-based approach to address these needs and support learners and their parents. Staff from the Gwent Education Minority Ethnic Service (GEMS) have assisted schools in making phone calls to families and provided a translation service when needed. This has helped ease the anxieties of some parents of pupils who have English as an additional language.

The contact that education welfare officers (EWOs) and educational psychologists established during lockdown to offer support to families continued during the autumn term. Feedback from parents and staff is that this has been a very useful service and it provided valuable support for them, particularly for pupils with special educational needs. Across the local authority, there has been a sharp increase from parents requesting elective home education with 27 new requests received since the start of the autumn term. Numbers of these requests had previously been reducing. EWOs

are providing advice and information to parents to ensure that they are aware of the full implications of their decision.

The local authority put procedures in place to ensure that it maintained contact with vulnerable learners in Year 9 to post-16 who could not return to school during the fire break. Officers met with all secondary headteachers and they have agreed a programme of distance learning to provide support for these pupils. All youth service workers that are normally based in schools returned to their school after half-term in November but have changed the focus of their support. They now support identified pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills and also make visits to pupils' homes as needed.

Local authority officers recognise the importance of smooth transition for vulnerable pupils to post-16 provision. To address this, they have strong links with Coleg Gwent.

Since September, the local authority has continued to use its early identification tool for learners who may potentially be not in education, employment or training (NEET). They have now added additional factors such as family breakdown and accommodation issues which could lead to youth homelessness. Schools can refer pupils for immediate crisis support. Officers will also work with schools to identify other pupils who need enhanced support or contact.

Officers feel that they have given schools a high level of support to ensure a safe return to school. This has included guidance on social distancing, good hygiene, and suitable personal protective equipment (PPE). They have also provided model risk assessments. All schools have adopted and adapted the local authority risk assessment templates. Guidance was provided to schools regarding the use of PPE in general, for first aid, medical, intimate care and other purposes. PPE and other resource requirements such as signage, were audited on a school by school basis to allow appropriate provisions to be made.

Education and Health and Safety teams visited all school sites in order to review the reopening plans, risk assessments and to undertake environmental health-based assessments ensuring compliance with key legislation, guidance and infection control and management measures. Individual risk assessments were also undertaken to support the needs of pupils accessing specialist provision including resource bases, along with vulnerable and shielding pupils or families. Officers agreed with headteachers that there would not be a requirement for pupils to wear uniform and that the dress code would be relaxed. In addition, it was agreed that pupils would bring their own refreshments into schools.

Officers recognise that there is a real concern for the wellbeing of young people aged 16 to 25. They have used youth service buildings to provide takeaway food for these young people as well as giving them access to digital resources which they may not otherwise be able to use. Partners from the 'raising aspirations strategic group' have met regularly to help ensure that all young people can achieve as well as they can. Partners include the Prince's Trust, Careers Wales and the housing sector.

On a regional basis, the local authority has supported the South East Wales Consortium (SEWC) ALN Transformation Network on Hwb, a place where ALN resources and training materials can be accessed by all school and central staff. Over 1,000 members have been able to access this network. The local authority has provided weekly specific ALN resource ideas to all schools, for pupils and parents including suggesting online web-sites, games to play, and things to do whilst at home and fun exercises. Staff from the Sensory and Communication Support Service (SenCom) and GEMS have also contributed specific resources and advice. In response to headteachers identifying a regression in pupil's language skills on return to school, the local authority extended their 'Word Aware training' to support the development of language within primary schools.

The local authority have facilitated regional drop in advice sessions for schools to access. For example, for ALNCos are able to speak to occupational therapists, speech and language workers, physiotherapists, and CAMHS. At the time of writing, none of these specialist support workers are visiting schools with all their work being undertaken remotely.

The local authority anticipated a surge in new referrals for counselling, with the service being close to full capacity. Feedback from pupils already accessing counselling services has been mixed with many saying that it is not working well as they cannot find a private place in their homes with which to chat to the counsellors. When this has been the case, phone calls have just been used to check up on their wellbeing. The local authority has used additional funding from Welsh Government for counselling services to recruit extra counsellors.

There is a new partnership board with the council's leisure services and officers hope that this work will further strengthen working relationships between different departments. The local authority has agreed to continue commissioning the Aneurin Leisure trust for the next five years as it has worked well previously. They feel that provision is good and that it has helped them with revenue savings.

The Education and Environment Directorates worked closely with schools, along with colleagues in Social Services and Aneurin Leisure Trust, to establish Clwb Yr Haf/Summer Club. The club operated in four school buildings in the most deprived areas of Blaenau Gwent with the schools being selected on the basis of eFSM, area/deprivation status and interest.

Since September, the local authority reports that all annual reviews have taken place as planned. As these meetings have taken place virtually, attendance at meetings by other professionals has been higher than usual. Education officers have seen this as a positive benefit to working this way. Feedback from parents has also been that they have been happy with this approach to holding reviews. All reviews for looked after children within the local authority are up-to-date with all meetings also having taken place virtually.

The local authority has met requirements on pupils' individual statements as far as possible given the current restrictions due to the pandemic. However, the local

authority recognises that this has not been at the same level of support as it was prior to the pandemic. Since September, most support has returned to normal levels. If pupils are self-isolating, this support has to be adapted and schools have used support staff to meet pupils' needs.

Within the local authority, most statemented pupils are in Learning Resource Bases (LRBs) or special schools. Schools have maintained a high level of online contact with statemented pupils and this process is evolving and should improve further over time.

Schools have reported a big increase in information received through the Operation Encompass initiative, possibly reflecting a rise of cases of domestic abuse within the local authority.

Officers recognised that, due to the pandemic, there was the potential for the implementation of their plans to meet additional learning need reforms to be delayed. However, they are taking steps to address this. They have already seconded another person with ALN specialism to work for the local authority for two days a week and will shortly be seconding a full time ALNCo to join the team. They are establishing an oversight group with partners from Children's Services and other agencies to help them be ready for implementation. All schools are now trialling the use of individual development plans (IDPs) and are accessing refresher training to help staff prepare. As a result of this work, officers feel that they have largely caught up and schools have reported that they are now on track and have no concerns about being ready for implementation in September 2021.

Agenda Item 18

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 26.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 29.03.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**
Date of meeting: **14th April 2021**
Report Subject: **Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Annual Return 2019/20**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Joanne Collins, Executive Member for Education**
Report Submitted by: **Joanne Sims, Youth Service Manager**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
✓	25/02/21	23.03.21			9/03/21	14.04.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the attached report (appendix 1) received from the Museums, Archives and Libraries Division (MALD) of Welsh Government with respect to the third year of the Sixth Assessment Framework for the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) return 2019/20.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Aneurin Leisure Trust has been commissioned by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to deliver the Library Service as part of their general operations since 2014. In April 2020, the client function for the Leisure Trust moved to the Education Directorate. This is the first year since the portfolio changes that this report has been submitted to the Education and Learning Scrutiny.
- 2.2 The Trust is now requesting that the Council consider the attached WPLS Annual Assessment Report 2019-20 with respect to the current position of the third year of the Sixth Assessment Framework of the Welsh Public Library Standards “Connected and Ambitious Libraries: The sixth quality framework of Welsh Libraries 2017-20” for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.
- 2.3 Public libraries are a statutory service as laid out in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. For over a decade the Welsh Government has implemented successive assessment frameworks which have helped bring a more consistent level of public library provision across Wales.
- 2.4 Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 it is a statutory duty for every library authority (Local Authorities) in Wales to provide a “comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”.
- 2.6 The attached report (Appendix 1) with respect to the Sixth Assessment Framework for Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Return 2019/20 covers

the third year of a three-year cycle of the new quality framework “**Connected and Ambitious Libraries: The sixth quality framework of Welsh Libraries 2017-20**”. It has now been confirmed, however, that the framework will be extended for another year.

- 2.7 The WPLS annual report 2019/20 has been prepared based on information provided by Blaenau Gwent’s annual return, case studies and narrative report submitted to the Museums, Archives and Libraries Division of Welsh Government in July 2020. This was submitted through the Leisure Trust.
- 2.8 The WPLS Annual Assessment Report includes the following;
1. Executive Summary
 2. Performance against Standards
 3. Analysis of Performance
 4. Strategic Context
 5. Future direction
 6. Conclusion
- 2.9 The sixth framework of Welsh public library standards builds on the developments in the fifth framework. It comprises 12 core entitlements and 16 quality indicators to monitor how well library services realise these benefits for the local community and the people of Wales.
- 2.10 The report has highlighted that:
- Blaenau Gwent has met all of the 12 core entitlements in full.
 - Of the 9 quality indicators which have targets, Blaenau Gwent achieved 7 in full, 1 in part (QI 13 staffing levels and qualifications) and did not achieve 1 (QI 9 up to date appropriate reading material).
 - Library services in Blaenau Gwent are delivered by the Aneurin Leisure Trust on behalf of the local authority, and are noted as a key component in both the local authority and Trust’s service delivery plans
 - The service continues to be reliant on staff from other areas of the Trust, Council and partner organisations to help deliver services. The future resilience of the service remains a concern.
 - The continued partnership work with key organisation remains a strength of the service and enables Blaenau Gwent to support the needs within communities and deliver appropriate activities.
 - The staff within the service remain a strength with a strong focus on staff training, reflected by the fact that 99% of customers think the standard of customer care is good or very good although staffing levels remain critically low.

- The service scores well for impact and making a difference to people's lives.
 - Recognition of an increase in the book fund, which led to an increase in loans and active borrowers and the percentage reporting that they felt the choice of books was good or very good.
- 2.11 The report has highlighted that overall Blaenau Gwent has maintained its performance in this third year of the sixth framework, with an improvement in Welsh Language resources in 2019/20.
- 2.12 The report concludes that the impact of the new review undertaken in 2019 is not clear, but it is essential in any future planning that staffing and resources levels are appropriate to ensure the service is able to meet its statutory duties.
- 2.13 It is proposed that any considerations identified in the annual assessment report will now be considered through the new governance arrangements established between the Council and the Aneurin Leisure Trust. Full details can be found in the attached report at appendix 1
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- Option 1:
Members to accept the report.
- Option 2:
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**
- 4.1 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 sets out the statutory duties of the public library authorities to “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service” to their communities.
- 4.2 The Library Service fully supports Blaenau Gwent’s Well-being Plan and also acts as an agency for economic wellbeing in our local communities through supporting learning at all stages of life helping with illiteracy, lack of skills and the digital divide.
- 4.3 The Library Service contributes to a range of Welsh Government outcomes such as literacy, skills and learning, digital inclusion, poverty, health and well-being. Library provision spans these outcomes, offering a range of services which often support two or more of the outcomes simultaneously.
- 4.4 The Library Service is seen as a key partner in tackling the problems of social isolation, inequality, disadvantage, fractured communities and ill health. The library service acts as a single point of contact for local people to access public services and also gain information on local health issues, providing space for

local voluntary organisations to provide advice and information on health and other matters. Moreover, the intention is that the library service will be a key component of the Council's community 'hub' provision moving forward and this will bring benefits to both the work of the Council and the Library Service, including enhanced footfall.

5. Implications Against Each Option

There are no current implications associated with the options proposed in section 3 above

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

- 5.1.1 During the review of the Leisure Trust, the Trust committed to increasing the book fund from £27,000 to circa £43,000 in 2018/19 and be reviewed year on year in order to achieve a more appropriate budget going forward. In 2019/20, the Trust spent £51,681, an increase of 5%, exceeding the original agreement. Furthermore, the Trust has invested on a pan Wales level in Borrow Box to increase the availability of eBooks given the current pandemic. This includes a 6% spend on Welsh Language books which will meet this target. There is a planned increase of 20% in the book fund for 2020/21.

5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

The risks highlighted in this report are predominantly linked to two areas. The gradual increase of the book fund mitigates the one area. Regular dialogue through newly established governance arrangements will ensure that collectively, between the Council and the Trust, the Library Service is supported to meet the standards required.

5.3 *Legal*

There are no legal issues associated with this report

5.4 *Human Resources*

- 5.4.1 There are no direct staffing issues with respect to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in relation to this report. However, the report highlights concern about the level of staffing within the Library Service.
- 5.4.2 This will be an area of discussion and monitoring through the new governance arrangements between the Council and the Leisure Trust.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

- 6.1.1 Blaenau Gwent continues to meet all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 9 quality indicators which have targets, Blaenau Gwent achieved 7 in full, 1 in part (QI 13 staffing levels and qualifications) and did not achieve 1 (QI 9 up to date appropriate reading material). See Appendix 1 for details. The report has highlighted that overall Blaenau Gwent has maintained its performance in this third year of the sixth framework, with an improvement in Welsh Language resources in 2019/20. The Library Service is only required to undertake a

customer survey once in each framework and that was completed this year. The outcome of that survey demonstrated that staff within the service remain a strength with a strong focus on staff training. This was reflected by the fact that 99% of customers think the standard of customer care is good or very good.

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

The outcome for the public is to continue to provide a fully accessible and professional Library Service within the local community to meet needs.

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

Local people, groups/agencies and volunteers are engaged through regular customer surveys, in line with the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS)

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

The library standards will help establish a sustainable model for the Library Service going forward.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Libraries provide support with many key preventative approaches, such as improving literacy levels for children and young people through early intervention within communities

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Partnership working with a number of agencies/organisations is embedded in the ethos of the Library Service.

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

The Library Service has close links to Education, Adult and Community Learning and also acts as a direct link to other Council services through providing the use of ICT to the local community also providing access to third sector organisations. The move towards a community 'hub' model and the alignment of the Leisure Trust to the Education Directorate's portfolio will only strengthen further these links.

6.8 ***EqlA***

N/A

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Performance reports related to the Leisure Trust are monitored through Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee and the Executive. There is also the recently established Leisure and Libraries Strategic Partnership Board that will oversee the collaboration arrangements between the Council and the Leisure Trust.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 - Sixth Assessment Framework for the WPLS; Annual Return 2019-20 report*

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Blaenau Gwent (Aneurin Leisure Trust)

Annual Assessment Report 2019/20

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Blaenau Gwent's annual return, case studies and narrative report submitted to the Culture and Sport Division of the Welsh Government.

1 Executive summary

Blaenau Gwent met all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

Of the 9 quality indicators which have targets, Blaenau Gwent achieved 7 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 1.

Library services in Blaenau Gwent are delivered by the Aneurin Leisure Trust on behalf of the local authority, and are noted as a key component in both the local authority and Trust's service delivery plans. The service continues to be reliant on staff from other areas of the Trust, council and partner organisations to help deliver services. The future resilience of the service remains a concern. The continued partnership work with key organisation remains a strength of the service and enables Blaenau Gwent to support the needs within communities and deliver appropriate activities. The staff within the service remain a strength with a strong focus on staff training, reflected by the fact that 99% of customers think the standard of customer care is good or very good although staffing levels remain critically low. The service scores well for impact and making a difference to people's lives. It is pleasing to see the modest increase in book fund, led to an increase in loans and active borrowers and the percentage reporting that they felt the choice of books was good or very good. The impact of the new review undertaken in 2019 is not clear, but it is essential in any future planning that staffing and resources levels are appropriate to ensure the service is able to meet its statutory duties.

- The percentage of adults who experience the library as an enjoyable safe and inclusive space remains high.
- There has been a dramatic increase in electronic downloads, which has increased by 130%, only some of which can partly be attributed to the impact of Covid-19 in the last couple of weeks and month of the reporting period.
- Aggregate annual opening hours have increased by 20% since 2018/19, but remain below the median in Wales.
- Overall staff numbers have decreased slightly in 2019/20 and it is noted that this is as a result of accommodating staff requests for flexible retirement. The overall target for staff per capita is not achieved and remains amongst the lowest in Wales and a cause of concern.
- The service launched 'fines free' in March 2020 and this new approach to borrowing has the potential to remove barriers and increase membership and positively impact on a more equal Wales.

2 Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3. The assessment has been limited to some degree by the fact that local authorities were only asked to comment on any changes to the previous year's return, alongside additional commentary on of partially/not met core entitlements.

2.1 Core entitlements

Blaenau Gwent continues to meet all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Due to the impact of Covid-19, three quality indicators have been removed for the 2019/20 reporting year, five, six and fifteen, of which number six had a constituent target. Of the **nine** remaining targets for 2019-20, Blaenau Gwent achieved 7 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 1 of the indicators.

Quality Indicator	Met?
QI 3 Support for individual development:	Met in full
a) ICT support	√
b) Information literacy and skills training	√
c) E-government support	√
d) Reader development	√
QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being	Met in full
i) Book Prescription Wales scheme	√
ii) Better with Books scheme	√
iii) Designated health & well-being collection	√
iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours	√
v) Signposting to health & well-being services	√
QI 7 Location of service points	√ Met in full
QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material	Not met
Acquisitions per capita	x
or Materials spend per capita	x
QI 10 Welsh Language Resources	Met in full
% of material budget spent on Welsh	√
or Spend on Welsh per capita	√
QI 11 Online access:	Met in full
a) i) Public access to Internet	√
ii) Wi-Fi provision	√
QI 12 Supply of requests	Met in full
a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days	√
b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days	√
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:	Partially Met
i) Staff per capita	x
ii) Qualified staff per capita	x
iii) Head of service qualification/training	√
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	√ Met in full

Blaenau Gwent has maintained its performance in this third year of the sixth framework, with an improvement in Welsh Language resources in 2019/20.

2.3 Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are only required to carry out user surveys for QI 1 once over the three-year period of the framework. However, this measure has been affected by Covid-19 and some authority plans to undertake a survey in the first quarter of 2020 were cancelled. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are therefore based on those authorities indicating they completed their user survey during framework 6. Rankings reflect the numbers of authorities, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Blaenau Gwent completed both its adult and children's user surveys in November 2019.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	94%	=5/19	60%	89%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	99%	1/19	41%	85%	99%

Authorities are also asked to provide up to four case studies describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Blaenau Gwent provided four such case studies, alongside wider feedback from users:

- Visually Impaired Group – An art session for visually impaired members. This activity was organised in response to customer feedback from home delivery customers. This was a successful event resulting in a positive impact on the wellbeing of those involved.
- Toddler Group at Ebbw Vale Library – these sessions encourage children and families of all ages to join in a story session in the library. These sessions help foster a love of books and reading. These free sessions also provide parents with a range of techniques to encourage reading at home.
- Support for digitally excluded residents – libraries play a very important role in supporting those individuals who are digitally excluded. This initiative demonstrates how libraries support the needs of their communities by reducing social inequalities and providing support for the most vulnerable in a variety of areas, ranging from bus pass applications to housing benefit.
- Jobseeker gaining employment – Blaina Library offers a job club on a regular basis. A library member considers that the library supported his job search which resulted in him finding employment. The library service plays a key role in enabling people to find appropriate jobs and learning opportunities, in a relaxed and friendly environment.

2.4 Quality indicators and benchmarks

Whilst Covid-19 restrictions remain challenging to all library services in Wales, staff resilience, professionalism and care for the community they serve has been outstanding. Although digital services have increased, we know from evidence provided that customers are missing their library services. They are missing the staff, browsing the shelves, IT provision, community spaces and groups such as knit and knatter. The importance of the library as a physical place and the impact on the wellbeing of their customers through interaction with library staff cannot be underestimated.

The remaining indicators do not have targets, but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Blaenau Gwent's position for 2019/20. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available to some authorities. Figures from the first and second years of the sixth framework or relevant previous surveys have also been included for comparison. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2017/18
QI 1 Making a difference						[Framework 5]
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	91%	=2/18	25%	75%	94%	90%
c) health and well-being	70%	9/19	38%	69%	96%	94%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	99%	=2/19	10%	92%	100%	98%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						[Framework 6]
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	91%	=7/18	78%	91%	99%	88%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=3/18	88%	97%	100%	99%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	91%	=5/17	65%	85%	99%	N/A
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	98%	=5/18	85%	96%	100%	98%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.3	= 7/19	8.0	9.1	9.5	9.4
QI 8 Library use ¹						
a) visits per capita	4380	5/22	2429	3987	6874	4234
b) virtual visits per capita	395	19/22	239	909	2131	353
c) active borrowers per capita	86	20/22	78	145	244	80
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita ²	311	22/22	311	680	1468	95
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per 10,000	9	11/22	5	10	14	9
c) % of available time used by the public	35%	4/22	14%	30%	64%	33%
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£8,513	18/22	£7,260	£12,448	£23,333	£8,610
b) % on staff,	69%	7/22	48%	61%	76%	73%
% on information resources	9%	=18/22	5%	13%	22%	8%
% on equipment and buildings	6%	10/22	0%	8%	21%	8%
% on other operational costs	16%	=11/22	1%	18%	35%	11%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	22/22	£0	£1,567	£13,027	£0
QI 16 Opening hours ³						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	0.23%	3.96	0.00%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	1.07%	5.41%	0.00%

¹ figures for co-located services are marked with an asterisk; performances for these services are likely to reflect higher footfall, and will not therefore be directly comparable with stand-alone library provision ²per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population

³Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority

3 Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas, and compares this performance with the first and second year of the sixth framework (2017/18 and 2018/19).

3.1 Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5) ⁱ

Blaenau Gwent completed its adult and children's user survey for QI 1 and QI 2 in November 2019. Although there has been a decrease in the ratings for how the service supports health and wellbeing for adults, there has been little change in other areas. The 24% drop in adults "who have found helpful information for health and well-being at the Library" can be attributed to the fact that a dedicated Macmillan Information support officer was based in the Service during the previous framework which is no longer the case,

although the service still has a strong commitment to health and wellbeing. The service continues to provide a wide range of activities for all ages.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8) ⁱⁱ

Library usage has also been impacted by the closure of all libraries on March 20th 2020 due to Covid-19. Blaenau Gwent continues to meet the target for easy access to service points. Library usage has steadily increased since 2017/18, and the number of active borrowers has increased by 7% since 2018/19, despite a decrease of 10% in the total number of library members per capita. The service notes that this may be due to a membership data cleanse. An improvement in the materials budget has impacted positively in this area.

As noted in 2018/19, Blaenau Gwent's performance in relation to children's book issues remains amongst the lowest per capita in Wales. While book issues for children have decreased, Blaenau Gwent has continued to see an increase in the number of adult book issues with a 15% increase since 2017/18, possibly from an increase in the book fund.

There has been an increase in electronic downloads, which has increased by 57% since 2018/19, which can partly be attributed to the impact of Covid-19. The increased usage of social media can also be seen as having an impact in this area.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12) ⁱⁱⁱ

The materials budget has increased slightly in 2019/20, alongside the figure for overall acquisitions, although neither target is met. The return noted that recently acquired stock was due to be added to the system when libraries were shut in March 2020, and as a result this stock did not feature in the reported figures. Blaenau Gwent is one of seventeen authorities who have not met the acquisitions target (QI 9) in 2019/20. The number of Welsh issues per capita have increased considerably since 2018/19, which is a positive development. The levels of investment in the materials budget still remain amongst the lowest in Wales and a cause of concern.

Blaenau Gwent remains at the median level for the number of computer devices available to the public, with recorded ICT usage still amongst the top quartile in Wales.

The service continues to achieve the targets for supply of requests and as a partner in the regional inter-lending Scheme, Books4U, works collaboratively with partners to continue to promote and develop this service to ensure customers are able to access the resources they need.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16) ^{iv}

Overall staff numbers have decreased slightly in 2019/20 and it is noted that this is as a result of accommodating staff requests for flexible retirement. The overall target for staff per capita is not achieved and remains amongst the lowest in Wales. The total number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications has remained the same and remains an area of concern.

However, there is a comprehensive, uniform offer across all service points, and services are tailored to address the needs within communities.

Total revenue expenditure has gradually increased by just over 3% since 2017/18, with expenditure per capita below the median level. Aggregate annual opening hours have increased by 20% since 2018/19 as home delivery hours have been included and the target has been met, but remains below the median in Wales. Blaenau Gwent did not report any unstaffed opening hours, unplanned closures of static service points or missed home deliveries during 2019/20.

4 Strategic context

As part of the return authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Blaenau Gwent reports well on a range of services relevant to the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The Service demonstrated its commitment to a prosperous Wales through its continuing partnership with NatWest Bank, providing users with support with their financial needs. Together with job clubs, there is a pro-active approach to meeting the educational needs of the community. New partners include a local charity, Hospice of the Valleys. This organisation will help the service deliver the health and wellbeing offer in libraries. This initiative, together with dementia cafes and Reading Well for mental health contributes to the achievement of a healthier Wales.

The service's contribution in other areas, including energy and environmental issues, loneliness and social isolation, digital inclusion, and Welsh language and cultural activity are noted as positive indicators of achieving the goals outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, it is noted that the wider vision for the service is laid out in the Library Strategy (2018-19). A commitment to explore the potential for further co-location of services was highlighted in previous years, but this hasn't been fully realised.

Blaenau Gwent's commitment to partnership working is a key factor in enabling the library service to achieve its vision:

"Improving people's life opportunities, inspiring and enriching lives by providing high quality library services which are relevant and accessible to all".

The service continues to achieve this vision with a variety of initiatives and schemes in place.

Partnership working is a strength of the service, but it is essential that adequate levels of investment enable sufficient capacity to build on these partnership for the benefit of local communities. The beneficial impact on people's lives which the service already achieves could be increased with greater resources. The service launched 'fines free' in March 2020 and this new approach to borrowing has the potential to remove barriers and increase membership and positively impact on a more equal Wales.

6 Conclusion

Library services in Blaenau Gwent are delivered by the Aneurin Leisure Trust on behalf of the local authority, and are noted as a key component in both the local authority and

Trust's service delivery plans. The service continues to be reliant on staff from other areas of the Trust, council and partner organisations to help deliver services. The future resilience of the service remains a concern. The continued partnership work with key organisations remains a strength of the Service and enables Blaenau Gwent to support the needs within communities and deliver appropriate activities. The staff within the Service remain a strength with a strong focus on staff training, reflected by the fact that 99% of customers think the standard of customer care is good or very good. The impact of the review undertaken in 2019 is not clear, but it is essential in any future planning that staffing and resource levels are appropriate to ensure the Service is able to meet its statutory duties.

ⁱ Due to Covid 19, local authorities were only asked to report any change in provision since the last reporting year for QI 3&4

ⁱⁱ Due to Covid 19, QI 5&6 were removed for the 2019/20 reporting year

ⁱⁱⁱ E-resources purchased through centrally-funded subscriptions have been included in the acquisitions figures for QI 9 in 2019/20. Each authority has added 201 to their total acquisitions from centrally funded subscriptions. CIPFA Statistics Returns continue to include figures for centrally-procured resources.

^{iv} Due to Covid 19, QI 15 was removed for the 2019/20 reporting year, alongside training and volunteer hours.

Agenda Item 19

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 26.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 29.03.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th April 2021**

Report Subject: **Children's Services response to vulnerable children during the COVID-19 pandemic**

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

Report Submitted by: **Damien McCann, Corporate Director Social 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)
4.2.21	9.2.21	23.03.21			17.3.21	14.04.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Executive Committee with information on how Children's Social Services supported vulnerable children since the COVID-19 pandemic started in March 2020.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 This report will provide information on how Children's Services changed the way in which services have been delivered throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, how we worked with partners and as a region to ensure a consistent approach was taken.

3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 The Report has been considered by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.

Option 1

Executive are asked to review the report on the Children's Services response to the COVID-19 pandemic and contribute to the continuous assessment of the effectiveness of the directorate by making appropriate recommendations.

Option 2

Accept the report as provided.

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

- 4.1 Childrens Services response to COVID-19 links to the following key priorities in the Corporate Plan:
- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater;
 - To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities;
 - To put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

Welsh Government established an Emergency Hardship Fund to support councils during the pandemic. Children's services were able to access this to fund fixed term support worker posts to support the work of the social work teams in the early days of the pandemic. The costs of these fixed term posts were fully met by the hardship fund.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications within the report, but already there have been a number of reviews undertaken by different bodies and it is likely in the future there may be a public enquiry into the overall handling of the Coronavirus in Wales.

5.4 ***Personnel***

There are no personnel issues within the report other than to say it is important that we recognise the work of all the front line care staff including foster carers and their supervisors /managers who have, as always, pulled out all the stops to ensure services were maintained and the children and families of Blaenau Gwent continued to be supported.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.1 When the first National local down was announced on the 23rd of March 2020 the Gwent Heads of Childrens Services met to discuss and agree a regional approach to service delivery during the COVID 19 period.

6.1.2 This approach was informed by guidance which had been issued up until that point by, CAFCASS Cymru, the Court Service, and the Heath Board. The approach has continued to be reviewed as new guidance has been issued in particular from Welsh Government who issued their first set of guidance on the 21st of April 2020.

6.1.3 The following information provides information on how services have been delivered in each of the service areas in Children's Services throughout the pandemic.

6.1.4 **Information Advice and Assistance** – This service has continued to provide a timely response to all referrals into Children's Services without disruption. There was a small decline in referrals during the first 2 weeks of the pandemic however referral rates have remained as we would expect them ever since.

6.1.5 **Families First** - As this service was not deemed critical due to being a preventative service, at the beginning of the pandemic some of the staff were redeployed to the social work and supporting change teams to ensure there

was enough staffing capacity to continue service delivery to our most vulnerable children in the Authority. These staff have since returned to their substantive posts as the pandemic did not lead to high levels of staff being off at any one time due to COVID 19. Throughout the pandemic Families First have continued to deliver preventative services. In the early stages they RAG rated their caseloads to ensure those who were most in need continued to receive face to face visits. The team quickly adapted to using social media and other IT platforms to keep in contact with families and offer support.

- 6.1.6 **Flying Start** – In the early stages of the pandemic some Flying Start support workers were redeployed to Adult Services to support with home care duties due to high levels of need. Also Health Visitors connected to the programme were redeployed by the Health Board to front line hospital services. These staff have since returned. Flying Start staff have continued to engage with children and families using social media, in particular their Facebook page which provided daily advice and activities for parents at a very challenging time. They also provided activity packs to families in the initial lockdown. The staff do provide face to face visits when the need is established.
- 6.1.7 **Early Year's Child Care and Play Team** – this team has played a crucial role during the crisis. They have worked closely with colleagues in Education to ensure school/child care provision was available for keyworker staff and the most vulnerable children in the borough. The Early Years and Child Care Team have provided significant support to child care providers during COVID-19 which has played a large part in 64% of providers remaining open throughout the crisis.
- 6.1.8 **Social Work Teams** – These teams are responsible for providing services to all children in need of care and support, children on the child protection register, our children looked after, children with disabilities and our care leavers. At the start of the pandemic all Team Managers RAG rated their caseloads and only those identified as red received face to face visits. These visits were undertaken in line with the regional home visit guidance developed which was based on advice from Public Health Wales and Welsh Government. When the initial lockdown ended face to face visits were offered to all open cases to the social work teams and this has remained the case to date to prevent needs from escalating. The teams have also used social media to support and keep in contact with children and families which has worked very well for some.
- 6.1.9 To be clear if a child was deemed at risk then this child would always be seen face to face to ensure they were safe. We have continued to see children who are on the child protection register face to face for their statutory visits and we have continued to work face to face with children and families where there is a high risk of them coming into care.
- 6.1.10 The various meetings required under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures have continued to take place but by virtual means. This has seen greater participation of partners as we share the same IT platforms, however some children and families initially struggled to engage which was not acceptable

to the department as family engagement is crucial to this process. Steps have been taken to involve families via telephone conferencing and a plan is in place to start inviting families into the offices to participate in meetings when COVID restrictions allow.

- 6.1.11 **Children Looked After** – All children looked after have continued to be seen in line with statutory requirements. When these visits have been undertaken face to face the necessary risk assessments have been done and protective PPE measures undertaken. We have kept in contact with some of our children virtually using WhatsApp which has worked very well for all involved. All of our children looked after who live in Blaenau Gwent have been offered education placements throughout the pandemic. This has been a crucial resource and supported placement stability. We also ensure that each child had access to IT equipment to make sure they could access on line learning and our education coordinators have offered individual support to those children with additional needs.
- 6.1.12 **Family Time (contact)** – During the first few weeks of the initial lockdown all face to face contact between children looked after and their families was stopped. However, as new guidance was issued by Welsh Government we quickly moved to a position of starting this again as it is so important for the wellbeing of our children. All the necessary risk assessments are in place and protective measure being taken to minimise any COVID 19 risks.
- 6.1.13 **Foster Carers** – Throughout the pandemic the placement team have continued to support our Blaenau Gwent foster carers. Face to face visits have been undertaken when necessary to support vulnerable placements but a lot of support has occurred by keeping in touch via phone or WhatsApp. Regular letters have been sent to foster carers keeping them updated and a regular newsletter has also been sent out offering advice on how to manage various aspects of care during the pandemic. Foster carers have been consulted twice via questionnaires during the pandemic and the feedback is very positive about the level of support they have received from the department. Fostering assessments have continued to be undertaken and foster panels have continued to meet virtually
- 6.1.14 **Adoption** – Adoption assessments have continued throughout the pandemic albeit virtually with final home visits being made face to face. Adoption training has moved to virtual delivery and feedback from adopters has been very positive. Children have continued to be placed with adoptive parents following well-structured guidance developed by the National Adoption Service.
- 6.1.15 **Emergency Out of Hours Service (EDT)** – The service continues to operate as normal although staffing levels at the Gwent EDT service are reviewed daily and staff from across the wider Gwent area have been identified to support as and when required.
- 6.1.16 **Working with Partners** – As previously mentioned the Gwent Heads of Children's Services have worked very closely together to ensure the

Children's Social Services being delivered throughout the pandemic have been consistent across Gwent.

- 6.1.17 The Regional Safeguarding Board continued to meet virtually and increased its frequency to monthly to ensure safeguarding data was monitored and partner agencies could share intelligence on emerging safeguarding issues in the region. The board led on raising awareness of the need to report safeguarding concerns across the region and lobbied Welsh Government to take a national approach to this which was forthcoming.
- 6.1.18 Within Blaenau Gwent we have worked very closely with our Health Visiting colleagues. We have enabled health visitors to use the Flying Start hubs (prior to the 2nd lockdown) to undertake routine health check under the Health Child Wales Programme due to access to GP surgeries being restricted.
- 6.1.19 We have worked extremely closely with education colleagues to ensure all vulnerable children in Blaenau Gwent were identified and then offered school hub placements. We have increased the numbers of social workers in Families First who are aligned to the schools to support when needs have been identified and take steps to prevent them from escalating.
- 6.1.20 We have continued to work with the third sector to support vulnerable families in relation to a number of issues. In particular working with Phoenix Domestic Abuse Service when dealing with domestic violence, Llamau when dealing with mental health issues and GAVO who sit on our Children and Communities Grant (CCG) Steering group which is responsible for seeking to address the support needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities through a range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms.

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

The work Children's Social Services has been doing during the outbreak of COVID-19 has been to ensure we minimise the harm of COVID -19 and to keep people as safe as possible from contracting this virus whilst continuing to deliver services to those who have required our help and support.

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

The service has had to work at speed to try and ensure our communities safety against contracting the virus and has often had to make decisions without the consultation or engagement of the public which has often been as a result of implementing Welsh Government and Public Health Wales guidance at pace. If at all possible we have tried to consult with children and families who are in receipt of services.

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

Children's Services are still in part in the responsive phase, however there is a need for reflection on how we have responded to this pandemic in order to inform and shape the recovery phase in the future. Despite the changes we have needed to make to service delivery we have still been able to take forward planned service developments.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

Children's Services have tried to be proactive to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we have continued to make contact with vulnerable children and families throughout the pandemic as well as continued to visit where it has been necessary and safe to do so. This has been to try and prevent the spread of the virus but also ensure people are able to continue to manage during the lockdown period.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

In many cases responding to the pandemic has strengthened joint working at local, regional and national levels, with more agile and responsive decision making and action planning being enabled. Relationships with providers have been strengthened by the continual dialogue, with local authorities, and others, supporting homes with the provision of advice and updates, and sharing learning.

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

Health and Social Care have had to work closely together to reduce the potential harm of the Coronavirus outbreak for the public, this has included working in an integrated way to ensure we protect and safeguarding vulnerable individuals during these unprecedented times.

6.8 ***EgIA***

There is not a requirement for this report to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 This report is a one off report to reflect on the work undertaken by Children's Social Services since March 2020 since the start of the Coronavirus outbreak within Blaenau Gwent. If and should there be a further outbreak of the virus then we would bring a further report back to identify how and what we were able to do to continue to support our most vulnerable children to continue to get the care and support they require.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

N/A

By virtue of paragraph(s) 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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