

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 25TH FEBRUARY, 2021**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

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**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)**

Councillors M. Cook (Vice-Chair)  
P. Baldwin  
G. A. Davies  
J. Millard  
M. Moore  
G. Paulsen  
J. Holt  
J. Hill  
J. C. Morgan  
B. Summers (sub: C. Meredith)

**WITH:** Service Manager: Policy and Partnerships  
Service Manager: Early Years  
Early Years Transformation Project Officer  
Scrutiny Officer

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

<p><b>No. 2</b></p>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>The following apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p>Councillor S. Thomas Councillor H. Trollope Councillor C. Meredith Managing Director</p>	
<p><b>No. 3</b></p>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
<p><b>No. 4</b></p>	<p><b><u>PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2020.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p><b>No. 5</b></p>	<p><b><u>BLAENAU GWENT PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2019/20</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director.</p> <p>The Service Manager Policy and Partnerships advised that the report provided information on the second annual progress report on 'The Blaenau Gwent We Want' Well-being Plan.</p> <p>The Service Manager spoke to the report and noted that the 'The Blaenau Gwent We Want' covered the period 2018 to 2023 and each year the PSB was required to report on the steps taken to meet the objectives set out in the Well-being Plan via a progress report. The Service Manager advised that the 2019/20 Annual Progress Report had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, therefore the report detailed progress made in the second year from April 2019 to March 2020.</p> <p>During the pandemic the PSB had continued to meet and reflect on the impact that Covid-19 had on our communities and focused on the PSBs work programme.</p>	

The Service Manager added that the information contained in the progress report was prior to the pandemic, however there had been some detail regarding partners' immediate response to the pandemic from March 2020 to August 2020. However, the full response from partners to the pandemic would be fully detailed in the next Annual Progress due to be published later this year.

The Service Manager further outlined the contents of the PSB Annual Report 2019/20 as detailed in the Appendix which outlined the progress made in the second year of the PSBs programme for delivery against the Well-Being Plan under the five key sections.

A Member referred to a pilot scheme undertaken on the collaboration between the Police, Ambulance and Fire Services in Abertillery and asked if an outcome of this pilot could be provided.

The Service Manager agreed to provide an update direct to the Member as although there was a pilot undertaken in Abertillery he would need to seek clarification if the pilot had been rolled out further from partners who had been involved in the pilot.

Another Member noted the request and felt that it would be of benefit for all Members to be made aware of the outcome of the pilot and asked it be recorded as an action for the next meeting.

This course of action was AGREED.

Concerns were raised over the lack of credit given to volunteers and third sector involvement during the pandemic in the Annual Report. A Member noted that assistance included the delivery of free school meals, delivery of food parcels, support to the vulnerable and shielding residents. Therefore, it was important that these individuals be mentioned as their support was critical.

The Service Manager Policy and Partnerships reiterated that the case studies and findings within this Annual Report was up until March 2020, however the PSB had taken a decision to include a small narrative around the work undertaken at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. The superb response of the volunteers and third sector parties would be included in this year's Annual Report. The information contained in the current report provided a small narrative and did not fully reflect the important role volunteers had undertaken.

	<p>It was reported that this year's annual report would be more focussed around the work of partners throughout the pandemic.</p> <p>Another Member referred to the Employability Programme and advised that this programme had got up to 1,000 people into work and the Member would have liked to have seen more headline information in terms of the specific work achieved and the impact.</p> <p>The Service Manager Policy and Partnerships advised that there had been challenges in drafting the Annual Report due to Covid-19. The Team contacted relevant partners for case studies and specific/longer term goals in order to demonstrate the work being carried out, however the comment was noted and it was agreed that these specific elements would be sought from respective groups and partners.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED Option 1; namely the progress made in the second year of delivery against the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan be noted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 6</b></p>	<p><b><u>WELSH GOVERNMENT EARLY YEARS INTEGRATION TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME PILOT CHILDCARE OFFER – JOINT WORKING PILOT – BLAENAU GWENT PATHFINDER</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the joint report of the Chief Executive Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and Service Manager – Early Years.</p> <p>The Service Manager Early Years provided a comprehensive overview of the progress made to date on the Welsh Government's new Early Years Integration Transformation Pilot in the Blaenau Gwent Pathfinder area. The Service Manager spoke in detail to the report and outlined the background, progress to date, next steps, budget implications and risk associated with the options for consideration.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Officer for her informative overview of the report and at this juncture invited questions/comments/observations from Members.</p> <p>A Member asked if equipment would be provided to families who needed technology in order for virtual home visits to be carried out.</p>	

It was reported that in most instances contact was made virtually via What's App as most parents had mobile phones and this allowed video calls as well as voice calls. If an actual home visit was needed full PPE would be required with strict guidance would need to be adhered to and a call would be made ahead of the visit to discuss safety.

The Member further asked if there were families of concern outside of Bryn Farm, Brynmawr would they be considered.

The Service Manager Early Years advised that the Bryn Farm area was identified as the highest need in Brynmawr in terms of deprivation and if there was a need to go outside of this area it was expected that generic Health Visitors would support families and if necessary the family could be referred to the outreach element for more intensive support. This would allow the service to be provided as required.

A Member raised concerns around the strict areas for the Flying Start Programme where one side of the street could have the service and the other side would not have the same benefits. It was hoped that the new programme would cover the Ward and not particular sections.

The Service Manager Early Years referred to the amount of work undertaken to ensure the Flying Start initiative was provided to families in Blaenau Gwent.

It was reported that the Team was passionate about the new programme and it was hoped that funding would continue to be provided to ensure its rolled out fully as Blaenau Gwent was one of the most deprived areas in Wales.

The Member requested that the Scrutiny Committee be kept informed of the progress to ensure it could be rolled out across Blaenau Gwent.

The Service Manager agreed to keep Members informed of progress.

A Member requested information on how much funding Blaenau Gwent had received from the Child Development Fund and what was the take up from families.

The Service Manager agreed to ascertain the amount of funding and report back to the Committee accordingly.

This course of action was AGREED.

In response to a question raised in relation to the length of the pilot, the Service Manager advised that there was no end date and no confirmation had been received to ascertain if the pilot would be continued in 2021/2022. The continuation depended on the success of the pilot and feedback from Welsh Government. The Service Manager added that she had recently attended a meeting to ensure funding would be continued.

A Member raised concerns around how some services the Council provided relied upon grants and the Member felt it was unfair that the service provided and officers employment relied so heavily on grant funding.

The Service Manager advised that a number of grants were used in Children's Services and noted that managing these grants could on occasions be difficult, however, she had drafted a spreadsheet for all the different grants in order to manage them accordingly. The Service Manager advised that a number of the grants came with specific terms and conditions which protected a number of areas. The Service Manager welcomed the grants as it protected many areas of the Team and allowed the good work being undertaken to be continued.

The Public Service Board Scrutiny Committee had an overwhelming support for the work undertaken in relation Early Years and hoped that the pilot would be continued and further rolled out across Blaenau Gwent.

The Committee AGREED Option 1; namely that the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee considered the proposed roll-out outlined for 2021 and noted the contents accordingly.

Councillor G. Paulsen left the meeting at this juncture.

No. 7

**BLAENAU GWENT CLIMATE MITIGATION STEERING GROUP**

Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director.

The Service Manager Policy and Partnerships outlined the report which gave details of the Blaenau Gwent Climate Mitigation Steering Group which had been established by the Public Services Board. The Service Manager noted that climate mitigation was taking action that would reduce man-made climate change. This included action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to absorb greenhouse gases in to the atmosphere. The role of the Steering Group was to develop a borough wide mitigation plan and the agreed aims for the first year was to set a science based carbon budget for Blaenau Gwent, agree vision/direction of travel, identify and outline key issues for public engagement in relation to decarbonising in Blaenau Gwent.

However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic this work had been delayed and to date the steering group had met three times. It had now been agreed that the group meet every 2 months going forward.

The Service Manager referred to consultation and explained that although at present it was difficult for consultation to be carried out, these type of exercises would be resumed in the future. It was important that the public be involved in this consultation and the Service Manager referred to the upcoming Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly in March 2021.

It was the first to be held in Wales and was fully funded via the Welsh Government. The Assembly would provide a good opportunity to start the process of gathering this type of public opinion about climate action in Blaenau Gwent.

The Service Manager Policy and Partnerships drew Members attention to the options for recommendations as noted in the report.

A Member welcomed the report and was pleased to see that the steering groups had now commenced. The Member advised that there were a lot of positive things that could be done to mitigate climate change which included tree planting and asked if such exercises had been planned.

The Service Manager advised that there was a great deal of work which could be undertaken, locally, regionally and nationally and these would be reported back to the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee as the group progressed.

Another Member welcomed the establishment of the steering group and felt that everyone could make a contribution in climate change and Wales was at the forefront of this work.

The Committee AGREED Option 1; namely the PSB Scrutiny Committee accepted the overview report and supporting appendix on the establishment of the Steering Group.

**No. 8**

**PSB SUSTAINABLE FOOD PROGRAMME**  
**PROGRESS UPDATE**

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Executive, Tai Calon.

An update on the progress regarding the PSB Sustainable Food Programme was provided and it was reported that the lead PSB sponsor for this programme was Tai Calon Community Housing.

The programme had been delayed due to Covid-19 as partners' work was focussed on the pandemic, and although this work continued partners are now working together to progress the programme as a sustainable food partnership going forward.

It was noted that in January 2020 the PSB agreed that the sustainable food partnership group would oversee the £23,147 capital spend awarded to Blaenau Gwent Council via the Welsh Government's EU Transition Fund Food Poverty Grant. The Food Poverty Grant capital funding would support organisations to access, store and distribute additional supplies of good quality food, including good food surplus, in particular, larger amounts of fresh food, boosting the capacity of organisations to provide good quality, nutritious food to their customers. It was further added that Tai Calon and partners had been awarded funding from NRW for a part-time sustainable food coordinator to be put in post to oversee the development of the Sustainable Food Programme in 2021.

It was continued that although work had been delayed a positive start had now been made. A good food partnership had been set up and an action plan had been developed.



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A Member noted that the Council was the holder of the EUTF Food Poverty Grant for 2020/2021 which needed to be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 and it was asked how much progress had been made on this spend.

It was reported that the NRW grant was separate to the Food Poverty Grant held by the Council. It was hoped that this funding would continue into the next financial year, however confirmation was awaited. The majority of the food grant had been spent and although the Council holds the grant community applications was considered by the Public Services Board.

The Service Manager Policy and Partnerships added that the Council had worked hard to ensure the community was aware of the grant available and it was unsure whether any surplus monies could be rolled over into next year. It was hoped that the monies would be committed by the 31<sup>st</sup> March, however if this was not the case the Council attempt to roll it over to the next financial year.

The Committee AGREED Option 1; namely that the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee accepted the report and appendices as provided prior to it being submitted to the Public Services Board.

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