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**Blaenau Gwent**

Our Ref./Ein Cyf.  
Your Ref./Eich Cyf.  
Contact:/Cysylltwch â: Gwasanaethau Democraidaidd

**THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND**

Dydd Mercher, 6 Gorffennaf 2022 Dydd Mercher, 6 Gorffennaf 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

**PWYLLGOR GWAITH**

A meeting of the Pwyllgor Gwaith will be held in Ystafell y Weithrediaeth, Canolfan Ddinesig, Glynebwy on Dydd Mercher, 13eg Gorffennaf, 2022 at 10.00 am.

Yours faithfully

Damien McCann  
Interim Chief Executive

**AGENDA**

**Pages**

**1. CYFIEITHU AR Y PRYD**

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

**2. YMDDIHEURIADAU**

Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

**3. DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU**

Derbyn datganiadau buddiant a goddefebau.

**4. AMSER CYFARFODYDD Y DYFODOL**

Ystyried amser cyfarfodydd y dyfodol.

**COFNODION**

**5. PWYLLGOR GWAITH**

5 - 16

Ystyried cofnodion y cyfarfod arbennig o'r Pwyllgor Gweithrediaeth a gynhaliwyd ar 16 Mawrth 2022.

**MATERION CYFFREDINOL**

**6. CYNADLEDDAU, CYRSIAU, GWAHODDIADAU A DIGWYDDIADAU**

17 - 18

Ystyried gwahoddiadau i gynadleddau, cyrsiau a digwyddiadau a dderbyniwyd.

**PORTFFOLIO TROSOLWG CORFFORAETHOL A PHERFFORMIAD**

**7. CYFLE GWEITHLU AR GYFER 'BENTHYCIAD PONTIO' AR GYFER CYMORTH GYDA CHOST GYNYDDOL DEFNYDDIO CAR AR GYFER DIBENION GWAITH**

19 - 22

Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Datblygu Sefydliadol.

**EITEMAU ER PENDERFYNIAD - MATERION ADFYWIO A DATBLYGU ECONOMAIDD**

**8. CYNLLUN BUDDSODDI LLEOL A CHYNLLUN BUDDSODDIAD RHANBARTHOL Y GRONFA FFYNIANT GYFFREDIN**

23 - 30

Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Adfywio a Datblygu.

**EITEMAU ER PENDERFYNIAD - MATERION ADDYSG**

**9. MAES LLAFUR HAWLIAU, GWERTHOEDD, MOESEG**

31 - 48

Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Addysg

**EITEMAU EITHRIEDIG**

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

## **PORTFFOLIO LLE AC ADFYWIO**

### **10. GWERTHU TIR, ASHVALE, TREDEGAR**

49 - 56

Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Adfywio a Datblygu.

To: S. Thomas  
Councillor H. Cunningham  
Councillor S. Edmunds  
J. C. Morgan  
H. Trollope

All other Members (for information)  
Interim Chief Executive  
Chief Officers

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**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

**SUBJECT: SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 16<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2022**

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

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**PRESENT: Leader of the Council/  
Executive Member – Corporate Services  
Councillor N. Daniels**

**Executive Member – Education  
Councillor J. Collins**

**Executive Member – Environment  
Councillor J. Wilkins**

**Executive Member – Social Services  
Councillor J. Mason**

**Executive Member –  
Economic Development & Regeneration  
Councillor D. Davies**

**WITH:** Corporate Director Education  
Corporate Director Social Services  
Chief Officer Customer and Commercial  
Chief Officer Resources  
Head of Community Services  
Service Manager – Public Protection  
Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance  
Press Officer

**DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

<b><u>ITEM</u></b>	<b><u>SUBJECT</u></b>
<b>No. 1</b>	<p data-bbox="268 324 849 360"><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="268 412 1469 488">It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>
<b>No. 2</b>	<p data-bbox="268 542 496 577"><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="268 624 1118 660">The following apologies for absence was reported:-</p> <p data-bbox="268 712 1241 788">Managing Director Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services</p>
<b>No. 3</b>	<p data-bbox="268 840 1235 875"><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="268 927 1334 963">There were no declarations of interest and dispensations raised.</p>
	<p data-bbox="268 1055 440 1090"><b><u>MINUTES</u></b></p>
<b>No. 4</b>	<p data-bbox="268 1146 485 1182"><b><u>EXECUTIVE</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="268 1234 1469 1310">Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2022.</p> <p data-bbox="268 1375 1469 1460">RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>

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**DECISION ITEMS – EDUCATION MATTERS**

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**No. 5**     **EAS BUSINESS PLAN 2022-2025**

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

The Corporate Director Education advised that the report was presented to the Executive on an annual basis to review the draft EAS Business Plan 2022-2025 as part of the regional consultation process. The Executive would ensure that the plan enabled appropriate support for schools and settings in Blaenau Gwent. The Corporate Director outlined the changes which had been made to the current plan, which included context in response to Covid-19 and a regional statement of intent that moved away from a vision to a formal statement of intent which was well received by Corporate Directors and Chief Education Officers across the region. The Plan also included Blaenau Gwent strategic priorities and from a self-evaluation perspective there was a summary of progress in the main plan and not in the supporting section as in previous plans. The Corporate Director also noted that the Plan captured measures and outcomes up to 2025, which was useful to measure progress.

The Corporate Director added that Blaenau Gwent statistics and stories are included in the appendices of the Plan which reflected well on Blaenau Gwent. It was further added that the draft EAS Business Plan had been well received and supported by the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that the report and Business Plan be accepted and the information contained therein be noted. (Option 1)

<p><b>No. 6</b></p>	<p><b><u>BLAENAU GWENT ADMISSIONS POLICY FOR NURSERY AND STATUTORY EDUCATION 2023/24</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Education spoke to the report which outlined the outcome of the annual consultation process, in line with the revised draft of the Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2023/24. Executive Committee are asked to provide their views and comments on the document in preparation for the 2023/24 admission round, prior to its determination and publication on the 15th April 2022.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Education noted that the most significant changes were outlined in the report and summarised the primary changes.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the policy document be agreed. (Option 1).</p>
	<p><b><u>DECISION ITEM – SOCIAL SERVICES MATTERS</u></b></p>
<p><b>No. 7</b></p>	<p><b><u>CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING POLICY &amp; CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING TRAINING FRAMEWORK</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Social Services advised that the report updated the Executive on the developments in respect of the Audit Wales recommendations, regarding the development of a Corporate Safeguarding Policy and a Corporate Safeguarding Training Framework which was detailed in the report and attached appendices. The Corporate Director further provided an overview of the key points as outlined in the report.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted (Option 1) and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy be agreed; and</li> <li>• the Corporate Safeguarding Training Framework and its implementation plan be agreed.</li> </ul>



	<p align="center"><b><u>DECISION ITEMS – ENVIRONMENT MATTERS</u></b></p>
<p><b>No. 8</b></p>	<p><b><u>DISABLED ADAPTATIONS – POLICY AMENDMENT PROPOSAL TO REMOVE MEANS-TEST</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the joint report.</p> <p>The Service Manager – Public Protection provided a detailed overview of to the report which sought approval from the Executive on a proposed policy amendment that would remove the current means test for grants for disabled adaptations in Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and proposed policy amendment be approved that would remove the current means test for grants for disabled adaptations in Blaenau Gwent from April 1st 2022.</p>
<p><b>No. 9</b></p>	<p><b><u>ACQUISITION OF HIGHWAYS ASSETS AT SIX BELLS</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Community Services.</p> <p>The Head of Community Services advised that the report provided the Executive with options for the proposed acquisition of highways assets at Six Bells, Abertillery. The Head of Community Services advised that the Council had been approached by a consortium of residents from High Street, Six Bells, Abertillery who had requested that the Council consider becoming the freehold owner of land currently within their ownership. The land was purchased by the consortium from the National Health Service in December 2019 to protect the interests of local residents and property owners. The group would now like to offer the freehold interest for the highways assets at no charge to the Council. The Head of Community Services noted that there was no apparent reason why these highways assets could not be formally transferred under freehold to Council ownership as maintenance costs are already being funded directly by the council.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the request to make the necessary arrangements to complete and transfer the freehold interest to the Council be approved. (Option 2).</p>

	<p align="center"><b><u>MONITORING ITEM – CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS</u></b></p>
<p><b>No. 10</b></p>	<p><b><u>REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING -2021/2022, FORECAST OUTTURN TO 31 MARCH 2022 (AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2021)</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources outlined the report which provided an overview of the forecast financial outturn position across all portfolios for the financial year 2021/2022 (as at 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2021).</p> <p>The Chief Officer advised that the overall favourable variance as at December 2021 was £4.65m, after the application of Welsh Government Hardship Funding and noted that there had been an increase in the favourable variance of £1.835m since the September 2021 forecast position (£2.814m). The Chief Officer further provided an overview of the adverse variance across portfolio which was detailed in the report and informed that these were monitored and reported accordingly with actions plans in place to address cost pressures.</p> <p>The Leader felt that this reported ended the current administration on a positive financial setting. The Leader was of the opinion that this Council had managed the budget really and set a strong platform for the future and an incoming new administration in May. The Leader stated that this Council should be proud of the positive position reported.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive provided the appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes detailed in the report. (Option 1).</p>
<p><b>No. 11</b></p>	<p><b><u>CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, FORECAST FOR 2021/2022 FINANCIAL YEAR (AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021)</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources provided the Executive with an overview of each Portfolio’s actual and forecast capital expenditure against funding approvals for the 2021/2022 financial year, as at 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2021</p>

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The overall financial position as forecast at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 indicated an adverse variance of £227,852 against a total in year capital budget of £20.1m. The Chief Officer further outlined over spends as detailed in the report and informed that discussions with funding bodies are currently positive, therefore, it was not proposed that funding for these schemes would be built in from the Capital contingency at this stage. However, the Chief Officer was mindful that the Council was approaching the year end and there may be a need to look at funding options.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted (Option 1) and:-

- the appropriate challenge be provided to the financial outcomes in the report;
- support be continued against the appropriate financial control procedures agreed by Council; and
- the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital Team, to safeguard Authority funding be noted.

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**No. 12 USE OF GENERAL AND EARMARKED RESERVES 2021/2022**

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

The Chief Officer Resources informed the Executive of the forecast reserves position for 2021/2022 as at Quarter 3 and highlighted the key points as contained within the report.

The Leader welcomed the report which demonstrated that the Council had gotten to grips with the financial resilience within the organisation. Although the Council had the highest level of reserves since 2012, the Leader advised that the Council was still only part of the way up in the league table relative to reserve levels across all local authorities. However, the Leader felt that the Council was moving in the right direction and placed the next Council at a good point to inherit or exploit.

	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive considered the forecast use of general and earmarked reserves for 2021/2022 (Option 1) and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the impact of the £4.649m favourable variance for 2021/2022 would have on the budgeted contribution to the General Reserve;</li> <li>• the forecast increase of the General Reserve in 2021/2022 to £12.402m be noted, being 9.39% of net revenue expenditure, above the 4% target level;</li> <li>• the need for ongoing prudent financial management to support the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the financial resilience of the Council be continued; and</li> <li>• continue to challenge budget overspends and implement appropriate service Action Plans, where required.</li> </ul>
<p><b>No. 13</b></p>	<p><b><u>BRIDGING THE GAP (BTG) PROGRAMME 2021/2022 – PROGRESS UPDATE OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2021</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources advised that the report provided an update on the progress made with the Strategic Business Reviews during the period October to December 2021, the latest assessment of the financial achievement for the current financial year and the latest estimated achievement between 2022/23 and 2026/27.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources outlined the budget gaps for 2022/23 to 2026/26 and reported that the forecast achievement was expected to exceed the estimated achievement of £0.75m by £0.25m for the current year due to the successful outcome of the appeals on rateable values of Council property and assets and rental income on industrial units.</p> <p>In conclusion, the Chief Officer felt that this was another positive report on the Council’s financial position.</p> <p>The Leader concurred that this was a positive report and felt that the Bridging the Gap Programme had been a positive piece of work which had protected services in the Authority where the Council had moved away from the traditional way of balancing budgets where the Council looked to Service Areas for cuts. It was hoped that this would be continued, although it was felt that the Programme would need to be refined going forward.</p>

	<p>The Leader noted the ambition and commitment of officers along with majority of politicians who supported the Programme and the Leader felt it would play a major part in the future of budgets.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive provided the appropriate challenge to the Bridging the Gap Programme. (Option 1).</p>
	<p><b><u>MONITORING ITEMS – ENVIRONMENT MATTERS</u></b></p>
<p><b>No. 14</b></p>	<p><b><u>CONTRACT EXTENSION – PEST CONTROL TREATMENT SERVICE TO 31 DECEMBER 2023</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager – Public Protection.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the service performance and continuation of the contract with Rentokil until 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2023 be noted. It would then be reviewed and retendered, as necessary, in accordance with Corporate Procurement rules. (Option 1).</p>
<p><b>No. 15</b></p>	<p><b><u>FLY TIPPING ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY 2021/22</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Frontline Enforcement Service.</p> <p>The Head of Community Services advised that report provided an update on the Authority’s enforcement activities in relation to fly tipping and other waste regulation offences and the level of fly tipping activity within Blaenau Gwent for the year 2021/22. The Head of Community Services spoke in detail to the report and outlined the key points to the Executive as contained in the report.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Environment welcomed the positive report that had also been well received by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee. There had been a number of favourable comments raised on the work undertaken by the Enforcement Team.</p>

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The Executive Member advised that this had been an area which had long been a source of complaints from members of the public who would not been concerned with the operational side as residents wanted to see action. The Enforcement Team had brought about a different way of working instead of the duplication of the various services across the team incidents were dealt with collectively and their actions are outlined in the report. The Executive Member continued that the Enforcement Team had been an initiative she had aspired to develop to move this Council forward. It was a personal priority and an administration priority and feedback from residents were positive.

The Executive Member further referred to the Roseheyworth Recycling Centre and noted the booking system which had been in place due to Covid-19 restrictions, however as of today there would be a hybrid system in place which allowed residents to just turn up at the site. The Roseheyworth Site had been chosen as it was a bigger site which also had a shop on site for residents to visit. The Executive Member also added that work would commence shortly on an Education Centre on the site which would teach children about litter and recycling.

The Executive Member reiterated that this was a pleasing report which needed to be brought forward in order to highlight the good work undertaken by the Enforcement Team across the Borough.

The Leader reiterated that this administration had aspired to this work for many years. There had been delays due to the pandemic, however the work was now being undertaken and the public had recognised the changes in their areas. The Frontline Enforcement Team are doing an excellent job and the difference in the Borough had been massively improved. The Leader added that there was still a fair way to go with the combination of the Enforcement Team, however the Leader stated lets serve these penalty notices and maintain determination to keep Blaenau Gwent tidy. The progress made and the work undertaken was a huge credit to the Department with the support of the Executive Member for Environment.

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In conclusion, the Executive Member added that this report demonstrated the strong start, however there was a great way to go with this initiative and the Executive Member was confident that the Enforcement Team would continue to achieve the best results.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive continued to support the waste regulation work and development of the Frontline Enforcement Service as detailed in the report. (Option 1).

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### **ABERTILLERY LEARNING COMMUNITY**

At the invitation of the Leader, the Executive Member for Education apologised for the lateness of reporting this information, however, it had only just been received and it was positive news to share in relation to the Abertillery Learning Community and thereupon asked the Corporate Director Education to provide the appropriate update.

The Corporate Director Education advised that Abertillery Learning Committee had been subject to an Estyn Monitoring Visit in February 2022. The findings had been published today by Estyn and the Corporate Director was pleased to report that the Learning Community had made sufficient progress against the 7 recommendations and had been removed from the Estyn Improvement Category. This was great news for the Learning Community and the Council as well as the children of Abertillery Learning Committee.

The Corporate Director added that a press statement had been developed in conjunction with the Learning Committee and wished to thank them for their prompt action. The Corporate Director felt that this was further good news to conclude the current cycle of meetings.

The Executive Member for Education stated that this was fantastic news predominately for the children, it had been such a journey for the Learning Community and the Executive Member was delighted that it was now in position of such a positive place and would now go from strength to strength. The Executive Member expressed thanks to everyone involved in making the progress needed and the collective support of the Executive in relation decisions to be taken, along with the Education Team and the school staff in getting the School to this position.

The Leader thanked everyone for attending the final meeting closed.

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# Agenda Item 6

*Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

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

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **13<sup>th</sup> July, 2022**

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

Portfolio Holder: **General Matters**

Report Submitted by: **Democratic Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
X	x	X				02/03/2022		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

To present a list of conferences, courses, events and invitations for consideration and determination by the Executive.

## 2. Scope of the Report

### 2.1 The Installation of the next Archdeacon of the Gwent Valleys and Diocesan Director of Mission

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at Newport Cathedral, Newport

To approve the attendance of Councillor D. Wilkshire, Deputy Presiding Member.

### Armed Forces Day 2022

To approve the attendance of Councillor D. Bevan, Armed Forces Champion.

## 3. Options for Consideration

3.1 To seek approval for attendance for the events outlined in the report.

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# Agenda Item 7

*Executive Committee and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 07.07.22

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 07.07.22

Committee: **Executive Committee**  
Date of meeting: **13<sup>th</sup> July 2022**  
Report Subject: **Workforce Opportunity for a 'Bridging Loan' to support with the increasing cost of using a car for work purposes**  
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Steve Thomas, Executive Member Corporate Services and Leader of the Council**  
Report Submitted by: **Andrea J Prosser, Head of Organisational Development**

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					13.07.22		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is, further to a request from Unison regarding the cost of living crisis, for the Council's Executive to approve temporary funding to support the optional opportunity for the Workforce who uses a car for work purposes to access a one-off temporary 'bridging' loan of £200. Unison has also requested that the Council consider increasing the rate paid to employees for mileage similarly to the framework put in place for the NHS Wales workforce.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The proposals in this report will be for the Council workforce that are required to use a car for work purposes. This does not include those staff employed by schools governing bodies.
- 2.2 Employees who use their vehicle for business purposes claim the mileage reimbursement directly via employee self-service and are paid monthly in line with usual pay dates to comply with HMRC. Employees are encouraged to submit claims in a timely manner however, due to the nature of a monthly payroll, the employee would have incurred the expense of paying for fuel to undertake a business journey then could potentially need to wait 4-5 weeks for the reimbursement. Unison have made representations on behalf of members regarding affordability of increasing costs of fuel and maintaining a car.
- 2.3 For financial year 2021-2022, the business miles travelled by employees has been reviewed and the table below details the number of employees by the average number of miles claimed for each month, in 50 mile increments.

<b>Mileage Band</b> (Average Miles Claimed Per Month)	<b>Number of Employees</b>
1-50	248
51-100	85
101-150	58
151-200	27
201-250	22
251-300	3
301-350	13
351-400	7
401-450	2
451-500	3
501-550	2
551-600	2
601-650	3

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

#### 3.1 *Option 1* (preferred option)

To offer employees who use their car for work purposes the opportunity of applying for a 'bridging' loan of £200 that is fully repayable. The situation will be reviewed in March 2023 or earlier should the cost of fuel reduce, the pay award has been implemented or there is any other change. The loan will be repayable via monthly instalments over 12 months. The 'bridging' loan is fully recoverable with immediate effect if an employee terminates their employment with the Authority.

Continue to discuss the potential of a temporary review of mileage rates with the trade unions.

The loan opportunity will be advertised through line managers and the Chief Executive Newsletter and will only be available to those who have claimed mileage over the last year and use their car for work purposes. The employee would be required to sign a declaration and commitment to repay the loan in the future.

#### 3.2 *Option 2*

Do not offer the opportunity of a 'bridging' loan.

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

This proposal would support the workforce with the cost of living crisis and the increasing cost of running a car.

## 5. Implications Against Each Option

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

By offering the opportunity of a 'bridging' loan to all employees who have claimed mileage, this would be approx. 475 employees at £200 which would give a temporary total cost of £95,000. As detailed in the report the aim will be to recoup the loans when the cost of fuel reduces or at the point of review in March 2023. As the loan is fully recoverable, there should be no significant budgetary implications arising from this report, however, should any of the loans become irrecoverable, this may result in a cost pressure to be funded from to the relevant department.

### 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The proposal is a temporary loan that will be repayable and presents minimal risk, however, there is some risk with repayment of individual loans.

### 5.3 ***Legal***

N/A

### 5.4 ***Human Resources***

This temporary arrangement will apply to those who claim mileage for work purposes.

## 6. Supporting Evidence

### 6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

See section 2.3

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

N/A

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

Proposal has been developed further to a request from the trade union.

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

### 6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The proposal will give the workforce some support with the purchase of fuel and the timeline for claiming mileage expenses.

### 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

N/A

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

N/A

### 6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

Managers have been asked to ensure that mileage for their area is managed, planned and minimised as far as possible.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment***

The proposal will be equally applied to the Council's workforce who uses a car for work purposes and claims mileage expenses.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The 'bridging' loan to be reviewed at the end of March 2023.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

*None*

# Agenda Item 8

*Executive Committee and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **13<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

Report Subject: **Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Local Investment Plan and Regional Investment Plan**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John C. Morgan, Executive Member for Regeneration and Development**

Report Submitted by: **Ellie Fry, Head of Regeneration and Development**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
05.07.2022	07.07.2022					13.07.2022		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report outlines the Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the work to date required to progress the UKSPF through a regional process that will continue over recess. It summarises the potential regional investment opportunities, the delivery mechanism and timescales for submission, the appraisal of the Regional Investment Plan submission to UK Govt and the next steps.

### 1.2

The purpose of this report is to:

1. Seek agreement for Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council (RCT) to act as Lead Local Authority for the UK SPF for the Cardiff Capital Region and for them to submit the CCR Investment Plan to the UK Government by the deadline of 1st August 2022.
2. Grant delegated authority for the Head of Regeneration and Development (in consultation with the Leader and Executive Member for Regeneration and Development, Chief Executive, Chief Officer Resources/Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Compliance) to take necessary actions to meet the submission deadlines and requirements.
3. Agree a number of interventions to ensure that the 2022/23 funding is spent in a timely manner, including some at risk recruitment. This will be at financial risk to the council in the first instance. Contracts can be further extended once confirmation of SPF funding is received.
4. To agree to utilise part of the 4% SPF administration/management fee to appoint a small project team to manage and administer the delivery of the SPF programme for BG CBC.

## 2. **Scope and Background**

2.1 The SPF is the UK Government replacement for European funding (European Structural Investment Fund ESIF) following the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union in 2020.

### **SPF Allocation**

2.2 The UKSPF is a key part of the UK's Levelling Up agenda, forming part of complementary funding, including the Levelling Up Fund and Community Ownership Fund. The primary aim of the fund is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK. Underpinning this aim are three investment Priorities: communities and place; supporting local business and people and skills.

- The **Communities and Place** investment priority will enable places to invest to restore their community spaces and relationships and create the foundations for economic development at the neighbourhood-level. The intention of this is to strengthen the social fabric of communities, supporting in building pride in place.
- The **Supporting Local Business** investment priority will enable places to fund interventions that support local businesses to thrive, innovate and grow.
- The **People and Skills** investment priority will help reduce the barriers some people face to employment and support them to move towards employment and education. Places can also target funding into skills for local areas to support employment and local growth.

2.3 As part of the People and Skills priority there is a dedicated and ring-fenced element of the UKSPF called **Multiply** which seeks to improve adult numeracy skills.

2.4 The 10 Local Authorities in the CCR have a combined conditional allocation of £230,432,573 and £48,100,003 for Multiply. Blaenau Gwent have £23M allocated for expenditure across three priorities and an additional £5M for Multiply.

2.5 This amount is allocated over three years starting 1 April 2022, with a substantial amount in year three (2024/25). The funding has been broken down to yearly allocations; 12% in year 1 (22/23), 24% in year 2 (23/24) and 64% in year 3 (24/25). UK Gov have advised that any funding not utilised in each year cannot be carried forward. Table 1 outlines the allocations for Blaenau Gwent until March 2025.



2.6 Table 1

<b>Total SR (UKSPF core)</b>	<b>22-23 (UKSPF core)</b>	<b>23-24 (UKSPF core)</b>	<b>24-25 (UKSPF core)</b>
<b>£23,301,572</b>	<b>£2,827,861</b>	<b>5,655,721</b>	<b>£14,817,990</b>
<b>Total SR (Multiply)</b>	<b>22-23 (Multiply)</b>	<b>23-24 (Multiply)</b>	<b>24-25 (Multiply)</b>
<b>£4,863,920</b>	<b>£1,470,488</b>	<b>£1,696,716</b>	<b>£1,696,716</b>

2.7 Lead local authorities for each area will have flexibility over how the Fund is delivered. A mix of competitions for grant funding (default approach set out in Cabinet Office Grants Standards), procurement, commissioning, delivery through in-house teams or a mix of all the above. For example, some community level interventions may require a commissioning or in-house approach, recognising that competitions for grant may create barriers to participation in left behind communities.

2.8 **Investment Plan Process**

Emphasis is being placed on gathering local evidence to substantiate local (and regional) spend of the SPF. Welsh Government has also issued correspondence to local authorities requesting that actions fit with WG policy and strategy, and this has been taken into account.

2.9 To access the local SPF funding allocations, each local authority has developed a local Investment Plan which identifies a range of interventions that meet the 3 investment priorities and reflect local evidence, challenges and opportunities. Each local Investment Plan will contribute to one South East Wales Regional Investment Plan which will need to outline:

- Local context: showing evidence of opportunities and challenges using the three investment priorities for UKSPF.
- A selection of outcomes and interventions: identifying the outcomes based on local evidence and need, and the interventions to prioritise, under each priority.
- Delivery; detailing:
  - a. Approach to delivery and governance
  - b. Expenditure and deliverables
  - c. Capability and resource
- Engagement with wider local partners, stakeholders, local MP's and Members of the Senedd.

2.10 **Lead Authority Role**

A lead local authority has been identified to manage the regions allocation and the authorities of the Cardiff Capital Region propose that Rhondda

Cynon Taf Council undertake this role and submit the Regional Investment Plan. The lead authority will also have responsibility for a single funding agreement with the UK government for the full South East Wales SPF allocation of £278.5M and will be accountable for all aspects of monitoring and claiming the allocation. There will be a requirement for Service Level Agreements between the Lead Authority and Blaenau Gwent CBC to pass on accountability and the terms and conditions of the funding.

#### 2.11 **Regional Investment Plan Submission**

UK Govt will review the Regional IP we expect to receive the first year's funding allocation in October 2022. Local authorities anticipate needing resource before the November decision on the Regional IP and so are requesting some 'at risk' recruitment into some of the key positions required to take the SPF process forward before that date. The fund can support investment into interventions starting from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

2.12 Joint communications are ongoing by the ten local authorities and a joint message has been shared and posted on Council websites and in a document for those groups looking for information on SPF with further consultation planned for later in the summer.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

#### 3.1 **Option 1**

To proceed with the regional Shared Prosperity Fund process and agree the following:

1. Seek agreement for Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council (RCT) to act as Lead Local Authority for the UK SPF for the Cardiff Capital Region and for them to submit the CCR Investment Plan to the UK Government by the deadline of 1st August 2022.
2. Grant delegated authority for the Head of Regeneration and Development (in consultation with the Leader and Executive Member for Regeneration and Development, Chief Executive, Chief Officer Resources/Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Compliance) to take necessary actions to meet the submission deadlines and requirements.
3. Agree a number of interventions to ensure that the 2022/23 funding is spent in a timely manner, including some at-risk recruitment. This will be at financial risk to the council in the first instance. Contracts can be further extended once confirmation of SPF funding is received.
4. Agree to use part of the 4% SPF (£1,120,000 over three years) administration/ management fee to appoint a small project team to manage and administer the delivery of the SPF programme for BG CBC.

#### 3.2

#### **Option 2**

Not to proceed with the SPF local and regional process any further.

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

4.1 The BG Local IP refers to the relevant documents that build the evidence of need in the County Borough. This evidence is reflected in the resulting interventions identified that go to make up the Local Investment Plan proposed actions. The Local IP calls on evidence from the: Corporate Plan; BG Wellbeing Plan; UK Competitiveness Index; Enterprise Strategy; Environment and Active Travel Plan, amongst others.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

5.1.1 Option 1 would unlock a budget of £28M in total to deliver the identified programme of interventions and MULTIPLY (the UK Govt adult numeracy intervention) across Blaenau Gwent. Up to 4% of the £1,120,000 funding can be used for joint arrangements around the administration of the fund. The team will be funded through the local authority's share of the 4% SPF administration fee and will be part of the Business and Regeneration Team. The cost will be in the region of £160k p/a, for 2022/23 the risk would be a maximum of £100,000 if all appointments are made in August/September. If SPF is not agreed this will be a cost pressure to the Department.

5.1.2

Option 2 – by not proceeding with the endorsement of the Local IP there will be regional decisions around SPF budget that will not involve BG and could have an adverse impact upon our priorities and interventions planned using the evidence base for the local authority area.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.2.1 Option 1 There are a number of risks that we are managing as part of this process.

- The timescales imposed by UK Govt – working together to find the best solution in the time given.
- Working without the detailed guidelines, still to be provided by UK Govt – we are speaking to the UK Govt civil servants on a weekly basis and local authority feedback is changing some conversations for the positive.
- Undertaking limited consultation before the Regional IP is submitted – the evidence that underpins our Local IP is from our corporate documents which themselves have come from consultation with the public and local organisations. Consultation with key partners like the Gwent PSB are programmed in and further consultation on evidence and process will be undertaken over the summer.
- Total SPF is less than the previous European funding and so the money will need to be targeted to those areas of need, reflected in the split across priorities and the local and regional split – this process is complicated but regular discussions, both internally and with other authorities is making progress but it is anticipated that there will still be some difficult discussions and decisions ahead.
- Due to the late programming of the SPF, resulting in Regional IP sign off by UK Govt due in Oct/Nov 2022, and the small amount of funding

identified for 22/23 - the process for bids from the third sector and partners will not be in place until end of financial year 22/23 – this is being communicated and more detail on how this will work will be communicated through the summer.

- Linked to the above, the SPF funding officially began on 1 April 2022. Whilst the funding allocated to year one the 2022/23 allocation is far smaller than in future years, we must still ensure that full spend against the budget profile is achieved so there is a risk that if we don't start some elements of delivery i.e. recruitment at risk we will fail to achieve full spend against this year's budget profile.
- The profiled spend within the Local IP has been designed to ensure that we are best placed to spend in line with the annual budget profiles. It will also be important to ensure that delivery partners are aware of these profiles and take ownership of ensuring spend within profile is achieved. There is a risk that if we fail to achieve the profiled spend UK Govt have indicated that funds would have to be returned and would not be rolled over for spend in future financial years. This would result in us failing to fully utilise the £28m available.

5.2.2 Option 2 – the main risk is that we have little or no control over the outcomes if we are not part of the regional discussions and may not have our projects agreed.

### 5.3 **Legal**

There will be a regional 'back-to-back' agreement with RCT to undertake the Lead Partner role. Heads of Terms are being drafted and this will follow.

### 5.4 **Human Resources**

The process has been very resource intensive for all the staff involved who are still delivering on all the other priorities. It is essential for the next stages to have some key positions filled at risk to enable us to maximise the benefits to Blaenau Gwent and initially achieve the spend required for year one of the programme.

5.5 This programme is significant and will be challenging in terms of delivery; it will place additional pressure on a number of key service areas to provide the necessary staff support for the programme, in particular Regeneration & Finance.

5.6 It is proposed that a small project team is appointed, initially comprising an SPF lead programme officer (Grade 9/10), finance officer (Grade 8/9) and 1 x SPF project support officer (Grade 6/7) to manage and administer the delivery of the programme for BG. The Team will be funded through the local authority's share of the 4% SPF administration fee and will be part of the Business and Regeneration Team and will be fixed term contracts. The cost will be in the region of £160k p/a, for 2022/23 the risk would be around £100,000 if all appointments are made in August/September.

## 6. **Supporting Evidence**

### 6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.1 The process has made use of existing performance information and data to put together evidence for the Local IP. This has been used to evidence need in BG.

6.1.2 Performance will be managed through the programme administration. This is yet to be supplied with the detailed guidance. We have assurances that UK Govt will be using a lighter touch than previous EU funding.

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

6.2.1 The Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and a component of its support for places across the UK. It provides new funding for local investment by March 2025, with all areas receiving an allocation from SPF via a funding formula rather than a competition.

6.2.2 The SPF aims to invest in local priorities and targets funding where it is needed most: building pride in place, supporting high quality skills training, supporting growth in pay, employment and productivity and increasing life chances. It will enable local decision making and better target the priorities of places within the UK. It is anticipated that it will lead to visible, tangible improvements to the places where people work and live, alongside investment in human capital, giving communities more reasons to be proud of their area.

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

Consultation and engagement is continuing with the ten local authorities in the CCR. Further consultation has started with other public sector partners. Corporate documents that have been consulted upon, and drawn up with communities have been used as the evidence for the Local IP. Consultation will continue over the summer period.

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

The current SPF has only identified three years but we have been advised that the programme will continue for longer. The spreadsheets attached show a three-year plan which would continue for longer once further funding is identified in future SPF programmes.

## 6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The SPF is by its nature funding to help prevent social and economic deprivation. This theme continues throughout the Local IP and process.

## 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

We are working in partnership with the ten local authorities across the CCR, the Cardiff City Region team and the Welsh Government civil servants. Regionally and locally we are also working in close contact with the UK Govt civil servants.

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

Internally the SPF can benefit a number of different Departments. The working group is made up of staff from Education, Community Services, Policy and Performance, Regeneration and Finance.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The decarbonisation agenda will be considered when putting the individual projects together. Some of the interventions in Community and Place will also support work within the Community around decarbonisation and could support locally owned renewable energy projects to come forward.

6.9 ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment including the Equality Impact Assessment***

6.9.1 The completed Integrated Impact Screening form has been completed, it is early in the process, but the fund is geared towards assisting with the wellbeing, life expectancy, crime, jobs, skills and other issues that affect our diverse communities. It is considered that a full assessment is not necessary given the attached but a watching brief will be kept as projects are developed.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The programme will be monitored through UK Govt and RCT as lead partner at a CCR level. The local interventions will be monitored through the BG Democratic Process.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- *Integrated Impact Screening*

# Agenda Item 9

*Executive Committee and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 06.07.22

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 06.07.22

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **13<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

Report Subject: **Rights, Value, Ethics (RVE) Syllabus**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr S. Edmunds, Executive Member for People / Education**

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

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
√	√					13.07.22		Syllabus Conference 01.07.22

## 1. Purpose of the Report

This report asks the Executive Committee to adopt the Rights, Value and Ethics (RVE) Syllabus for use in Blaenau Gwent schools.

## 2 Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Agreed Syllabus sets out the requirements that schools should follow in order to meet statutory requirements. In June 2013 Standing Conference endorsed the re-adoption of the Blaenau Gwent Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education with an understanding that the syllabus would be reviewed once further information is received in relation to the assessment and national curriculum review.
- 2.2 SACRE (Standing Advisory Conference for Religious Education) has been updated on the developments with the National Curriculum review and the development of the Humanities curriculum. Schools have been advised that they should follow the current agreed syllabus until further notice.
- 2.3 Following the release by Welsh Government on the new Curriculum for Wales, a Syllabus Conference was held on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 so that consultation on the proposed syllabus could take place. The Syllabus Conference is the process through which SACRE undertake consultation on the proposed syllabus and this meeting was advertised on the Councils' webpage.
- 2.4 Welsh Government made provision for local authorities to adopt or adapt this guidance as their Agreed Syllabus.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 This report has been approved by Education DMT, CLT for submission to Executive Committee.

#### **Option 1:**

For the Executive Committee to receive the report and adopt the agreed syllabus for use in primary schools from September 2022 and for those all through/ secondary schools implementing Curriculum for Wales from 2023 as set out in paragraph 6.14.

#### **Option 2:**

For the Executive Committee to not adopt the proposed syllabus and offer guidance as to what changes should be made.

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

#### 4.1 **Statutory Responsibility**

4.1.1 The Local Authority is required to have in place an agreed RVE syllabus for use in its schools.

#### 4.1.2 **Corporate Plan Education Aims**

- Minimise the impact of COVID-19 on learner development and progress, including improving the digital competency of all learners and staff in the wider Blaenau Gwent school community.
- Ensure high quality leadership and teaching that secures good progress for all learners, particularly the vulnerable and those who are eFSM. (Entitled to free school meals)
- Improve wellbeing for learners at all stages of development.
- Secure strong progress in skills, particularly in English and mathematics at key stages 3 and 4.
- Support schools who are identified as causing concern through regional protocols to secure improvement, in conjunction with the Education Achievement Service (EAS).

#### 4.1.3 **Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan**

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



## 5. Implications Against Each Option

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

5.1.1 Schools have a delegated budget from which they fund RVE. There is no impact on schools or the Councils' budget in the short medium or long term through the adoption of the proposed RVE syllabus

### 5.2 *Risks*

The Directorate risk register identifies risks and the adoption of the proposed syllabus does not present as a risk. Should option 2 be agreed there is a risk that those schools implementing Curriculum for Wales will not have an RVE syllabus that meets their needs.

### 5.4 *Legal*

The Local Authority EAS is required to hold a syllabus conference and determine the RVE syllabus for use in its schools. The proposed Syllabus sets out the requirements that schools should follow in order to meet statutory requirements.

### 5.5 *Human Resources*

None for this report.

## 6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 A Syllabus Conference was held on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022. Prior to this meeting the syllabus conference was advertised on the Blaenau Gwent Website and amongst Blaenau Gwent schools. All SACRE representatives were also invited to the conference.

6.1.2 There were 10 people in attendance at the meeting. The SACRE advisor took attendees through the proposed curriculum and the following key issues were noted:

- The overarching approach to the curriculum noting the links to key guidance documents
- From September 2022 the parental right to withdraw from RVE is not permitted in all primary schools and for those secondary all though schools opting into the Curriculum for Wales. This is not the same for Collective Worship as parents have the right to withdraw. It was also agreed that within the draft syllabus that reference should be made to the determination process that schools can follow in respect of Collective worship arrangements
- Complaint and concerns process was updated to clarify arrangements

6.1.3 The draft minutes of the Syllabus Conference will be brought before SACRE at their next meeting scheduled for later this term.

6.1.4 The Conference concluded with a vote amongst those entitled to do so and resolved that the Local Authority should adopt the RVE syllabus as

laid before conference on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 from September 2022 to September 2027. The RVE syllabus will be used by those primary schools and those all age/ secondary schools who are implementing the Curriculum for Wales from September 2022. All other schools will implement from September 2023 and will continue to use the current syllabus that was agreed in June 2013 until they implement the Curriculum for Wales.

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

SACRE is required to consult and agree a syllabus for RVE for use in Blaenau Gwent schools.

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

Involvement of partners (e.g. Schools, Faith representatives, elected members, teachers, parents) are fundamental to securing buy in to the final proposed RVE syllabus for use in Blaenau Gwent schools.

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

In June 2013 the Standing Conference endorsed the re-adoption of the Blaenau Gwent syllabus for Religious Education. Consultation on the proposed RVE syllabus has taken place. The proposed syllabus is aligned to the Curriculum for Wales changes and will be the Curriculum that is in use following adoption. SACRE will be required to consult on the next RVE syllabus in 5 years' time.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

A key element of the Council's work is to monitor settings and ensure appropriate support to secure continuing high standards. SACRE also participates in this work through scrutinising the teaching of religious education through Estyn Inspection reports reflects the extent to which settings and the Local Authority has been effective in providing support to ensure that the teaching of RE continues to be done to a high standard.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The constitution of SACRE exemplifies the collaboration and partnership working that is in place to support the effective delivery of religion values and ethics education in Blaenau Gwent schools.

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

The proposed RVE syllabus is part of the Humanities area of learning.

6.8 ***EqIA***

An EQIA has been completed for this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The EAS provides school improvement support to Blaenau Gwent schools and SACRE are supported by a Curriculum Partner (SACs and

RVE). As part of the forward work programme for SACRE they will monitor the implementation of the RVE curriculum amongst schools.

### **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

Appendix 1 – BG Syllabus

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**The Blaenau Gwent Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values  
and Ethics**

**Based on the Curriculum for Wales Religion, Values and  
Ethics Guidance**

**Implementation Date: September 2022**

DRAFT

## ***Foreword from the Corporate Director Of Education, Lynn Phillips***

### **Corporate Improvement Plan**

Our Core Vision and Values Our Core Vision and Values reflect who we are as a Council, how we do things and how we are shaping the future by ensuring that these apply to everything we do. Our Council Priorities. With reduced funding and increasing demand on services the Council can no longer do everything it has done in the past. We must focus on those actions that will have the greatest impact.

Safeguarding the most vulnerable people in our communities continues to be a top priority for the Council alongside transforming the aspirations of residents and valuing fairness and equality in everything we do. Improving the quality and provision of teaching and learning is also vitally important to ensure we are achieving ambitious outcomes for all children and young people. We will continue to invest in our neighbourhoods so that they are places where people are proud to live and have prioritised economic development and regeneration to bring jobs, growth and opportunity to local people and businesses.

Another priority is to make sure the services we provide are of a high standard and value for money, where more people are satisfied and services are more accessible for and responsive to the needs of citizens. Everything we do should contribute to the Council's priorities (the 'golden thread') so that all our effort and resources are linked into the delivery of this Plan. Some of the priorities will also require contributions from across different service areas and this will help us to deliver our 'One Council' approach by working together to deliver better outcomes for our communities.

### **Education Provision**

Blaenau Gwent has 25 schools and their status is detailed below:

- 2 are Maintained 3-16 Learning Communities,
- 1 Foundation Comprehensive,
- 1 Maintained Comprehensive,
- 1 x Maintained 3-18 Special School,
- 1 x Maintained 3-16 SEBD Special School; and,
- 19 Primaries (of which 4 are voluntary aided / faith schools)

There are currently circa 9,000+ pupils on roll across all Blaenau Gwent schools

**Lynn Phillips**  
**Corporate Director of Education**

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## **The Standing Advisory Council (SAC) on Religion, Values and Ethics**

The function of the Standing Advisory Council on RVE is to advise the local authority on such matters connected with the provision of teaching and learning, under the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021, either in respect of the mandatory element of RVE, or the post-compulsory education in maintained schools of optional RVE which includes: methods of teaching; the choice of teaching materials; the provision of teacher training. In addition, the SAC may advise on any other matter the LA may refer to it, or as the SAC may see fit.

### **Contact Details**

For further information on Blaenau Gwent SAC or if you have any queries in relation to the Agreed Syllabus, please contact:

Michelle.Jones (Strategic Education Improvement Manager)  
[Michelle.jones@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:Michelle.jones@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) or 07891815904

Hayley Jones (EAS Curriculum Partner - SACs and RVE)  
[hayley.jones@sewaleseas.org.uk](mailto:hayley.jones@sewaleseas.org.uk) or 07904 644749.



## Introduction

Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) is the name the Welsh Government has given to Religious Education in the Curriculum for Wales. **RVE is mandatory for all learners aged 3 to 16.** This now sits within the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE), along with Geography, History, Business Studies and Social Studies. RVE is still locally determined and therefore, as well as having regard to the Curriculum for Wales Framework Guidance on Hwb, **all schools in Blaenau Gwent must also have regard to the Blaenau Gwent Agreed Syllabus for RVE when designing their school curriculum.**

It is the local authority's responsibility to monitor the statutory provision of RVE, and they are supported in doing this by the Blaenau Gwent Standing Advisory Council on Religion, Values and Ethics (SAC).

Every local authority is legally required to establish and support an Agreed Syllabus Conference which must prepare a syllabus of RVE to be adopted by a local education authority.

The Curriculum for Wales Religion, Values and Ethics Statutory Guidance on Hwb was adopted as the new Blaenau Gwent Agreed Syllabus for RVE on (date to be inserted), following a formal recommendation to the LA by the Agreed Syllabus Conference on (date to be inserted).

**The RVE statutory guidance can be accessed via Welsh Government's Hwb website:**

[Link to Hwb – Welsh Government Guidance on Religion, Values and Ethics](#)

This Agreed Syllabus is not intended to be a scheme of work. It provides a framework within which each school can best design its own local curriculum which includes RVE within the Humanities AoLE.

## Aims of RVE

Mandatory RVE makes an important and distinctive contribution to supporting the four purposes by giving learners opportunities to:

- **engage with and explore ultimate and philosophical questions** about the meaning, significance and purpose of life, and about the nature of human thought and of the universe, and the connections between them;
- **undertake enquiries and engage with sources of wisdom and philosophies** that encourage them to explore the challenges, opportunities and responses of human beings in the context of their [cynefin](#), locally, in Wales and the wider world, as well as support them in evaluating their own perspectives and those of others;
- **develop and express their own informed viewpoints**, which prepares them for lifelong learning in a pluralistic and diverse world;
- **use their knowledge and understanding** of both institutional and personal religious and non-religious beliefs and practices to think critically about their own values and about how they might make important social and personal decisions;
- **explore the ways in which religion and non-religious philosophical convictions have influenced human experience throughout history**, so that they can make sense of their place in the world, imagine possible futures and create responsible solutions that take in to account the diverse needs and rights of all people;
- **evaluate and use evidence from a range of religious and non-religious sources to engage with ethical and moral issues**, past and contemporary, that challenge their knowledge and values. This enables learners to develop an understanding of religion and belief, culture, community, their [cynefin](#), Wales and the wider world now and in the past, which can help to nurture a sense of place and belonging;
- **respond sensitively to religion and non-religious philosophical convictions** and explore the beliefs and practices of people in their community, Wales and the wider world, and how these might impact their actions and choices;
- **develop secure values and establish their ethical beliefs and spirituality** through the exploration of religion and non-religious philosophical convictions on a range of issues, which can in turn enable them to form positive relationships based upon trust and mutual respect;
- **discuss and reflect on their own perspectives and those of others** on a range of issues, which help them to build their mental, emotional and spiritual well-being by developing confidence, resilience and empathy.

## **Audience**

The RVE guidance in the Humanities AoLE has been written to be accessible to all those responsible for designing a curriculum. Those persons who must have regard to the guidance when designing a curriculum are:

- the headteacher of a maintained school or a maintained nursery school;
- the governing body of a maintained school or a maintained nursery school;
- a provider of funded non-maintained nursery education;
- the teacher in charge of a pupil referral unit;
- the management committee for a pupil referral unit;
- a person who provides teaching and learning for a child, otherwise than at a maintained school, maintained nursery school or pupil referral unit, by virtue of arrangements made under section 19A of the Education Act 1996 (c. 56);
- a local authority in Wales.

In addition, the guidance may also be useful to practitioners, regional consortia, awarding bodies, Estyn, teacher unions, religious organisations, non-religious organisations, parents and carers and other bodies in Wales with an interest in RVE. These bodies do not have to have regard to the guidance, but it may be useful and informative for them to refer to it to better understand the content of a given setting's curriculum.

### *Church in Wales Schools*

More information on Church in Wales guidance can be found [here](#).

### *Catholic Schools*

More information on Catholic guidance can be found here [\(Link to follow\)](#).

**The LA has a legal duty to review the Agreed Syllabus every five years.**

### Schools should take note of the following points:

In accordance with the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 the Agreed Syllabus reflects that:

- the religious traditions in Wales are in the main Christian while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Wales;
- the fact that a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales.

### More information can be found in the legal summary section on Hwb:

[Link to Curriculum of Wales: Summary of Legislation – Religion, Values and Ethics](#)

We strongly advise that Governors and Head Teachers engage with this summary.

## The RVE Curriculum

### *Time*

At each progression step, sufficient time and resources are required to provide an effective and coherent course of study. As a mandatory element of the Curriculum for Wales, **RVE should have equity with other disciplines within the Humanities AoLE.**

### *Design*

The Curriculum for Wales requires all schools to offer a broad and balanced education, which enables learners to make links between the different disciplines and areas of learning and experience. Therefore, curriculum design should draw together different disciplines, including RVE, to provide learners with a coherent and holistic learning experience, which incorporates the following:

- the cross-curricular skills of literacy, numeracy and digital competence;
- the skills integral to the four purposes;
- consideration of the cross-cutting themes.

More about the role of disciplines in learning is available here:-

[Link to Principles for designing your curriculum - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

When planning and preparing your RVE curriculum you should take note of the following areas. Please see below links which will take you to the relevant sections of the guidance on the Hwb website:

- [Humanities statements of what matters](#)
- [Descriptions of Learning \(Progression steps\)](#)
- [RVE Concepts](#)
- [RVE lens \(sub lenses in RVE\)](#)
- [Learner progression and exemplar learning journeys in RVE](#)
- [Spiritual development of learners](#)
- Ensuring Inclusivity in RVE

As learners progress, they should have greater opportunities to engage with different disciplines and to specialise within them, particularly when they reach the later progression steps. The Curriculum for Wales guidance tells us that this process should be supported by discipline-specialist teaching, which, along with the multi-disciplinary approach to curriculum design, should prepare learners who seek to specialise further during learning post-16. **This will require specialists to teach RVE and specialists to have input in designing RVE within the humanities.**

While learners should have opportunities to specialise, the curriculum must remain broad and balanced, and each learner should continue to draw on learning from each AoLE throughout their time in compulsory education, which includes the mandatory element of RVE. Schools will be expected to enable all learners to access a range of courses of study and to gain suitable qualifications at the end of compulsory education.

### *Implementation*

This Blaenau Gwent agreed syllabus will be effective from September 2022, for Religion, Values and Ethics in respect of all learners, up to and including year 6. In respect of year 7 learners, schools in the region will have flexibility on whether to roll out the Curriculum for Wales in September 2022, or to roll out the Curriculum for Wales for years 7 and 8 together in September 2023. During the period of curriculum roll out, as a secondary school or setting 'adopts' the Curriculum for Wales Framework for a particular year group, this agreed syllabus will supersede the current/legacy agreed syllabus. From September 2023, this agreed syllabus, in respect of years 7 and 8 as all schools and settings will have implemented the Curriculum for Wales for those learners. Thereafter, the phased roll-out of the Curriculum for Wales will continue, and this agreed syllabus will supersede the other:

- year 9 learners in September 2024
- year 10 learners in September 2025
- year 11 learners in September 2026

More information for schools and settings on the process for opting in to the Curriculum for Wales in respect of year 7 learners is provided in the ['Journey to curriculum roll-out'](#).

## *Post-16 RVE*

In the Curriculum for Wales, the mandatory status of RVE has been removed for Sixth Forms in maintained schools. Therefore, as of 2027, RVE will become optional for these learners. However, this does not prevent individual schools with Sixth Forms from timetabling RVE for all students if they wish to. Sixth Formers **have the right to ‘opt in’ to RVE** and the **school would legally have to provide RVE for those learners upon request.**

There are a variety of ways that a school can provide RVE for Sixth Formers who request it. For advice on this type of provision, schools can contact the RVE Partner or Blaenau Gwent SAC for support. Contact details are available on page 2 of this document. More information on Post-16 RVE can be found here: [Link to Post-16 RVE Guidance.](#)

## **The right to withdraw in the Curriculum for Wales**

From September 2022, there will be no parental right to withdraw from RVE as the new Curriculum for Wales is implemented in their year group. **The parental right to withdraw will remain in place until their year group becomes subject to the Curriculum for Wales.** The timetable for these changes is as follows:

Primary aged pupils – September 2022

Yr. 7 pupils – September 2022 OR September 2023 (depending on the roll out of the Curriculum for Wales into their school).

Yr. 8 pupils – September 2023

Yr. 9 pupils – September 2024

Yr. 10 pupils – September 2025

Yr. 11 pupils – September 2026

This is in line with every other academic subject in the Curriculum for Wales.

More information on the right to withdraw can be found in the legal summary on Hwb:

[Link to Curriculum of Wales: Summary of Legislation – Religion, Values and Ethics](#)

## Collective Worship

Collective Worship is **distinctive from, and additional to**, curriculum time given to RVE. Collective worship sits outside the curriculum and has its own legal standing and requirements and must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. However, there continues to be a determination available to schools.

Note that **parents may still request that their children are withdrawn from ‘collective worship’ from September 2022**, if they wish, as this is distinct and separate from the academic subject of RVE.

## Concerns

Under the Education Act, the LA must provide local arrangements for dealing with unresolved concerns. The Local Authority will consider concerns in relation to the Agreed Syllabus. Concerns relating to the provision of the RVE Agreed Syllabus should be addressed through individual school complaints processes in the first instance.

Please contact Michelle Jones (Strategic Education Improvement Manager) if you have any unresolved concerns in relation to RVE.

**Tel:** 07891815904

**E-mail:** [Michelle.jones@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:Michelle.jones@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

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