

DRAFT AGENDA

ID	2305
Committee	Pwllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu
Date	01/02/2022
Attendees	<p>Cynghorwyr Haydn Trollope (Cadeirydd)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Julie Holt (Is-gadeirydd)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Derrick Bevan (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Garth Collier (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Martin Cook (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Malcolm Day (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr D. Lyn Elias (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Stewart Healy (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr John Hill (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Clive Meredith (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr John C. Morgan (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorydd John P. Morgan (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Tommy Smith (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Bob Summers (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr David Wilkshire (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Mr. Tim Baxter (Co-Optee)</p> <p>Mr. Tim Pritchard (Co-Optee)</p> <p>Lynn Phillips (Swyddog)</p> <p>Luisa Munro-Morris (Swyddog)</p> <p>Michelle Jones (Swyddog)</p> <p>Julia Carmichael (Swyddog)</p> <p>Claire Gardner (Swyddog)</p> <p>Joanne Sims (Swyddog)</p> <p>Gemma Wasley (Swyddog)</p> <p>Liz Thomas (Swyddog)</p> <p>Leeann Turner (Secretary)</p> <p>Gwasanaethau Democrataidd (Monitor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Joanne Collins (Monitor)</p> <p>Pob Cynghorydd (Monitor)</p> <p>Louise Bishop (Notify)</p> <p>Sean Scannell (Notify)</p> <p>Richard Crook (Notify)</p> <p>Rhian Hayden (Notify)</p> <p>Damien McCann (Notify)</p> <p>Michelle Morris (Notify)</p> <p>Steve Berry (Swyddog)</p> <p>Andrea Jones (Swyddog)</p>

Item ID	5761
Item Title	Cyfieithu ar y Pryd

Summary	Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o hysbysiad ymlaen llaw os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais.
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Item ID	5762
Item Title	Ymddiheuriadau
Summary	Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

Item ID	5763
Item Title	Datganiadau Buddiant a Goddefebau
Summary	Ystyried unrhyw ddatganiadau buddiant a goddefebau a wnaed.

Item ID	5889
Item Title	Cynnydd Band B Ysgolion yr 21ain Ganrif
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Addysg.

Item ID	5890
Item Title	Diweddariad Strategaeth a Phrosiect TGCh Addysg/Ysgolion Blaenau Gwent
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Addysg.

Item ID	5891
Item Title	Blaenraglen Gwaith: 15 Mawrth 2022
Summary	Derbyn yr adroddiad.

Agenda Item 4

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **Tuesday 1st February 2022**
Report Subject: **21st Century Schools Band B Progress**
Portfolio Holder: **Education and Learning Portfolio – Cllr. Joanne Collins**
Report Submitted by: **Corporate Director of Education – Lynn Phillips and Service Manager – Education Transformation and Business Change – Claire Gardner**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
13.1.22	13.1.22	18.01.22			1.2.22	02.03.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the 21st Century Schools Programme, along with the opportunity to scrutinise progress in line with the delivery of the Band B Programme.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 The 21st Century Schools Programme is a long-term strategic investment in the education estate throughout Wales. The Programme is broken down into phases of investment, categorised as Bands. The Band A Programme in Blaenau Gwent, successfully concluded in the autumn-term of 2019, with the delivery of the final project, Six Bells Campus. The Band A Programme realised an investment of £20.25m in school estate between 2014-19 (50/50 WG and Council funded).

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

2.3 Welsh Government encourages and expects councils to participate in a Gateway Review process. A Gateway Review is a form of peer review, which tests the Council's readiness and capacity to successfully deliver projects and programmes. The Education Transformation team agreed with the review team that, due to the programme status, the delivery confidence assessment should be split as follows, one for Band A and one for Band B respectively. For Band A, based upon a Gateway 5, the review team considered that the delivery confidence assessment as Green. For Band B, based upon a Gateway 0, the review team considered that the delivery

confidence assessment as Amber, due to fact that Band B was in its infancy at the time. The outcome report (Please refer to **Appendix 1**), highlighted that the 21st Century Schools programme management arrangements are to be commended, as follows:

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

- 2.4 An Internal Audit of the 21st Century Schools Programme was undertaken during the 2019/20 academic year, the outcome of which was a grading of 'reasonable assurance'. Only 2 weaknesses were found which pre-date the existing programme team. The weaknesses found were pertaining to the Band A SOP (submitted in 2010), along with business case submissions pre-2014. Both of these weakness have subsequently been addressed by the current Programme team (for more information please refer to **Appendices 2 (a), (b) and (c)** containing the audit reports).
- 2.5 The Blaenau Gwent Band B Strategic Outline Programme was approved in 2018. Blaenau aims to address the following key priorities:
- I. Raising standards, particularly at KS4;
 - II. Improving suitability and condition of the school estate;
 - III. Programme deliverability-match-funding and affordability;
 - IV. Sustainability and reducing revenue costs; and,
 - V. Increasing Welsh medium learning opportunities.
- 2.6 The Blaenau Gwent Band B Programme investment objectives are as follows:
- **Investment Objective 1:** to raise standards and achievement in line with localised targets at foundation phase, KS2, KS3 and KS4; and secure improved transition into post 16 learning.
 - **Investment Objective 2:** to create a sustainable model for the 21st Century school estate in consideration of both capital and revenue investment, along with the condition and suitability of buildings.
 - **Investment Objective 3:** to establish effective management and provision of school places, by having the right schools in the right place at the right time.
 - **Investment Objective 4:** to implement the 21st Century Schools Programme in line with local, regional and national school organisation policy; ensuring synergy between progression, development and implementation.

- **Investment Objective 5:** meeting the needs of vulnerable learners.
- 2.7 The Band B Programme commenced in April 2019 and is set to conclude in 2025. The Programme will realise an investment of £19.6million throughout the Blaenau Gwent school estate. The Welsh Government intervention rate for Band B is a 65/35 split, in favour of local authorities.
- 2.8 In November 2021, the Education and Welsh Language Minister announced that all new schools and college buildings, major refurbishment and extension projects, will be required to meet Net Zero Carbon targets from January 1st 2022. The Council meets with Welsh Government on a monthly basis in line with programme monitoring. At the last meeting, it was discussed that although the application of Net Zero Carbon is not required retrospectively, Welsh Government would commit 100% funding where application to existing schemes which are under development is possible. Therefore, the team have been investigating this, as detailed within the update below.
- 2.9 The Band B Programme seeks to deliver the following key projects in line with the investment objectives:
- Continued secondary school re-modelling within the following priority schools:
 - Abertillery Learning Community Secondary Campus
 - Brynmawr Foundation School
 - River Centre Learning Community
 - Tredegar Comprehensive School

This project will be a continued focus in line with future bandings of the 21st Century Schools Programme, due to the level of investment required – **Good progress has been made in identifying the priority works at the schools, via initial site visits and discussions. Further detailed assessments are programmed for development throughout the spring-term 2022. The assessments will be used to inform the options appraisal process and associated business case development, with business case submission is programmed throughout 2022.**

- The development of a new 360 primary school to replace Glyncoed Primary, which is the only category 'D' building in terms of condition within County Borough – **All business cases have been submitted and approved by Welsh Government. Significant progress has been made in relation to the Glyncoed project, the stage 3 design is complete, and the pre-planning application process concluded in September 2021. A full planning application has been submitted and the tender process initiated. The project team is currently assessing the potential application of Net Zero Carbon, along with the associated implications and impact from**

both a programme and financial profiling perspective. This is being explored further via the tender process, and will be progressed accordingly in line with contractor appointment. Finally, a pick-up and drop-off area has been developed off Allotment Road, with the aim of easing congestion and improving access to the site. The scheme was taken forward via the Highways Department, Education and Community Services, in line with feedback resulting from the Pre-Application Consultation process.

- Primary School remodelling within the Ebbw Fawr Valley consisting of Beaufort Hill, Cwm and Rhos y Fedwen Primary Schools – **All business cases have been submitted and approved by Welsh Government. The Rhos y Fedwen Primary remodelling project brief has been developed and agreed. Planning applications and tender documents are currently under development. We aim to submit relevant planning applications in the Spring 2022, and initiate the tender process during the Summer period 2022.**
- Remodelling of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg to address ongoing condition and suitability issues – **The business case has been submitted and approved by Welsh Government. The internal works commenced at the end of the Summer period 2021, and are nearing completion. We plan to re-initiate the tender process in January 2022, to secure a provider to undertake the external works. The project is on track for completion during the Spring 2022.**

2.10 In addition to the Band B funding envelope, Blaenau Gwent Council received confirmation in October 2018, that they were successful in securing £6 million from the Welsh-medium capital grant, along with £200,000 from the Capital Childcare Grant. The grants were awarded in line with the proposal to create a new 210 place Welsh-medium primary school and associated childcare facility in the Tredegar/ Sirhowy valley – **Design work has commenced and the project development phase is progressing well, along with tender document preparation. The project team aim to submit the pre-planning application at the end of January 2022, and initiate the tender process during the Spring 2022. Welsh Government has agreed the latest cost profile in principle - subject Ministerial sign off. The latest cost profile has increased due to COVID, market forces, design development associated with site constraints, along with additional information which emerged as a result of the site investigation process. In addition, Education has engaged Welsh Government who has stated that they would provide 100% additional funding in order to deliver a Net Zero Carbon school.**

2.11 The delivery programme/timeline has and continues to be subject to regular review. The financial profile has also undergone review in discussion with Welsh Government, with the latest profile having been submitted in December 2021 (Please refer to **Appendix 3(a)** for the overarching delivery programme/timeline and **Appendix 3(b)** for the funding forecast).

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers and accepts the report.

Option 2: Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers the report and provides comments relating to improvements that can be made prior to reporting to the Executive Committee.

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

There is a statutory requirement upon the Council to deliver the Band B Programme in line with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2018). Education is a strategic priority within the Council's Corporate Plan and the Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan, of which 21st Century Schools is an essential component in securing: improved access to education, education facilities (including condition and suitability), provision and standards throughout the school estate. The 21st Century Schools Programme is a key element in responding to the Council's wellbeing goals for all learners, particularly learners with Additional Learning Needs.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

There are no new or additional budgetary implications for the Council. The financial profile was last reviewed and submitted to Welsh Government in December 2021. The total programme cost currently stands at £19.6million, with the Council's 35% contribution being £6.86million which has been secured and approved via the Council's Capital Programme.

In addition, the Welsh Medium Project which has received 100% funding from Welsh Government is currently estimated to be £8.2million. Discussions have taken place with Welsh Government, who have approved the cost increase on an 'in principle' basis, subject to Ministerial approval. Ongoing detailed cost review processes are in place, to support effective financial management of the project. The programme is currently on profile, with regular reviews taking place with all relevant representatives on a monthly basis.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

Raising educational standards is a strategic risk on the Corporate Risk Register (CRR). The 21st Century Schools Programme proposals presented within this report will contribute to mitigating this risk. Moreover, there are robust risk management arrangements in place for the 21st Century Schools Programme, with identified risks regularly monitored reported and escalated via the 21st Century Schools Programme Board.

The high-level risks associated with programme delivery at present, include: the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic along with financial, resourcing and programming implications. Project Groups have been established for all live projects monitoring development, delivery and associated requirements. Programme Board are monitoring programme delivery, with core project

team (Education, Finance and Community Services) monitoring and reviewing programme resourcing, progress, timelines and financial profiles on a monthly basis. 2 business cases have been approved to date, with the remainder on track for submission as programmed. Monthly meetings continue to take place with Welsh Government, in order to review and consider the financial profile and delivery programme.

5.3 **Legal**

There are no direct legal implications associated with this report, other than the requirement for the Local Authority to follow the statutory processes set out within the Welsh Government School Organisation Code.

5.4 **Human Resources**

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

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Band B projects are currently on profile and programme. To date the following outcomes have been achieved:

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

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

The 21st Century Schools Programme will contribute to raising the standard of education throughout the school estate, promoting pupil and staff wellbeing and attainment, whilst ensuring fit for purpose teaching and learning environments.

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

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

- 6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**
The 21st Century Schools Programme is a long-term investment programme that at present, spans the period 2014 to 2034. The Band B element covers the period 2019 to 2025. The Programme takes account of facilities management and asset condition and suitability, along with key strategic and policy developments, at both a local and national level.
- 6.5 **Preventative focus**
The 21st Century Schools Programme will take a preventative approach in line with the needs of school staff and learners, placing an emphasis on delivering a school estate that is fit for purpose and contributes to raising educational standards, which is a Council priority.
- 6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**
The Vision for Education is based upon a school led, self-improving, collaborative approach. The 21st Century Schools Programme plays a fundamental part in improving partnership arrangements with the schools and their respective communities e.g. the community focussed school's agenda. In addition, the programme itself is delivered via a team officers from across all Council directorates, along with external partners such as the Shared Resource Service Wales and contractors.
- 6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**
The project is being progressed and managed by a multi-disciplinary team with dedicated officers from key services.
- 6.8 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**
All capital schemes and associated remodelling projects undertaken within schools, seek to contribute to CO2 carbon reduction and decarbonisation. Prior to design development, the project team establish key targets, with evidence provided via BREEAM trackers, benefits realisation plans, closure reports and other relevant project management documentation. The Council are committed to ensuring that all new schools and college buildings, major refurbishment and extension projects meet Net Zero Carbon targets from January 1st 2022. Although the application of Net Zero Carbon is not required retrospectively, Welsh Government has confirmed that they will look to commit 100% funding where the application to existing schemes under development is possible.
- 6.9a **Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment**
The Band B Programme was created prior to the socio-economic duty commencing. However, the impact of each project will be considered.
- 6.9b. **Equality Impact Assessment**
An Equality Impact Screening Assessment (EQIA) has been completed, which determined that there is no negative impact upon the protected characteristics.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 The Education Directorate has established a 21st Century Schools Board that has a strategic oversight for the programme, in line with the requirements of the Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) good practice guidelines. The 21st Century Schools Programme team reports to Education Department Management Teams (DMT) and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). The Education and Learning Scrutiny/Executive Committees monitor progress via their forward work programmes and Scrutiny are also consultees on any statutory school re-organisation consultation exercise. Furthermore, the 21st Century Schools Programme is independently assessed through the WG facilitated Gateway Review process.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Gateway Review Report

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

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



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

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

This assurance review was arranged and managed by:

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1.0 Delivery Confidence Assessment (DCA)

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



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

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

1.1 Delivery Confidence Assessment

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

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

2.0 Summary of Report Recommendations

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

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

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

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

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



3.0 Comments from the SRO

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

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

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

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



4.0 Background

The aims of the Programme:

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

The driving force for the Programme:

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

The procurement/delivery status:

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

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



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

Current position regarding OGC Gateway™ Reviews:

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

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

5.0 Purposes and conduct of the OGC Gateway Review

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

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

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

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

6.0 Acknowledgement

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



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

7.0 Scope of the Review

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

8.0 Review Team findings and recommendations

8.1: Gate 5: Review of operating phase

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

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

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



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

8.2: Gate 5: Business Case and benefits management

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

8.4: Gate 0: Policy and business context

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

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

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

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

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

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

8.5: Gate 0: Business Case and stakeholders



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

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

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

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

8.6: Gate 0: Readiness for the next phase

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

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

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

9.0 Next Assurance Review

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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

ANNEX A

OFFICIAL COMMERCIAL

Page 12 of 16

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



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

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

Purposes of the OGC Gateway Review 0: Strategic assessment:

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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

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Page 14 of 16

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ANNEX B

List of Interviewees

The following stakeholders were interviewed during the review:

Interviewees:

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



ANNEX C

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

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

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

SYSTEMS AUDIT – 21st CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION/OBJECTIVES

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

2. SCOPE OF THE AUDIT

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

3. BACKGROUND

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

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

4. AUDIT FINDINGS & WEAKNESSES

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

5. RISKS AND AGREED ACTIONS

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

6. CONCLUSIONS

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

7. INTERNAL CONTROL STANDARD GRADING

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

INTERNAL AUDIT SUMMARY REPORT

SYSTEMS AUDIT – 21st CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION

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

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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

3. CONCLUSION

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

4. INTERNAL CONTROL STANDARD GRADING

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

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APPENDIX A

INTERNAL CONTROL CLASSIFICATION.

The Internal control classifications are as follows: -

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

RISK RATING CATEGORIES.

The Risk Rating classifications are as follows: -

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

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Projects	Timeline/ Milestones
	Welsh Medium Grant Project
New Welsh-medium Primary (Welsh Medium Capital Grant)	Business case: Submitted and approved Formal consultation: Concluded Statutory notice period: Concluded Site investigation: Spring 2021 ongoing Project brief: Spring/Summer 2021 Tender document preparation and detailed design: Autumn 2021/Spring 2022 Pre-planning consultation: Autumn 2021 Planning: Spring 2022 (potential timeframe - 6 months) Out to tender: Summer 2022 Contractor appointment: Autumn 2022 Commencement: Late Autumn 2022 (14-month contract) Conclusion: Autumn 2023 Occupation: Autumn 2023
	Band B – Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg Remodelling Project
Welsh-medium Remodelling Project (Band B)	Business Case: Submitted and approved Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: Autum 2020/Spring 2021 Out to tender: Summer 2021 (internal) and Autumn 2021 (external) Contractor appointment: Summer 2021 (internal) and Spring 2022 (external) Commencement (internal works): Summer/Autumn 2021 Commencement (external works): Spring 2022 (6weeks) Conclusion: Spring/Summer 2022
	Band B – Band B Ebbw Fawr Valley Primary Redevelopment Projects
New Build Glyncoed Primary School (Band B)	Business case: Submitted and approved Project brief: Autumn-term 2020 Glyncoed Site investigations commencement: Spring 2020 Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: Summer 2021 Pre-planning consultation: April/May 2021 Planning submission: Autumn 2021 (potential timeframe - 6 months) Out to tender: Spring 2022 (6 - 8 weeks) Evaluation: Spring 2022 Contractor appointment: Summer 2022 Commencement: Summer 2022 (17-month construction period) Conclusion: Autumn 2023 Occupation: Autumn 2023
Rhos y Fedwen Primary School Remodelling (Band B)	Business case: Submitted and approved Site investigations: Summer 2021 Project brief: Summer 2021 Tender document preparation/detailed design work: Spring 2022 Building regulation/planning applications to be submitted: Spring/Summer 2022 Out to tender: Summer 2022 Evaluation: Summer 2022 Contractor appointment: Autumn 2022 Commencement: Autumn 2022 (12-months contract period) Conclusion: Summer 2023
Primary School Re-modelling:	Business case: Submitted and approved Project brief: Autumn 2022

Cwm & Beaufort Hill Primary Schools (Band B)	Tender document preparation/detailed design work: Spring 2023 Out to tender: Autumn 2023 Contractor appointment: Autumn 2023/Spring 2024 Commencement: Spring 2024 (depending on scope of work) Conclusion: September 2025
	Band B – Band B Secondary School Remodelling Projects
Brynmawr Foundation School (Band B)	Detailed options appraisal in consideration of site suitability and constraints: Spring 2022 Business Justification Case: Summer 2022 Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: Summer /Autumn 2022 Out to tender: Spring 2023 Contractor appointment: Summer 2023 Commencement: Autumn 2023 Conclusion: TBD dependent on the option taken forward
The River Centre – Secondary Campus (Band B)	Business Justification Case: Spring 2022 Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: Spring 2022 Out to tender: Autumn 2022 (4-6 weeks) Contractor appointment: Autumn 2022 Commencement: Spring 2023 (1-year construction period per/project) Conclusion: Autumn 2024
ALC-Secondary Campus (Band B)	Business Justification Case: Autumn 2022 Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: Spring 2023 Out to tender: Summer 2023 (4-6 weeks) Contractor appointment: Autumn 2023 Commencement: Spring 2024 (1-year construction period per/project) Conclusion: Autumn 2025
Tredegar Comprehensive School (Band B)	Business Justification Case: Autumn 2022 Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: Spring 2023 Out to tender: Summer 2023 (4-6 weeks) Contractor appointment: Autumn 2023 Commencement: Spring 2024 (1-year construction period per/project) Conclusion: Autumn 2025

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

Organisation Name:				Total Funding			
Project Name	Proposed Capacity	Education Level	Education Medium Type	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Total	WG Grant %
Band B							
Ysgol Bro Helyg	258	Primary	Welsh	350,000	650,000	1,000,000	0.65
Ebbw Fawr New Build/Primary School Redevelopment	971	Primary	English/Welsh	3,150,000	5,850,000	9,000,000	0.65
Secondary School Remodelling	tbc	Secondary	English	3,360,000	6,240,000	9,600,000	0.65
				-	-	-	
Childcare Offer							
Blaina ICC	tbc	Pre School	English		1,250,000	1,250,000	1
Glyncoed new setting	60	Pre School	English		1,500,000	1,500,000	1
Six Bells new setting	60	Pre School	English		8,777	8,777	1
Small Grant Scheme	tbc	Pre School	English		122,000	122,000	
Swffryd Flying Start	tbc	Pre School	English	-	748,239	748,239	1
Dynmawr Childcare	tbc	Pre School	English		491,233	491,233	
Welsh Medium Provision - Band B Seedling School & New Build WM	tbc	Pre School	Welsh	-	200,000	200,000	1
				-	-	-	
Welsh Medium							
Band B Seedling School & New Build WM	210	Primary	Welsh	-	8,200,000	8,200,000	1
				6,860,000	25,260,249	#####	
				£0.21	78.64%		

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Agenda Item 5

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **Tuesday 1st February 2022**
Report Subject: **Blaenau Gwent Education/Schools ICT Strategy and Project Update**
Portfolio Holder: **Education and Learning Portfolio – Cllr. Joanne Collins**
Report Submitted by: **Corporate Director of Education – Lynn Phillips
Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change – Claire Gardner**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
13.1.22	13.1.22	18.01.22			1.2.22	02.03.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to scrutinise progress in relation to Blaenau Gwent Education/Schools ICT Strategy, along with associated projects.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 Blaenau Gwent ICT Strategy Purpose and Overview

The purpose of the Education ICT Strategy is to clearly set out the Council and its schools' aspirations and goals, aligned to the digital learner journey within Blaenau Gwent. In addition, the strategy seeks to identify the priorities and resources required to facilitate effective infrastructure, connectivity and approaches to learning via the use of digital technologies.

2.2 Vision for Education ICT

'To secure continued development ensuring that all learners, regardless of age or demographic, have continued safe access to a blend of digital resources, hardware and cloud-based learning throughout the course of their education'.

2.3 Aims and Objectives

- Create a safe teaching and learning environment fit for the digital age
- Effectively engage teaching practitioners in seeking to improve and enhance the quality of teaching and learning
- Secure continued access to high quality devices both within and outside of the classroom
- Encourage and develop the use of technology in the classroom to facilitate improved learner outcomes in line with the Digital Competency Framework.
- Use and incorporate new technologies in inspiring learners to become digitally skilled and enabled citizens

- Facilitate effective connectivity for all learners in line with the delivery of a flexible blended learning offer
- Secure and develop collaboration with key partners and neighbouring authorities to inform localised developments, opportunities and create a regional strategic overview which is aligned to national priorities and associated policy

2.4 **Progress to Date**

The Blaenau Gwent Education ICT Strategy Group was re-established post emergency response period and met for the first time since November 2019, on March 18th 2021. The Group met 4 times over the course of the last academic session, and have made very good progress towards completion of the draft Education ICT Strategy. There are two remaining aspects which require completion, as follows:

- Delivery Strategy; and,
- Migration to and use of HWB.

2.5 Due to the pressures on schools and associated staff resourcing issues during the autumn-term 2021, a decision was taken to hold the final workshop until towards the end of January 2022. This will contribute to the final draft of the delivery strategy section.

2.6 Local authorities throughout Wales, have been experiencing issues with connectivity, due to an issue with the Welsh Government Internet filtering solution Websafe, which SRS authorities moved to in September 2020. Welsh Government had highlighted this solution to be more efficient, much simpler and quicker to use for schools. However, to date, these benefits are yet to be realised. BG have experienced outages and reliability issues, which have been escalated to the highest levels within Welsh Government, BT and local authorities in seeking a solution. SRS LAs were informed by Welsh Government in January 2022, that the issues which have been ongoing since the early part of the autumn-term 2021, will be resolved by the end of the second week in January. Once this issues are resolved, we can review the HWB migration strategy and complete the final section of the draft strategy.

2.7 The timeline which includes indicative dates for production of the final draft, consultation, approval and implementation can be found in **Appendix 1**.

2.8 **ICT Project Progress to Date**

Despite the impact of COVID-19, which resulted in both school access and resourcing issues, along with extensive additional planning and risk assessment requirements; the Infrastructure and Connectivity Project (ICP) was successfully delivered during the 2020/21 academic session. The project has not been without it's challenges and has encountered issues along the way including: facilities issues, Public Sector Broadband and British Telecom technical and resourcing issues, service disruption etc. However, issue management has been strong, and addressed via detailed action plans which are effectively monitored in partnership with the Council and schools.

2.9 The capital investment of £560,000 has achieved the following throughout the school estate:

- **Migration to the Schools EDU Network** – Improving the network infrastructure within schools throughout BG.
- **Improved internet connectivity and use** – Prior to project inception, school usage on the connection peaked at just over 50%. Internet usage in schools is expected to increase following these improvements. Should the capacity for schools have remained the same this would create a bottle neck, which despite faster connection, would mean that schools experience slowness.
- **School connectivity** – Connection between the school and the central infrastructure. Achieving LiDW 2020 aspirations for all schools; i.e. 100MB for primary schools and 1GB for secondary schools, for middle schools on separate sites the primary and secondary requirements apply.
- In-school infrastructure to ensure **effective internet access to meet current and future** requirements and aspirations (switches and wireless).
- **Internal connectivity** - the BG standard is defined as infrastructure and connectivity for every person in the school (student, teacher, adult) to have a maximum **1.5 internet connected devices simultaneously in appropriate areas**.
- Provision of **secure remote access for teachers, pupils, parents and governors**.
- **Centralised infrastructure including** school file storage, infrastructure licensing, software deployment servers (SCCM).
- **Secure e-safety** infrastructure arrangements – to include web filtering, anti-virus protection, and Bring Your Own Device (BYOD).
- **Centralised SIMS** – ensuring consistency and continuity of access.

2.10 **Welsh Government Hwb EdTech Initiative**

During 2019, the Welsh Government launched the Hwb EdTech (HET) initiative, which over a 3-year period, will realise an investment of over £2 million (£900,000 over waves 1 and 2) throughout the school estate. The status of the ICP placed Blaenau Gwent strong position to further enhance the infrastructure in line with the first 3 waves of Hwb EdTech funding. Welsh Government stipulated that waves need to be signed off sequentially. Waves 1-3 of the Hwb EdTech Programme were completed on January 31st 2021. The Council and SRS are currently working towards the completion of Wave 4, having already replaced over 40% of end of life devices, which equates to 4,194 devices in total to date.

2.11 **Digitally Disadvantaged Learners (DDL)**

The Council are working with the Shared Resource Service and its schools, in order to undertake a fundamental review of both the provision and demand. The strategy to date, has involved the repurposing of end of life devices using Neverware software, which is carried out by the Shared Resource Services via the current SLA team. However, there is a licence cost involved with the Neverware product, which requires renewal on an

annual basis. To date, funding has been obtained via a variety of sources as follows: Welsh Government Hwb EdTech Programme, the Welsh Government Hardship Grant and the Council, in order to establish and deliver this project.

- 2.12 Device requirements for digitally disadvantaged learners are regularly reviewed in partnership with schools, with a view to identifying, rebuilding and distributing devices in line with demand. Currently, 1,359 devices and 161 Mi-Fi units have been distributed to digitally disadvantaged learners, the allocation and management of which, is undertaken by the schools in partnership with SRS and the Council.
- 2.13 **Sustainability**
It has been agreed that the Neverware licences for 682 of the current DDL device allocation, will be supported by the Welsh Government until July 2022. Additional devices over and above those funded by Welsh Government, will require a Neverware licences at a cost of £25 per device, per annum. The Council has been supporting connectivity for the Mi-Fi devices at a cost of approx. £2,135 per calendar month between Spring 2020 and Spring 2022. Ongoing costs associated with the Mi-Fi connectivity (the devices/units themselves have been purchased via the Council), will be taken over by schools from January 2022.
- 2.14 A review process commenced with schools during the spring-term, in order to inform the development of school device sustainability plans from January 2022. In addition to DDL device management, school-based device replacement sustainability planning is in development for implementation from April 2022. This will ensure that the device replacement strategy of at least 20% of end of life devices per annum, in line with the device audit and review process.
- 2.15 **SRS Service Level Agreement (SLA)**
The SRS SLA is coming to the end of the existing 3-year cycle (April 2019 – April 2022), and is currently under review in line with the Council’s SLA programme. Headteacher and Governor engagement sessions are planned throughout January and February 2022.
- 2.16 The SRS Education Service aims to provide a comprehensive and all-inclusive offering that caters for the needs of the school and underpinned by the SLA agreement between schools and the SRS. The SLA provision covers:
- Management and monitoring of the ICT infrastructure and hardware in schools such as switches, access points and caching servers.
 - Management and monitoring of the central ICT infrastructure.
 - Day to day technical support, school visits and end user device management.
 - High quality technical advice, project planning and problem resolution.

- 2.17 The service has significantly moved forward over the last 18 months, reshaping to continue to deliver a high quality service despite the backdrop of the global pandemic. Blaenau Gwent schools have been supported with:
- The Hwb EdTech programme delivery – including the device roll-out project.
 - Design, implementation and review of the Digitally Disadvantaged Learners strategy.
 - A home working response team dedicated to meeting the needs of staff and students as we moved away from an education setting to ‘blended learning’.
 - Safeguarding schools against cyber threats.
 - Maintaining the integrity of associated systems.

Ensuring the platform and service provided is relevant to school’s needs.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 **Option 1:** Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers and accepts the report.
- 3.2 **Option 2:** Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers the report, and provides comments relating to the current monitoring and reporting processes.

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

- 4.1 Education is a Strategic priority within the Council’s Corporate Plan, of which the development and sustainability of school-based ICT provision is an essential component in relation to teaching, learning and pupil outcomes.
- 4.2 Welsh Government has developed the Digital Competency Framework (in line with the Donaldson report, and ‘A Curriculum for Wales – a Curriculum for Life’, 2015). The DCF establishes a framework for the delivery of ICT across the curriculum that will enable the development of a digitally skilled pupil population in the use of technologies, whilst preparing them for future progression routes and career pathways.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

There are no new or additional budgetary implications for the Council associated with the ICT Strategy. There is, however, an agreed approach to infrastructure and device sustainability, which has previously been approved via the Council’s political process, and will be subject to continued monitoring and review. This involves:

- **Future infrastructure costs** will be funded by continuing the existing ISB top slice (£50,000) to generate further prudential borrowing. This will realise a further investment of circa £500,000.
- **Future device costs** will be funded via school budgets on an annual basis, in line with each individual school’s sustainability plan.

5.1.1 The SRS Service Level Agreement review is underway, with cost plans programmed for circulation among school leaders and governance, during the latter part of January 2022.

5.1.2 The ICP project was delivered on profile as was the Digitally Disadvantaged Learner Project. Welsh Government Hwb EdTech Funding received for Wave 4 to date, is as follows: £293,293.35. Education are presently awaiting confirmation of further funding to complete this Wave, having highlighted to Welsh Government our current status and future requirements.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

The primary risk is failure to deliver an effective ICT strategy in line with the WG Education Digital Standards, which facilitates and enhances delivery aligned to the Digital Competency Framework and the new Curriculum for Wales. However, this is largely mitigated due to the following:

- The Infrastructure and Connectivity Project has successfully been delivered, along with Waves 1-3 of the Hwb EdTech Programme. Wave 4 implementation is currently underway, and progressing as programmed and in line with the financial profile.
- Sustainability sessions have taken place in order to inform the device refresh and replacement programme, along with the development of the ICT Strategy. As a result, school's ICT Sustainability Plans have been drafted and will be reviewed in the early part of the Spring-term 2022, for implementation in the 2022/23 financial year.
- Strong progress has been made in line with the development of the Education ICT Strategy, which is scheduled for consultation in the Spring-term 2022, and implementation from September 2022.
- The Website/PSA issues continue to be subject to daily monitoring and escalation processes, with school's connectivity having been negatively affected – particularly during the latter part of the Autumn-term 2021. These issues have been escalated to the highest level, with WG having produced an action plan to address them. An effective communications plan is in place, which has been developed in partnership with SRS and neighbouring authorities, to ensure that schools are in receipt of up to date information in order to aid planning, engagement and delivery.
- There is continued engagement with school's via headteachers, regarding both the projects and individual school needs
- Device and infrastructure audits have been undertaken for all schools and are update annually, meaning that the Council, SRS and schools have an excellent working knowledge of provision.

5.3 **Legal**

There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

To date the following outcomes have been achieved:

- 1,359 devices and 161 Mi-Fi units have been distributed to digitally disadvantaged learners.
- 4,194 devices have been ordered to replace end of life devices throughout the school estate.
- 30 out of 30 school sites have been fully migrated and their connectivity addressed under the ICP. Infrastructure upgrades have been completed in 30 out of 30 school sites.
- Device and infrastructure audits have been completed and updated for all schools.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

The primary outcomes associated with projects are driven by two key education objectives:

- Improved quality of teaching and learning via the development of a fit for purpose ICT infrastructure; and,
- Improved standards of education, pupil attainment and outcomes.
-

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

Stakeholder and end user needs and engagement are of paramount importance, and a key focus of the strategy and associated projects. The strategy will be subject to consultation, which will be used to inform development, delivery, progression and learning.

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

The projects and Blaenau Gwent ICT Strategy will be form part of a 10-year plan in addressing classroom delivery, ICT infrastructure, connectivity and device-based sustainability, throughout Blaenau Gwent school estate.

- 6.4.1 Shared Resource Service Wales SLA, will be reviewed with schools on a 3-yearly basis in line with the economic life of the assets. The SLA will ensure that SRS are able to provide the required level of support in managing the infrastructure and connectivity requirements of Blaenau Gwent's schools.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

The ICP and Hwb EdTech Projects, along with the strategy aim to address existing ICT issues and enhance provision, whilst ensuring parity of provision throughout the school estate and ensuring a sustainable strategic approach which creates consistency.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

Both the strategy projects require a collaborative approach in terms development, implementation, monitoring and progression. This is carried out via the ICT Strategy Group, Project, Welsh Government and SRS delivery team and strategic planning meeting.

6.7 Integration (across service areas)

The projects and strategy are being progressed and managed by a multi-disciplinary team with dedicated officers from key services, along with external partners.

6.8 Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions

Any physical works planned and undertaken within education settings are planned in order to take account of decarbonisation and reducing carbon emissions.

6.9a Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment

The report does not involve a strategic decision covered under the Act, however, the above assessment will be undertaken in line with production of the final strategy.

6.9b. Equality Impact Assessment

EqlA screening and impact assessments are carried out on a case by case basis.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 The projects are managed in accordance with Blaenau Gwent Corporate Project Management Framework and the PRINCE 2 methodology. Project development and implementation is managed via the Education Transformation Manager in partnership with the Shared Resource Service. Project monitoring is carried out via the Project Group, Programme Board and the ICT Strategy Group, along with regular reporting to Welsh Government. This process supports effective project management ensuring that both projects meet spend and delivery profiles.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Timeline

BLAENAU GWENT EDUCATION ICT STRATEGY

Timeline and Milestones 2020/21	
Planning and Preparation	<p>Agree the lead person for each section, along with the associated stakeholder groups – June 2021</p> <p>Final Delivery Strategy Workshop – Thursday 27th January 2021 (2pm-4pm)</p> <p>Draft Strategy to be produced by – Friday 18th February</p>
Consultation	<p>Consultation start date – Monday 28th February 2022</p> <p>Consultation with Education and Learning Scrutiny – Tuesday 1st February 2022</p> <p>Consultation end date – Monday 28th March 2022</p>
Consultation Out-turn and Review	<p>Out-turn Report taken via the ICT Strategy Group – April 2022</p> <p>Out-turn Report via Directorate Management Team – April 2022</p> <p>Out-turn Report via Corporate Leadership Team – April 2022</p> <p>Scrutiny Committee - TBD</p>
Political Approval	Executive Committee – TBD
Implementation	Implement the Education ICT Strategy 2022 - 2025 – September 2022

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Agenda Item 6

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

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

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **1st February 2022**
Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme: 15th March 2022**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Joanne Collins, Executive Member Education**
Report Submitted by: **Cllr Haydn Trollope, Chair of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	18.01.22			01.02.22			

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present to Members the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 15th March 2022 for discussion and agreement.

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Scrutiny Work Programmes are key aspects of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and support the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Forward Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's revised Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 Effective work programmes are essential to ensure that the work of scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
 - 2.4 The Committee's Forward Work Programme was agreed in June 2021, recognising the fluidity of the document to enable the Committee to respond to urgent and emerging issues, and included timescales when reports will be considered by the Committee. The work programme is managed and implemented by the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer under the direction of the Chair and Committee.
 - 2.5 The forward work programme for the forthcoming meeting will be presented to Committee on a 6 weekly cycle in order that Members can consider the programme of work; request information is included within the reports, as appropriate and / or make amendments to the work programme.

3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 **Option 1:** The Scrutiny Committee consider the Forward Work Programme for the meeting 15th March 2022, and
 - Make any amendments to the topics scheduled for the meetings;

- Suggest any additional invitees that the committee requires to fully consider the reports; and
- Request any additional information to be included with regards to the topics to be discussed.

3.2 **Option 2:** The Scrutiny Committee agree the Forward Programme for the meeting 15th March 2022, as presented.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme – Meeting on 15th March 2022

Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

Date	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council
Tuesday 15th March 2022 Deadline: Tuesday 1st March 2022	Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2022/23	Pre-Decision To consult Members on the draft EAS Business Plan for 2022/23.	Luisa Munro-Morris / Michelle Jones	Executive 27.04.22
	Inspire to Achieve / Work	Performance Monitoring Members to consider and monitor the performance in line with targets and spend. Sustainability and funding for NEETs agenda. (Performance completion and securing funding moving forward)	Joanne Sims	Executive Info Item
	Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Annual Return 2019/20	Performance Monitoring Members to consider the Annual Assessment from Welsh Government which highlights Blaenau Gwent's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards.	Joanne Sims <i>Invitee: ALT</i>	Executive Information
	School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education Statutory deadline for the policy to be published by 15th April	Pre-Decision To provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the draft School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2023/24, prior to Executive Committee approval.	Claire Gardner	Executive 02.03.22

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